GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC MANAGEMENT SERIES

SUB-MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE IN EUROPE: DECENTRALIZATION BEYOND THE MUNICIPAL TIER

EDITED BY NIKOLAOS-KOMNINOS HLEPAS, NORBERT KERSTING, SABINE KUHLMANN, PAWEL SWIANIEWICZ, AND FILIPE TELES

Governance and Public Management

Series Editors
Robert Fouchet
Universite Aix Marseille
Marseille Cedex 03, France

Juraj Nemec
Masaryk University
Economics and Administration
Brno, Czech Republic

IIAS Series: Governance and Public Management

International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS)—*Improving Administrative Sciences Worldwide*

Website: http://www.iias-iisa.org

Governance and Public Management Series

The *Governance and Public Management* series, published in conjunction with the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), brings the best research in public administration and management to a global audience. Encouraging a diversity of approach and perspective, the series reflects the Institute's conviction for a neutral and objective voice, grounded in the exigency of fact. How is governance conducted *now*? How could it be done better? What defines the law of administration and the management of public affairs, and can their implementation be enhanced? Such questions lie behind the Institute's core value of *accountability*: those who exercise authority must account for its use—to those on whose behalf they act.

More information about this series at
http://www.palgrave.com/series/15021

Nikolaos-Komninos Hlepas
Norbert Kersting • Sabine Kuhlmann
Pawel Swianiewicz • Filipe Teles
Editors

Sub-Municipal Governance in Europe

Decentralization Beyond the Municipal Tier

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Nikolaos-Komninos Hlepas
Political Science and Public Administration
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Athens, Greece

Sabine Kuhlmann
Political Science, Public Administration and Organization
University of Potsdam
Potsdam, Germany

Filipe Teles
Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences
University of Aveiro
Aveiro, Portugal

Norbert Kersting
Department of Political Science
University of Münster
Münster, Germany

Pawel Swianiewicz
Department of Local Development and Policy, Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies
University of Warsaw
Warsaw, Poland

Governance and Public Management
ISBN 978-3-319-64724-1 ISBN 978-3-319-64725-8 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64725-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017955212

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

This publication is meant to extend our knowledge about the sub-municipal governance in Europe. It offers country analyses about the multifaceted institutional world below the city level of government, called "sub-municipal units" (SMUs). The book contains analyses of sub-municipal governance in countries with markedly different administrative contexts and local government systems that are also reflected by the variety of SMU structures across the European continent. Thus, the Continental/South European Napoleonic type is represented by case studies on Greece, Portugal and Spain, the Continental European Federal type by Germany and Belgium (Flanders/Antwerp), the Anglo-Saxon type by the UK, the Nordic type by Norway (Oslo), and the Central Eastern European type by the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovenia. This selection of country cases enables the reader to draw conclusions on how different administrative profiles and local government traditions influence—in combination with other factors—the implementation and actual functioning of SMUs.

This book is an outcome of the COST-Action IS 1207 "Local Public Sector Reforms: An International Comparison (LocRef[1])," which the authors of this preface had the honor to serve as chair and vice-chair from 2013 to 2017 within the EU/Horizon 2020 framework. The main objective of LocRef was to identify approaches and effects of local public sector reforms from an international comparative perspective, to explain these approaches/effects, and to draw lessons for future policymaking. LocRef embraced more than 300 senior and early stage researchers in 31 countries from about 60 academic institutions. Based on a shared European

perspective, it brought together academics and practitioners in order to jointly assess the hitherto scattered and dispersed information bases on local public sector reforms, to generate new comparative knowledge, and to develop policy-relevant frameworks in order to design future modernization processes in Europe. The overarching questions addressed by LocRef were:

> Which approaches and effects of local public sector reform can be identified from an international comparative perspective? How can these be explained? What lessons can be drawn for policymaking?

The following basic reform trajectories were studied within four specialized working groups:

1. Reorganization of Local Service Delivery, so-called External (Post-) NPM Reforms (LocRef working group I)
2. Managerial Reforms, so-called Internal (Post-)NPM Reforms (LocRef working group II)
3. Territorial and Functional Re-Scaling (LocRef working group III)
4. Democratic Renewal (LocRef working group IV)

The volume presented here in particular draws on the activities of LocRef working group III on "Territorial and Functional Re-Scaling," chaired by Nikos Hlepas, Reto Steiner, and Ellen Wayenberg, as well as on important contributions coming from working group IV on "Democratic Renewal," directed by Colin Copus, Bas Denters, and Anders Lidström. The two working groups have joined their forces and invested many efforts to realize this book project. It is a prime example of successful academic cooperation across borders, institutions, and disciplines and represents a major contribution to the advancement of the international study of local governance.

Vice-Chair of LocRef, KU Leuven, Belgium — Geert Bouckaert
Chair of LocRef, University of Potsdam, Germany — Sabine Kuhlmann

Notes

1. Refer to http://www.uni-potsdam.de/cost-locref/.

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Decentralization Beyond the Municipal Tier

Nikos Hlepas, Norbert Kersting, Sabine Kuhlmann, Pawel Swianiewicz, and Filipe Teles

Background

Municipalities have been sub-divided into sub-municipal territorial units since many years and in many different countries in Europe. The Portuguese Freguesia, the Polish sołectwo, the German Stadtbezirk,

N. Hlepas (✉)
Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

N. Kersting
Department of Political Science, University of Muenster, Muenster, Germany

S. Kuhlmann
Lehrstuhl für Politikwissenschaft, Verwaltung und Organisation, Universität, Potsdam, Germany

P. Swianiewicz
Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, Department of Local Development and Policy, Univeristy of Warsaw, Warszawa, Poland

F. Teles
Department of Social, Political and Territorial Sciences, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

N.-K. Hlepas et al. (eds.), *Sub-Municipal Governance in Europe*, Governance and Public Management,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64725-8_1

different kinds of parish councils, neighborhood bodies, city boroughs and arrondissements show the variety of sub-municipal units. Most of them can lean on long-lasting traditions, following older communities and old historical paths. They were serving practical purposes, while they were, in most cases, embodying socio-cultural identities and expressing local communities.

In recent decades, reforms introducing or re-organizing sub-municipal territorial units have been initiated in several European countries, including the UK, Germany, Spain, Greece and Portugal, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as some cities in Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Belgium (an overview by Swianiewicz 2015: 173–174). Many of these reforms were attempting to strengthen participatory democracy (Daemen and Shaap 2012; Kersting et al. 2009; Kersting 2016) or representation of different territories in municipal decision-making (Van Ostaaijen et al. 2012), while optimizing territorial structure of municipal administration and increasing service efficiency were not regarded as less important reform drivers (Griggs and Roberts 2012: 185). Sub-municipal governance is often seen as an appropriate tool to counterbalance the negative effects of size, in terms of municipal area or/and population, sometimes in rural areas following amalgamation reforms (e.g. in Germany or Greece), other times in big cities facing negative effects of urban density and overcrowded services with overstretched catchment areas, while simultaneously suffering from alienation and civic disengagement.

A Common Legal Framework?

The most important common legal framework for Local Self-Government in Europe, the European Charter of Local Self Government (ECLSG), does not refer to the sub-municipal level. But, the *Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority* that was opened for signature as a convention by the states signatories in 2009 seems to address the issue of sub-municipal governance. According to this additional protocol (art. 1 par. 2), "the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority denotes the right to seek to determine or to influence the exercise of a local authority's powers and responsibilities" and the law (art. 1 par. 3) "may provide particular measures for different circumstances or categories of persons". In article 2 ("Implementing measures for the right to participate") of the additional protocol it is said that measures for the exercise of the right to

participate shall include, among others: "..ii. securing the establishment of: a procedures for involving people which may include consultative processes, local referendums and petitions and, where the local authority has many inhabitants and/or covers a large geographical area, measures to involve people at a level close to them;…".

Up to now, this Additional Protocol has already been signed by 15 member states of the Council of Europe (Belgium, Norway and the UK being among them), while the Council of Europe had already previously adopted pertinent recommendations, such as the *Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life*, which was "…considering that, in certain circumstances, the level of trust people have in their elected institutions has declined and that there is a need for state institutions to re-engage with and respond to the public in new ways to maintain the legitimacy of decision-making…". More precisely, this Recommendation asked the states to develop:

> … both in the most populated urban centres and in rural areas, a form of neighborhood democracy, so as to give citizens more influence over their local environment and municipal activities in the various areas of the municipality. More specifically:
>
> 1. set up, at sub-municipal level, bodies, where appropriate elected or composed of elected representatives, which could be given advisory and information functions and possibly delegated executive powers;
> 2. set up, at sub-municipal level, administrative offices to facilitate contacts between local authorities and citizens….

Furthermore, the Recommendation Rec(2003)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on neighborhood services in disadvantaged urban areas (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 February 2003) asks the member states to "…set up bodies, such as neighborhood councils, either elected or composed of elected representatives, which could be given advisory and information functions and possibly delegated executive powers;—encourage local residents to become involved—directly or via neighborhood associations—in the design and implementation of projects which have a direct bearing on their neighborhood;—appoint, through local authorities, elected representatives specifically responsible for monitoring neighborhood problems on a cross-sectoral basis (allocation or delegation of powers on a geographical as well as subject-specific basis".

Constitutive Elements of Sub-Municipal Decentralization

These multiple attempts of the Council of Europe to encourage and trigger the institutionalization of neighborhood bodies and services in Europe could lean upon previous experience in many European states. As already pointed out, different countries had developed a rich variety of sub-municipal institutions. Out of the plethora of intra- and sub-municipal decentralization forms (reaching from local outposts of city administration to "quasi-federal" structures), this book focuses on territorial sub-municipal units, which combine multipurpose territorial responsibility with democratic legitimacy and can be seen as institutions promoting the articulation and realization of collective choices at a sub-municipal level (Ostrom and Ostrom 1970). These kinds of sub-municipal organizations/entities should be concentrating the following characteristics:

- *Sub-municipal territorial jurisdiction*: They have territorially defined competence over a specific sub-area of the municipal territory.
- *Multipurpose*: They have responsibilities in different policy fields; they are not single-purpose organizations.
- *Not a fully independent layer of local government and without exclusive territorial jurisdiction over local affairs and citizens*: They function as territorial parts of a municipality. That means that even if they have their own legal personality and even if they reach a kind of semi-autonomy, their territory is an integral part of the municipal area, their citizens are also citizens of the municipality and municipal decisions are directly (without the need for additional sub-municipal decisions/approvals—possibly with few exceptions) being implemented at sub-municipal level.
- *Democratic legitimacy/accountability*: They are governed by democratically elected (directly or indirectly) bodies, or even by popular assemblies. This does not imply that national legislation regulating how sub-municipal councils/boards are elected would be a precondition. Municipal statutes and soft laws introducing democratic election of sub-municipal boards/councils/chairs, etc. could be issued by individual municipalities (as it is the case in Poland and elsewhere).

- The aforementioned characteristics are the constitutive elements for the definition of sub-municipal governance, which is analyzed in this book: it refers to *multipurpose sub-municipal units with territorial competence and democratic legitimacy which do not constitute a fully independent layer of local government and do not possess exclusive territorial jurisdiction over their local affairs and citizens.*

These sub-municipal units are political entities (Peteri 2008) connecting individual citizens and governments and providing mechanisms of political and social accountability. A main task of sub-municipal governance is to enhance the legitimacy and responsiveness of municipal institutions. Furthermore, they provide local knowledge in political agenda setting and decision-making and often fulfill administrative functions.

Different in Urban and Rural Areas

The rationale and origin of sub-municipal units in Europe is usually different in urban (especially large cities) setting and in rural areas.

In big cities, sub-municipal governance is supposed to give voice to different city parts and at the same time offer to central city leadership the possibility to come closer to and cooperate with different initiatives and groups located in these city parts. Central city administrations in big cities are often suffering from overpartification and bureaucratization, disregarding modern urban complexity and creating distance from citizens and different communities within city borders; therefore, they need sub-municipal institutions as a remedy. Sub-municipal units can play an important role in agenda setting, decision-making, policy implementation and feedback; they can promote sustainable urban regeneration and planning, decentralized technological innovation (e.g. in energy) and social innovation (sub-local social welfare systems and networks).

In rural areas, sub-municipal institutions have usually deep historical roots, related to various forms of self-government on a village level. The names *parish*, *freguesia* (in Portugal), *sołectwo* (in Poland), *kmetstvo* (in Bulgaria) and several others clearly refer to that tradition. In some countries, their existence is perceived as more "natural", compared to sub-municipal institutions in urban settings. Frequently, they have been created in order to facilitate the implementation and mitigate eventual negative effects of amalgamation reforms. Rural sub-municipal institutions can also be important

for service delivery and voice, especially if they are parts of overstretched municipalities covering a larger surface with several settlements/villages. In such cases, sub-municipal units (SMUs) are often identity- and community-keeping institutions.

Roles and Benefits of Sub-Municipal Governance

A more systematic review of benefits from sub-municipal governance has been presented by Lowndess and Sullivan (2008), who mention four major arguments, often shared (in different or supplementary versions) by other authors as well:

- *Civic rationale*: increasing citizen participation in local governance and revitalizing civic culture and local community (also Tavares and Carr 2013). Participation at sub-municipal level would also develop "social capital of a Toquevillian sort, contributing to increased social trust and norms that promote collective action" (Jun and Musso 2013: 74).
- *Social rationale*: facilitating a citizen-focused approach to governance and (Van Assche and Dierickx 2007) elevating local knowledge and providing neighborhood-level feedback to city leaders. Communicating important information about residential preferences and street-level conditions to administrators and elected officials (Berry et al. 1993), which is particularly important in large urban areas, where patterns of service delivery may poorly reflect the local needs and preferences (Levy et al. 1974).
- *Political rationale*: improvement of local democracy, since citizens can access sub-municipal governance more easily and hold politicians directly accountable for their actions and omissions. Consequently, leaders at this level are more likely to be responsive to citizens' opinions. Also, the local democracy in a municipality as a whole could benefit from power-sharing (Peteri 2008: 9) and a more balanced institutional design through sub-municipal governance (see Kersting and Vetter 2003; Kersting et al. 2009).
- *Economic rationale*: more efficient and effective use of available resources, in part due to creative local synergies. Services in which direct contact with citizens or small groups is particularly important could be delegated to the sub-municipal level. The same applies when flexibility in management arrangements is needed, since it can be better achieved on the lowest territorial level (Swianiewicz 2015: 175).

From a practical standpoint, sub-municipal units may play various roles in the local political systems. The potential roles may be summarized in the following way:

1. *Facilitator (animator) of local activeness:* In this vision, the main function of sub-municipal units is to initiate or support various kinds of cultural, sports and educational activities in the local neighborhood. One may distinguish between two versions of that role:

   (a) *Organizer*—the neighborhood council organizes some events important for the local community.
   (b) *Catalyst* (of other's activities)—neighborhood councilors do not necessarily organize (initiate) activities of their own invention but concentrate on supporting bottom-up initiatives developed by local societal organizations or individual citizens.

2. *Representation of local interests in the city*: This role may take different forms:

   (a) *Decision-making on limited scope of policies*—sub-municipal units make decisions which are binding, for example concerning small investments or repairs in their neighborhood (village), participate in the commissions to decide on tenders or nominations for public posts in their area.
   (b) *Consultation*—municipal government consults its decisions with sub-municipal councilors (or e.g. village heads/leaders) and this is treated as an important element of public consultation process.
   (c) *Lobbying*—sub-municipal politicians from their own initiative or under the pressure of residents lobby for some actions to be undertaken by the municipal government (e.g. improvement of access to some services, new investment in local infrastructure).

3. *Service provider (mini local government)*: Responsibilities for concrete tasks (functions) have been passed to sub-municipal units, which not only make respective decisions but also organize implementation of the tasks (service delivery).
4. *Driving belt* (*herald*): Dissemination of information on city policies. Sub-municipal units are tools of information policy in the municipality, citizens may learn about municipal policies and their rationale.

5. *Breeding ground* for political talents (step in a political career for neighborhood/village local activists). The typical role would be "incubator" (local politicians starting their political career from SMU level (Kersting 2004 for Germany, Swianiewcz and Chełstowska 2015 for Poland) and moving to municipal or national politics, but following Kjærs' (2012) distinction we may also find examples of "respirator", when politicians use the sub-municipal level after lost municipal/regional/national election to re-build their political position.

Some theorizing voices in the literature are focusing on the *intermediary* role of sub-municipal governance (Berger and Neuhaus 1977; Jun and Musso 2013: 74–76) and sub-municipal units that "act as mediating organizations in communicating spatially differentiated preferences to local leaders" (Jun and Musso 2013: 74), since formal city-wide democratic structures would poorly represent sub-municipal interests and, even in overstretched rural municipalities, the voice of distant villages and settlements would not be heard. In big cities, dispersed interests of residents would tend to impede coalitional politics, while well-funded interests of business and developmental elites or well-organized interests of supra-local NGOs and political parties would prevail, hollowing out needs and demands of neighborhood stakeholders. Others suggest that seemingly neutral administrative procedural rules may result in systematic biases in service delivery patterns (Levy et al. 1974; Jun and Musso 2013: 75). Therefore, this intermediary role of sub-municipal governance would be crucial in order to address aspects of *equity and fairness* (Peteri 2008: 6), in terms of both interest representation and service delivery, while the role of sub-municipal governance can be indispensable for the inclusion of minorities.

Emphasis was also given to the *instrumental aspect* of sub-municipal governance that would better fit the *complexity* of contexts and problems, needs, and demands in modern urban environments (Jun and Musso 2013: 74). While social movement organizations and initiatives would increasingly take a metropolitan focus, sub-municipal governance would combine vertical (mediator, "advocate and messanger": Peteri 2008: 15) with horizontal functions (cohesion, mobilization of local capacities, coordination and synergies), providing indispensable territorial links to urban governance as a whole. On the other hand, in rural areas with large municipalities, sub-municipal organization would incorporate pre-existing pluralisms of *local community identities* often ignored in parent council politics, especially when it comes to smaller and outlier villages (Deleon and Naff 2016).

Criticisms and Reforms

An important part of the literature is putting the benefits of sub-municipal governance in question. In his "local scale trap" thesis, Purcell (2006) has heavily criticized the sub-division of local democracy into smaller-scaled localities, emphasizing the socially constructed and politically contended nature of jurisdictional scale. Drawing on the social movement theory, Purcell argues that there is a need to mobilize citizens across the different parts of the municipality rather than privileging the sub-municipal scale down to the neighborhood level. Others argue that territorial mobilization may aggravate rather than ameliorate *power inequalities* of different territories (Kearns 1995), mostly highlighting the danger of decision-making processes that would privilege parochial concerns of wealthy territories rather than engaging a diverse range of stakeholders in collective action and multilevel municipal governance. Spatial inequalities found within municipalities would tend to *aggravate the socioeconomic biases found in most forms of political participation*. Frustrating implementation of municipal policies that pursue equitable outcomes in benefit of the larger community could also be the result of localized NIMBYism often protecting property values (Dear 1992). The latter was found by Jun and Musso (2013: 98) also in lower-income communities, even though high costs may hamper their focus on substantive activities on the long run.

A crisis of legitimacy of the local political system can be seen, on the one hand, in growing online and offline political protest (for innovation in the "invented space", see Kersting 2013). The crisis of representative democracy can be seen, on the other hand, in growing political apathy and cynicism and a decline of political party membership as well as voter turnout ("invited space") in a number of countries. Both phenomena seem to be influenced by the growing demand for participation in the citizenship at the local level.

The 1990s saw more open dialogue-oriented participatory instruments being implemented (Kersting and Vetter 2003). Also, new forms of vote-centric direct democracy such as referendums and initiatives began to be implemented on the one hand. On the other hand, participatory instruments in the field of talk-centric deliberative democracies began to be implemented too in some countries (Smith 2009; Kersting 2007). In a number of countries, "deliberative instruments" such as participatory budgeting were applied (Kersting et al. 2016). Deliberative democracy often developed a path from conflict to consensual deliberative decision-making. These new participatory instruments spread worldwide (for the

"deliberative turn", see also Dryzek 2002). Participatory inventions are predominantly realized at the local level, which can be regarded as a laboratory for democratic innovation. Based on the recruitment of the participants, the following three ideal types can be identified: Open "Forums" are open for everybody and based on self-selection. Alternative "Minipublics", often called citizen jury or citizen assembly, use random selection or the recruitment of members. New "advisory boards" have elected representatives (from political parties or organized interest groups) as their members (for the typology, see Kersting et al. 2009; Kersting 2016). Sub-municipal councils could be regarded as an advisory board for the municipal council.

Results of Empirical Studies

Criticisms seem to prevail in many *empirical studies* of sub-municipal governance: In their study of Scandinavian cities, Bäck et al. (2005) found only ambiguous results related to expected cost savings of *service delivery*, while the effects of increased *community involvement* were not found to be durable. Contact of neighborhood councilors with citizens was not much more frequent than citizens' previous contact with city councilors. In their study of the UK cities, Griggs and Roberts (2012: 206–207) come to the conclusion that sub-municipal structures often generate unmet expectations among stakeholders, mainly due to limited authority and weak influence of the sub-municipal level on key decision-making. In their study of Birmingham, Rotterdam and Bologna, Ringeling et al. (2012: 199–200) stress the fact that city politicians and bureaucrats tend to prevent neighborhood councils from becoming too strong, while these sub-municipal councils would strongly be "self-referential" and would neither organize citizen's participation nor diminish the distance between city government and citizens. Sub-municipal governance would tend to *duplicate local council politics* instead of being a tool of democratic improvement, as originally conceived. Duplication of municipal politics was also found by Swianiewicz et al. (2013) in their study of Polish cities, where the role of sub-municipal institutions as "breeding ground" for political talents seems to stand out. On the other hand, Swianiewicz (2015: 195) also stresses the fact that a "positive relationship…has been discovered between citizens' interest in neighborhood councils and the scope of spending authorities allocated" to them. This would provide

"foundation for careful optimism", after all in most European cities, the option of radical decentralization has not "really been tested so far", since the Scandinavian cities where the sub-municipal level sometimes spends nearly half of the municipal budget usually do not have directly elected sub-municipal councils.

Opinion polls in German cities showed that sub-municipal councils are regarded as highly important in German cities (in 2014, approximately 2700 citizens and 600 councilors were interviewed; see Kersting 2016). About 71% of the citizens evaluate sub-municipal councils as being very important. Only 7% of the citizens do not see them important at all. In the ranking of different participatory instruments, sub-municipal councils have similar acceptance like self-selected citizen forums, youth parliaments, and so on. In the group of the local politicians, this participatory instrument is also highly respected. In this case, 69% of the members of the city council see them as (very) important, while 10% of the councilors regard them as not important (at all). Local politicians give for example better marks for some sub-municipal councils compared to youth parliaments. But politicians rank advisory boards for migrants slightly higher.

Some positive findings have also been reported in *Portugal*, where sub-municipal governance enjoys a strong democratic legitimacy and the Freguesias are deeply rooted in political culture: Carr and Tavares (2013, 2014) found a positive relationship between the number of parish governments and civic engagement, while sub-city institutional fragmentation would nurture political and civic skills, as parishes act as channels that encourage residents to express their views on public issues and participate in sub-municipal elections (Tavares 2016). Furthermore, the presence of nonpartisan candidates increases voter turnout at the parish level (Tavares 2016). Finally, municipalities with higher levels of sub-city fragmentation (SMUs) were also found to be associated with higher levels of spending and larger transfers to SMUs (Tavares and Rodrigues 2015).

Questions and Topics for Analysis

This book will take advantage of already conducted empirical surveys and case studies in most of the investigated countries, offering a variety of different approaches and findings which are expected to mostly refer to evaluation of sub-municipal governance. The analysis will, nevertheless, follow

the pattern introduced by the LocRef conceptual framework (Bouckaert and Kuhlmann 2016: 3) and attend to cover its main guiding questions:

- The *causes* of specific reform agendas and the formulation of institutional reform packages by relevant stakeholders.
- The adoption of reform measures, *institutional changes*, and the degree of reform implementation.
- The *effects* of reforms and the influence of specific choices on local government performance.

Further drawing upon this framework, this book analyzes the following main topics, each one them responding to guiding research questions:

a. *Historic paths and reform drivers, prevalence and intra-national diversity* (responding to the questions when, why, where and how have SMUs been introduced)

Possible reform triggers include bringing decision-making closer to the citizen, eventually counterbalancing the negative effects of size in big cities and overstretched municipalities, adapting to the specific needs of a territory, decentralizing tasks that are otherwise within municipal jurisdiction, facilitating amalgamations or/and counterbalancing negative effects of amalgamations, preserving local identity and social cohesion, giving distinct voice to different parts of the city/municipality (Hlepas 1990: 265).

Sub-municipal governance institutions may have been created when windows of opportunity emerged (amalgamations, drop of turnout in elections and legitimacy crises, city riots and other crises due to segregation) or indicate path dependencies (persistent local identities, traces of former institutions, etc.). Sub-municipal institutions might have been initiated by central and/or local governments, the latter sometimes being entitled or even encouraged thereto. Discretionary power of municipal statutes can greatly differ across and within countries, just as it happens with the level of institutionalization, the legal status (e.g. distinct sub-municipal legal personality or not) and the eventual guarantees of existence.

Prevalence of sub-municipal governance can be restricted in some single cities, some specific categories of municipalities (bigger cities, local authorities created through mergers, etc.), while in other cases, it could be an option or on obligation for most municipalities in a country. In some

countries, the presence of sub-municipal entities is restricted in a "natural way" by territorial organization. In particular, if territorial fragmentation of the rural areas is big, with nearly each settlement unit (even very small village) having its own local government, there is no much space for sub-municipal structures, which may exist in bigger cities only. Among countries covered by this volume, Czech Republic and, to a lesser extent, also Slovenia and Spain are close to this model.

b. Political autonomy and democratic relevance/legitimacy (responding to the question, what is the role of sub-municipal governance for local democracy and local politics)

Besides the local specific actors and network constellations, the relative political weight of sub-municipal governance within local politics also depends on the municipal election rules, mostly their direct or indirect election. Also, the balance between local and political party-based election, the possibility of double mandates (accumulation of mandates), the role of sub-municipal mandates for political careers and the level of citizens' participation (e.g. through participatory budgeting, popular assemblies) influence the relation between parent municipality and sub-municipal institutions. The level of sub-municipal accountability to the parent municipality and the eventual powers of municipal bodies to nominate and recall sub-municipal politicians/administrators are decisive for the level of sub-municipal autonomy, especially when sub-municipal institutions do not have channels of direct contact and cooperation with the state and other supra-municipal levels of authority.

c. *Functional scope and policy discretion* (responding to the question about the functional scope and the discretional autonomy of sub-municipal governance, regarding competence, resources and organization)

The policy scope of sub-municipal units can be (totally or partly) predefined by law or delegated by the municipality. Tasks of these units can be mandatory and/or voluntary, unitary for the whole municipal territory, or differentiated across the various sub-municipal units. The scope of functions and the corresponding discretion of the sub-municipal level can deviate in different policy fields, such as education, caring functions (child care, elderly care, etc.), health, housing, social assistance, planning, permitting

(shops, businesses, etc.). After all, following Dahl and Tufte (1973), one would expect that the wider scope of functions of sub-municipal units would tend to increase citizen interest in sub-municipal governance. Although the original discussion of Dahl and Tufte did not concern sub-municipal units, this claim has been to a large extent confirmed by earlier study on Polish boroughs of large cities (Swianiewicz 2015). Supervision powers and tools for municipal bodies concerning activities and decisions of the sub-municipal level (controls, approvals, monitoring, etc.) should, however, also be taken into account when the autonomy of the sub-municipal level is being assessed. The role of sub-municipal governance can furthermore strongly fluctuate across the different stages of public policy (agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, policy evaluation). Jun and Musso (2013: 98), for instance, highlighted the role of neighborhood communities for agenda setting and planning decisions, but we expect important deviations across the investigated countries and within.

The proportion of sub-municipal expenditure on total municipal spending and the amount of available financial resources also appear to be reasonable measures of sub-municipal autonomy. Other important financial aspects would be the possibility of sub-municipal taxation, the question about unconditional (block grant) or conditional (earmarked grants) financial transfer from the parent municipality and, of course, the issue whether there are direct financial transfers from other levels of governance, as well as the level of spending autonomy and sub-municipal discretion concerning spending priorities. Finally, there is the question whether sub-municipal spending is subject to municipal or external supervision (controls, monitoring, ad hoc approvals) or both.

Another issue is the organizational structure of sub-municipal administration (eventually including single-purpose entities, such as schools, nurseries and elderly homes) and its accountability to municipal or/and to sub-municipal bodies, as well as whether human resources management is subject to the parent municipality or to sub-municipal bodies.

d. *Evaluation and perspectives* (responding to the question how the experience with sub-municipal governance is being evaluated in the corresponding country, which are the prevailing trends and emerging perspectives)

The major (political, economic, policy-related, demographic, etc.) challenges for sub-municipal governance will be highlighted; furthermore, the favorable or unfavorable conditions for good performance and functioning can be pointed out. Based on eventually existing empirical research, case studies, expert opinions and literature, an overall assessment can be made about advantages and disadvantages, successes and shortcomings of sub-municipal and eventually about the institutional settings or innovative tools that do function and the ones that do not (and the reasons why).

Furthermore, the prevailing dynamics concerning sub-municipal governance will be shown.

It will be investigated whether sub-municipal governance is rising or declining, in terms of both numbers and democratic/service performance, as well as in terms of awareness and public interest/acceptance.

Finally, the emerging perspectives should be detected and whether they include further development, or decline and even abolishment, possibilities and needs for reforms concerning the sub-municipal level (territorial, functional or/and democratic reforms), as well as future roles. More specifically, what kind of reform pressures emerge and which reform agendas have eventually been taken up.

This book covers 10 European countries from different parts of the continent (Southern, Middle, Eastern and Northern Europe) representing different local government systems and democratic traditions, but also different experiences with sub-municipal governance. Country chapters will present institutional settings for sub-municipal units without excluding informal community practices at the sub-municipal level. A central ambition of this book will be to present and evaluate a wide range of different institutions and practices of sub-municipal governance in several European countries, covering big cities, middle-sized municipalities and rural areas. In order to evaluate their national experience, the authors of country chapters will also take advantage of the eventually existing empirical surveys and case studies in their countries. Country chapters that will follow address the aforementioned four main topics, a common pattern that will be facilitating systematic comparisons while at the same time leaving enough space for national peculiarities and priorities chosen and highlighted by the authors.