

**The American Society for Public Administration  
2022 Annual Conference  
March 18-22, 2022 | Hyatt Regency | Jacksonville, Florida**

**SECTION ON AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (SAPA) SYMPOSIUM**



**CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS**

**Democratic Governance in Africa: Current Threats, Challenges, and Opportunities**

Of 54 countries in the African continent, 21 countries experienced a leadership change within the last 5 years while 18 countries continued to be led by the same leader for more than a decade (Brookings, 2021). This landscape on the African continent lends a different layer to ASPA’s overarching conference theme titled, “Democracy under Threat,” as its orientation and approach is from an assumed democratic backdrop with aims to prevent slippage in upholding democratic ideals. This is not always a given when studying how government works in Africa. It is more complicated and correspondingly varied due to the diverse political-administrative arrangements and their institutional history. Past scholarship has highlighted unique the institutional development of the continent (Herbst, 2000; Kabwegyere, 1995) that is contrary to European states (Spruyt, 1994; Tilly, 1990). The importance of the varied contextualized institutional development paths becoming more relevant to PA scholarship (Dasandi & Esteve, 2017; Levy, 2014).

Similarly, one of the crucial dimensions of democratic governance in developing countries is its capacity to address the realities of socio-economic stagnation or inertia by adopting innovations based on domestic capacity and indigenous knowledge. Haque et al., (2017) argue that such innovations should be context-specific and responsive to the local needs of citizens. “Each developing country is quite unique, and its system of governance should be transformed in such a way that it reflects the country’s contextual realities and people’s demands and aspirations (ibid, p.7).” More so, as public service and response effectiveness cannot be removed from its context.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the importance of leadership and unique governance landscapes among African nations to the forefront, as the public health crisis was a national crisis that had to be dealt with locally. The pandemic’s impact reverberated beyond the health sector and spilled over to both the economic and social sectors. The 2021 SAPA Symposium brought together SAPA scholars and practitioners to share research and disseminate comparative best practices on how public administrative structures across African countries experienced disruptions and setbacks. The collective set of studies advanced scholarship dissemination in the following areas: 1) Public Leadership and Governance in Turbulent Times, 2) Strategic Approaches to Fighting COVID-19, 3) Pandemic Response and Health Care Systems, 4) Public Infrastructure, Capacity Building and Free Trade, and 5) Public Finance and Resources Management. Under these tracks, presenters advanced public administration scholarship by highlighting the unique challenges faced by the leadership and management of public sector organizations on the African continent.

The 2022 SAPA symposium aims to continue building on what was a monumental effort last year. We invite multidisciplinary scholars and practitioners into the conversation to weigh in on the ways to accelerate public sector action toward a multi-pillar goal of strengthening African democratic governance, supporting inclusive civil engagement, and mobilizing African workforce and youth talent around creative solutions to surmount the setbacks and reversals brought about by the unprecedented pandemic. SAPA members, African and global scholars, and practitioners come join us again in full force to continue to disseminate research and enrich the existing PA scholarship on the African continent. The Symposium is divided into five detailed tracks outlined below to guide your proposal abstract submission. By tagging your abstract submission to the following tracts, it allows us to identify and designate panel moderators for fruitful discussion and commentary.

### **Track I: Taking Stock of Public Administration Realities**

- Assessing the effects of Covid-19 related disruptions on public administration operation.
- Due to the prolonged period of pandemic response, more data is now available. What does the enriched COVID-19 government responses data tell us? How does it update scholarship and its theories?
- What are the identified challenges to COVID-19 adjustment and normalization in light of weak distance work/learning infrastructure?
- How is conflict and competition in resources, the two pervasive factors found in many African countries, integrated into public service delivery scholarship?
- What is the current state of inequality studies? What endogenous knowledge is available and how is it incorporated into the broader PA scholarship?
- As resources availability becomes a rare commodity during an economic downturn, how are gender and minority rights ensured? How are they included in the integration and inclusiveness discussions in public service delivery in the African continent?
- What is the status of African-African cooperation and what are its impacts on national governance?

### **Track II: Civic Engagement, Capacity Building, and Human Capital Development**

- What is the current state of African public sector's civic engagement capacity and infrastructure in light of the current pandemic related disruptions and setbacks?
- How is the current PA scholarship on human capital development tailored to the unique circumstances of African countries? What tailored means are available to build work force resiliency? How can PA scholarship be informed by inequality studies emerging from the continent? What are the continental perspectives on Gender and LGBTQ agendas as it ties with the future of equality discussions in Africa?
- Africa as a continent has one of the lowest average citizen ages. How has African youth altered the way we understand citizen engagement and accountability? How has technological innovations and youth mobilization enhanced social capital for greater accountability? What are future opportunities to nurture youth potential in Africa?
- Given the rise of the "net generation," how are social network/connectivity advancements harnessed and utilized in public service delivery discussions?
- What potential human capital development strategies could be harnessed, such as university-government-private sector relationships and connections?
- How can home-grown initiatives or local knowledge be better harnessed in governance strategies? How can the public infrastructure needs, solutions, and innovations be better incorporated into better governance theories befitting for African nations?

### **Track III: Political Transitions & Institutional Consequences**

- How has Covid-19 pandemic precipitated the destabilization of newly formed democratic regimes and/or the demise of pre-Covid 19 failing regimes?
- How has political changes impacted public administration development in African nations? With many countries operating on provisional government status, how have changes in electoral systems and processes impacted and defined administrative operations?
- What have we learnt from the political transitions from unitary autocratic rule to more centrifugal power-sharing regimes? What lessons and working practices can be distilled from current African experiences with transitional democratic governance?
- Participatory governance is growing in African countries as more countries are transitioning to multiparty elections. What is the current state of African public sector capacity to oversee and manage electoral engagement and voting?
- How are home-grown initiatives or local knowledge being harnessed in public policy design and its implementation?
- How have political and administrative change impacted ethics and corruption agendas?

### **Track IV: ICT Infrastructure & Governance: Gaps & Opportunities**

- What is the current state of ICT infrastructure development within African nations? What are its gaps and consequences?
- How could ICT infrastructure development enable African nations to leapfrog ahead? What are the disruptive yet innovative opportunities available with adoption of modern ICT development?
- How is ICT changing how African societies approach transparency and accountability in public service delivery?
- How is ICT enabling better planning public service delivery and evaluation of development programs?
- What finance means are available to deliver ICT infrastructure project pipeline within African nations?

### **Track V: Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation in Turbulent Times**

- What are some of the salient features and lessons of international cooperation supporting African governments' COVID-19 responses?
- How has supranational organizations (WHO, EU, UN, WB) influenced governance dialogue and policy in African countries?
- How do changes in global international relations, such as the changing and diversifying loan, investment, and aid landscape, affecting African nations engagement with the international system?
- What is the current state of affairs of African-African cooperation? What are some of the African Union's noteworthy achievements in supporting democratic governance on the continent?
- With Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) being an international collaborative agenda, how are African national governments collaborating with their regional and local governments and coordinating with international development organizations the reporting of SDGs performance progress?

### **Submission Protocol for Paper Proposals**

SAPA Symposium program committee welcomes the submission of proposals for individual papers and fully formed panels in alignment with the aforementioned SAPA 2022 Annual Symposium theme "Democratic Governance in Africa: Current Threats Challenges, and Opportunities."

Dissemination of high-quality conceptual, theoretical, empirical, policy- and practice-oriented research is strongly expected. All proposals should: 1) briefly explain how the paper or panel connects to the overall Symposium theme; 2) note the individual conference track in which the proposal best fits; 3) include 3-4 keywords, and 4) provide complete contact information for the corresponding individual. Proposals for individual papers should include an abstract of 250-400 words. Proposals for fully formed panels should consist of three to four complementary papers and include an abstract of 400-600 words.

Review of SAPA Symposium proposal submissions will begin on **December 15, 2021 and continue through January 30, 2022**. The program committee will review the proposals and notifications of decisions will be made via email on or before **February 28, 2022**. Proposals should be emailed to the Symposium committee chair, Dr. Shin Kue Ryu ([shinkueryu@isu.edu](mailto:shinkueryu@isu.edu)). The high-quality papers presented at the Symposium will be considered for publication in either a special co-edited issue of AJPAM (e-edition) and/or an edited volume. AJPAM is the African Journal of Public Administration and Management.

## References

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