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Local Government: A Shift from Autonomy to a Rational, Sustainable Model (p. 503)

Giuseppe Piperata

Essays and articles

Inter-Municipal Cooperation: The United Kingdom Case (p. 523)

Neil McGarvey

This paper outlines the practice of inter-municipal cooperation (more commonly referred to as shared services) in the United Kingdom. Like many things the UK approach leaves it as something of an outlier in relation to the continental European norm. The scale of local government, non-proportional electoral system and deeply embedded systems of centralisation contribute to its outlying status. However, recent developments would temper this thesis of UK exceptionalism. Local government in the UK is presently in the midst of what could be called a 'perfect storm' – a UK Government deficit reduction programme which is cutting back central grant coupled with rising expectations and demands for local government services. Faced with this climate councils are looking to new ways to increase efficiency, make savings and increase their own income. Sharing of services has emerged as an important part of that agenda. The institutional context (which influences the way actors define their interests and preferences) in the UK is changing, and the sharing of services between different local authorities is becoming more common practice.

Inter-Municipal Cooperation in Germany: Striking a Balance between Autonomy and Efficiency (p. 549)

Jens Woelk

Conceptually, inter-municipal cooperation (IMC) remains an exception in the German system of local government. The rule is the fulfilment of all tasks concerning the local community by the municipality protected in its autonomy through an essential core of guaranteed functions. The legislation in many Länder has provided for various forms of IMC in private as well as in public law, usually on a voluntary basis (sometimes stimulated by incentives). The article analyses the territorial reforms enacted in the 1970s and 1990s, which were intended to reduce the number of municipalities and increase their size in order to improve their administrative capacity and efficiency. The main forms of IMC are presented and illustrated before some problems related to specific issues of IMC are discussed, in particular concerning EU law. In conclusion, some critical observations are made regarding the effects of IMC on the institutional equilibria at the local level.

Inter-Municipal Cooperation in France (p. 583)

Alain Boyer

Municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants account for more than 60% of the French population; those with less than 10,000 account for more than 50%; more than one-third of the population lives in towns with less than 3,500 inhabitants. These data succinctly suggest why inter-municipal cooperation is a necessity in France in the 21st century. The French legislature has identified several forms of inter-municipal organization, featuring varying levels of integration. Their policy objective is to achieve a reduction in the number of municipalities, and inter-municipal cooperation has been identified as the tool to achieve this result.

Inter-Municipal Cooperation: A Possible Alternative for the Re-organization of the Local System in Spain (p. 599)

Marcos Almeida Cerrada

The article begins with a definition of what is meant by inter-municipal cooperation and then examines the principal means by which it is achieved

(or could be achieved). The strengths and weaknesses of inter-municipal cooperation are highlighted, in order to identify solutions for the improvement of the discipline and the conditions for its implementation and promote its use among Spanish municipalities.

The Reform of the Local Authorities System in Portugal (p. 639)

Pedro Cruz e Silva

The article, after a short introduction on the local government system in Portugal, focuses on current institutional reforms, which are leading to a significant reduction and amalgamation of Portuguese local authorities (the fregusias). The author highlights the limitations and weaknesses of this process, which is bound to produce more wide-reaching organizational changes than the mere creation of a new map of the local administration.

The “Kallikratis Program”: The Influence of International and European Policies on the Reforms of Greek Local Government (p. 653)

Christina Akriopoulou, Georgios Dimitropoulos, Stylianos-Ioannis G. Koutnatzis

The global economic crisis that broke out in 2008 has severely affected Greece due mainly to its unsustainable levels of public spending. Greece’s major reaction, supported by measures agreed upon with the IMF, the European Central Bank and the EU, has been to introduce austerity measures that have focused primarily on cutting public administration costs and consolidating national and local government functions. The aim of the austerity measures is to cut local government spending to the lowest possible cost and in the most effective way. In this framework the “Kallikratis program” introduced in 2010 has aimed to implement the following reforms: (a) consolidate local and decentralized government entities to achieve their financial viability, (b) enhance transparency and legality in their functioning, (c) improve governmental effectiveness based on relevant EU standards. Consistent with Greek courts’ longstanding deferential approach vis-à-vis local government reforms, the Kallikratis reforms are widely expected to pass constitutional muster.

The Rationalization of the Local System in Italy: Towards which Model? (p. 695)

Claudia Tubertini

Under the pressure of the economic crisis, Italian local government has undergone reforms that have deeply changed its distinctive features. If the goal of these reforms – i.e., the reduction of public spending – and their effects – the reduction of autonomy – are clear, the resulting model of local government is less. The essay identifies the main features of this rationalization process and assesses its impact on local government's ability to address effectively citizens' needs.

Notes and Comments

Macro-Regional Strategy as a New Mode of Territorial Cooperation (p. 727)

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Readings and Highlights

A Review of L. Benvenuti, *Diritto e amministrazione. Itinerari di storia del pensiero (Law and Administration: Pathways in the History of Thought)* (p. 755)

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