

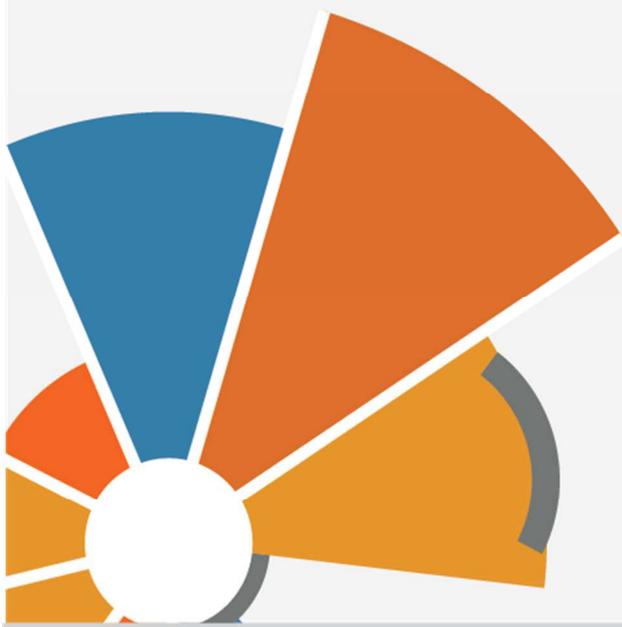


# 2018

Annual Conference of the  
EUROPEAN GROUP FOR  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

LAUSANNE | SWITZERLAND | 5-7 SEPTEMBER 2018  
PhD SYMPOSIUM | 3-4 SEPTEMBER 2018

## CALL FOR PAPERS



EGPA Permanent Study Group VIII on: Civil Society,  
Citizens and Government

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The political world is arguably at its most unstable point for at least a generation, and seismic shocks have left many millions of people feeling confused and deeply concerned. In many ways our field has never been more important – who else pioneered discussions on the VUCA world, for example, or represents the standards by which public figures should act? In other ways our field has never been more impotent – what use are all our codes of conduct, our commitment to values, when democracy makes choices that appear to be so potentially damaging?

One of the major contemporary issues in public administration and management deals with the often unquestioned need of governments to engage with citizens and civil society in the development and implementation of public policies and public services. A government that is not aiming for more engagement by and with citizens and civil society, is often considered a poorly functioning government. Engagement may come in many forms: participation in the development and decision making of public policies, and participation in the design and implementation of public services ('cocreation' and 'coproduction'). Citizen and civil society engagement is not something new at all. In some neo-corporatist countries, involvement of civil society in the public domain is part of the 'political culture'. In other countries, 'subsidiarity' ('government should only do what society cannot do itself') has been essential to structure society and its relation to government.

The claim that underpins the current trend to societal engagement with government, is that increased engagement has virtues, which makes governing more effective: increased legitimacy by engaging stakeholders, richer solutions for often complex societal problems, better accountability for public policy and service delivery, increased trust-levels between government, citizens and society, policies and services tailored to the need of the stakeholders, and more efficient service delivery by engaging valuable resources available in society.

These virtues are often taken for granted by government, and as such, it should not come as a surprise that we observe a world-wide trend of participation and coproduction initiatives at all governmental levels. However, slowly but increasingly, we see evidence of the 'dark side' of coproduction and participation (Brandsen, Steen & Verschuere, forthcoming).

On a more strategic level, we need knowledge about the ‘real’ reasons why governments increasingly rely on participation and coproduction. Is the choice for more participation and coproduction really a positive choice? Or is it the result of governments losing self-confidence? Do governments, perhaps, feel intuitively that how their machineries are organized, is not ‘in fit’ any longer with the complexity of the society it is supposed to lead? Hence, participation as an ‘unconscious’ attempt to shift away, in a legitimate way, the responsibility for dealing with societal problems? Or is the choice for participation and coproduction the result of governmental ‘poverty’? Hence, a deliberate attempt to save resources, and thus for engaging societal resources to deal with societal problems?

On a more operational level, we need knowledge about the potential negative consequences of participatory and coproductive practices.

On the level of democratic quality, we may question whether one of the unintended results of participation and coproduction is a more ‘divided’ society? Do we observe a gap (in quality and quantity of service-use or policy input) between people who are able and skilled to do it themselves, and people that lack these skills? Or perhaps even a growing ‘distrust’ in government and a decrease in governmental legitimacy? After all: in the perception of citizens, a government that shifts away responsibilities might become irrelevant, in the end.

On an organizational level, we may question whether citizen engagement perhaps leads to rising transaction costs. After all, there might be hidden costs that are related to the process of participation and coproduction: for decreasing information-asymmetries between participants, for dealing with changed response capacity to other concerns and needs, for dealing with certain participant behavior (different viewpoints, delays, adverse reactions, etc.). To a certain extent, we may question whether such ‘costs’ are justified, and need to have knowledge about how these costs relate to the assumed improvement of services and policies that are the result of citizen engagement.

We invite papers that address one or more of the issues:

- ✓ On a more strategic level, what are ‘real’ reasons why governments increasingly rely on participation and coproduction?
- ✓ On a more operational level, what are potential negative consequences of participatory and coproductive practices?

Please note that this year, the co-chairs of the PSG VIII invite participants to submit **a full paper** and not an abstract. For submitting your full paper proposal, please fill the form on the Conference management system with abstract and upload a full paper instead of an abstract.

### Key Deadlines

- ✓ **Full Paper Proposals** should be uploaded through the submission website by May 15, 2018
- ✓ Authors that are selected to present their paper on the EGPA conference, will be notified by June 15 2018.

## Practicalities

Please submit your abstract and complete paper online through the Conference Website [www.egpa-conference2018.org](http://www.egpa-conference2018.org) or directly through Conference Management System: <https://www.conftool.com/egpa2018>

Practical information on the EGPA 2018 conference can be found at: [www.egpa-conference2018.org](http://www.egpa-conference2018.org)

### Co-chairs of Permanent Study Group VIII:

#### **Professor Taco Brandsen**

Radboud University  
[t.brandsen@fm.ru.nl](mailto:t.brandsen@fm.ru.nl)

#### **Professor Bram Verschuere**

Ghent University  
[Bram.Verschuere@UGent.be](mailto:Bram.Verschuere@UGent.be)

#### **Professor Karen Johnston**

Portsmouth University  
[karen.johnston@port.ac.uk](mailto:karen.johnston@port.ac.uk)

**EGPA Policy Paper on European Governance** – Please note that all authors with accepted papers can submit a proposal for an EGPA Policy Paper. For more information, please contact Dr. Fabienne Maron