

# Public Governance for Climate Action: Call-for-Proposals

**IIAS 2020 Conference  
Brussels, 24-26 June 2020**

*How dare you pretend that this can be solved with just  
business-as-usual and some technical solutions?*

Greta Thunberg, U.N. Climate Change Summit, 23 September 2019

*It is a very wicked issue indeed.*

(Pollitt 2016)

## Introduction

Established in 1930 to develop public administration solutions to the contemporary policy challenges, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) celebrates its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary during its 2020 Conference on June 24-26 in the capital of Europe – Brussels.

The IIAS 2020 Conference will approach the theme “Public Governance for Climate Action” through the following streams of public governance research: 1) Collaborative Governance, 2) Evidence-based Policy, 3) Innovation, and 4) Resilience studies.

With this call-for-proposal, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences is inviting its members and partners, and interested individuals and institutions, to take ownership of one of the tracks proposed here or propose any other one deemed relevant to address this pressing policy concern.

## Climate Action

Climate change is an increasingly salient policy issue.

First, there is emerging consensus that the climate is changing and impacting the natural system. Ice fields are decreasing, opening new maritime routes in the Arctic Ocean. Forest fires are on the rise, in the Amazon, but also in Africa, Asia and Europe. Episodes of extreme weather are increasingly common.

Second, society is increasingly polarized on the issue. The school strike for climate movement and its claim for resolute climate action is proving unexpectedly sustainable. It is opposed by other movements skeptic of the scientific diagnosis of global warming

and optimistic about its technical treatment. This portrays an emerging political conflict between ways of life and their respective partisans.

Third, Climate Action is gaining salience in political and economic realms as well: it is the first priority raised by the President-elect of the European Commission, it features high on the agenda of the World Economic Forum, while the United Nations linked its Climate Action Summit 2019 to its flagship General Assembly.

## Public Governance for Climate Action

The professional community of public administration has much to contribute to climate action. With Christopher Pollitt (2015), we distinguish four public governance research streams with significant potential relevance for climate action: Collaborative Governance, Evidence-Based Policy, Innovations, and Resilience.

### *Collaborative Governance*

Climate change is the ideal-typical case of wicked issue: multi-faceted, uncertain and contested, it resists treatment by specialized institutional jurisdictions, and requires “Collaborative Governance” (Ansell and Gash 2008; Daviter 2017; Pollitt 2016).

Collaborative governance has been one major proposition of the field of public administration to address wicked issues. It consists in “bringing multiple stakeholders together [...] in common forums to engage in collective decision-making” (Ansell and Gash 2008).

With Bouckaert (2015), we distinguish levels at which collaborative governance can occur:

- Inside the public sector, coordination (Verhoest et al. 2004), joined-up government (Ling 2002), and whole-of-government (Christensen and Lægreid 2007) literature has tried to devise ways to cut across organizational silo’s inside government. This literature remains relevant for climate action, which requires **policy integration** between, i.e.: fiscal, urban, social, economic and environmental aspects (Tosun and Lang 2017);
- Interaction with the private and non-profit sector has also attracted a great deal of attention, under labels such as **network governance** or management (Raab, Mannak, and Cambré 2015; Ansell and Gash 2008). This rich literature has emphasized conditions under which the reunion of stakeholders with various perspectives on wicked policy issues such as climate change can create win-win solutions;
- The literature on **public-private partnerships** focuses on schemes whereby public and private organizations join their forces over the course of a public utilities project life cycle, sharing risks and opportunities (Torchia, Calabrò, and Morner 2015). PPPs can be leveraged for climate action projects, especially in high public debt and low interest rate contexts;
- The involvement of citizens in the design and delivery of public policies has been the focus of other streams of literature on co-production (Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016), participation (Fung 2015), and **social innovation** (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015).

## ***Evidence-based Policy***

The evidence-based movement is an aspirational call for public policy processes to be more scientifically rational. Grounded in the rejection of politics as zero-sum games between vested interests It found the same echo in democracies and developmental states.

Climate action strongly echoes this movement: it is concerned with forecasting future scenarios on basis of non-fully accurate data, with setting quantified policy targets, measuring their realization, providing incentives, the follow-up of their realization... At least three streams of public administration research can be mobilized for climate action (Pollitt 2015):

- With **performance management**, policy objectives are operationalized into indicators, auditors or evaluators measure the progresses of agents towards their realization, and this information is (hopefully) used in policy learning processes (Moynihan 2005). Climate action is undoubtedly going to rely significantly of performance management processes, which were discussed at length in public administration literature;
- **“Big data”** is generated by users of the Internet, being individuals or objects (“Internet of Things”; IoT). With big data being assumed to be just “out there”, the challenge shifts to its analysis on such a way as to inform policy processes (Dunleavy 2016; Lavertu 2016; Mergel, Rethemeyer, and Isett 2016);
- The very call for evidence-based policy is concerned with the prevalence of the public interest over vested private ones. It echoes public regulation literature, called to complement self-regulation by the private sector.

## ***Innovative Policy Solutions***

One interim conclusion of the climate action debate is that “business-as-usual and some technical solutions” won’t suffice: disruptions, radical changes or even revolutions will be needed. Public administration has been addressing such questions for a long time, through the concept of innovation. Innovations refer to new practices, on the whole public value creation chain (De Vries, Bekkers, and Tummers 2016);

- Most climate action, political pressure to engage in it and policy results currently occurs in **cities**, pioneering in innovations labeled as smart cities (Meijer and Rodriguez Bolivar 2016), or in the field of architecture, transport, ideas and ideologies. Local governance studies have high potential relevance for climate action;
- A significant share of innovation literature aims at seizing the opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve public service delivery, hereby merging with the established subfield of **e-government** or e-governance. ICT can automatize existing administrative workflows, but also allows inventing new ways of achieving public policy objectives;
- With **behavioral public administration** (Grimmelikhuijsen et al. 2017), the theoretical pendulum is moving back towards agency arguments and micro-level of analysis, after one generation of institutionalism. This research agenda gives prospects of non-manipulative behavioral changes from citizens through tools such

as nudges. Climate action being about changing mindsets, behaviorism public administration has a significant relevance therefore.

### ***Resilience Studies***

The concept of resilience originates refers to the capacity of systems to absorb shocks and recover an equilibrium position, different (bounce forward) or not (bounce back) from the initial one (Duit 2016). Resilience studies examine how governance systems react to crisis situations, of natural or human origin.

- **Crisis Management** aims at learning lessons from cases of natural disasters (Katrina hurricane), human-made catastrophes (Fukushima powerplant), financial (Euro-crisis), political (Arab spring and revolutions), military (war) or other crises. Many crises being expected to flow from climate (in)action, this is another relevant field of research to be mobilized in the current context;
- **Post-conflict** (Brinkerhoff 2005) and **recovery** studies position themselves after the disturbing event and the destruction it occasioned. It focuses on the reconstruction of capacities, while learning the lessons of the past.

### **Call for proposals**

Hereby, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences invites you to take ownership of one of the proposed conference tracks above, or to propose any other one which is relevant for climate action, by applying to the position of Track Chair for the IIAS 2020 Conference on Public Administration for Climate Action.

#### ***Your application should mention:***

- The name, email and institutional affiliation of the involved individuals;
- If applicable, the name, website and logo of the institution endorsing the track;
- A short (200 words) description of the research question the track wants to address and justifying its relevance for climate action;
- An indication of the kind of contribution expected, such as: papers, presentations, posters, ...

The proposals should be sent to [info@iias-conference2020.org](mailto:info@iias-conference2020.org) by **December 15, 2019**.

The proposals will be evaluated by the Conference Rapporteur, the Chair of the IIAS Scientific Committee, and the Scientific Team of IIAS. Chairs are notified of the decision on such a way as to compile all proposals into a call-for-contributions and diffused online by New Year. Track chairs are invited to mobilize their network.

The Scientific Team of IIAS will ensure due support to the edition of the call-for-paper, and the review of abstracts.

Registration fees will remain due for Track Chairs and Presenters alike, who both enjoy significant discounts, as do PhD students and early bird participants.

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