

# Politique africaine

Call for Papers

## **The old and new faces of planning in Africa**

Special issue coordinated by Boris Samuel

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Since 2000, the fight against poverty as well as the Millennium Development Goals (replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015) have led to the use of neoliberal New Public Management procedures, embodied by ‘results-based management’ in Africa (Egil 2015; Fioramonti 2014; Samuel 2013). But they have also urged the return to voluntarist state policies and to the use of planning techniques which are reminiscent of development practices imported from Soviet bloc countries in the 1960s (Ward 2004; Ziai 2011). These hybrid forms are not surprising: as shown by recent research, Soviet-inspired planning and indicator-based neoliberal management may have certain similarities in their forms and mechanisms (Hibou 2015; Salais 2013; Supiot 2015). Such observations invite us to question the meanings of development monitoring practices: the use of a single planning practice can entail a multitude of different political repertoires that must be understood in the light of national historical trajectories (Laborier and Trom 2003).

While privatization and ‘discharge’ (Hibou 2004) were at the heart of structural adjustment reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, direct state interventions are again deemed acceptable in support of development. Consumption subsidies, social safety nets, employment programmes for young people, or cash transfers to the ‘poor’ (Bono, 2010; Ferguson 2015; Sardan et al. 2014) have multiplied as ‘inclusion’ became the motto of international organizations, following the 2011 Arab Spring. At a time when entrepreneurial and capitalist logics are taking the upper hand in African societies (Cooper 2014; Kelsall 2013), the rhetoric about emergence is also encouraging states to act as modernizers and developers. Governments are revitalizing administrative bodies and agencies in charge of investment promotion, and launching programmes to foster infrastructure, land use and communications development, coupled with

regulatory and liberalization reforms deemed to attract investors. These interventions reflect a period of pluralisation in economic practices and discourses in Africa. Our special issue will study the states modes of action that drive, finance and steer these policies.

### **Planning and governing in Africa, from colonial times to the twenty-first century**

Using the term ‘planning’ in connection with contemporary Africa may seem anachronistic. The developmentalist and voluntarist African state was confronted with many significant setbacks up to the 1970s, and structural adjustment policies have greatly weakened state institutions since the 1980s (Cooper 2014). State planning is supposed to have given way to laissez-faire and the neoliberal technologies of privatization. However, planning still plays a major political role in so-called ‘developing’ countries.

#### ***The itineraries of planning***

The idea of central planning still lies at the heart of political repertoires and imaginaries. Memories of the benevolent state, frustration at its demise as a result of structural adjustment, and demands for a return to a developmentalist voluntarism are still underlying public debates (Bonnecase 2013; Siméant 2014), official discourses (Hibou and Samuel 2011) and requests for state intervention (Lachenal and Mbodj-Pouye 2014). In national administrative systems, the planning departments have long played a crucial role in the political economy of development in the formulation of economic and social policies, but also in the dynamics of accumulation related to the flows of financial aid and the conduct of development projects, in relation to the challenges of the ‘politics of the belly’ (Bayart) and the ‘gatekeeping’ activities of the state (Cooper). Today, even when planning units do not officially exist, the authorities in charge of programming and investment policies are often referred to as the ‘plan’, and their officials as ‘planners’. Through institutional realities and political imaginaries, the ‘Plan’ continues to represent a multifaceted social reality.

#### ***From techniques to political situations***

Addressing the question of ‘planning in Africa’ does not mean that one should limit the analysis to the processes whereby plans are drawn up. The understanding of the practices and discourses of planning and their effects requires a study of the social and political situations in which they develop, as well as the areas or ‘sectors’ that they are intended to govern (economic sectors, major public policies, cities and territories, etc.). The way planning is embedded in social dynamics needs to be thought through, as well as the way in which the plans shape social

relations and trigger socio-political transformations. Studying planning in Africa therefore requires a multiple-scales investigation, a description of what lies ‘outside the frame’, and a consideration of the power relations in which the plans are elaborated (de Certeau 2011; Hibou and Samuel 2011). This approach allows us to describe the variety of situations in which planning is central to social and political life. It also allows us to shed light on the politicization of planning processes, against arguments that suggest a de-politicization of technocratic activities (Ferguson 1994; Jobert 2003; Linhardt and Muniesa 2011).

### ***Studying techniques in action***

This special issue encourages a methodological shift from what is usually proposed in African studies: it invites us to analyse political processes through the lens of technical activities and tools. The techniques of economic management in Africa are now beginning to be researched by social scientists, like the calculation of GDP (Jerven 2013, Samuel 2013, Speich 2008), the measurement of poverty (Bonnecase 2011, Davie 2015, Guyer 2004), ~~the~~ development technologies (Cooper 2010; Desrosières 2014; Hodge et al. 2014; Morgan 2008), and ~~the~~ censuses (Gervais and Mande 2007). However, the tools used by African economic administrations remain understudied.<sup>1</sup> This special issue aims at providing a genealogy and a detailed description of the processes and categories that guide the steering of the economy. Building on non-africanist research (Blum and Mespoulet 2003; Desrosières 2008; Fourquet 1980; Porter 1995; Tooze 2001), the objective is to analyse planning techniques as social practices and to properly describe the sociology of the planners. The adopted approach will therefore engage many on-going works on public policy instruments in Africa (Eboko 2016; Enguéléguélé 2008) as well as the recent literature from the anthropology of development (Biershenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014). However, it will not seek to contrast ‘theoretical’ technocratic norms with ‘practical’ norms; it will rather show that the mundane handling of technical tools and a wide variety of repertoires can be combined (Hibou and Samuel 2011; Mosse and Lewis 2005). Various methods can be used to do this: political and economic sociology, history, anthropology, political economy etc.

### **Main themes of this special issue**

Submissions could engage with the following themes:

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<sup>1</sup> There are a few notable exceptions, such as Van de Walle (2001) and Anders (2010).

### **The history and circulation of planning models and techniques**

The history of African planning deserves to be revisited. Since the second half of the twentieth century, moments of voluntarism have marked the trajectories of many countries and resulted in ambitious planning projects, from post-independence developmentalism to the socialist periods in several states, not to mention the plans elaborated in the colonial contexts of the 1940s and 1950s. These projects have sometimes left an enduring mark on the administrative systems, economic and political histories and national imaginaries of these countries. The way imperial planning models have taken roots in former colonies has received little attention to date. The exchange of technology between the Soviet bloc and African countries – whether socialist regimes or not - has been even less thoroughly explored. These circulations also imply a broader context: planning techniques have been spread via sub-regional, pan-African and international organisations, via experts (Morgan 2008), academic routes (Nubukpo 2011), or professional networks (Charoy and Diop 2006), that need to be studied.

### **The tools and actors of planning**

The resurgence of planning in the 2000s resulted in the emergence of new planning tools (poverty alleviation programmes, strategies to achieve the MDGs, ‘strategies for accelerated growth’ or schooling, etc.). At the same time, the advent of the neoliberal era led to the rise of new professional bodies and legitimate forms of knowledge, for example in the fields of finance, economic evaluation or audit (Bezes 2009; Eboko 2016; Samuel 2013; Strathern 2000). The proliferation of national agencies, investment banks and major sectoral projects has also led to the spread of planning activities in a myriad of sites. The process of planning is, finally, being conducted within new networks of international actors. Submissions may propose to study these new actors and practices on the basis of a detailed examination of national or sectoral planning systems (education, health, environment, etc.) in different historical periods. They may also consider describing the chain of procedures that planning entails<sup>2</sup> so as to show the interactions between the myriad of actors and institutions involved in the production of plans ~~production~~. By extension, the modes of dissemination, the critiques, debates and controversies triggered by the plans can also be studied. The modes of ‘popularisation’ of the narratives that emerge from planning (through state discourses, media, parties and associations, etc.) must indeed be grasped so that the role of plans in the exercise of power can be analysed. Bearing this in mind, the methods of the sociology of science and

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<sup>2</sup> To paraphrase Alain Desrosières who suggested that we study the ‘chain of statistical production’.

technology (Lampland 1996) might be combined with sociology, anthropology, or political science.

### **The political repertoires and imaginaries of planning**

Plans formalize the representations and imaginaries of the social world through the use of numbers, equations and models (Desrosières 2008; Morgan 2012). They give numerical form to teleological visions of social progress and development as well as to representations of the frugal state, the generous and voluntarist state, or a state that controls space and territory, etc. The paper proposals for papers might identify how these imaginaries were formed, changed over time and mobilized in a variety of social situations. They could also highlight that the cognitive categories used by the plans can be grasped by their multiple links with the social world as well as their technical genealogy (Bowker and Star 1999). Planning is also a mode of enunciation of politics (Hibou and Samuel, 2011): Many political divides and protests, and many social demands are expressed with regard to the planning function of the state; they may also be reflected in the process of planning. Conversely, the stories built on the plans may also serve as tools of political normalisation, for example when mentioned in speeches pledging allegiance to the political regimes (Bono 2010; Hibou and Samuel 2011).

### **The margins of planning**

Finally, the forms of planning can be highly varied. Planning does not always result in actions on the part of omniscient, voluntarist and visionary states. The planning processes of many countries are, or have been, implemented by international agencies and not by national administrations (South Sudan, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea etc.). Conversely, in the absence of international support, quasi-states (such as Somaliland) can sometimes manage to stabilize administrative and institutional procedures that are at odds with international economic formalism, but still allow state management. Planning techniques may also be implemented by private actors in accordance with a logic of discharge, for example in public services privatized for the benefit of businesses, major NGOs or churches. In addition, planning is not solely ~~applied~~ applied to development policies in their restricted, social or economic sense. In many situations, violence and war are closely linked or even organized by a logic of planning (Rwanda). In many emergency situations, related to food shortages for example, planning guides the interventions of many actors. The link between planning techniques and the management of emergency deserves to be considered, especially in bringing

out the ways in which an authoritarian or violent exercise of power can be combined with the promotion of a bureaucratic rationality (Blum and Mespoulet 2003; Tooze 2001; Samuel 2014).

## CALENDAR

- June 10, 2016:** Deadline for submissions of proposals (1 page maximum summary) to Boris Samuel ([boris.samuel@sciencespo.fr](mailto:boris.samuel@sciencespo.fr))
- June 24, 2016:** Notification of acceptance to the selected authors
- October 25, 2016:** Deadline for sending draft articles to the editorial board (50,000 signs, including spaces and footnotes)
- Oct. 2016-Feb. 2017:** Evaluation, revision and (where necessary) translation of the texts selected by the editorial board of the review

The special issue will be published in **March 2017**. Submissions can be sent in English or French. The final publication will be in French.

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