

Local Public Sector Reforms in Time of Crisis National Trajectories and International Comparisons - Book review

Alina Georgiana PROFIROIU¹

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Introduction

The book“**Local Public Sector Reforms in Time of Crisis.National Trajectories and International Comparisons**” edited by Sabine Kuhlmann & Geert Bouckaert is one of well-designed and well-executed volume which address the local public sector reforms in a comparative approach. This volume is based on the results of COST research project, entitled „Local Public Sectors Reforms: An International Comparison”, implementing by the prestigious scholars from 31 European countries (including Eastern and Western, as well North and Southern European countries).

1. Book review

This book starts with a comprehensive introductory chapter by the editors that presents the background and the main reasearch objective: identifying the different approaches and effects of local public sector reform, reform trajectories from a comparative perspective and looking for a possible explanation of divers effects. In addition, the first chapter presents the conceptual framework of local public sector reforms, which were viewed as “different types of institutional policies, directed at political and administrative institutional structures”. Using the ideal input-output model of the politico-administrative system, the authors make distinction between input-oriented reforms (viewed as democratic reforms, aiming to enhance the public participation, direct democracy) and more output –oriented reform (considered as administrative reforms). This latter type of reforms is divided in external(such as territorial re-scaling and re-organization of local service delivery) and internal variants considered as managerial reforms (such as internal

¹Professor Ph.D.; The Bucharest University of Economic Studies; Bucharest; Romania,
e-mail address: profiroiualina@yahoo.com

reorganization by changing of relation between council administration or re-engineering performance management or human resources management). The main explanatory factor of reforms effects is considered the „starting conditions and contexts” such as state structure, government type, administrative culture and inherited traditions, functional responsibilities and the extent of local autonomy, territorial structure (size of territorial-administrative units), type of local democracy (the power distribution within decision-making process between mayor and council). The countries were grouped in six clusters with different mix of institutional and cultural core characteristics: Continental European Napoleonic type, Continental European type, Nordic type, Anglo-Saxon type, Central Eastern European type and South Eastern European.

The first part addresses the problem of external reforms such as amalgamation, inter-local cooperation and territorial consolidation.

Chapter 2, by Steiner R., Kaiser C., Eythorsson G.T., focuses on „objectives” of amalgamation reforms, „strategies” followed that could be the cause of different „pattern of conflict” appeared during the implementation process and the „outcomes” of such reforms.

Chapter 3, by Broeckema W., Steen T. and Wayenberg E., offers a possible explanation for different trajectories of municipal amalgamation („incremental change vs large waves”) in Netherlands and Flandres such as „socio-economic forces”, especially the economic-financial crisis, the features of „political system”, central government pressure, bad memories from other imposed amalgamation reform, or „administrative system” (bottom-up vs top-down amalgamation process, role of intermunicipal cooperation).

In Chapter 4, Askim J., Klusen J.E., Vabo S.I. and Bjurström analyse the “driving factors” and the „filtering factors” of municipal amalgamation in Western European Countries.

Chapter 5, by Franzke J., Klimovsky D. and Pinteric U., investigates if inter-municipal cooperation experiences during 2004-2013 have driven to territorial consolidation in some selected countries (Slovenia, Slovakia and Brandenburg) that have the same „post-comunit legacies”

The second part deals with the managerial reforms, viewed as administrative reform, inspired of New Public Management (NPM) philosophy.

Chapter 6, by Mussari R., Tranfaglia A.E., Reichard Ch., Bjørna H., Nakrosis and Bankauskaite-Gringaliuniene S., analyses the contextual factors, design, trajectories, and implementation of performance budgeting reform at the local level in four European countries, selected from four different clusters: Norway, Germany, Italy and Lithuania.

In Chapter 7, Turc E., Guenoun M., Rodrigues M.A.V., Dermirkaya Y. and Dupuis J. present three case studies countries with Napoleonic tradition (France, Portugal and Turkey), where they are looking at impacts of performance management reforms (PMR), but focusing on the first layer of local government.

Chapter 8, by Proeller I., Wenzel A-K., Vogel D., Mussari R., Casale D., Turc E. and Guenoun M., investigates the „origins”, „design” and „implementation

”of Performance–Related Pay (PRP) Systems in local governments of three countries (Germany, France and Italy).

Human Resources Management Reform and Change Management is discussed by Salm M. and Schwab Ch in chapter 9, by using case studies of three cities Bilbao (Spain), Mannheim (Germany) and Tampere (Finland).

The Third Part addresses the issue of re-organization of Local service delivery, the shifting from government to governance.

Chapter 10, by Wollmann Hellmut, introduces a cross–countries analysis regarding to „institutional changes” of public utilities and social services provision, the shifting of the type of management techniques.

In chapter 11, Torsteinsen H. and van Genugten M. discuss various institutional change of municipal waste management in Norway and Netherlands, its causes and its effects.

Chapter 12, by Henriksen L.S, Smith S.R, Thorgersen M. and Zimmer A. explores the involvement of non -profit organizations in social services delivery at local level, by highlighting the developments in three countries (Germany, Denmark and UK) despite the differences of welfare regimes and nonprofit –government relations.

In chapter 13, Hlepas N., Kettunen P., Kutsar D., Carthaigh M.M, Navarro C., Richter P. and Teles F. focus on local governance of child daycare in seven countries (Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain), with different local government and state models and welfare state traditions and family policies. They analyzed the share of responsibilities and financing between the state and local government and the effects of financial crises on this service.

The issue of spatial planning system reform in six European countries is discussed by Getimis Panagiotis in Chapter 14. He tries to explain the directions of reforms, the “driving forces”, “the differences and similarities ” between countries.

The fourth part discusses the problem of participatory democracy and political leadership at the local level.

In Chapter 15, Vetter A., Klimovsky D., Denters B. and Kersting N. explore the evolution of local democratic reforms in different European countries for a long period of time (1990-2014) and the opportunity given to the citizens to control local decision making process.

In chapter 16, Lindstrom A., Baldersheim H., Copus C., Hlynsdottir E.M, Kettunen P. and Klimovsky D. investigate various types of reforms of the local councils, driving forces and the role of councilors in 15 European countries with representative democracies. They discussed in what extent the citizens involvement in local decision-making processes has to be enhanced.

Chapter 17, by Copus C., Iglesias A. , Hacek M., Illner M. and Lidstrom focusses on debate on local political leadership reforms across Europe and analyses whether introduction of direct elected mayor system influenced the legitimacy, accountability and democracy at the local level and depends on local government size.

In chapter 18, Kersting N., Gasparikova J, Iglesias A. and Krenjova J. investigates the new local participatory instruments, especially participatory-budgeting, the impact of new information and communication technology (ICT) on this process, by using four case studies (Spain, Germany, Estonia and Slovakia).

Chapter 19, by Denters B., Ladner A., Mouritzen P.E and Rose L.E., analyses the citizens' expectations and perception about local government performance in four countries (Switzerland, Norway, Denmark and Netherland).

Finally, chapter 20 presents the conclusions of these comparative researches and reveals the four „major cross-cutting issues of local public sector reform”, such as :”1. rescaling, restructuring and multilevel governance , 2. Output-legitimacy, Effective service delivery and citizens satisfaction, 3. Input-legitimacy, trust and participation,4. Local autonomy versus austerity in the context of the fiscal crisis”, described by the two editors, Bouckaert and Kuhlmann.

In my opinion, this book represents a real contribution to advancement of the local public sector research and presents a normative perspective about good local government.

2. About the editors

Sabine Kuhlman has been Professor of Political Science, Administration and Organization at the University of Potsdam, Germany, since 2013. Between 2009-2013, she was full Professor of Comparative Public Administration at the German University of Administrative Science in Speyer. Since 2012 she has been Vice-president of the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) and she chaired the COST Action „Local Public Sectors Reforms: An International Comparison” . She is member of National Control Council that advises the German Federal Government on Better Regulation since 2011.

Geert Bouckaert is one of the most prestigious scholars in Europe in public management and public administration reforms. He is professor at the KU Leuven Public Governance Institute in Leuven, Belgium. He is the Coordinator of the Policy Research Centre- Governmental Organization –decisive Governance and President of the International Institute of Administrative Science (IIAS).