



# EGPA/IIAS

European Group  
for Public Administration

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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*Improving Administrative Sciences Worldwide*

### 2017 EGPA Annual Conference 30 August – 1 September, Milano, Italy

#### French-Speaking Seminar - Call for Papers

The European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) in close collaboration with Politecnico di Milano is organizing **the 2017 EGPA Annual Conference** to be held **from 30 August to 1st September** in Bovisa (Milan). The event will be preceded by the PhD Symposium on 28 and 29 August.

#### Turnarounds, turnarouns everywhere! Public management in times of political changeovers and volatile public opinions

##### The Scientific Committee:

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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.

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### **Turnarounds, turnarounds everywhere! Public management in times of political changeovers and volatile public opinions**

«May you live in interesting times!» says the old Chinese curse. Today's landslide political changes - culminating in the unexpected election of Donald Trump as US president - mark the full expression of protest polls in Western democracies. Populism is on the up in the francophone world, in Europe, and abroad. The unpredictable referenda results - Brexit, Italian constitution, Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport in France - highlight the open breach of citizens' trust in their States. Despite the fundamentals of our representative democracies, institutions are looked upon with disbelief (political and administrative, the media, the judiciary, medical, social, and religious bodies etc.), whereas doubt extends to the elites that supposedly run them<sup>1</sup>. While societies progress into the 'post-truth' era, the role of public expertise is submerged by emotional and 'anti-system' discourse and ideas.

The citizens' defiance and electoral sanctions pair up with anxiety and a rekindled focus on identity politics; they lead to more vocal demands for safety policies and social conservatism<sup>2</sup>. Curiously, it also signals a stronger grip of individualism, with some groups borrowing the thatcherite credo «there is no such thing as society» to various effects.

More broadly, the economic effects of globalization are discussed as delegitimizing institutions and favoring rent capture for selected groups (Lorenzi 2012). Following, users contemplate the extension of market logics to public services with ambivalent feelings (Baumstark 2006). Meanwhile, digital technologies act as catalysts of social transformation, and distinctly erode vertical relations and the governments' authority and legitimacy (online press, Wikileaks, Bitcoin, social media, etc.).

In reply, the electoral process brings forth radical programs and agendas. Proposals are made to scale down the public sector (privatizations, cut back services and means, reforming health and social services), to trim down the civil service, reinforce the authority of the State, and put local governments on a diet.

Such generalizations may invite to see some historical determinism unraveling worldwide. Yet if long term opinion polls suggest a progressive decline in citizens' trust for their institutions and a growing disquiet over immigration patterns, they also express a diversity of concerns across countries (Eurobarometer, European Commission 2016). Too bleak a worldview is misleading also, as some unwanted trends may cast a shadow on the positive ones.

### **Quo vadis Administratio**

This emerging setting is bound to produce major effects on public administration and organizations. Yet finding them may be a complex task, as impacts of recent events are blended with those of broader and enduring trends. Since the early 1980s, francophone public administration entered in a progressive reform movement, going beyond and besides the NPM ideas which appear today to have reached a consensual closure (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2006; Pollitt, 2014). By now however, reform trends pay tribute to the acts and symbolism of 2016, and mere modernization seems unable to process the needs and expectations of the politicians and society.

This is supported by recent demonstrations showing that connections between good governance, public service quality, and citizens' trust are loosely connected and non linear. It appears that public service quality is not tightly coupled with public trust (Van de Walle &

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<sup>1</sup> In Belgium, the results of a survey on this topic has sparked vivid media debates (RTBF Info & Bilterijs, 2017b).  
<sup>2</sup> (RTBF Info & Bilterijs, 2017a).



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Bouckaert, 2003), and heavy international trends may bear less brunt than local variations in context, or geographical and cultural closeness (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005; Bovens & Wille, 2008). The reactions of public organizations to difficult contexts is a complex issue that calls into focus various dimensions and evolutions of models. It highlights the need to reinvestigate the means, the design, the production of services and the management of their performance. More broadly, there's a need to question governance models, citizen participation and involvement, and the institutional makeup.

Following suit to the French-speaking Seminar's 2015 program, the issues related to the originality and adaptations of administrative practices in the francophone world are maintained on the research agenda in this period of inflexion and turnarounds. We need to question the fallacious determinism of 'worldwide trends' as they are confronted to local practices or merely integrated into opportunistic slogans and local discourse.

We invite researchers and practitioners to provide critical readings of global evolutions and trend reversals, to observe the transformations of public services in napoleonic and francophone settings, to reinterpret the consequences of the economic crisis and elections in the long run.

Descriptions, hypotheses testing, empirical works and theoretical reflections, both of the existent and the upcoming, are equally welcome. More specifically, we encourage comparative approaches underlining the originality of field experience, of administrative and managerial ideas and doctrine<sup>3</sup>. This is also an occasion to reinterpret familiar research topics with new models and methods.

1. With liberal values coming back in force, how will the public and tutelary services reinvent themselves? To what extent can austerity management maintain public service levels? How do collaborations, networks, mergers, pooling of resources and processes evolve in the new context?
2. How do administrations and elected politicians bridge the gap between business-supported cosmopolitanism and the citizens' expectation to reinvest local and nearer public arenas?
3. Will calls for more authority and primacy of politicians unbalance the power in political-managerial links? Will it enforce or weaken the neo-weberian administrative model? Will the legacy of previous reforms (internal contracting, performance management) maintain current practices or have them evolve under more stringent political pressure?
4. In areas where public servants and managers developed a direct link with the users (co-design, co-production, co-evaluation), will the austerity context and political clout slow down the process? How will the empowerment of employees, citizens, and public managers progress under the influence of a stronger central authority?
5. What new culture of public service should we expect today? Which values amongst efficiency, legality, efficacy, administrative democracy will dominate the end of this decade? Will the loyalty of public servants and managers remain an instrumental value, or should we expect some form of opposition?
6. Is the post-truth society a working concept? To what extent has administrative expertise been weakened by emotional and normative discourse? What is henceforth the place and use of administrative competence in public affairs? How do the traditional arenas of public decision-making evolve in this respect?

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<sup>3</sup> We refer to the call for papers of 2016 for issues of comparison and translation, which remain standing for the 2017 edition.



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7. How are the missions and capacities of European administrations evolving? Does international administrative cooperation (inter-government, supranational, decentralized cooperation) decline due to a stronger local focus?
8. How does the shift in the ideas and discourse of international bodies (World Bank, IMF) transform public administration in developing countries? What new models and hybridizations may occur in Francophone African countries and elsewhere?

### 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: **10 April 2017**
- Deadline for decision and selection by the co-chairs: **8 May 2017**
- Deadline for submitting the complete papers: **August 1st 2017**

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

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Further information is available on the conference website:

<http://www.egpa-conference2017.org/fr>

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