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MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH NETWORK



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الجمهورية التونسية
رئاسة الحكومة

Under the patronage of the President of the Tunisian government
will take place

The Second Conference of Middle-East & North Africa
Network of Public Administration Research
2015

around

Role of Citizens and Organizations in Co-Constructing Public Action
in the MENA region

Call-for-Contributions

Palais des congrès, 6-9 Octobre 2015





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The Middle East & North Africa Network of Public Administration Research (MENAPAR) is organizing its second international conference from 6 to 9 October, 2015 in Tunisia, in association with the Institute of Public Administration of Bahrain (BIPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Arab Governance Institute (AGI).

The MENAPAR is a network of professionals and organizations in the Arab region with an interest in public administration research. MENAPAR promotes evidence-based policy and decision-making in Public Administration.

The MENAPAR was established in April 2014 in Bahrain following its organizational meeting as an offshoot of a collaboration between BIPA and the UNDP. The two organizations have since funded the first project of the network, namely to develop a research agenda for Arab Public Administration.

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The local organizing partner, AGI, is a "think tank" providing reflection, research and development capabilities in the area of governance and public policy to facilitate citizen involvement in public affairs and to allow decision-makers to enlarge their perspectives in finding appropriate solutions.

Other key organizers include the Institute of Public Management and Territorial Governance (IMPGT) of Aix-Marseille University, the National School of Administration of France (ENA), the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS).

The organizing committee would like to cordially invite scholars and practitioners in the field of public administration and public governance to participate in the conference and submit their contributions for presentation.

OBJECTIVES

The **MENAPAR Conference on The Role of Citizens and Organisations in Co-Constructing Public Action in the MENA region** will facilitate exchange of knowledge and experiences among countries and





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partners in the Arab States on the architectures and models for co-constructing public action in delivering public service through integrating citizens and the corporate world. An extended focus will be on local governance models enabling both citizen and corporate participation in constructing public action.

The conference will consider the pros and cons of co-constructing public action in the Arab States and look at comparative experiences in other countries and regions. The emphasis will be on comparative experiences from the South that would eventually translate into South-South collaboration. Experiences from the 'North' will also be critically analyzed to ensure their transferability.

The conference will facilitate discussions between researchers and decision-makers from across the region and beyond and experts on public administration and local governance. In particular, the conference will provide a much-needed opportunity to debate the important role of public administration and local government in building more legitimate, inclusive and rights-based societies in the region.

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The objectives of the conference are:

- To map out the key research priorities that Arab public administrations are in dire need of pursuing;
- To outline alternative and innovative modes of public action and their ramifications in terms of service delivery and governance modes of public administration;
- To highlight comparative experiences from other countries, within and outside the region; that have adopted innovative co-construction methods of public action;
- To discuss possible scenarios and sequencing for addressing public administration and local government reforms emanating from public action models;
- To develop the impetus for partnerships between the MENAPAR and research institutions, regional organisations, public administrations and local governance institutions.





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THEMES

Within the overall theme of the conference which is the **role of citizens and organisations in co-constructing public action**, the following subthemes will be debated in four parallel tracks.

Plenaries, policy panels, and paper presentations will be programmed within each track over the 2 days.

1. State sole-provision vs. participative models of public action

For a long time, the State was considered as the exclusive party steering public action, defining public policies and deciding about the common interest. Ensuing societal problems, challenges and crises challenged these modes of decision and action and provoked a slow evolution towards more open modes of interactions. The evolution of our democracies also promoted the emergence of new public action models. The concept of governance emerged as a result prompting a new definition of the role of the State. Though representative government remains as the main ideological underpinning and reference for our political system to manage our societies, the State's sole provision started to disappear with the emergence of governance which gives particular attention to the role of civil society and the emergence of new models of action involving citizens and users.

For this sub-theme, we will revisit the role of the State and highlight the evolution/introduction of participative modes of public action:

- What are the transformations that are recasting the role of the State in public action?
- Who are the new actors in the public action scene?
- How does the State operate differently today in the MENA Zone to cope with citizen engagement and the rampant involvement of civil society organizations?
- What are the differentiations between the co-production practices in the MENA region?





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- What are the new participative modes of public action? Its facilitating and inhibiting factors?
- When is State sole provision more appropriate and what are the limits of participative public action?
- Are there exclusive domains of participative public action versus domains of State sole provision? How to establish that?

2. Legal, normative and institutional framework for co-constructing public action

Following the awareness of civil society and the challenges faced by the State to conduct public action and to deliver public services responding to the needs of citizens and to constantly changing social problems, different ways of delivering public services must be considered. Accordingly, public policy co-construction approaches are called upon to provide a newfound legitimacy to governments and public authorities, through the inclusion of all stakeholders in decision making processes and in the participatory implementation of public policies. Co-construction can give a real response in terms of sustainable development of our societies and help to find new ways to better conduct public action. Co-construction, because it involves a renewal of the methods for defining the aims of collective action, will be part of a transformation of public action. These changes require a change of the legal framework and the institutions allowing the participation of all stakeholders.

Under this theme, we will address the issues of setting up a legal framework for the co-construction of public action, but also the establishment of institutional arrangements to facilitate the involvement of stakeholders (citizens, users, organisations, communities, associations, etc.)

Moreover and as co-construction tasks will be shared between public authorities and a variety of 'stakeholders' namely, corporations, citizens and civil society; this requires a revisit of the control/audit systems and mechanisms and the legal framework (for financial control, audit, performance evaluation,





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public procurement, etc.) as well as the overall framework of responsibility and accountability for public action.

Some of the related questions that will be addressed include:

- What is the necessary legal framework (constitution, laws, regulations, decrees, rules of operation, Charter of Fundamental Rights, principles of good governance, etc) for the new configurations of public action?
- How do the different legal provisions support (or not) the co-construction of public action?
- How to legislate new modes of public action? Control and auditing mechanisms?
- What are the necessary institutional changes to involve the different stakeholders in public action and public service delivery?
- Information access and accessibility regimes?

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3. Alternative and innovative configurations of public administration to co-construct public action

In addition to the reforms regarding the legal framework and the institutional arrangements, public service organizations must be restructured to allow the citizen to engage in defining, developing, implementing, evaluating and reviewing public policies. Public administration must be reformed to be open to citizens and involve them actively in the process of public action.

The reform of public services is intended to encourage citizens / users to design and deliver services in partnership with professionals. A recent OECD report (2014) entitled "Together for better public services: partnership with citizens and civil society" provides us with an overview of innovative approaches to service delivery based on partnerships that governments have with citizens, users and organizations of civil society.





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The report also mentions that users are more likely to be 'co-producers' for personal services such as health, social services, and community services.

An environment that is favorable to citizen' engagement must set up actors and stakeholders with enabling tools such as information and communication technology (ICT, e-Gov, portal, etc.) Several conditions of participation will be highlighted as: establishing tools for evaluating the delivery of public services by citizens (electronic tools/evaluation, consultations, etc.) establishment of a national platform to facilitate citizen participation and the improvement of online services, public private partnership modes, etc. Moreover transparency and information access regimes must be strengthened in order to give a meaning to the participation of citizens / users.

Public sector professionals and officials must be informed and trained to interact significantly with the people (citizens / users / civil society) involved in the use or in the co-construction of public service. Professionals must be convinced that co-construction is a way to improve government performance and be motivated to use it.

The following questions will be addressed:

- What restructuring is necessary from public service organizations to better utilize the co-construction / production processes and implement new approaches of public action?
- What changes are needed to the existing structures to enhance the co-construction process? How to manage the change from existing structures to new ones?
- What are the means used (technological, informational, communication, etc.) to strengthen the use of co-production?
- How to motivate professionals and officials to make use of the co-production process and to interact with stakeholders?





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- In case of co-production of public service and co-construction of public action, what are the new mechanisms for monitoring/control and accountability?
- What are the benefits and risks of the introduction of co-construction processes?
- What are the opportunities and the demand level for the co-production of public services that are most valued in the countries of the MENA region?

4. The dialectic between central vs. local in deploying public action: Innovative models of territorial governance

The discourse of participation in public action goes hand in hand with decentralization and localization. The participation arena is greatest at the local governance level where the policy cycle is tightly connected to local realities there. Several MENA countries have opted strategically for decentralization but the tradeoffs between central public action versus a more decentralized format remain unsettled. Territorial governance tries to arbitrate the power game between central and local government. Innovative territorial governance models loom like a panacea for greater autonomy and enhanced participation at the local level while maintaining a strong grip of the central State to ensure coherent policy making and development.

The local level is considered as the level closest to the concerns and needs of citizens. It is therefore considered important when initiating innovative models of territorial governance.

Submissions are invited with a focus on the following issues:

- What are the new modes and ideas for improving co-production of public services at the local and decentralized levels?
- What tools and arrangements can be put in place to strengthen the involvement of stakeholders (citizens) in territorial development?





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- How to ensure the right of citizens to have access to clear and complete information regarding the various issues / problems in local communities and to participate in important decisions affecting the future of their community?
- Identify new ways to strengthen the sense of belonging to a community and to promote a 'culture' of participation shared by local communities and local authorities and consolidate citizen engagement in local processes;
- Highlight the means to encourage citizens to accept their responsibility in contributing to their communities;
- How to balance between the resilience of central government and the flexibility of local government?
- How to share responsibility between State / Local authorities and public organisations and 'communicate' this to citizens?

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Researcher/Practitioner Dialogue

The conference will be an ideal venue to bring together researchers and practitioners from the region to discuss the role of the public service in fostering sole provision vs. co-constructed public action. Practitioners will team up with academic/researchers to develop cases that will be presented at the conference. This means that many of the submissions/presentations will be by invitation. However there will be plenty of room for open submissions that relate to the overall theme of the conference and its sub-themes above.

A pre-conference day will be dedicated to a presentation of a MENAPAR project on developing a research agenda for public administration in the Arab region. Scholars, young researchers, and practitioners will be invited to debate the research agendas and propose ways to embed PA research in MENA countries public action processes. A separate call will be issued for the pre-conference day.





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Pre-Conference Workshops

Parallel to the Pre-conference research consortium, a set of pre-conference workshops will be held to showcase the best practices in public administration in Bahrain, Tunisia and other countries. The workshops will consist of primers on building capacity in public administration that will create opportunities for collaboration between the different participating parties. A website will be made accessible about the CDF project that has been funded through the BIPA-UNDP partnership. The objective is to get collaborations going between PA administrations in the region and engage the process of South-South cooperation on a pragmatic basis.

Important Dates

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- 15 August 2015: Deadline for abstract submissions
- 30 August 2015: Deadline for author notifications
- 30 August 2015: Deadline for early-bird registration
- 20 September 2015: Final paper and presentation submission
- 6 October 2015: Research Consortium, Pre-Conference Workshops, and MENAPAR Board meeting
- 7 October 2015: First day of conference & Gala Dinner
- 8 October 2015: Second day of conference, General Assembly and election of a new board, and Gala Dinner
- 9 October 2015: Social Program





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Submission Requirements

- Submissions must address one or more aspects of the conference theme or sub-themes;
- Submissions are accepted in Arabic, French, and English;
- Papers should be 4000-6000 words in length. Abstracts of no less than 500 words should be sent to MENAPAR's Scientific Board via the Conference Management System (link available at <http://menapar.net/menapar/conference/conference-2015>) by 15 August 2015;
- Authors will be duly notified of the acceptance of their abstracts;
- Only registered participants will be included in the program;

Conference Chairs

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- The representative of the Tunisian Government
- Raed BenShams (President of MENAPAR & BIPA Director General)
- Robert Fouchet (Professor, Institute of Public Management and Territorial Governance, IMPGT - Aix Marseille University and Publications Director at International Institute of Administrative Sciences IIAS)
- The representative of UNDP
- The General Secretary of AGI

Scientific Committee

- Conference Program Chairs: Fabienne Maron (IIAS Scientific Administrator) & Sofiane Sahraoui (Research Director, MENAPAR & Senior Advisor, BIPA)





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- Khoula Laabidi (Director General, Presidency of Tunisian Government)
- Ibrahim Tamimi (Director of Bahrain Center of Excellence)
- Oumama Naifere (UNDP, Tunisa)
- Ali Salman (UNDP, Bahrain)
- Professor Carlos Condé (Director of Governance program for the MENA region, OECD)
- Noora Al-Ghatam (University of Bahrain)
- Professor Geert Bouckaert (KU Leuven, Public Governance Institute and IIAS President)
- Jennifer Colville (UNDP, Bureau of Arab States, Jordan)
- Khalil Amiri (AGI, Tunisia)
- Fabrice Larat (ENA, France)
- Islem Omrani (University of Tunis El Manar, Tunisia)
- Majdi Hassan (Araba Institute of head of institutions, Tunisia)
- Iskander Boustani (Institute of Finance Basel Fleihan, Lebanon)
- Ahmed Kilani (General Personnel Council, Palestine)

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Fees

Category	€	\$
Regular delegates	€ 250	\$ 275
Early bird (31 August)	€ 200	\$ 220
MENAPAR members and associate organization members	€ 100	\$ 110
Accompanying persons	€ 100	\$ 110
PhD students	€ 50	\$ 55
MENAPAR Board members & Local delegates	Free	

The fee for Gala dinner is € 50 (\$55) for the local delegates

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For additional information regarding research submissions, please contact Ms. Shagufta Ahmad (shagufta@bipa.gov.bh) or Mrs Lobna Toujani (lobna.toujeni@arabgovernance.org)

For additional information regarding the conference organization, please contact Ms. Batoul Murad (b.murad@bipa.gov.bh) or Mrs Donia Turki (turki.donia@arabgovernance.org)

