




Administrative Reforms in Context: A Comparative Perspective

Prof. Dr. Sabine Kuhlmann
University of Potsdam

Structure

- 
- A vertical decorative graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of five dark blue downward-pointing chevrons stacked vertically.
- Administrative Reforms in Europe: Nothing but NPM?
 - “Context – a Missing Link”
 - Do Reforms make a difference?
 - Conclusions

Administrative Reforms in Europe: Nothing but NPM?

New Public Management: Convergence, Similarities, Isomorphism?

„The movement has been striking because of the number of nations that have taken up the reform agenda in such a short time and because of how similar their basic strategies have been“ (Kettl 2000:1)

Talk/ Decisions vs. Practice/Action vs. Results/ Impacts

„Welcome to variety!“ (Pollitt 2014)

Nothing but NPM?

NPM
(exter-
nal,
internal)

PA in
Europe

Post-NPM
(extern, intern)

Is the pendulum swinging back?

Other-than-
NPM

Pragmatic Mixtures?

→ Multi-facet combinations
of traditional/sector-
related reforms + NPM
experiments + Post-NPM

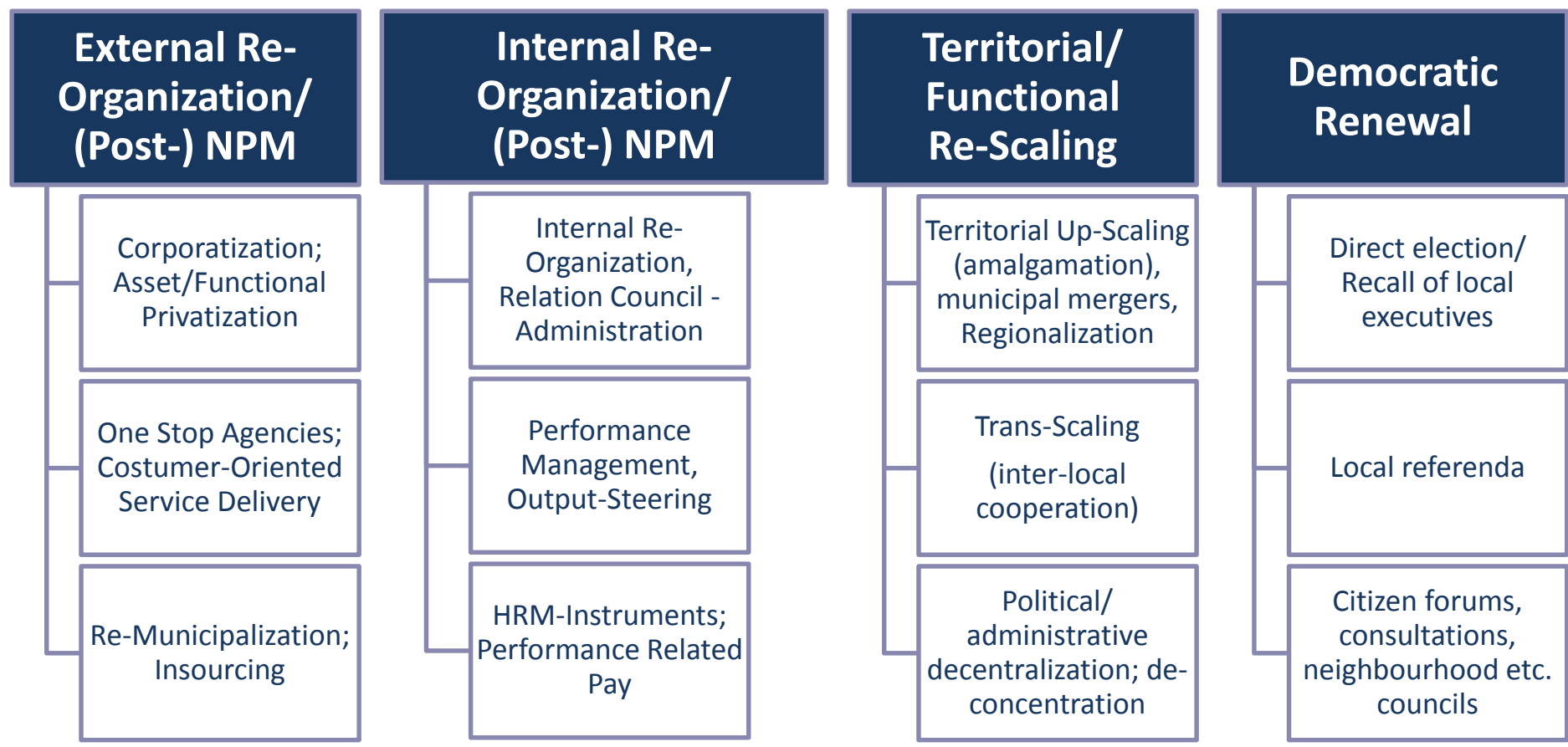


Variety of Local Reform Approaches

Similar discourses - Different paths

(Post) NPM-Reforms

Other-than-NPM-Reforms





Example: Decentralization

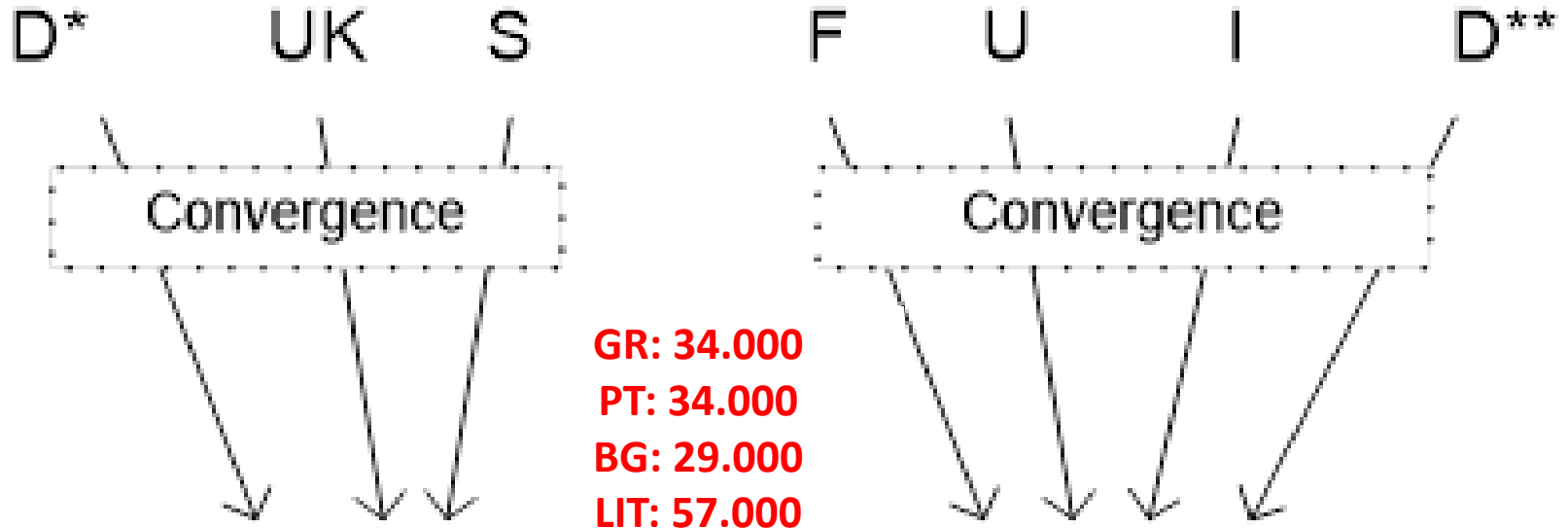
- Political Decentralization: Transfer of state tasks including political decision-making competencies for the local council (French case);
- Administrative Decentralization: Transfer of state tasks without political decision-making competencies for the local council (German case);
- De-Concentration: Creation of locally operating single purpose state agencies substituting local governments (British case).

Example: Decentralization

Decentralization Policy	Germany	France	UK/England
Institutional Changes in the Intergovernmental Setting	Withdrawal of de-concentrated state administration; dissolution of state authorities	Weakening of de-concentrated state administration; however, institutional persistence	Inflation of de-concentrated state administration; agencies/quangos
Territoriality/Functionality	Strengthening of territorial organization; multi-purpose, but financial crisis	Strengthening of the territorial organization; multi-purpose, but units are too small	Weakening of the territorial organization; single-purpose
Local Democracy/Political Accountability	Formal non-political (administrative) decentralization, but in fact politicization of transferred tasks	Political decentralization, in fact strengthening of local executives (mayors)	Administrative de-concentration; weakening of local councils



Example: Territorial Reforms



Up-Scaling:
territorial amalgamation
"Northern European path"
parl. enforcement



Trans-Scaling: Inter-municipal
cooperation
"Southern European path"
voluntary



Convergence, Persistence, Divergence?

On the one hand:

- Some convergence perceivable (Up-Scaling, NPM-tools, trend of decentralization)
- Similar external pressures (fiscally, demographically etc.)
- Mimicking; normative pressure, coercion, isomorphism
- Adopting of reform trends as a strategy of legitimization („rational myths“)

On the other hand:

- Persistent differences between (groups of) countries; different responsiveness of (groups of) countries to various reform trends
- Due to institutional “starting conditions” and path-dependencies of countries
- Historical/cultural embeddedness of institutions → “contexts” shape corridors for reforms and processes of “translation” → divergence/persistence

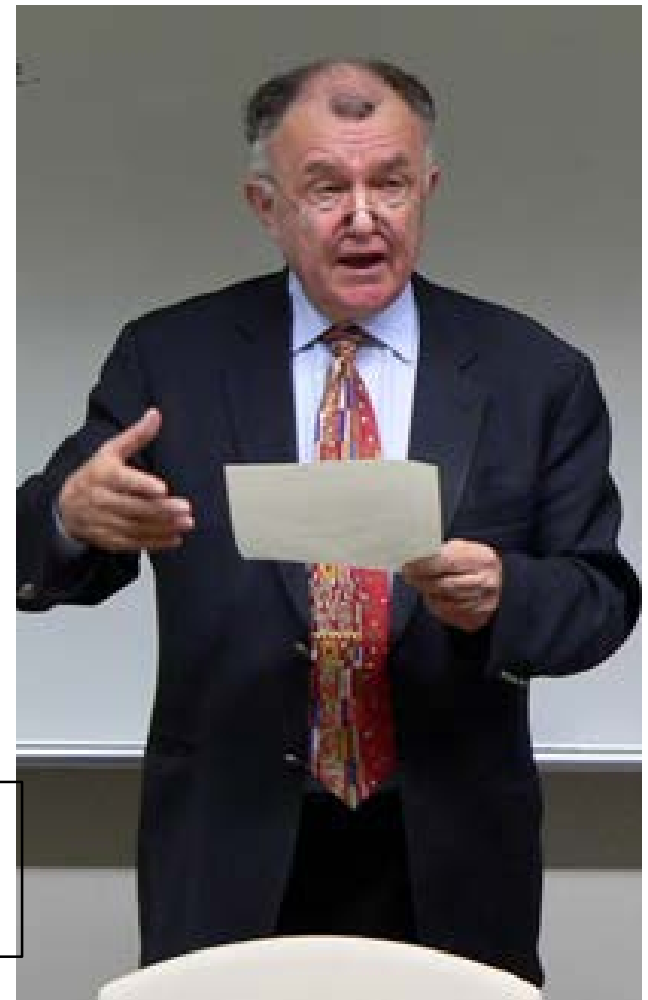


Context – a missing link

„Context – a missing link“

*„The NSM-debate is to be criticized for having pushed aside some crucial premises which culturally and traditionally characterize our politico-administrative system.“
(Wollmann 1996: 42)*

A quite early plea for taking context into account (see also Pollitt 2013)



Operationalizing “Context” in CPA: Five Clusters of Administrative Profiles in Europe

Adm. profile/group of countries	Administrative tradition/culture	Macro-Organization of PA
Continental European Napoleonic (F, I, P, GR, E)	Rule of law (<i>Rechtsstaat</i>), Legalism	Unitary-centralized; weak local government (decentralization in F, I, E since 1980s/90s)
	Southern European subgroup: clientelism, party patronage, politicization	
Continental European federal (D, A, CH)	Rule of law (<i>Rechtsstaat</i>), legalism	federal-decentralized; strong local government
	Switzerland: weaker separation of state and society; weaker public service, legalism	
Scandinavian (S, N, DK, FIN)	Rule of law (<i>Rechtsstaat</i>) culture, transparency-/ contact culture; accessibility of administration for citizenship	Unitary-decentralized; strong local government/civic self- determination
Anglo-Saxon (UK/England)	Public interest culture, pragmatism	Unitary-centralized; strong (since 1980s weakened) local government
Central Eastern European (H, PL, CZ) South Eastern European (BG, RO)	Socialist cadre administration (“Stalinist“ legacy); since the system change, reestablishment of pre-communist (rule of law) traditions	Unitary-decentralized; strong local government (re- centralization since 2011 in H)
		Unitary-centralized; weak local government



Context matters form Reforms

- Different NPM-responsiveness
- Anglo-saxon managerial administrative tradition:
 - Radical NPM-reforms (marketization/ “minimizing”)
 - Cultural accessibility for managerial ideas
 - Comprehensive transfer of concepts and personnel from the private sector
 - „Revolution in Whitehall“; „War against local government“ etc.
- Classical-Continental European Administrative Tradition:
 - Later/more cautious grasp of NPM-Ideas
 - Maintenance of legalist orientation (“maintaining”)
 - Combination of managerial and „Weberian“ principles (Neo-Weberianism)
 - Partly withdrawal of NPM-instruments (e.g. re-municipalization; whole of government approaches; horizontal steering)



Context explains persistence

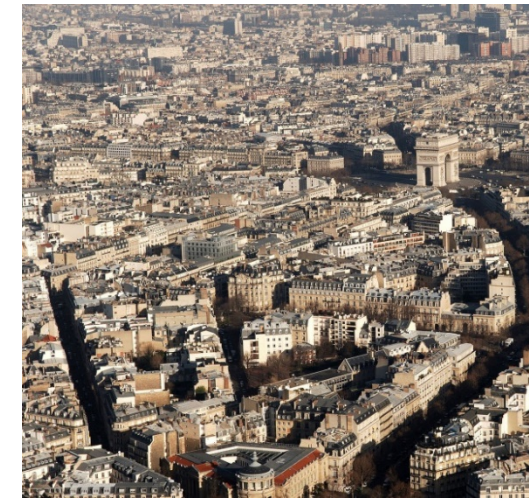
France: “Small is beautiful”

„Mergers giving rise to enlarged jurisdictions are considered to be the ultimate threat – indeed, considered to be a way of committing political suicide” (Thoenig 2005: 691).



UK: “Big is better”

“.....in the UK is the almost obsessive predominance that is always given to production efficiency in any discussion of designing sub-national structures” (Sharpe 1993: 252)



“...Instead, the argument is about the best way to create even larger units in order to achieve greater efficiency of public services...” (John 2010: 101).



Is it possible to change institutional „paths“?

UK: → shift from a multi-purpose to a single-purpose model?

- Hollowing out of the traditionally strong multi-purpose local government system
- Privatization of a high number of public enterprises
- Increasing central-government interventions at the local level
- radical rupture with the historic „dual polity“-tradition and the separational model
- UK „falls out of step with the rest of Europe“ (Stoker 1998)

France: → shift from a centralist state to a decentralized republic?

- *„Over the past 20 years France has moved from one of the most centralized systems in Europe to one of the most decentralized“ (OECD 2003: 71)*
- “Inter-municipal revolution”; 90% of communes; direct election of the inter-municipal councils

Greece → shift from South- to North-Type of territorial organization?

- Number of LGs -80% (since 1997), Ø PT of municipalities from 1.600 to 34.000 (similar trend in Portugal, Bulgaria)



Do reforms make a difference?



Do reforms make a difference?

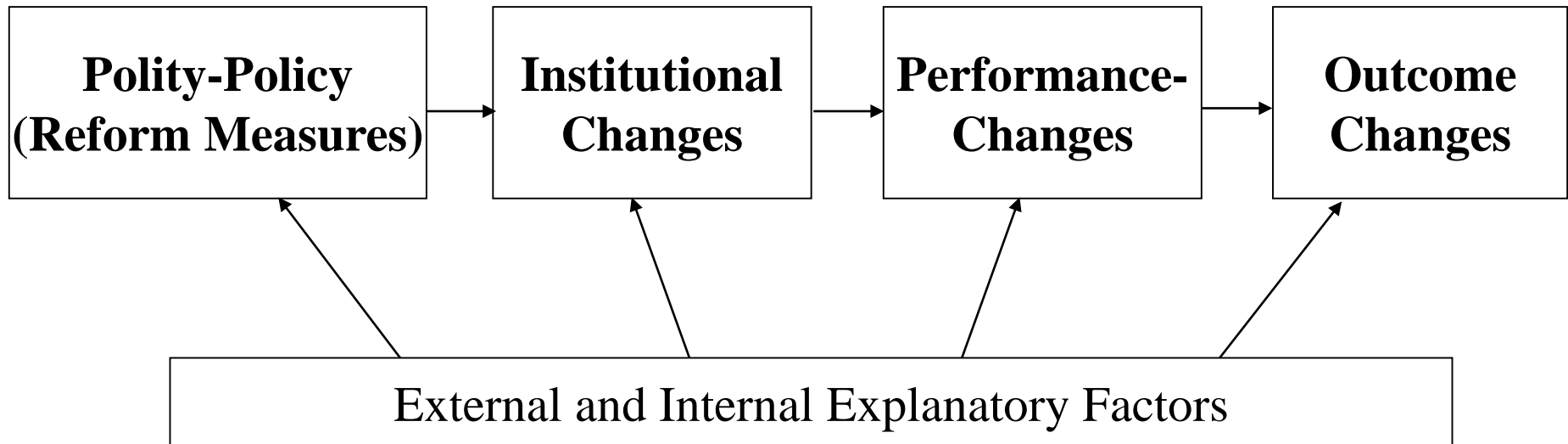
“Even where serious evaluations have taken place, the kind of data required for a reliable judgement about some of the big issues frequently turn out to be inaccessible.”
(Pollitt/Bouckaert 2004: 16)

Do reforms make a difference? Measuring Results and Effects

*Institutional
Evaluation*

*Performance
Evaluation*

*Outcome
Evaluation*





Do reforms make a difference?

- „Evaluation gap“ → Limited knowledge about the effects of administrative reforms
- Problems of causality, accessibility/availability of comparative data; „Street light dilemma“
- Resistance against the disclosure/transparency of reform results
- Germany: administrative reforms predominantly a sub-national issue
→ object of institutional evaluations highly fragmented; assessments hardly coordinated; no central-state institution for reform evaluations
- However: increasing activities of administrative reform evaluations (ex ante/ex post)



Do reforms make a difference? Measuring Results and Effects

Dimensions of Performance	Performance indicators
Democratic control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal decision-making competencies of local council• Actual increase in political discretion• Participation of interests groups/ citizens in decision-making
Horizontal and vertical coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conflict intensity of interactions between sectors/across levels• Capacity of problem solving• Creation of coordination units/institutions
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieved savings (costs, personal)• Changes in output (number of cases)• Ratio input-output
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal quality, formal correctness of service delivery• Professional quality of service delivery• Proximity to citizens/ Customer orientation
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equal treatment of citizens in different local jurisdictions

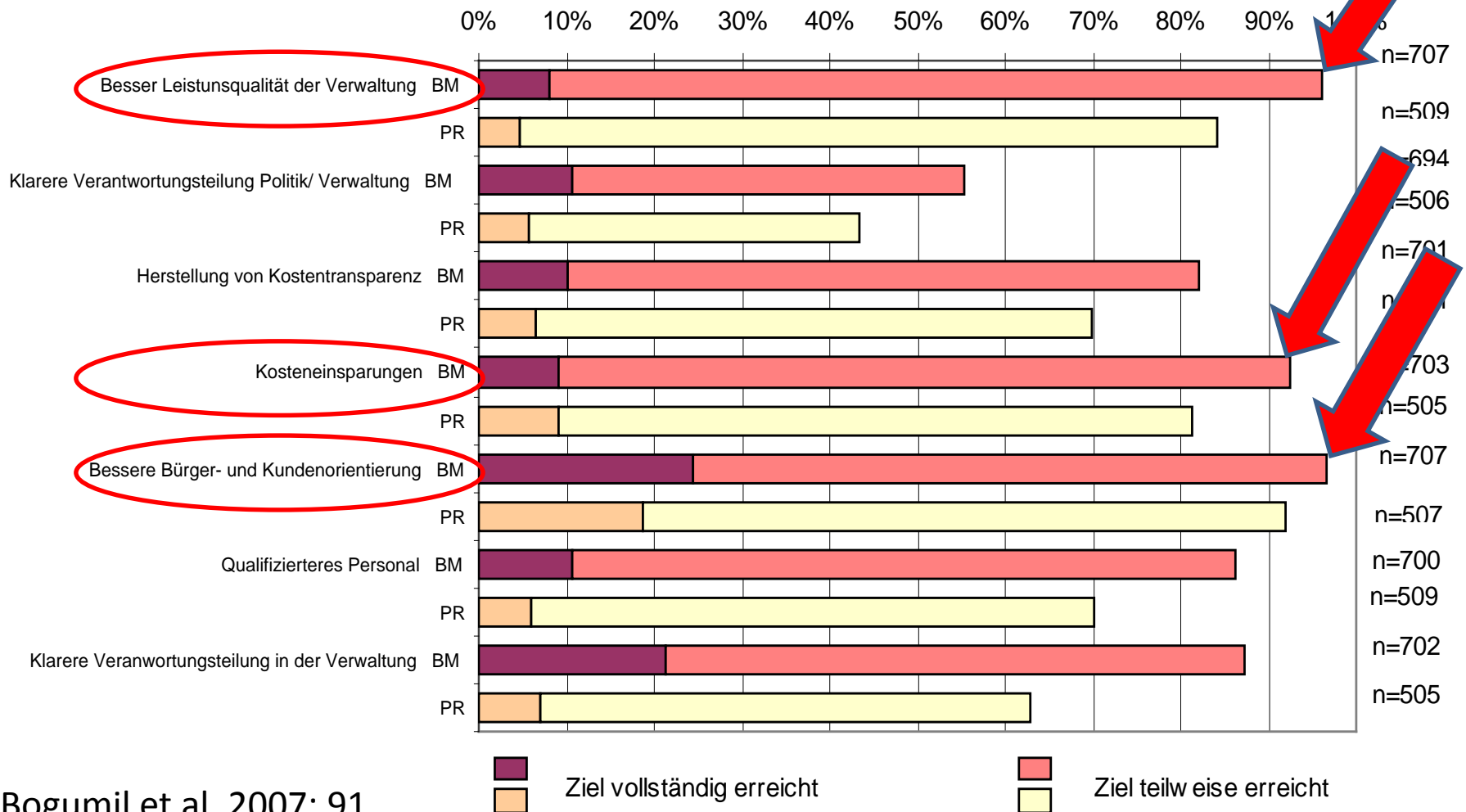


Do reforms make a difference? (Decentralization)

Dimension of assessment	France (Political Decentralization)	Germany (BW) (Administrative Decentralization)	England (Administrative De-concentration)
Effectiveness	+	-	-
Efficiency	-	+	+/-
Horizontal Coordination	+	+/-	-
Vertical Coordination	-	-	+
Democratic Control	0	-	-
Equity	-	-	-

Do reforms make a difference? (New Steering Model)

Zielerreichung der Verwaltungsmodernisierung





Transaction Costs of Administrative Reforms

NSM-Costs
in Baden-
Wuerttemberg:
220 Mill. €



**Preparatory
Costs**

**Processing
Costs**

*Costs for
Consultancy,
Staff, Material*

„This model is too
expensive. We are
under cutback
stress and therefore
it is absolutely
counterproductive“



**Costs for Correction,
Adaptation,
Destruction**

**Effective
Formulas?**

**„Fatal
Remedies“?**

Kuhlmann/Wollmann 2006: 376

#39216187

Conclusions

- **Convergence** between countries/country groups:
 - Discourses (NPM) and instruments (performance measurement)
 - Reform Trajectories (Northern territorial model, decentralization)
 - Perceivable only if level of abstraction is high
- **Divergence/Persistence:**
 - Reform Implementation/modes of steering (top-down/bottom up; minimizing/marketization/Re-Weberianisation)
 - Reform Effects (multi purpose vs. single purpose model; gains vs. losses in democratic participation)
 - Better perceivable if analytical focus is „sharp“; level of abstraction lower
- **Major explanations:**
 - historical path-dependencies;
 - actor-constellations;
 - national/local contexts: adm. cultures/ traditions; institutional “starting conditions”; PA-systems

A Clue for Comparative Research

„...to Google rather than to travel ...can lead to a particularly modern form of superficiality and to ...foolish mistakes.“ (Pollitt 2010: 764)

→ To avoid those mistakes, comparative researchers (also) need to travel and to physically visit their objects of analysis (from time to time)!



Thank you very much for your attention!