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COST Action IS1207 LocRef Short Term Scientific Mission
Inter-Municipal Cooperation in Europe
University of Aveiro, Portugal
Scientific report

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Host/Supervisor: Prof. Filipe Teles, University of Aveiro

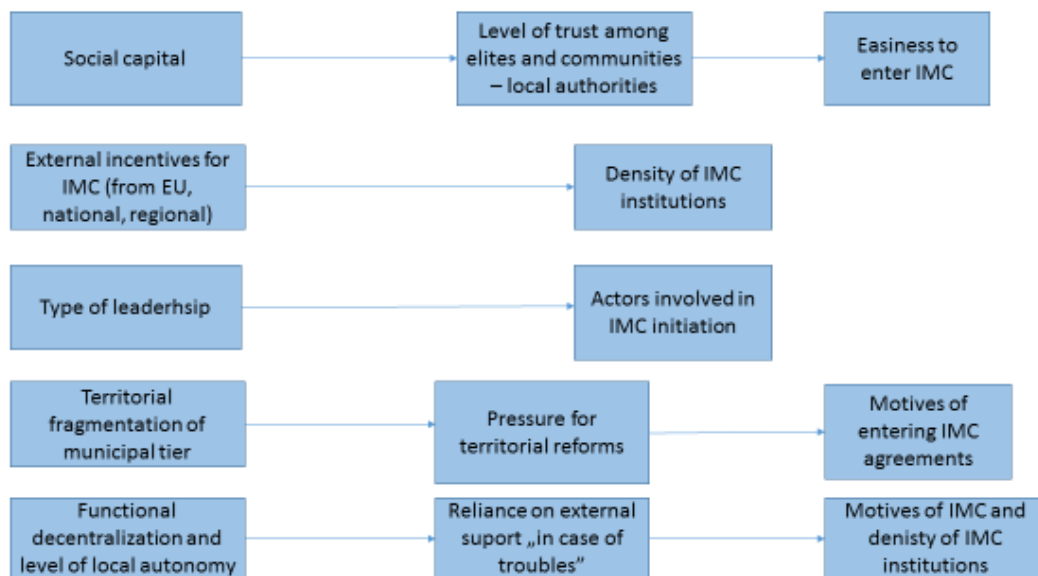
The main outcome of my visit to Aveiro is a proposal of special issue of the journal as well as proposal of the edited volume on inter-municipal cooperation. Both proposals have been developed in consultation with Filipe Teles. Both publications would include several colleagues participating, and working jointly on IMC in COST Action IS 1207. Additional document produced during my stay in Aveiro is also protocol defining the content and structure of required papers to be prepared by other members of the IMC sub-group of COST IS 1207. It is intended that first outlines of papers will be discussed during the October Istanbul meeting of COST Action project and manuscripts would be ready in the second half of 2016.

Inter-Municipal Cooperation (IMC) has been an important topic of debates in European academic literature for a long time. However, studies of IMC in Europe suffer from deficit of comprehensive, international comparative studies. So far the only comprehensive study covering 8 European countries has been undertaken by Hulst and van Montfort (2007). In Central and Eastern Europe the volume comparing scope and forms of IMC in 5 countries (but excluding Poland) has been edited by Swianiewicz (2011). There are also publications comparing IMC in two different countries (e.g. Wollmann 2007, 2010 on Germany and France, Bolgherini 2011 on Italy and Germany) or reviewing evidences on the impact of IMC on costs in a single local service (e.g. Bel, Fageda, Mur 2014; Bel, Warner 2015 – both on waste management). The study I was working on in Aveiro may contribute to filling the gap in international comparative studies of IMC. What is going to be “value added” of the new study within the COST IS 1207?

1. The last comprehensive international study of IMC in Europe (by Hulst and van Montfort 2007) has been based on ca. 10 years-old data. Our research will bring new up-to-date material. The decade difference is important at least twofold. First, it covers economic crisis which in many countries stimulated debates on territorial reforms, including impact on IMC. Second, 2004 (and then 2007) EU enlargement – as we want to demonstrate in our articles - has changed the nature of IMC in Europe, by adding a strong EU dimension among the motives of cooperation.

2. We add new countries (not researched comparatively before). The list of countries to be included covers: German land of Brandenburg, Iceland, Finland, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spanish region of Catalonia. It ensures good coverage of Eastern Europe, strongly under-researched so far and provides a good mixture of small and big countries.
3. Thanks to uniform methodology (the same questionnaire of IMC offices conducted in all countries) of research in individual involved countries, some of our analysis may go down from country by country level to the level of individual IMC institutions. It also allows to ask new questions, going beyond earlier comparative studies:
 - a. What are the motives of IMC establishment? (we distinguish between (i) related to common goals to be achieved and/or maximizing utility of already available resources, (ii) maintaining of status quo, (iii) responding to changing environment in which local governments operate
 - b. Who are the actors who initiated cooperation? (the role of politicians, bureaucrats, professional managers and external actors such as EU, central government).
 - c. What is the shape and sustainability of institutional structures built by IMC?
 - d. How do they perform? (we refer to self-assessment of decision making, perception of benefits, allocation of benefits among members, horizontal power relations).
4. We look for factors explaining variation among countries.

The summary of hypothesis is presented on the figure below.



Overall, this STSM was extremely useful for my work – thanks to opportunities of regular interaction and discussions with prof. Teles and access to the library of the University of Aveiro. I want to express my gratitude for giving me that opportunity.



University of Aveiro Campus.



At work in the office



in leisure time

Pawel Swianiewicz and Filipe Teles

Beauties of Aveiro:



Old railway station with azulejos



Numerous, picturesque channels of the city



Sunset over the ocean, just 10 km from Aveiro