2027 Public Administration Theory Network (PAT-Net) Annual Conference: Call for Papers

Power, Repression, and Resistance: Public Administration in an Age of Democratic Crisis

June 10–13, 2027 | Kent State University **Hotel** and Conference Center, Kent, Ohio, USA

Submit your proposal at the following link: https://forms.gle/hZt6DBBNZXSDeoo4A

Abstract deadline: January 15th, 2027| Notification of acceptance: February 15th, 2027.

About the Conference

The 2027 Public Administration Theory Network (PAT-Net) Conference will be hosted by the School of Peace and Conflict Studies at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. We invite scholars, students, practitioners, and activists to join us around the theme of **Power, Repression, and Resistance: Public Administration in an Age of Democratic Crisis**. Public administration theory has long grappled with questions of state power, legitimacy, and the proper exercise of administrative authority. Yet the spread of authoritarian governance practices, the securitization of dissent, the use of political repression, and the erosion of democratic norms across many political contexts demand renewed attention to how public institutions, and public administration more broadly, reproduce or resist violence, respond to repression, and create spaces for peaceful change.

The conference calls for sustained theoretical engagement with the tensions between state authority and democratic governance in contexts marked by violence, repression, and institutional crisis. It focuses on five interconnected issues: state violence, peaceful change, populism, and democratic backsliding, authoritarianism, and political repression.

We seek contributions that interrogate the conceptual foundations, historical legacies, and contemporary manifestations of state violence and institutional response. We welcome paper proposals, panels, workshops, roundtables, and experimental formats that challenge, reimagine, or extend public administration theory.

Papers that engage in theoretical work on bureaucratic and civic power, political contestation, democratic and authoritarian governance, conflict transformation, and the ethics of public administration are welcomed. We are particularly interested in scholarship that refuses the false dichotomy between order and justice and instead situating administrative practice within broader structures of power and inequality and examining how institutions construct, justify, or challenge the boundaries of legitimate state and administrative action.

The theme is not limited to the United States. We strongly encourage comparative and international scholarships on how public institutions in varied political contexts navigate questions of authority, legitimacy, repression, and democratic governance. We also welcome work that bridges public administration theory with adjacent fields, including political theory, peace and conflict studies, critical policy studies, organizational theory, and the history and sociology of state violence and civil resistance.

Why Kent?

Kent is a place where peaceful protest and state violence collided, with consequences that still reverberate through American political life. On May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire on students protesting the Vietnam War and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, killing four students and wounding nine others. In response, Kent State University established what became the School of Peace and Conflict Studies as a living memorial, dedicated to the research, teaching, and practice of peaceful mechanisms of social and political change.

The events of May 4, and the decades of institutional response that followed, raise questions that are ripe for public administration theory. What are the ethical obligations of public institutions that have participated in or enabled state violence? How do administrators construct and manage official narratives in the aftermath of harm, and what does accountability require? What can the long history of nonviolent resistance, and the state's repeated recourse to repression, tell us about administrative power and democratic legitimacy? How is official memory constructed, and whose version of events is institutionalized and memorialized?

Participants will have access to the May 4 Visitor Center and related campus resources, and the program will include opportunities for site-based engagement with this history.

Suggested Conference Tracks (not exhaustive)

State Violence and Institutional Responsibility: Policing, militarization, protest control, and the ethical obligations of institutions that enable or respond to harm

Peaceful Change and Conflict Transformation: Nonviolent action, dialogue, mediation, restorative practices, and the conditions under which peaceful change is possible

Populism and Democratic Backsliding: Administrative capacity, the civil service, and public institutions under populist and illiberal pressure

Authoritarianism and Administrative Complicity: Bureaucratic obedience, discretion, resistance from within, and the administration of authoritarian rule

Political Repression and the Securitization of Dissent: Surveillance, criminalization of protest, and the shrinking of civic space

Memory, Accountability, and Official Narratives: Memorialization, truth-telling, reconciliation, and the politics of institutional memory

Order, Justice, and Administrative Ethics: Legitimacy, authority, and the normative foundations of public administration

Civic Power and Resistance: Social movements, mutual aid, insurgent publics, and community-based governance

Comparative and International Perspectives: Repression, resistance, and democratic governance across political contexts

Theory at the Boundaries: Public administration in conversation with political theory, peace and conflict studies, critical policy studies, organizational theory, and the sociology and history of state violence.

Panel Proposals

Panels consist of 3–4 papers or presentations pre-arranged to address a common issue or theme. Panel proposals should include:

- **Convener, moderator, and discussant:** names, affiliations, and email addresses.
- **Title:** the title of the panel for the program.
- **Description:** a brief description of the panel and its relationship to the conference theme, in 150 words or less.
- **Paper abstracts:** a description of each paper in 150 words or fewer, including the title, participant(s), any non-attending author(s), organizational affiliations, and email addresses.
- **Accommodations:** please tell us about any significant logistical needs the committee can accommodate, such as the Jewish Sabbath or other religious considerations, accessibility needs, or other accommodations.

Panels should be designed so that they can be explored fully within the session length (approximately 75–90 minutes). Proposals with too many participants may be asked to divide into two panels.

Roundtable and Workshop Proposals

Roundtables and workshops generate provocative, highly interactive discussion between presenters and audience members. Roundtables are pre-arranged around a common theme or topic and generally include 5–7 presenters and a discussant. Presenters may be asked a series of questions or given five minutes to discuss their research briefly, as a way to spark discussion and contestation. Proposals should include:

- **Conveners, moderators, and participants:** names, affiliations, email addresses, and participation roles.
- **Title:** the title of the roundtable or workshop for the program.
- **Description:** a description of the session and its relationship to the conference theme, in 150 words or fewer.
- **Accommodations:** as described above.

Individual Paper Presentations

If accepted by the program committee, individual papers will be grouped into panels organized around topics that speak to the conference theme. Proposals should include:

- **Author(s):** names of presenter(s) and any non-presenting author(s), with affiliations and email addresses.
- **Title:** the title of the paper for the program.
- **Abstract:** a description of the paper and how it relates to the conference theme, in 150 words or fewer.
- **Accommodations:** as described above.

Please indicate on your submission which conference track best fits your proposal.

Theory Fellows Workshop

Continuing a PAT-Net tradition, the Theory Fellows Workshop will take place on the afternoon of Thursday, June 10, 2027. It offers doctoral students and early-career scholars a dedicated space to engage theoretical questions, receive mentorship, and connect with senior scholars. The 2027 workshop will focus on how scholars navigate theory, ethics, and institutional responsibility in contexts shaped by conflict, dissent, and contested governance. Application details will be announced soon.

Who Should Attend

The conference is open to scholars, students, practitioners, activists, and others who study or work on questions of power, repression, resistance, and democratic governance. Whether you write theory, teach, mediate, organize, or serve in public institutions, we invite you to join the conversation.

Publication Opportunity

Completed papers may be considered for a special issue of *Administrative Theory & Praxis* related to the conference theme. All papers will undergo the journal's standard peer-review process. Submission information is available at the journal's website: https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/madt20/current

Conference at a Glance

- **Thursday, June 10:** Theory Fellows Workshop, registration, and informal gathering
- **Friday, June 11:** Opening welcome, concurrent panels, and keynote lunch plenary
- **Saturday, June 12:** Concurrent panels, lunch plenary on public institutions, dialogue, and accountability, and an evening reception with site-based engagement at the May 4 Visitor Center or downtown Kent
- **Sunday, June 13:** PAT-Net Annual Member Meeting, *Administrative Theory & Praxis* Editorial Board Meeting, and departures

The conference will be held in person at the Kent State University Hotel and Conference Center, within walking distance of downtown Kent. Kent is approximately 40 miles from Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE), and travel and lodging information will be posted on the conference website.

Questions

Please direct questions to Ashley Nickels, Administrative Theory and Practice Co-Editor (anickel5@kent.edu), Samanta Varela, the Public Administration Theory Network Chair (svarela@cmq.edu.mx), or José Luis Irizarri, Conference Chair (jirizar2@nccu.edu).