



**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR:  
ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**

# **Transformation of the role of the State and new instruments of public action**

**5-6 May 2011**

**University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa**

## **1) Objectives**

Several recent evolutions in the public sphere have translated into major changes regarding the definition and implementation of public policies. They are characterized by renewed, multi-actor and multi-level institutional and governance frameworks and can be summarized as follows:

- As a result of concurrent decentralisation, regional integration and globalization processes, governance structures currently represent several layers of decision-making. As such, public policies are increasingly developed at all these intertwined levels and do not originate from one single entity.
- The processes of State withdrawal that result from these governance structures are accompanied by increased engagement of multiple actors who benefit more autonomy from the State.
- By recognising the autonomy of various actors, sectors or networks, renewed instruments – supposed to facilitate the steering of socio-politico-economic society in fragmented contexts and entangled hierarchies – are justified and continue to emerge.

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Thus, three major issues/questions emerge:

**\* What are the new instruments of public action?**

*What types of public action has developed in Africa? – Learning from different sectoral or territorial situations and governance structures, the seminar should give a broad overview of new instruments of public action.*

Governance dynamics were accompanied by the development of new public policy instruments and by the diversification of programs and policies in the different sectors; the latter were traditionally characterized, to various degrees, by State engagement. As such, each phase of governance development or restructuring has been accompanied by a new wave of innovations relating to these instruments. The current phase is no exception. The proliferation of actors and levels of intervention has led to innovative instruments in a number of sectors, such as norms, standards and certification policies, but also to new institutions and policy instances – of which NEPAD is a good example.

A first aim of this seminar is thus to concretely analyze policy transformations by detailing the changes in policy instruments developed within this governance framework. Public instrument analysis seems a significant avenue for reflection, primarily because it presents concrete examples of public policy change; in addition, it offers a methodological advantage, as it enables the assessment of concrete changes that often remain invisible when analyzed through the classical policy content entry point (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007). Instruments of public policy that results from the governance changes that have taken place in recent years will be detailed here. Although a policy – or even a program for action within a policy – will rarely be mono-instrumental, a non-extensive description of these instruments (legislative and regulatory, economic, fiscal or social), covering different sectors (agriculture, industries, etc.) will give a broad understanding of renewed models of public intervention. The aim is not to call for renewed action on the ground, but to better understand the renewed instruments of public action that have been developed within the transformed governance context described above.

**\* What are the renewed roles of the State?**

*What are the renewed roles of the State today, in a context of multi-actor and multi-level governance? – By describing and analyzing new governance structures, policy development processes, and effective policy instrument implementation, the seminar should give a broad overview of the renewed role of the State.*

Secondly, the seminar proposes to engage in a discussion about the “State in action” (Jobert and Muller, 1987). On one hand, the seminar proposes to interrogate the essence of the State and its role in the definition, implementation, regulation of these new instruments of public action. The latter calls for a focus on the politics level within the State, and more particularly, between the State and the above mentioned actors at

different levels, with regards to the development and implementation of public policies. On the other hand, it will focus on a concrete analysis of its different departments, with the objective of analyzing in detail the practical norms, professional cultures and actual behavior of civil servants and of their intermediaries. This approach corresponds to the objectives of the public policy analysis, which aim at understanding the conditions and actors of public policy production rather than simply staying at the level of policy substance and declared policy goals. It responds to the necessity of taking into account the administrations themselves, as well as their relationships; this is motivated by a closer attention to these relatively under-studied entities (Darbon and Crouzel, 2009), but also by the emergence of new instruments (for example, public-private partnerships) and by the redefinition of the role and functions of the State with the imposition of a discourse on governance. The seminar will pay a particular attention to the newly highly fragmented regimes of action and to the polycentricity of States, in (Southern) Africa and elsewhere.

**\* An exercise in conceptual transfer or the need for renewed theories?**

*To what extent are analytical public policies tools (conceptual, methodological) transposable in the African context? – The seminar aims at in-depth reflections on public policy analysis in Africa*

Thirdly, this seminar questions the (Southern) African situation in terms of public policy analysis. The fact that many of the policy analysis tools were developed with regards to situations in developed countries raises the question of the obstacles and constraints of their transfer towards African terrains (Smith, 2002; Hassenteufel, 2005). For example, are the concepts of State, public policy networks, public policy instruments, governorship, etc. exportable? Questioning the renewal of the State, as this seminar intends to do, directly raises the issue of this concept's significance in the (Southern) African context. Which lessons could be drawn from those types of transfers of instruments that were utilized on other continents? Though these interrogations appear natural, such precautions have been paradoxically neglected when various African governments were asked to import public policy management tools (new public management, contractualization, privatization, accountability, decentralization, etc.). Based on empirical studies, the seminar aims at highlighting such paradoxes.

**2) Seminar organization and call for papers**

The seminar will take place in Pretoria, at the University of Pretoria, on May 5-6, 2011. The Public Policy and Governance Platform (PP&G), whose co-founders and funders are the University of Pretoria and CIRAD, will organize the seminar, with funding from CIRAD, the University of Pretoria and the French Embassy in South Africa. It intends gather experts and academics working on public policies, as well as practitioners, civil society and other stakeholders directly engaged in policy processes.

The seminar will combine invited key note speakers with an open call for papers. Although the seminar will remain academic, academics, experts, practitioners, civil

society and other stakeholders directly engaged in public policy are invited to respond. A selected review committee will select papers based on relevancy and academic excellence. The seminar will mainly focus on Southern Africa, but papers from the other parts of the African continent and elsewhere are welcome and will be considered.

Abstracts for paper proposals (400 words maximum) should be send to:

- Ward ANSEEUW ([ward.anseeuw@up.ac.za](mailto:ward.anseeuw@up.ac.za))
- Magalie BOURBLANC ([magalie.bourblanc@cirad.fr](mailto:magalie.bourblanc@cirad.fr))

The following schedule will apply:

- Deadline for abstract submission: 31 January 2011
- Notification of paper acceptance: 15 February 2011
- Deadline for submission of paper: 20 April 2010

### **3) Contacts:**

For further information and to participate, contact:

Ward ANSEEUW  
CIRAD Researcher  
Post Graduate School of Agriculture and  
Rural Development  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria 0002  
South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0)12 420 5022  
Fax: +27 (0)12 420 3206  
Email: [ward.anseeuw@up.ac.za](mailto:ward.anseeuw@up.ac.za)

Magalie BOURBLANC  
CIRAD Researcher  
Centre for Environmental Economics and  
Policy in Africa  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria 0002  
South Africa  
Tel: +27 (0)12 420 5228  
Fax: +27 (0)12 420 3206  
Email: [magalie.bourblanc@cirad.fr](mailto:magalie.bourblanc@cirad.fr)