



PSG V “Regional and Local Government” Call for Papers 2014

“Post NPM-reforms under the impact of austerity”

Sabine Kuhlmann, University of Potsdam, Germany (sabine.kuhlmann@uni-potsdam.de)

Martin Laffin, Queen Mary University of London, UK (m.laffin@qmul.ac.uk)

Ellen Wayenberg, University of Ghent, Belgium (ellen.wayenberg@ugent.be)

The focus of the Regional and Local SG is on the structures, processes and reforms of local and regional governments and their inter-relationships. This year’s sessions will focus on reform approaches, strategies and impacts in the Post-New Public Management era. Recent years have seen increased local and regional reform activity which has been triggered by a range of often contradictory reform pressures and objectives. Many local and regional governments have significantly shifted away from NPM-type performance management and moved to “something different” which some commentators have been labelled “Post-NPM”. The reforms involve a range from adjustments of former NPM-measures (e.g. in the field of performance management, coordination, organization, strategies); new arrangements between the local public, private and non-profit sectors (corporatization, insourcing, re-municipalization); and to territorial and functional reform activities, re-scaling and inter-local cooperation typically driven by austerity policies and/or demographic pressures. There remains a pressing need to assess how far those Post-NPM-reforms have changed local and regional governments, how the present reforms differ between various countries, to what extent do they represent a new “wave” of reforms (is the pendulum really swinging back?) and whether all this makes a difference to the performance and functioning of local/regional governments.

Against this background the PSG focus for the 2014 Conference will be on Post NPM-reforms under the continuing impact of austerity policies. The PSG, then, is interested in papers which address questions such as:

- How have local governments reorganised internally and externally after the passing of NPM as a predominant reform ideology and the increasing financial pressures on their role? For example, have local governments moved away from a traditional (Weberian) departmental structure to one based on a commissioner-provider split, external service provision and contracting-out or rather re-integrated/insourced services into the departments?
- To what extent have local governments sought to ‘innovate’ in response to NPM-shortcomings and new fiscal pressures? Has austerity involved incentives to innovation and what form have these innovations taken?

- To what extent have local NPM-guided reforms been adjusted or cut back due to a malfunctioning of managerial instruments? Here in particular, issues of coordination, strategic control and steering could be addressed.
- To what extent have external (fiscal, demographic etc.) pressures triggered reforms directed at territorial and/or functional re-scaling (mergers, cooperation bodies, re-allocation of tasks between levels of government)?
- How have local and regional governments responded both organisationally, and in their inter-governmental role, to these pressures? Has 'regional centralism' characterised regional-local relationships or have the regional levels collaborated with the local governments?
- How have central or federal governments responded? For example, have they tightened controls over local governments, given local governments more freedom but fewer resources or used performance management systems in different ways?

We are particularly keen to welcome papers which seek to deliver empirical, research-based arguments and build a theoretical understanding of these issues. They might also pursue a comparative approach, be it “over time”, “cross-countries”, or “cross policies”.

The collaboration with the COST Action IS 1207 “Local Public Sector Reforms: an International Comparison – LocRef” is one of the strategic objectives of the Permanent Study Group V for the period 2014-2017. The research topics and the participating scholars of PSG V and LocRef show many overlaps. Therefore the close collaboration of the two networks promises a multitude of synergies and mutual enrichments. LocRef is an EU-funded international research network on local public sector reforms with more than 100 senior and early stage researchers in 29 countries chaired by Sabine Kuhlmann (Action Chair) and Geert Bouckaert (Vice-Chair); Martin Laffin and Ellen Wayenberg are Chairs/Co-Chairs of LocRef Working Groups; many LocRef members are also PSGV members. LocRef brings together researchers and practitioners of all stages of local public sector reforms in order to jointly assess the hitherto scattered and dispersed information bases on local public sector reforms, to generate new comparative knowledge, and develop policy-relevant frameworks for the design of future modernization processes in Europe. The collaboration between PSG V and LocRef includes, inter alia, joint workshops and conferences, PhD training schools, high level seminars, short term scientific missions for PSG-members (research stays for scholars in partner institutions), joint publications and policy papers. For further information refer to: <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/is-kuhlmann/cost.html>; http://www.cost.eu/domains_actions/isch/Actions/IS1207?management.

This year's sessions are also meant to explore opportunities for a possible joint COST-PSGV-publication. The thematic sessions will be structured correspondingly.

We welcome **abstracts** (1 page maximum) to address any of the issues/questions mentioned above. Abstracts should be sent no later than **15 May 2014** to the three conveners of this EGPA Study Group (see above). **Notification of acceptance** will be no later than **1 June 2014**. Those authors whose abstracts have been accepted should dispatch their paper to the convenors as well as to Fabienne Maron (f.maron@iiasiasa.org) by **5 August 2014** at the latest.