

Preface

Making comparisons is a natural human activity. From antiquity to date, human generations have sought to understand and explain the similarities and differences they perceive between themselves and others (Landman, 2003, p. 3). On the other hand, comparison is a factor that makes politics a science. Ever since Aristotle set out to examine differences in the structures of states and constitutions and sought to develop a classification of regime types, the notion of comparing political systems has lain at the heart of political science (Mair, 1996, p. 309).

Comparative politics and government perspective which developed particularly after the World War II has turned into an important tradition today. In addition, it has an important future potential. “Nation-state” is at the decisive point of this tradition. Although reference is made to different social units here, interest at states is the common point of all studies on comparative politics and government. Although the themes subject to comparison change, the sample is designed generally on states. Nations which have sovereign right within their own boundaries and key role in political and administrative system over state are also at the centre of comparative methods. On the other hand, it should also be noted that main emphasis is made on authority in comparisons (Apter, 1996, p. 372). Comparisons are made in direct or indirect relation with the authority, depending on the political understanding of the related time.

Various reasons such as (i) definition of what is political, (ii) definition of government and scope, and (iii) finally transformation of nation state because of various reasons, particularly globalization, have unavoidably affected comparative perspective. Primarily, theory of politics offers richness which does not limit what is politic only to institutions such as parliament, political parties, administrative levels and behaviours such as voter preferences. In connection with this and particularly with the contributions of Foucault (1982), the thought that “power cannot be imagined as the single institutional centre and that it can be analysed as a network of relations” becomes more popular. Finally, optimism about potential outcomes of the comparison of nation states has gradually disappeared. At this point, nation state is too big to solve local problems and too small to solve global problems (Vassaf, 2011).

Leading results of this situation in terms of comparative politics and government should be and is diversification of the compared subjects and themes. Such that, it is possible to make comparison of the compared (Landman, 2003). In this direction, going beyond the boundaries of basic institutions and politics types; human rights, social movements with or without violence, processes of transition to democracy and etc. can be concluded to be subject of comparisons between states. It is possible for this situation to enrich and diversify in such way to include different fields. A question to be answered in relation to enrichment of the discipline is “Do the characteristics of local governments constitute a theme appropriate for comparison?”

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This study moves from the point that approaching local governments and local politics issues from a comparative perspective makes important contributions to both the field and the concerned perspective. It is thought that focusing on local government experiences of different states and comparison between them will contribute to many important discussions such as globalization and glocalization, nation state and its alternatives, democracy and participation, authority relation between central and local government, competences of local governments, decentralization, and socioeconomic transformation.

THE CHALLENGES

Although it is quite charming to address local governments with a comparative method, there are challenges to overcome at the starting point. Particularly potential incompliance with the traditionalized structure of comparative politics and government is the leading one. As a matter of fact, what would be the possible location of a local government unit against this tradition, the sample subject of which is the countries organized on the basis of nation state? Challenges related to the subject due to this and similar reasons can be listed as follows:

- Problem of generalizability of the characteristics of local governments and their relations with the center or essentialism in the subject of local governments.
- Problem of heterogeneity of different local government units.
- Problem of dependency of local government to the central government and its qualities in the definition of the former.
- Problem of classifiability of local governments and verifiability of the thesis on local governments.

Leading challenge can be suggested to be the relations of local governments with the state which they are a part of. Comparative method is based on comparison between equivalent elements. Level of equivalence between the local government units of different states is open to discussion. For instance, in the case of municipalities, the same term is used in different countries with similar contents. However, this similarity may not ensure a sound comparison. Therefore, local governments of any country may be deemed unique at first sight compared to those of other countries.

Although not a total solution to this problem, the first necessary step towards a possible solution is to reveal the relations between the central government and local government of a country. Furthermore, this detection should not be limited to definition of the current situation and should address relations and positions throughout a historical process and together with the changes and evolutions recorded. In other words, historical determinants of the central-local relations, possible reforms and their reasons and paradigms shaping reform processes can offer significant data for comparison. Considering historical development and reform processes, doubts about uniqueness of local governments are replaced by different partnerships and, in turn, a content enabling comparison.

A similar requirement is related to the extent the addressed local government reflects the whole country and system. Type of relations between the center and the local may vary depending on population, level of development, identity, culture and similar reasons. At this point, what should be considered as much as the details of the relation between the addressed units and the center is whether the center has different relations with different units and, if it has, the main reasons behind this difference. This can be done by detailing the relation between the center and the local, as the case in the first time.

A comparison between local governments necessitates applying for the “traditional” patterns of comparative politics and government. As a matter of fact, it seems quite impossible to completely separate macro agenda of political and administrative system – i.e. political parties, parliament, constitution and power struggle- from local governments. Therefore, addressing a local government unit or system requires addressing the whole political system of which local government is a part.

Finally, there remains definability, classifiability and similar factors which make social sciences a science. In terms of their content, local governments are open to be a part of such process. It is possible for different local practices to be subject to classification on the basis of their partnerships. On the other hand, positivism discussions remain in the background and concerned criteria do not seem to be necessarily sought for the criteria of being scientific. Therefore, openness to classification is a characteristic of local governments; however, cases lacking such qualification will continue to serve for the social sciences with the diversity and richness they offer.

SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION

In recent years, useful “country-based” studies have been conducted in the scope of this discipline in the world (Chandler, 2000), Europe (Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014) and Turkey (Karasu, 2013), which focus generally on state and government systems, public administration and the processes, structures and personnel of public administrations (Derlien & Peters, 2008). Another aim of comparative government and politics discipline is to analyse local governments and politics by giving importance to the socio-economic transformation, political dynamism, administrative reform and decentralization policies. In this scope, new studies have started to be introduced on local government system of a specific country (Agranoff, 2010; Sweeting, 2012), local government typologies (Goldsmith, 1992; Heinelt & Hlepas, 2006), economic aspects of local governments (Bailey, 1999) or local government systems of a specific continent (Baldersheim, 2002; Caulfield & Larsen, 2002; Hoffmann-Martinot & Wollmann, 2006).

This study is an important step taken towards addressing local governments from a comparative perspective. Rather than being a concrete example using comparative method in terms of content, it aims to play a role in transferring of the past tradition of the discipline to its future potential as mentioned above. It does not offer a solution for the problems regarding how to address local governments; however, it actually puts forward the outputs of possible solutions.

One of the challenges comparative studies face today is the limitations of increasing technological facilities related to security of information. In addition, potential problems in obtaining and using the data independently from a specific context should not be ignored as well. Particularly internet technologies significantly facilitate obtaining data related to a specific local government unit. However, obtained data would not be meaningful independently from its location in an integrated system and details of its relation with the central government. While the study presents different country practices in a descriptive manner, it increases the possibility of mentioned countries and examples to be a subject of a comparative study and meets requirements of such study.

Local governments are dynamic structures. They lack stability within the framework of internal and external conditions and are subject to continuous change. This instable nature obviously will create problems in making a local government unit subject of a comparison. However, addressing this issue on the basis of the general structure of the related state can be considered to eliminate these problems to some extent.

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Comparison of local governments complies with the interdisciplinary nature (which is clarified today) of social sciences. Public administration, political science, public policy, etc. are the first fields coming to mind when addressing local governments. However, local governments of today's world have complexity, influence and richness going beyond the borders of these fields. Many fields from economy to sociology and from health sciences to law are directly related to local governments from this or that aspect. Therefore, it would be impossible for any study on the "local" to be sufficient on its own. Diversity of the academic fields of the authors contributing to this study is a result of the interest created by locality and local governments.

Finally, addressing local governments in the enriched forms is an important move towards democracy as well. Although democracy is used in defining the typology of regimes applied in many countries, pessimism created by the practical process is obvious. The way out to this may be local governments in terms of their relations with democracy. However, before realizing this potential, local government studies in academic terms should be democratized. Comparative perspective is capable of achieving this aim with the voiceful and colourful findings it offers.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book analyses local governmental systems, local governments and politics issues and inter-governmental relations in many distinctive political-administrative systems. Local government composes a "new" research field in comparative public administration since issues such as decentralisation, local governance and democracy, new public management, grassroots democracy movements, locality, participatory administration and reform, local cultures and communities attracted greater demand from individual actors and, thus, increased attention from the scientific community in the last decades. In the last 30 years, large states experienced intensive political and administrative reforms, and such reforms highly influenced local governments and local politics at every instance. Thus, we substantially focus on sub-national governmental systems and politics in a sample of states, which are generally from Western and East Europe, Asia, North America and Latin America and explore the variation in administrative and political systems and examine differences in the outcome of the administrative reformation processes in this book.

The book is organized into twenty chapters. A brief description of each of the sections and chapters follows:

Chapter 1 addresses the decentralization and devolution process in the United Kingdom. In this chapter Chris Game focuses the structure and workings of local government in England with special emphasis to elections and elected councillors, services and functions, and its currently rapidly changing finances.

Chapter 2 reviews U.S. local governments' place in administrative system within the relationship among federal and federated states. Elif Colakoglu analyses the local governments as the lower-level administrative subdivision of the states by focusing the general and special purpose of local government.

Chapter 3 presents basic long-term trends in local governance in Germany with their functional, political, territorial and administrative dimensions. While Jochen Franzke starts with the traditions and legal framework of German local self-government, he pays special attention to local public management, local democracy and citizen participation.

Chapter 4 discusses fragmentary feature of Spanish local structure. According to José M. Ruano and José Manuel Rodríguez Álvarez self-government principle is widely recognized in legal and constitutional terms. However as a result of fragmentation, local governments in practice are to be subordinate to both central and regional governments and therefore lack adequate power.

Chapter 5 focuses on territorial governance, competencies, fiscal autonomy of local governments in Poland. Jolanta Galuszka defines Polish system with its limits about efficiency and underlines the low financial autonomy of local governments.

Chapter 6 analyses Czech municipal expenditures on selected public services that municipalities provide, and based on the results, determine the optimal size of the municipality for the analysed services. Lenka Matejova, Juraj Nemeč and Jana Soukopava discuss the problem of territorial fragmentation and summarize the arguments for and against a solution in the form of territorial consolidation in this chapter.

Chapter 7 focuses on the Slovak experience with decentralization and relating political and managerial innovations which have been implemented since 1990. Daniel Klimovský's aim is to show not only intended outcomes but also the outcomes of renewal.

Chapter 8 draws a map of local democracy in Romania by focusing on the function and scope of local government and evaluates the quality of local democracy by the interactions between elected councillors and citizens. Dragos Dragoman evaluates local and regional parties as valuable assets for local democracy, as they help promoting local interests and local elites and fuel national wide parties with political ideas and personnel.

Chapter 9 presents the features of Turkish Local Government system with a special emphasis on recent reform outcomes. Huseyin Gul, Ihsan Kamalak and Hakan Mehmet Kiris focuses on the types and characteristics of the local and urban politics and elections, actors involved, participation patterns.

Chapter 10 discusses the hierarchical system of bureaucratic control in China. While Joseph Y.S. Cheng presents general features that each level of government has to be accountable to the next higher level, and provincial governments must accept the unified leadership of the State Council in China, also discusses the significant role of local governments in economic development.

Chapter 11 presents the features of Panchayati Raj as a constitutionally 'encouraged' local governance system at grassroots level in 1950 in Indian case. Srinivasan Rajamanickam examines local governance in India primarily from three platforms – history, representation and delivery, to see whether its performance matches its promise.

Chapter 12 addresses the local government system in Pakistan as a cause and effect phenomenon for democratic process. Sofia Idris claims that the role of political parties both in the government and in the opposition, in holding the local government elections that is also affecting the mainstream politics up to a significant level.

Chapter 13 reviews Brazil with an argument that local governments have become the hub of the provision of universal social services while the federal government is in charge of policies targeting the poor. Celina Maria de Souza presents the general characteristics of the country's local governments and its position in the federal system, describes the distribution of revenue and governmental functions, shows the incremental increase in local resources and their earmarking for social policies, the complex system of funding and regulation created.

Chapter 14 scrutinize citizens' satisfaction on local government management with a comparison between different Argentinian Cities. Héctor Oscar Oscar Nigro and Sandra Elizabeth González Císaro references The Citizen Satisfaction Index to evaluate the cities by focusing urbanity and diversity, nature and recreation, job opportunities and cost-efficiency.

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Chapter 15 proposes the traditional and the governance approaches necessary components in order to understand the multiplicity of municipal conditions in Mexico. Francisco Javier Porras-Sanchez evaluate focusing on the growth of citizens' and inter-organizational networks, and over its influence in the production of horizontal interactions amongst local actors and the shift from government to governance.

Chapter 16 presents a comparison between selected EU countries' constitutions about local governments. Ayse Guner and Rusen Keles accept constitutions as a source for information about local governments' types, competencies, revenues and various other characteristics.

Chapter 17 focuses on The 2014 Local Elections in Turkey with reference to its significance on Local Autonomy and Decentralization. While Uğur Sadioğlu, Kadir Dede and Arda Yuceyilmaz analyse the elections as “the most general local election of Turkey” discuss the issue of local autonomy over pre-election propaganda process, new metropolitan model, election results and political geography analyses.

Chapter 18 paper reflects the evolution, institutionalization and functioning of the local self-governing institutions in the tribal areas of India in the context of the emergence of neo-liberal economic order of development. Although Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra underlines the historical importance of *Panchayats* as decentralized self-governing institutions, he analyses the dynamics for reformation process of tribal areas with reference to globalization.

Chapter 19 compares the issue of efficiency of the different modes of the provision of local public services in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Juraj Nemeč, Jana Soukopová and Beata Mikušová Meričková try to explain the main purposes behind the fact that externalization does not deliver visible improvements at the last stage.

Chapter 20 questions the situation that corruption and unethical conduct cases were experienced more in the municipalities in Turkey through the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality case. In this chapter Ugur Sadioglu and Ugur Omurgonulsen aim to detect the “public service ethics understanding” of municipality administrators in Turkey by a questionnaire was conducted among elected and appointed administrators of 9 urban-district municipalities in Ankara.

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