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'Joined-up' Local Governments?

Restructuring and Reorganising
Internal Management

facultas

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Preface

It is our pleasure to contribute a preface to this volume edited by Hilde Bjørnå, Stephan Leixnering and Tobias Polzer. The publication is an important step forward in extending our knowledge about public sector reform in a post-New Public Management era, at the local level of government and to advance the comparative study of local public sector reforms. It offers country case studies about internal management reforms aimed at joining up hitherto fragmented or disconnected administrative services and units, which can be considered in many cases as a reaction to unintended or negative effects of previous NPM reforms. From a comparative viewpoint this book is particularly attractive as it contains analyses of Joined-up Government (JUG) reforms in countries with markedly different administrative contexts and local government systems. Thus, the Continental European Federal type is represented by case studies on Austria and Germany, whereas the Anglo-Saxon type is represented by Ireland, the Scandinavia type by Norway, the Continental European Napoleonic type by Italy and the Central Eastern European type by Hungary. This excellent selection of country cases thus enables the reader to draw conclusions on how different administrative profiles and local government traditions influence – in combination with other explanatory factors – the implementation and success of JUG-reforms.

As Chair and Vice-Chair of the EU COST-Action ‘Local Public Sector Reforms: An International Comparison – LocRef’ (IS 1207),¹ we are particularly delighted to acknowledge this volume as a remarkable achievement of our international networking and collaboration within LocRef, which ran for four years from March 2013 to March 2017 within the EU/Horizon 2020 framework. LocRef embraced more than 300 senior and early-stage researchers in 31 countries from about 60 academic institutions. The output of LocRef includes more than 200 individual articles, 10 English language books and seven Special Issues in international journals (published or in preparation). To achieve this output, 32 conferences, workshops, meetings and PhD Training Schools were conducted, not least based on valuable contributions by the authors of this book.

The edited volume presented here in particular draws on the activities of the LocRef Working Group II on ‘Internal (Post) NPM Reforms’ chaired by Hilde Bjørnå, Riccardo Mussari and Emil Turc. It is evidence of the success of aca-

1 Refer to: <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/cost-locref> last access: 05/01/2017.

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demic cooperation across borders, institutions and disciplines. It is certainly a 'must read' for studying and teaching comparative local government on an international scale.

Sabine Kuhlmann (University of Potsdam), Chair of 'LocRef'

Geert Bouckaert (KU Leuven), Vice-Chair of 'LocRef'

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Part I:

**Theoretical Perspectives on
Understanding Joined-up
Government as a Phenomenon**

Chapter 1

Introduction: Understanding Joined-up Government in the European Local Government Sector

Tobias Polzer, Hilde Bjørnå and Stephan Leixnering

“‘When *I* use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone,
‘it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.’
‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.’
‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master – that’s all.’”
(Carroll 1872:124 [*Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*], emphases in original)

1 Introduction

This volume *‘Joined-up’ Local Governments? Restructuring and Reorganising Internal Management* aims to elaborate a comparative perspective on both implementation and effects of Joined-up Government (JUG)-related reform initiatives on the local government level in different countries. JUG has been discussed as one type of post-New Public Management (NPM) reforms to foster coordination and address the problem of fragmentation in the public sector and has so far been predominantly researched at the national level (Bogdanor 2005; Christensen and Lægreid 2007; Hodges 2012; Lægreid et al. 2014b; Ling 2002).

The volume is driven by scholarly curiosity about how local governments today ‘orchestrate’ all the activities that are performed in a plethora of different administrative units and other entities, what tools and concepts they apply to direct various contributors, and what approaches they take to make administrations act in concert. It is this quest to join-up for cohesion and unity (Greek ‘symphony’ for ‘accordance of sound’) after an era of NPM-driven disaggregation, decentralisation and autonomisation that we see perfectly represented by the volume’s book cover: Max Oppenheimer’s (1885–1954) painting ‘The Orchestra’, which he completed in his New York exile from Vienna in the early

1950s.¹ More precisely, two broad interests guide this edited volume. First, we aim to provide an empirical account of JUG initiatives in local governments and to which extent planned reforms actually ‘deliver’ on their promises. And second, we are interested if such JUG-style activities represent yet another layer of reforms motivated by nothing other than managerial goals, or attempts to reverse earlier NPM-inspired initiatives.

The edited volume came about by the EU COST-Action ‘Local Public Sector Reforms: An International Comparison – LocRef’ (IS 1207), a long-term international network for cooperation in science and technology funded by the European Commission and the Horizon 2020 programme. The main objective of this action has been to unite the fragmented European research on local public sector reforms, to enhance the scope of conceptual foundations, and to challenge the methodological rigour of the field in an innovative way.² Professor Sabine Kuhlmann (University of Potsdam) and Professor Geert Bouckaert (KU Leuven) chaired the action. The authors in this book were part of the *LocRef Working Group II*, whose research focus was on the comparison of major internal managerial changes and the extent and implementation of NPM/post-NPM reforms in European local governments. In this area of study, recent public governance debates increasingly centre on the issue of coordination and how fragmentation hinders public policy goal achievements (Ling 2002; Meyer and Leixnering 2015). JUG modernisation measures and programmes are here mainly understood as one strand of post-NPM reforms which are implemented in reaction to the effects of previous NPM measures (6 2004).³

However, the understanding of how best to join-up government is still limited (Keast 2011) and coordination in a post-NPM era has been claimed to be still an “empirical desert” (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011:199). Therefore, this book addresses how the idea of JUG spread and was (and still is) implemented at the local level – and how it relates to previous public sector reform initiatives. To do so, it presents and compares six different cases of how JUG manifested on the local government level. This comparison raises several issues:

- JUG-style reform initiatives on the local level: How do they manifest and what mechanisms are involved
- Variety in JUG-style initiatives

1 This famous version of the painting shows Gustav Mahler conducting the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and is today part of the collection of the Belvedere Museum Vienna.

2 Refer to: <http://www.uni-potsdam.de/cost-locoref/>, last access: 05/01/2017.

3 However, the debate whether NPM actually is “dead” (Dunleavy et al. 2006:467) has recently received renewed scholarly attention. For example, Hyndman and Lapsley observe for the United Kingdom “that the global financial crisis intensified the drive for NPM in the UK’s public sector” and that there is “no evidence in support of the demise of NPM” (2016:385).

- The ‘forces at work’ and influence of politics and changing regimes
- The implication and consequences for organisation, public services, and citizens
- The dynamics between context and adoption of JUG initiatives
- The status of previous NPM reforms in JUG initiatives

The case studies presented in this volume were conducted in selected municipalities in six European countries. Northern, Eastern, Western, and Southern Europe are represented (and so their different administrative traditions, see Meyer and Hammerschmid 2010 and Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011) in examples from Austria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, and Norway.

2 Varieties of Joined-up Government

As an in-depth discussion of the ‘JUG’ terminology and possible manifestations are presented in Section 5, this is touched here only briefly. The term ‘JUG’ is often used synonymously with post-NPM and ‘Whole of Government’ (WOG) reforms, where the broad idea is that a more holistic view on all state activities combined with a centrally implemented mode of coordination will result in increased efficiency, more capacity to act for political and administrative leaders, and more collaboration and integration among public organisations. The idea behind JUG is to eliminate contradictions and tensions between different policies, to make better use of resources, to improve the flow of good ideas and cooperation between different stakeholders in a policy area, and to produce more integrated and seamless sets of services from a citizen’s perspective (Pollitt 2003).

The term ‘JUG’ itself originates from the United Kingdom and is connected to the election of the *New Labour* government in 1997. It was introduced by the Blair government that came to power in the United Kingdom in the late 1990s as a component of its modernisation programme (Halligan et al. 2011, see also Pollitt 2003). The concept refers to different efforts taken to address different types of problems: 1) fragmentation due to NPM disaggregation of government units, 2) wicked policy problems, 3) strategic shortcomings, and 4) external pressures. The NPM reforms in the United Kingdom, running under headings like ‘unbundling’ or ‘decentralisation’, had led to disaggregation of government and involved extensive use of specialised agencies; this involved reliance on third parties for services and a devolution of line departments and other organisations (Pollitt and Talbot 2004). JUG in the British context is therefore best viewed as a group of responses to the perception that services have become fragmented

and that this fragmentation was preventing the achievement of important goals of public policy (Ling 2002).

Apart from the United Kingdom, however, the JUG concept is also widely used and discussed in the broader research community (e.g. 6 2004; Christensen and Lægreid 2007; Askim et al. 2011). This is because, as Hood (2005) argues, JUG is a new term for an old administrative issue (which conventionally was called *coordination*), and that JUG is an inclusive term to describe how governments and administrations tackle coordination problems resulting from the plethora of different autonomous organisational entities. Other researchers have linked the idea about JUG to joining-up staff in service providing 'one-stop shops' or 'shared services' (see, for instance, Askim et al. 2011 and Janssen et al. 2010), and yet others to network coordination of several actors (Osborne 2010; Stoker 2006). The JUG idea is further often linked to coordination using digital technology (Dunleavy 2010; Hodges and Grubnic 2010).

Joined-up *Government*, basically denoting a "joint working by government agencies" (Boston and Gill 2011:215), is sometimes conceptually differentiated from *Joined-up Governance*, meaning "jointly deciding policy or service delivery matters with civil society" (ibid.). As the subtitle of the edited volume suggests ("Restructuring and Reorganising Internal Management"), we focus on coordination between government entities and not on collaborative arrangements between the state and the private or the plural sectors. In some cases, however, organisations from the third sector (e.g. non-profit organisations and charities) might be involved in service delivery, but decision making remains with government in all cases.

However, there is no generally accepted understanding of what JUG actually is or constitutes. Pollitt notes that "JUG has emerged as a fashionable term of art, rather than a precise scientific or technical concept" (2003:34). In a similar vein, Ling argues JUG has developed into an "umbrella term describing various ways of aligning formally distinct organisations in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day" (2002:616).⁴ On the one hand, a *normative* perspective on JUG asks which programmes governments should adopt in order to maintain or enhance administrative coordination for the ultimate goal of cohesion. Such initiatives are closely connected to policies implemented by *New Labour* in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, an *analytical* perspective maintains that JUG is a concept with the help of which reform initiatives taking similar stances can be structured and compared among or within countries (see Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006). As this edited volume includes countries with political and administrative traditions other than the Anglo-Saxon one, we explicitly use

4 There are parallels to the NPM concept, which has been described "as somewhat of a 'loose and baggy monster'" (Hyndman and Lapsley 2016:405).

an open understanding of JUG and aim to account for JUG-style initiatives taking place within those countries. Therefore, JUG is seen as a ‘Humpty Dumpty’ concept – in the same way as it has been stated for ‘governance’ (see Rhodes 2007 and Shaw 2013) –, which gets filled with meaning only by its application in a specific administrative and political context within the scope of the case studies we are presenting in this volume.

3 Addressed Research Questions

To fill the ‘Humpty Dumpty’ catchphrase JUG with life, the chapter authors’ common interest is to provide an empirical account of JUG initiatives in European local governments, and to find out to which extent planned reforms actually ‘deliver’ on their promises. In addition, we are interested to find if such JUG-style activities represent yet another layer of reforms motivated by nothing else than managerial goals, or attempts to reverse earlier NPM-inspired initiatives. In doing so, we do not aim to apply a particular framework or to develop a new framework for analysis and comparison of the cases, but draw on existing ones that will be discussed in greater detail in Section 5. The cases look at a JUG initiative in-depth and their context is scrutinised and compared through common questions that each of the six country chapters cover. The research questions the cases address are as follows:

- *Research question 1 – Manifestations of JUG, targeted problems and objectives:* What does the local JUG measure consist of? What are the targeted problems, the implemented organisational structures and/or coordinative activities, and the expected results and outcomes?
- *Research question 2 – Drivers and involved actors:* What has triggered the initiative, programme or reform? What actors are involved?
- *Research question 3 – Results:* What are the actual results and outcomes of the initiative, programme or reform? To what extent do they coincide with or contradict the expected ones?
- *Research question 4 – Layering vs. replacement:* Can we observe combinations of NPM measures and the JUG-related initiatives existing as a layer on top of NPM measures, perhaps with the aim of correcting most of its obvious pitfalls, or aim those measures at taking NPM reforms back?

Most notable, we are interested in how JUG initiatives relate to previous NPM inspired reforms and whether different JUG actions seem to have ‘rocked the

NPM boat', with reversing the NPM trend of decentralisation and disaggregation. If so, there might be indications of a new trend where we can speculate about the 'death of the NPM era' (as Dunleavy et al. [2006] suggest). If not, that is, if we can observe combinations of NPM measures and JUG initiatives existing as a layer on top of NPM measures (perhaps with the aim of correcting most of their obvious pitfalls), then JUG is likely perceived as a further development of NPM, and an extra tool in the NPM toolkit. We will discuss the variety in local JUG (re-)forms in the concluding chapter.

4 The Spectrum of the European Local Public Sector

The focus of this volume are local governments in Europe, although the issue is also prevalent in non-European states like New Zealand, Canada, or the United States (6 2004; Efficiency Unit Hong Kong 2009). The local public sector is, and has been, subject to a whole range of partly contradictory reform pressures all over Europe. The recent unfolding financial crisis has hit many local governments hard and has contributed to a reinforcement of reform activity and intensity. The comparative research and focus on public management reforms, however, have mostly remained at the central government and the national level (see Bouckaert and Kuhlmann 2016a; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011; OECD 2010; World Bank 2007). So is the case with the growing body of research analysing JUG-initiatives in multiple countries; they often have a central government focus (see for example the Special Issue on "Prospects and Pitfalls: Experiences from International Joined-Up Government Experiments" in the *International Journal of Public Administration* [IJPA], edited by Talbot [2011], or the EU/FP7-funded COCOPS [*Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future*] project [Lægreid et al. 2014a]).⁵

On the municipal level, there is only a modest number of studies and little empirical evidence (as an exception see, e.g., Davies 2009). Therefore, a gap exists in the current comparative research literature concerning modernisation of the local public administration this book seeks to address. Here we will assess a particular type of local public sector reforms, the JUG-related reform or practice, from a cross-country perspective. We choose to have this focus, knowing that we cannot capture all forms and trends as there are about 91,200 municipalities and about 1,100 second tier local governments in the EU-27 (Bouckaert and Kuhlmann 2016b). Our aim is not to map, or to provide overall explanations, but to use the JUG to capture 'what is going on' and to structure and ana-

5 Refer to: <http://www.cocops.eu/>, last access: 03/02/2017.

lyse different varieties of local coordination practises in different country settings across Europe. We seek to understand the JUG phenomenon in its local real life-context (Yin 2014) and to describe ‘what happens’ and ‘how’ and ‘why’ things unfold (Miles and Huberman 1994) the way they do in different country settings. To enhance comparability between the JUG-activities in different countries, the JUG-topic is narrowed down by emphasising how local governments and their units are managed in a post-NPM/JUG era.

5 Setting the Scene: A Conceptual View on Joined-up Government and Previous Research

Conceptual Breadth of Joined-up Government

JUG is a concept that can be analysed using several conceptual perspectives (Askim et al. 2011; Hood 2005; Ling 2002). The term originated in the United Kingdom in connection with the election of the *New Labour* government in 1997 and has been discussed subsequently as one possible type of post-NPM reform (Christensen 2012; Lodge and Gill 2011) to address the problem of fragmentation and foster cohesion in the public sector. While the Oxford English Dictionary defines JUG as

“relating to, or designating a political strategy which seeks to coordinate the development and implementation of policies across government departments and agencies, esp. with the aim of addressing complex social problems, such as social exclusion and poverty, in a comprehensive, integrated way”,

the notion of JUG has departed over time from its original emphasis on complex social problems to become increasingly broad and, arguably, blurred (Ling 2002). Ling finds that JUG has even developed into an “umbrella term describing various ways of aligning formally distinct organisations in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day” (idem:616).

We propose a distinction between a *normative* use of a concept, like JUG, and a description of reality (see Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006 on a normative vs. analytical take on the idea of *governance*). In some country settings, JUG *explicitly* denotes normative programmes that aim to maintain and enhance coordination and cohesion; it therefore provides a template for what reforms should be implemented as part of addressing the problems of fragmentation. In other countries and settings, similar measures are implemented without any mention of JUG. We refer to such cases as *implicit* JUG, where the term is not used in official documents and by the actors involved in the initiative (and not even at-

tempted to be translated). In these instances, JUG can be conceptualised in a broader sense, not as a normative reform template or label, but as a scheme to account for and analyse attempts to capture what is actually going on when (perceived) problems of fragmentation arise. This implicit and analytical conceptualisation of JUG adds value, as it helps to show coordination measures in reforms, initiatives, or programmes can take similar stances, although different terminologies are used (see Matten and Moon 2008 for a discussion of the explicit vs implicit use of the concept of *corporate social responsibility* [CSR]). While JUG reforms in the *narrow sense* of the term mirror a (normative) understanding in the sense of *New Labour*, 'JUG-type' initiatives (as we refer to them) in the *broad sense* address similar issues of coordination (Hood 2005), independent of whether they are called 'JUG'.

JUG has sometimes been equated with the WOG approach (Christensen and Læg Reid 2007). Today we find that JUG is increasingly introduced as an idea of modernisation programmes, and this idea can be seen as a reaction to the (perceived) negative effects of NPM measures. Joining up organisational units in the public sector has some well-known motives. It has been claimed to provide a broader view so that different units can make a better contribution to cross-cutting programmes; it will likely reduce conflicts between different policies and provide interconnected programmes; it will supposedly lead to seamless services and improved service delivery; and it will supposedly promote innovation by bringing together people with different backgrounds, professions, and experiences (Pollitt 2003).

Mirroring our four areas of interest, the following sections provide an overview of previous literature. As there is no universally shared definition of the term, JUG remains a concept to be defined and understood by the different authors in this book; the individual authors will 'master the word', like Humpty Dumpty does, and define it in accordance to its special manifestation in a particular country. The JUG concept is wide and can include reforms, initiatives, and programmes for different responsibilities and across different government boundaries (Ling 2002). Just to point out a few: The scope of JUG government can be analysed along several dimensions (Boston and Gill 2011) – it is to be distinguished between permanent and temporary arrangements, between JUG policy making and JUG policy implementation, and between horizontal and vertical linkages. Research on JUG has further differentiated between the various 'targets' of JUG, such as groups, policy sectors, and localities. Broadly speaking, JUG can be found across departments within one tier of government, different tiers of government, or government and other sectors. In other words, JUG activities may span across any or all levels of government and may also involve groups outside government (Ling 2002). It becomes clear from this categorisation that JUG reforms may focus on processes external to the public sector