

Call for Papers

*Special Panel “Multilevel Democracy”*

**“Decentralization, Regionalization, and Territorial Consolidation: From Incremental Adjustments to ‘Paradigm Shifts’ at the Sub-national Level of Government?”**

Within the Permanent Study Group IV “Local Governance and Democracy”

To be organised at the 32<sup>nd</sup> EGPA Annual Conference 7-10 September 2010 in Toulouse

Chairpersons:

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In many European countries, there has recently been a new wave of decentralisation and territorial consolidation at the sub-national level of government. In some cases, these reforms conspicuously contradict the common pattern of administrative modernization, according to which changes are incremental, step-by-step, path-dependent, and small-scale. By contrast, the territorial and functional re-organization processes currently spreading across Europe sometimes tend to mark real “paradigm shifts” and “critical junctures” that challenge inherited institutional patterns and administrative legacies and could pave the way for new institutional paths.

The reasons and driving forces of this new trend of a more comprehensive and large-scale sub-state administrative re-organization are manifold. On the one hand, there are strong exogenous incentives for regionalization and de-centralization coming from the EU-integration process. On the other hand, growing functional and economic pressures fuel attempts towards regionalization and decentralization all over Europe. Many countries have established new regional units of public administration and comprehensive forms of inter-local cooperation in order to overcome fragmented institutional structures in metropolitan areas that inhibit effective policy coordination and implementation. The decentralization of state functions to lower levels of government, too, is directed at reducing shortcomings in territorial coordination and steering. The multi-function local government or a regional unit of self-administration are often regarded as more appropriate for sub-national administrative steering than single-purpose state authorities that tend to concentrate on single policy areas and lack capacities for cross-policies coordination in the territory.

Furthermore, the demographic change, growing fiscal restraints, and the supra-local impact of many sub-national policies (e.g. environment, economic promotion etc.) are major driving forces for sub-state administrative re-organization. As a reaction to the decline in population, increasing fiscal stress, and the necessity of supra-local coordination in numerous policy areas, some sub-national actors have voted for an amalgamation of territorial units in order to achieve economies of scale and to improve policy coordination. Others have preferred the

more smooth form of inter-local cooperation and have retained the political autonomy of the participating municipalities. Besides expected improvements in output-legitimacy (effectiveness, efficiency, quality of service-delivery etc.), regionalization and decentralization reforms also seek to enhance input-legitimacy through granting new political decision-making competencies to the directly elected regional and local bodies in regards to the new tasks transferred to them. Last but not least, the reform processes discussed here are largely influenced and triggered by national and sub-national actors who pursue their own institutional interests and strategies. These can be regarded as important explanatory factors for varying institutional trajectories, paces, and time sequences of territorial consolidation and decentralization in different countries and also within one country.

Against this background, this panel aims at providing an overview of different strategies and consequences of sub-national administrative re-organization, territorial consolidation, and decentralization. On an empirical basis, papers should address the question as to whether these reforms have marked a “*system change*” and a “big step” of modernization instead of common incremental adjustments or not and why so. They may treat this question either on the basis of single-country-studies taking an over-time perspective or from a cross-countries or cross-region comparative perspective. We also welcome papers concentrating on these reforms in selected policy areas (e.g. social services, environmental protection, urban planning etc.). We encourage those who are submitting papers to take up one or some of the following issues:

- a) Approaches of *regionalization* pursued in various European countries, either top-down (devolution of competencies from the central state to the regions) or bottom up (amalgamation of local territorial units to new regional governments);
- b) Institutional strategies implemented in order to achieve a *territorial consolidation* of sub-national administration. More specifically, how effective and democratic are new forms of inter-local cooperation on the one hand and of amalgamated local units on the other?
- c) The *decentralization* of state functions to the regional/ local/ inter-municipal level of self-government and administration that mostly accompany regionalization and/ or territorial consolidation processes;
- d) Increases/ decreases in institutional autonomy, viability, and political strength and democratic governance of the respective sub-national units, possibly indicating *major shifts* in the entire local government system (*system change*) or in the inherited pattern of local democracy.

Authors who wish to present a paper are asked to send their proposal (max 2p.) to the directors of the study group: Dr Marcel Boogers, Tilburg University, (The Netherlands), m.boogers@uvt.nl; Prof. dr Jochen Franzke, University of Potsdam (Germany), franzke@uni-potsdam.de; Dr José M. Ruano de la Fuente, Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain), jmruanof@cps.ucm.es; Prof. dr. Colin Copus, De Montfort University Leicester (England), ccopus@dmu.ac.uk. **The deadline for the submission of abstracts is May 1st, 2010.** Papers will be selected by the chairpersons no later than June 1st 2010. Authors whose abstracts have

been accepted should dispatch their completed text to the relevant chairpersons and to [f.maron@iiasiisa.org](mailto:f.maron@iiasiisa.org), by July 31st 2010 at the latest. A provisional program will be prepared with the local organizer and sent to you.