

Continuity as Raison d'Être

I am writing this message, nearly three weeks after the first signals of exit from confinement in many European countries, and a first issue which is on top of our agenda is how to approach the post-COVID-19 strategies for Public Administration, worldwide and on each continent. Of course, we must underline many positive responses coming out of our whole of IIAS community, such those initiatives taken by our learned societies and entities, by our institutional members – universities, faculties, institutes and schools of Public Administration – to continue teaching and researching during the crisis, by means of e-learning, e-teaching, e-conferencing. They participate of a wider endeavour from our Governments, Public Administration and Public Services to continue working in the General Interest for our citizens and societies thanks to innovative solutions (telework, digital procedures etc.).

Nevertheless, there is still a lot of uncertainty swirling around, especially for our colleagues – practitioners, scholars and their students – in the countries where the COVID-19 pandemic is still raging.

Therefore, we express our gratitude, esteem and support to all the public servants and employees who are still mobilised in the front-line to save lives and to continue day-to-day crisis management. We also express our solidarity and great compassion to people of our IIAS community who suffer the loss of family members, relatives, friends and colleagues during this dreadful period.

The three Cs: Continuity, Coordination, Comparison

Although it remains premature to relax the attention from the daily management of the pandemic, now comes the time to start wondering about the resilience of our States and public institutions of government and administration throughout and after the crisis, as well as reflecting upon the new forms of joined-up action, coordination of efforts and partnership that have emerged from the pressure of events.

We, scholars and practitioners with reflexive capacities, we can start questioning the capacity of our Public Administrations and their servants to resist to such an unprecedented shock. How did our officials succeed in ensuring the continuity of Public Service delivery during the crisis? What are the first lessons learned from this terrible episode that could be helpful for the future? What are the subsequent necessary transformations or improvements of PA practice and education to be better able to anticipate next crises?

As a worldwide community, we support the comparative efforts of addressing these first questions... and the other to come.

The IIAS Special Report on the COVID-19 pandemic and Public Governance is one of these initiatives, in combination with the various special issues of our PA scientific journals which are currently being produced, which also support this effort.

The e-IIAS 2020 Conference due to take place in the forthcoming weeks will soon contribute to have a full overview of the worldwide agenda, especially addressing the key topics of

Climate Action, COVID-19 and Public Governance, SDGs Governance, in English language but also with a French-Speaking Panel.

The IASIA e-learning platform is another one of your important initiatives that will bring a lot to the community.

I know that our colleagues of LAGPA, AGPA and MENAPAR are also very committed to developing their respective strategies for maintaining our whole community as active as possible.

At EGPA in particular, my Steering Committee and I, we have made strong incentives to all good wills to ensure the continuity of our activities. Our annual event dedicated to young researchers, the future of our community, which usually takes place during our Annual Conference, will take place as an EGPA Virtual Tutorial for Doctoral Students and Junior Researchers, on September 1st, 2020.

Many of our EGPA Permanent Study Groups co-Chairs – whom I want to thank warmly for their enthusiasm – are also working very hard to set-up and coordinate virtual events and panels which will take place simultaneously on September 2-4, 2020 and the program is under preparation.

Three other Cs: Continuity, Community and Creativity

In this so painful, difficult, yet challenging context, the ‘strength of (weak) ties’, the importance of global professional networks, and the shared belief that we belong to a scholarly community across borders are more important than ever. During the COVID-19 crisis, it was for many of us somehow strange to experiment compulsory and frustrating ‘social distancing’ with our nearest neighbors, while daily practicing more and more e-meetings and teleworking with our fellow colleagues and counterparts from all over the world.

Systematizing and capitalizing on such an experience, one major objective of IIAS and its entities is to be creative and make the necessary innovations allowing us to offer you, our regular and loyal members and our more occasional participants, the best possible structure and support to continue dialoguing remotely on current major PA challenges. This is fundamental!

At the same time – since life is always made of dialectics –, we are fully committed to preparing our future activities with great hopes that, thanks to the measures taken by our governments and to the citizens’ respect and engagement, our EGPA community members, and our guests, will all meet again and interact in face-to-face and warm presence, on the occasion of our next EGPA Conference, in September 2021 !

Our very best wishes to all, and see you soon!

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