

Call for Applications

European Perspectives for Public Administration: Futures Seminar

“PhD students and early stage Post-Doctoral Researchers”- Contribution

October 20 to October 21, 2016

in Leuven, Belgium

*On the occasion of the Leuven city festival ‘500 YEARS UTOPIA’ dedicated to
Thomas More’s “Utopia” published in Leuven in 1516*

Invitation to participate in a Seminar on

Public Administration and the Future

We invite early stage researchers (PhD students and PhD + 4 years) from disciplines such as Public Administration, Law, Economics, Public Management, Sociology, Political Science or History working on ‘Future cities’, ‘Ecotopia’, ‘Big data and Internet of Things’ and ‘Future citizens’ (see programme and application procedure below). The number of participants in the stage of PhD students or early Post-Doctoral Researchers is in total limited to 4. We are interested in one specific contribution to each of the sessions.

The ‘Futures Seminar’ is the first in number of seminars dealing with “European Perspectives for Public Administration” (EPPA).

What are the “European Perspectives for Public Administration” (EPPA)?

In line with major initiatives within the US Public Administration community to periodically reflect about the academic field of researching and teaching Public Administration, the European PA community is also organising such an effort to debate its future directions. The main concern is to remain relevant and be part of a solution for future societal and policy problems.

This EPPA project is financed by the Anneliese Maier Research Award of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation. It is implemented by professor Geert Bouckaert (KU Leuven) and professor Werner Jann (Potsdam University), within the institutional context of the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA).

The project was initiated in May 2014 and runs until 2019. A qualitative internet-based survey within the European PA community was conducted to assess and document opinions and concerns. Four major 'Pillars' are developed and discussed: Disciplines, Futures, Cultures and Practices.

EPPA Pillar: Futures

One of the major challenges for Public Administration is to anticipate the futures and to include this knowledge and capacity in policies and governance. Public Administration research and teaching runs too much behind the facts; it should be also in front of the facts, it should not just push realities but also pull realities.

According to this logic, it is important to bring not just scenarios, but also 'utopias' back to social sciences. 'Utopia' is in this sense one method to develop 'possible futures'. For Elias 'utopia' becomes part of a social science research toolkit, just like critique of sources, statistics, studies of trajectories, reconstructing networks, content analysis, reception studies, comparison, etc. (Elias, 2009). Utopia as a social science technique allows one to look at potentials for realisation, a gap analysis, and possible futures. Utopias also put more emphasis on teleological rationality, rather than causality, of change patterns. They put path dependency, bifurcations, and constraints in the perspective of reverse logics, backward mapping, effect/cause or objective/means logics much more central. For Elias this helps to re-evaluate the role of imagination in social sciences and opposes the fatalism of incrementalism and pragmatism in research and policies.

The purpose is to keep an eye on the future: How can we learn trusting utopias and distrusting dystopias, learning to think beyond short-term problems and solutions, but trying to be as realistic as possible?

Organisation

The Logic of the Futures Seminar

From a thematic point of view there will be a focus on 'Future cities and utopian architecture', 'Ecotopia', 'Big data and Internet of Things' and 'Future citizens'.

Each session consists of a debate including a field key presenter, an academic key discussant, a representative of an EGPA study group as commenter, and preferably an input by a PhD Student or early stage Post-Doctoral Researcher.

Application procedure:

Please submit a) a short outline of a 10-minutes input for the EPPA futures seminar referring explicitly to one of our sessions focusing on 'Future cities, utopian architecture', 'Ecotopia', 'Big data and Internet of Things' and 'Future citizens'. Please answer the following question: What are in your view the main future challenges based on your research in one of these topics? (250 words max., in English)

accompanied by b) a short CV, electronically by August 21, 2016. Preferably, the input is related to /an extract of your current research or your dissertation project.

To apply for contribution, please send your outline and CV to Jana Bertels (bertels@uni-potsdam.de) and refer to “EPPA Contribution to Futures Seminar” in the subject line.

Acceptance of the four selected participants will be notified until the beginning of September.

Technicalities and travel arrangements

The EPPA project will pay for all travel expenses including flights (economy class), train transportation, and hotel accommodation. A contingent of rooms will be reserved at a hotel in Leuven. Please let us know if you wish to book a room. Lunch and coffee breaks as well as the dinner at the Faculty club, the Organ recital and the entrance fee for the exhibitions are offered.

Programme

Thursday, October 20 2016	
13:00 – 15:00	Session 1 Introduction: “General futures and innovations”
15:00 – 17:00	Session 2 “Future cities, utopian architecture”
17:00	Visit of Utopia Exhibitions (Art historical & Contemporary), http://www.utopialeuven.be/nodes/stadsfestival500jaarutopia/en
20:00	Dinner at the KU Leuven Faculty Club, http://www.facultyclub.be/en/
Friday, October 21 2016	
09:00 – 11:00	Session 3 “Ecotopia”
11:00 – 13:00	Session 4 “Big Data and IoT”
13:00 – 13:30	Lunch break
13:30 – 15:30	Session 5 “ Future citizens”
15:30 – 16:30	Conclusion and open debate
16:30 – 17:15	Organ recital at the church of the Grand Beguinage, http://www.kuleuven.be/studentenvoorzeningen/huisvesting/residentiesab/grootbegijnhof/en/history

Venue: Leuven, Faculty Club, Groot Begijnhof 14, 3000 Leuven (<http://www.facultyclub.be/en/>)



For more information about the Futures Seminar and the European Perspectives for Public Administration initiative:

Jana Bertels, project coordinator, University of Potsdam, (bertels@uni-potsdam.de)

Geert Bouckaert, KU Leuven, (geert.bouckaert@soc.kuleuven.be)

Werner Jann, University of Potsdam, (jann@uni-potsdam.de)