



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 French-Speaking Seminar

Stability and instability of the environment of public affairs: Impacts on service quality and innovation

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The French-Speaking Seminar

The Seminar provides a unique opportunity for debates in French within EGPA's annual conference. 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 Ministries of the Economy and Finance (Paris, Bercy, France) dedicated to research, the training of civil servants, and providing support for public policies and reforms.

Stability and instability of the environment of public affairs: Impacts on service quality and innovation

The end of 2017 brought about rejoicing news for public decision-makers in Europe and abroad. Economic indicators and their projections turned green, with an anticipated global economic growth of at least 3% (2.9% WB 2017; 3.6% IMF 2018) and a better than expected distribution of growth across developed and developing countries. Moreover, the political landscape in Europe was settled by major elections in France, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany,

whereas EU uncertainties generated by the Brexit appear to be channeled through clearer procedural paths.

Yet, the increased clarity of public affairs doesn't assuage the wave of reforms that were set in motion by the great recession of 2007-2008. Cost controls rose at the top of the priority lists of national and local governments, and led to a significant number of institutional and managerial reform strategies across Europe (Raudla et al 2015). These are expected to be carried on by countries with Napoleonic administrative features, where debts and deficits are on the increase. Concurrently, expectations for public service innovation, modernization, digitalization, innovation, and co-production continue to rise.

It appears that current reforms seek to transform at the same time the context and processes of public services. In France the *Comité d'Action Publique* (CAP22) questions institutional competencies and scope, public policies ("doing the right things"), and the paths to improve public services in terms of quality, simplification, HR, and budgeting ("doing things right") (Rochet 2010). In Belgium the reform of the federal state enters its sixth phase with ambitions to transform public services and operators, whereas innovations such as telework overturn the civil servants' habits (IGPDE 2017). In Switzerland, NPM-inspired models are now built in the financial and political frameworks of public affairs (federal administration) with other major reforms tagging along (mergers of communes, new analyses of federal competence, converting civil service jobs into private law positions, digitalizing the administration etc.). Public administrations now seek to bundle and undertake simultaneously all Bouckaert's (2003) levers of reform: restructuring (scope, specialization, fragmentations), internal and external pressures (steering tools, market mechanisms), and tools that transform public sector interactions (quality charts, contracting, customer-oriented values).

It follows that the environment of public affairs has grown more dynamic and fractioned, evolving with asynchronous paces. Therefore, the main question raised by our Seminar is: how can public service processes be improved when their institutional context is also in upheaval? To what extent does institutional and organizational instability wager the optimization efforts of public employees? What balance should be struck in public organizations between external stability/instability and internal stability/instability? How does it affect the quality of public services, their simplification, continuous improvement, and social and digital innovation? These issues reach beyond the old administrative conundrum of efficiency VS quality, or the current concerns with overdose of change.

To some extent, management sciences have already considered the effects of work context stability and instability on the quality, cost, and innovation of services. The success of change projects depends on the capacity of leaders to recognize the stress and tensions of employees, to organize stable landmarks in the internal context, and to dose transformation goals (Jick & Peiperl 2002, Song 2008, Christensen & Laegreid 2012). The literature on process engineering and rationalization calls for minute and progressive fine-tuning of organizational systems starting from well-established and studied organizational frameworks (Hammer & Champy 1993, Boudreau & Bernier 2017). As for supporting innovation and creativity, pre-established frameworks and rules have been found more appropriate than excessive fluidity or chaos (Kim & Chang 2009, Bornard & Foucher 2017). The intimate knowledge of the existing framework serves as a departure point for creative thinking and favors the essential incubation processes for service innovations (Auger 2008). However, the current reform strategies in the public sector seem to exceed the limits of many of these tradeoffs.

Caught in the current reform agendas, public managers need to investigate such issues that concern the whole of the administrative francosphere.

The French-Speaking Seminar invites theoretical contributions (literature reviews, new conceptualizations, and models), empirical contributions, and case studies of relevant and novel experience and expertise. Comparative work is specifically welcome.

Proposals' Format

We invite researchers and practitioners to submit a two-page abstract (in French or English) 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 Deadlines

- ✓ Proposals/Abstracts should be uploaded through the submission website by April 18, 2018
- ✓ Deadline for decision and selection of the accepted papers by the co-chairs: and notification to the Authors : May 9, 2018
- ✓ Deadline for submitting the complete papers: August 16, 2018

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

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Practicalities

Please submit your abstract online through the Conference Website 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

French-Speaking Seminar

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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