

Letter from the Editor

As SICA celebrates its 50th anniversary, I invite you to reflect upon the value of comparing in the field of public administration. In Greek political thought, “theory” is equivalent to “journey”; therefore, we are all travelers seeking to discover problems, explain concepts, institutions, and mechanisms, and present evidence on facts and analytic narratives. The comparative traveler is well-versed in the frameworks and methods of comparative public administration but is also pragmatic enough to transcend paradigmatic battles and use their knowledge and experience to generate new research directions that inform practice—finding the right path between nominal and abstract thinking and realist and concrete problem-solving shapes how comparative travelers approach their voyage.

This year’s first *journey* introduces three research ideas, one practitioner perspective, and two policy briefs. The first Research Idea (Salazar) dives into the interconnected problems of corruption and organized crime and compares the behavior of organized crime networks in Mexico, Colombia, and Italy. The second Research Idea (Komar) compares the United States and Indonesia’s education policy after the pandemic and focuses on the connection between digital learning and inequality. The following comparative Research Idea (Hughes) introduces energy policy in Russia and Hungary and elaborates on the various diplomatic efforts to resolve global energy threats and conflicts after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The following Policy Brief (van Mulbregt) sheds light on the underrepresentation of women in leadership

positions in public bureaucracies. It presents the Dutch example to introduce barriers to representation and recommendations to address this problem. The final Policy Brief (He) explores defense policy developments between the United States and Russia through a comparative approach. The Practitioner Perspective (Stănică, Flanigan, and Bejinariu) covers Romania’s response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis caused by the Russian invasion. It presents central and local government approaches to crisis management. It highlights the critical role of NGOs and other civil society members in providing quick and efficient assistance to the millions of refugees who crossed the border into Romania.

The SICA – OPS Committee continues to build on the diverse body of scholars and practitioners in the ASPA community to introduce further regular and special region-focused issues of the *Paper Series*, including issues dedicated to comparative public administration in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Eastern Europe, or the MENA region. I want to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Kimberly Moloney, Dr. Meghna Sabharwal, and Dr. Aroon Manoharan for paving the way and supporting our collaborative journey in re-starting and continuing to publish the *Occasional Paper Series* as an open forum for comparative, international, and development scholarship. I am confident that the incoming editorial team, led by Dr. Ljubinka Andonoska and Dr. Pooja Paswan, will continue to steer the *Paper Series* in the right direction. I appreciate your willingness to support this endeavor and for formatting this issue. I would like to thank all the *Paper Series* committee members who have helped blind-review each article and all contributors who believed in the value of publishing in our open-access issues.

I invite you to stay engaged with the *Occasional Paper Series* ([website](#); [Twitter](#)) and consider publishing your manuscripts. A new call for papers will be issued soon. Please let us know if you would like to lead a special issue on a specific region, have any comments or suggestions, or would like to submit a manuscript. I hope you enjoy reading this issue!

-- Cristina M. Stănică, Ph.D., Assistant Teaching Professor, Northeastern University; Editor-in-Chief, *Occasional Papers Series*.

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