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Improving Administrative Sciences Worldwide

2016 EGPA Annual Conference 24-26 August – Utrecht, Netherlands

Call for Papers - French-Speaking Seminar

The 2016 Annual Conference of the European Group on Public Administration will be held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, from the 24 to the 26 of August 2016. The event will be preceded by PhD Symposium on 22 and 23 August.

The Scientific Committee:

Jean-François ADRIAN, Institut de la Gestion Publique et du Développement Economique, Paris, France.

Annie BARTOLI, professeur, Université de Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines, France.

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Coordinators :

Jan MATTIJS, professeur, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgique.

Emil TURC, Maître de Conférences, Université d'Aix-Marseille, Aix-en-Provence, France.



The Seminar provides a unique opportunity for debates in French within EGPA's annual congress. While open to English contributions, it confirms our wider community's interest for a linguistic space that provides alternative vocabulary, patterns of thought, scientific approaches and norms, and political-administrative cultures.

As a group, the seminar listens closely to the issues and needs of the practitioners of public management, and is dedicated to its scientific mission of knowledge renewal and enhancement. Hence, we invite researchers and confirmed practitioners to dialogue across scientific sessions, round tables, and a variety of professional accounts from the field.

The French-speaking Seminar is organized in collaboration with IGPDE (Institute for Public Management and Economic Development), agency of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance (Paris, Bercy, France) dedicated to research, the training of civil servants, and providing support for public policies and reforms.

Changing boundaries: Exploring the francophone originality of practices, theories, and language of public organizations

The works of EGPA's French-Speaking Seminar in Toulouse (2015) have highlighted the originality of francophone theories by investigating the effects of language diversity across public administrations, and its contribution to shaping the doctrinal and theoretical features of a francophone administrative thought. These fertile paths encouraged us to shape-up a

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program for the next three years and to encourage contributors to further their researches within this area and its connected venues.

The Seminar's 2016-2018 research program

The Seminar will investigate the consistency of the Francophone area of public management, its reactions to NPM, and its contributions to unveiling new horizons of the European dialogue of administrative sciences. Hypothesis testing, empirical and conceptual research, as well as descriptive and prospective works are equally welcome. We particularly invite comparative research, and accounts of original conceptions, models, and field experiences. Selected topics may either further our previous works, or bear up original and new developments:

- Which are the specific contours (if any) of francophone concepts or administrative traditions? Are they endowed with a specific history, circulation space, mechanisms of influence and diffusion?
- Are there ongoing innovations in the Francosphere and cross fertilizations with other administrative traditions?
- How are various administrative concepts competing or combining within the EU administrative landscape and institutions?
- Faced with today's challenging contexts, how is the conception of the State changing in central administrations, local governments, and public services (justice, education, energy, transport...)?
- What governance models, tools, and solutions can apply to the 'wicked problems' of our fragmented and interconnected societies?
- Are there original approaches for dealing with the crisis, in the fields of cutback management, HRM, institutional and service communication, externalization and internalization of missions and competences...?
- What lessons can be drawn from a century of reforms? Is there a need to reform change management itself?

Some of these themes may appear to be intrinsically linked to the francophone administrative and academic settings, others are in need of new and original perspectives. Contributors are invited to size this chance or to widen the topics of their work according to the general theme.

The method of the French-speaking Seminar: A comparative impetus

Pushing beyond classical cultural approaches, researchers and public management professionals have expressed a renewed interest for comparative studies, not only between the Anglophone and Francophone spheres, but also across the various francophone traditions. In this linguistic area public administrations (and more particularly those of international organizations and developing countries) were exposed in time to a multitude of influences shaping diversely their institutions (administrative control, ethics, civil service recruitment, externalization...), organizational management (HRM, practices of performance management...), public policies and reform programs. Yet, comparison may spring from common key issues: How are they influenced by the Napoleonic constitutional order, institutions, and management modes? Is this the 'natural' strong reference of the francosphere?

The analysis of concurrent influences within the francosphere itself changes perspectives and turns the table around: we are no longer concerned with the relationship to a hegemonic anglosphere, but with the need to account for the relationships of influence and exchange across francophone public administrations, as well as the local autonomous dynamics. Bipolarism is abandoned in favor of a multidimensional and more fertile perspective.

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In effect, such comparative research may seem challenging. How can one account for the influence of an administrative model? Existing methodologies are borrowed from various disciplines: historical accounts (antecedence and sequence of discourse and documents, content analysis of language diffused in the institutional landscape...), institutional analyses inspired by law and political sciences (weighting the sameness and differences of formal structures and organizations), sociological analyses of the actors' roles, progress, and mediations, etc. The challenge of comparisons stays not only on complexity, but the need to muster a rigorous and reliable methodological toolbox.

Insight must be gained into the theoretical framework of comparison itself. The now common reference to DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) isomorphic processes may not suffice, and may benefit from complements provided by the center-periphery approaches (Keim 2010), references to epistemic mediators, and communities (Jobert & Muller 1987, Simoulin 2015), and more interest into the ecology of management tools (Le Galès, Lascoumes & Halpern 2014)... The specifics of the comparison process are likely to bend and guide these refinements of concepts and theoretical frameworks.

'Translating' facts and contexts, generalizing and raising interest in the wider European context

Yet, comparison is not the only path for contributing to the research program of EGPA's French-speaking Seminar. The originality of practices and their contexts, the capacity of local organizational solutions to escape the influence of external models, innovation grounded in local cultures, are as many issues we wish to bring up through case studies or higher scope researches.

The whole range of topics of public management and administration is likely to be explored from this vantage point: HRM, leadership, performance measurement, external communication, ethical and deontological issues, political and administrative accountability, strategy-making and the design of public policies, externalization, budgeting choices, jurisdictional control, etc. While we enlist them here, we measure to its full extent the degree to which these notions are connoted, in their spelling, by the disciplinary language of management and administrative sciences, and, respectively, their national and cultural contexts.

Therefore, the researcher is faced with the challenge to perceive the wider interest of practices enrooted in their specific local contexts. This matter is in fact of epistemic order: it ties into the robustness of generalizations, the external validity of conclusions, of the inferences based on empirical data, the validity or refutation of shared hypotheses.

Yet, the challenge is also strategic in nature: our fellows within the scientific networks -researchers and practitioners- are used to their own categories and labels, they share to some extent the rituals and problems of conventional validation, and use some shared language and vocabulary. How then can their interest be raised for a new perspective, a new concept, an original field experience? Using the common communication channels may not suffice. From the viewpoint of the actor-network theory (Latour 2005) or of science studies (Law 2008), breakthroughs in these ventures are not solely an issue of disincarnate 'scientific quality'. They depend also on the researcher's capacity to set an issue onstage, muster a material basis, spread the word in a manner such that it will interest and convince her/his audience and readers.

We trust that, in this respect, the French-Speaking Seminar is a hospitable and attractive scene (Ciborra 1997) for researchers who wish to diffuse their ideas. Our commitment to openness is supported by reducing language barriers and needs for translation (Wolf & Fukari 2007), and by our proneness for heterodox analyses and out-of-the-mainstream' literature.

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Deadlines and submission

We invite researchers and practitioners to submit a two-page abstract with the following format:

- Communication title
- Topics or keywords
- Main issues or research questions
- Brief outline of research methods or empirical approaches
- First results
- Selective bibliography
- Name of the authors, organizational membership, coordinates (address, email, telephone number)

Key dates:

- Deadline for online submission of abstracts via www.egpa-conference2016.org under "Registration-Submissions": **15 April 2016**
- Deadline for decision and selection by the co-chairs: **5 May 2016**
- Deadline for submitting the complete papers: **31 July 2016**

For more information, please contact the Seminar's coordinators:

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Further information is available on the conference website:

<http://egpa-conference2016.org/>

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