

Call for Applications

JUNIOR RESEARCHERS' INSTITUTE, 11–17 DECEMBER 2022, NIAMEY, NIGER

CONTEXT

Global Africa invites applications for its first **Junior Researchers' Institute (JRI)**, established to promote the integration of younger and junior researchers into the broader social science community and thus allow for their active participation in the emerging body of global knowledge.

The JRI is an **essential component of the Global Africa project** and is designed and implemented with other Global Africa partners and placed under the aegis of the Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local [Laboratory for Studies and Research on Social Dynamics and Local Development (LASDEL)], an independent sub-regional laboratory, based in Niamey, Niger with a branch in Parakou, Benin.

OBJECTIVES

The Junior Researchers' Institute is conceived to strengthen the capacities of younger and junior researchers in scientific writing and scholarly publishing. Its objectives are mainly as follows:

- Foster the emergence, on the continent, of well-trained researchers capable of producing high-quality articles, publishable in *Global Africa* and in other relevant and reputable journals of good standing in the discipline at the national, regional and global levels.
- Create a crucible for the training and advancement of junior researchers with a view to facilitating their gradual insertion into the academic world with the required intellectual training and skills development in their area of study. The IJR aspires to contribute to the renewal of knowledge on Africa and the promotion of well-trained junior scholars and researchers through the publication of their work as well as the strengthening of their scholarly publication and writing skills in a stimulating work environment conducive to scholarly exchanges and development.
- Build a solid capacity building framework for junior researchers by providing them with sustainable support through a mentoring process with senior established scholars.

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The first session of the Junior Researchers' Institute will be held in Niamey, Niger for a duration of at least one week. The session will be connected to the fifth issue of *Global Africa*, which will focus on the theme “**Decolonizing the Future of Public Administration in Africa**”.

Such a stimulating subject undoubtedly rouses interest among researchers concerned with understanding the dynamics of the state as it takes shape and develops in Africa. Its multidisciplinary nature is at the heart of many reflections in the social sciences today. Consequently, the session will allow the selected candidates an opportunity to make a valuable contribution to knowledge on a subject that is always topical and recognized for its high strategic importance in the discourse on the State in Africa.

APPLICATIONS

The Institute is open to junior researchers under 35 years of age, who hold a PhD in the social sciences and humanities or who are preparing for their thesis defense and doctorate degree in 2022, and who have a project for an article that falls within the theme of the special issue of *Global Africa*, whose call for papers is attached.

The application file must include:

- A letter of motivation,
- A curriculum vitae
- A 10-page draft article (3500–5000 words)

For doctoral students defending their thesis in 2022, an acknowledgment of deposit or letter from the thesis director confirming the date of defense is required.

Applications must be sent to the secretariat of the Junior Researchers' Institute at the following address: school@globalafricasciences.org no later than 30 October 2022 at 23:59 GMT.

Decolonizing the future of public administration in Africa

GLOBAL AFRICA – NUMBER 5, SEPTEMBER 2023

As a follow up to issue number 4, which focused on elucidating the challenges around knowledge creation in Africa, this special issue of *Global Africa* is interested in new epistemological, theoretical and methodological thinking and projections on the subject of **Public Administration in Africa**. The journal's dedication to the analyses of global issues from the perspective of Africa and interest in the topic of public administration is inevitable. Apart from the renewed research interests in recent years in a previously long downgraded subject (For example, as shown in studies led by the transnational research group (TRG) on "The Bureaucratization of African societies" (2017–2021)¹), we cannot but explore public administration in Africa. We have here an unavoidable and essential terrain (for it goes beyond the management of the common good) to observe and understand state governance actors caught between subjugation to the neoliberal order, dealing with old challenges, and confronting constant emergence of new transnational demands. Challenges that renew the debate on the capacity of various arms of the state to implement solutions, whether through sovereign state institutions (the armed forces, police and judiciary) or public institutions (such as hospitals, universities, ...).

Even as African public administration face these unprecedented challenges, they remain institutions powerfully built on imported paradigms (Badie 2002), scarcity and shortage (Anders 2010; Bako-Arifari 2001, 2006; Bayart, Hibou & Ellis 1997), of fragility and deficiency (Cameron 2010; Bayart 1989), inertia and absence of due diligence (Darbon & Crouzel 2009). Indeed, the day-to-day analysis of public administration reveals flawed and atypical political and bureaucratic apparatuses as well as interactions of domination, and even violence in the relations between public administration and its users, thereby failing to ensure that the challenges of efficiency, diversity, equity and inclusion are far from being overcome. These seemingly immutable situations have justified a permanent and chaotic machinery of reform and aid, with serious practical and symbolic consequences (Easterly 2010; Machikou 2013; Machikou Ngameni 2014; Darbon 1985, 1990).

To what extent do colonial frameworks and matrices in public administration, as well as colonial governance, reproduce their effects in the present time? How can future African administrators be freed from bureaucratic coloniality to be able to invent other

¹ <https://www.dhi-paris.fr/fr/recherche/projekte-kurzzeit-ehemalige/la-bureaucratization-des-societes-africaines.html>

options? To answer these questions, that is, to develop a critical theory of present and future administration, therefore entails—but certainly not exclusively—the need to determine the magnitude and multidimensional implications of the (post)colonial legacy of African states, in order to, on this basis, elaborate alternative replacement models and adopt new practices.

This special issue focuses on clarifying questions around decolonization and the reshaping of African administration in the future. It is above all beyond a matter of filling a void, because if we note that, significantly, the rush to decolonize institutional norms, epistemologies, ontologies, practices, policies and processes is well underway, this normalization of the decolonizing stance must not be an illusion. There is no doubt that one of the spaces in which the decolonizing mission, violent and disruptive, is far from achieving its promises is that of public institutions. Yet, public administration poses problems (old and new) that are among the most urgent to resolve, including administrative sovereignty and efficiency; the radical transformation of spaces that reproduce inequalities, discrimination, and corruption; the rebuilding of administrative imaginaries and the social significance of administrative arrangements; the citizens' relationship to the State and to public institutions; and the modes of (re)production of government apparatuses. What analytical tools can this exercise use if we keep in mind Audre Lorde's provocative warning against traditional social science toolboxes: "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1979, 1984)? This issue invites scholars to take part in this exercise, which intends to reconstitute the future of decolonization of African public administrations by focusing on three closely related processes.

1. Retrieve African Administrators from the jaws of the bureaucratic library

Decolonizing African administrations involves first of all a critique of the "bureaucratic library" (TRG 2017–2021), that is to say the corpus of scholarly knowledge, representations, archives, beliefs, expertise and systems, on which African bureaucracies are founded. Drawing on Valentin Mudimbe's concept of the "colonial library", the study of the "bureaucratic library" requires, as scholars from the TRG notes, "a complex analysis", as it is equally an epistemological order, a co-production, and a continuous movement at the same time. For example, multilateral organizations, including the World Bank, produce, share, and disseminate knowledge about administration and development on a massive scale (Nay 2009: 153).

Taking a decolonizing look, therefore, also means simultaneously decolonizing the bureaucracies of international organizations, particularly those in charge of policies on administrative reform and development issues (the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), those that produce norms and mechanisms, as well as development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals

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(MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are massively controlled by the richest countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Paradoxically, these institutions are even more resistant to change and radical criticism than the administrations purportedly being supported (Nay 2009: 160).

Moreover, taking a decolonizing look at African public administrations (APAs) then leads to an analytical exercise whose entry point may be the following question: how do we grasp the continuities of the colonial and how do we deal with the connection between the neo/postcolonial and the neopatrimonial (Bayart, Médard)? The aim here is to reveal the (post)colonial roots and the ruptures or absence of rupture in a history marked by the appropriation of colonial institutions by the new elites. This also means questioning the practical and symbolic traces of (post)colonial governmentality through its own dynamics. In other words, it means asking more precisely at what moments, in what sectors and through which populations the (neo)colonial legacy can be seen. For and against whom is it exercised? According to what modalities and to what effects? What, in the permanent crisis of the APAs, is the result of other factors?

2. Liberate African administrators from the grip of permanent reform

An analysis of the administrative sector reveals a world teeming with civil servants, donors, experts, bi/multilateral and community institutions, NGOs, think tanks and private consultants with their reformist recipes, ideologies, values and conflicting knowledge. In this configuration, permanent reform has been erected both as a conditionality for “development aid” and as a mode of governing African administrations.

With the creation of this “reform market”, a technical dependency is perpetuated, linked to the constant changes in norms, directives and financing rules which require an infinite cycle of capacity building and retraining that are neither rationalized nor evaluated. The result is “a piling up that prohibits any form of ownership and institutionalization and ultimately makes the administration even more confusing. Administrative reforms in Africa are not only cumulative, they are also in dialogue and produce contradictions or ‘monstrous animals’ by combining, without reflection, concepts and techniques that are all the more incompatible because they are carried out by different and competing external organizations,” emphasize Darbon and Crouzel (2009). All of this is the basis for a serious debate on the autonomy of internal political-administrative actors, the appropriation of proposed models and techniques, and their adaptation to their social environment.

It is therefore a question of liberating future African administrators from the bureaucratic library and the reformist impulse through analyses centered on the establishment of administrations adapted to the social and economic structures specific to African countries, sensitive to local know-how, cultural norms and social institutions.

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This social construction of bureaucracies anchored in their socio-cultural and economic environment will make it possible to shape an endogenous doctrine of African administration and the production of a regulatory mechanism that takes into account in its interactions and tools what Philippe Warin calls “the overflow of the social” (2002), that is, the precarity of a majority of the population, the geographic and economic disparities, as well as the rapidity of the transformations underway in demographics, modes of living, consuming, working, and communicating. It is a question of redefining the services to be offered to the public, the modalities of their provision, and the values that constitute public service, so that it is possible to reestablish links of respect, dignity, equity, and inclusiveness.

3. Building a new African administrative praxis

Finally, in overcoming the great disillusionment (Stiglitz 2002), decolonizing also refers to a praxeological exercise, whose terms and practical contours must be identified. The deconstruction and structural dismantling of (neo)colonial tools of extraction, exploitation and brutality, as Yvette Mutumba notes, must “change structures as much as it builds new ones”(Larios 2020). What features should a decolonized administration have and how can it be achieved?

Contributions should aim to identify some endogenous models through critically addressing issues of efficiency, diversity, equity and inclusion, and through deconstructing the mechanisms of violence and internalized and systemic oppression in the contemporary structures of the administration of the real.

The discussion should focus on the forms, the missions, and the functions that a redesigned administration should assume in the digital age. For example, to what extent is a digital administration a solution to all these challenges?

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