

Training School

Contested Administrations – Challenged Politics: Addressing Wicked Problems at Local, National, and International Levels of Government

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The fourth COST Action IS1207 joint PhD-training and (summer) school, *Local Public Sector Reforms: An International Comparison (LocRef)*, took place from 13 to 16 September, 2016 in Potsdam, Germany. It was hosted by the University of Potsdam, Campus Griebnitzsee – or more specifically its Research Training Group and Graduate School *Wicked Problems, Contested Administrations: Knowledge, Coordination, Strategy* (WIPCAD) – and the Institute of Local Government Studies of the University of Potsdam (KWI), in collaboration with EUROLOC and EURA, and the ECPR Standing Group LOGOPOL.

This year, the general topic of the summer school encompassed the relationship between contemporary policy problems faced by politics, public administration, and governance processes at all levels, and the effects of public administration (PA) reforms addressed towards solving or mitigating global crisis effects on society. Furthermore, local governments face a decline in transparency, legitimacy, and responsibility. PA reform measures, in spite of the contradiction in their values and goals (i.e., effectiveness vs democracy) are intended to handle those problems simultaneously by improving coordination and control, delegation and discretion, and information and knowledge management.

The training programme was divided into four thematic days, while the last day was a social day. Each day included two lectures, and presenta-

tions of PhD projects by PhD students. Each PhD presentation was followed by the questions and comments of other PhD students and an assigned senior discussant (trainer).

The training school was opened with welcome speeches by Professor Maik Heinemann, Dean of the Faculty; Professor Werner Jann, director of WIPCAD; and Professor Sabine Kuhlmann (COST, KWI, the local organizer).

The first day was dedicated to local public sector reforms in Europe. Professor Kuhlmann emphasised that context variables matter when it comes to changing discourses and instruments (disruption with institutional path-dependency), but also explain the divergence (persistence) in reform implementation and effects in the five clusters of administrative profiles (Napoleonic, Germanic, Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon, and CEE/SEE). Professor Bouckaert explained a new approach of “reforming reforms”, emphasising three main assumptions for better performance: the pressure of innovative methods, specialisation (single-task agencies) with coordination, and participation in the policy cycle. Student presentations dealt with the legitimisation of design-led innovations in local polity, administrative reforms in Greece, territorial re-scaling in the UK, Europeanisation of EU regional policy in the UK and Greece, regulation of refugee admission by German and Italian local administrations, and conflicts as a source of organisational development.

The next day was devoted to research methods. Professor A. Vetter explained (wicked) problems and solutions for studying and explaining the effects of PA reforms, and this was followed by student contributions on the effects of bus contractual regimes on municipalities in the Barcelona province, the effect of civic local political deliberation on transformative public-spiritedness, and social sustainability in the context of city management. Methods training was guided by Professor H. V. D. Kolkand and consisted of four parts: research questions, theory and hypothesis testing, research design and case selection, and data collection and data analysis – all based on the students’ submitted papers.

Day three included topics on local government structures and coordination and collaboration in multiple-level settings, and it started with a lecture by Professor F. Teles on governance capacity, coordination, and efficiency at the regional level and how to research the relationship between scale and efficiency. PhD students presented the following research: policy content of health issues in urban planning processes in the metropolitan region of Bremen-Oldenburg, the role of the learning region

policy in Germany as a social innovation in the emergence and mobility of new models in spatial planning, health policy learning after emergency events, and politics of the linguistic integration of immigrants in contemporary European migration. Professor T. Steen elaborated on the concept of citizen coproduction, its challenges, and its effects on local politics, administration, and the citizens themselves. This was followed by PhD students' presentations on local government in Croatian cities, joined-up government in Austrian municipalities, and inter-municipal cooperation in Albania and Poland.

The last day started with a presentation by S. Bird, publishing manager at Taylor & Routledge, who provided detailed answers on scientific papers submitted for publication. The lectures and presentations focused on the impact of democratic representation on (local) administrations, with Professor B. Denters elaborating on the theory of representation and its impact on democratic accountability, and Professor J. Franzke describing the effects of local level citizen participation in Germany on administrative efficiency. The final student presentations focused on topics such as dual-mandate holding, causes and effects of local political conflicts in Swedish municipalities, and the impacts of participatory governance in the cultural policy of several European cities.

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