

**EGPA PERMANENT STUDY GROUP on
'EU ADMINISTRATION AND MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE'**

Objectives and planning for 2010-13

Chair

Prof. Edoardo Ongaro (SDA Bocconi School of Management and Bocconi University, Milan)

Co-chair

Prof. Dr. Michael W. Bauer (Humboldt University, Berlin)

Co-chair

Prof. Dr. Andrew Massey (University of Exeter)

Introduction and Rationale

The Study Group aims at the investigation of key features of the European Union (EU), namely the *administration* of its institutions, and the *Multi-Level Governance (MLG) frameworks* through which it operates in the various sectors of European public policy.

The investigation of the administration of EU institutions is an important component for the advancement of the study of public administration – which is the ‘mission’ of EGPA, that aims at covering all levels of government, thus encompassing also the supranational, EU level. EU institutions are embedded in a web of networks intermingling national and sub-national levels of government: the study of the EU Multi-Level Governance, in its varied, composite features, is thus the other complementary dimension of investigation of the Study Group, a line of research that draws also on the works of the ‘predecessor’ EGPA Study Group on intergovernmental Relations¹, the focus in the present strategic plan being on the EU as the key interface of IGR relations.

It is one of the aims of the Permanent Study Group on EU Administration and Multi-Level Governance to contribute through its works to ‘give substance’ to a notion which is still in many respects vague, the notion of ‘European Administrative Space’.

In order to be better fit for reaching its ambitious goals (outlined in detail in the next section), the governance of the Permanent Study Group on EU Administration and Multi-Level Governance includes, besides the Chair and the Co-Chairs, an Advisory Committee, composed of top level scholars and reflective practitioners that have a profound knowledge of the functioning of the EU system or important parts of it. Members of the Advisory Committee have committed to provide their expertise for supporting the works of the Permanent Study Group; they may also act as pivotal actors in the organization of specific initiatives (top level seminars, etc.) that will be carried out by the Study Group. The guidance of the Study Group is the responsibility of the Chair and the Co-Chairs.

¹ Whose activities include the organisation of four meetings during the annual EGPA conferences, the promotion of the ASPA-EGPA ‘Fourth Transatlantic Dialogue on the Status of Intergovernmental Relations and Multi-Level Governance in Europe and the US’ (www.4tad.org), which has produced, *inter alia*, two edited books (Ongaro, E., Massey, A., Holzer, M. and E. Wayenberg, forthcoming, *Governance and Intergovernmental Relations in the European Union and the United States: Theoretical Perspectives*. Cheltenham, UK: Elgar, and Ongaro, E., Massey, A., Holzer, M. and E. Wayenberg, forthcoming, *Policy, Performance and Management in Governance and Intergovernmental Relations* *Transatlantic Perspectives*. Cheltenham, UK: Elgar).

Objects and Objectives

Understanding management change and policy-making dynamics in systems of multilevel governance is a daunting challenge. That is especially true for the public administration community as key goals encompass both the production of basic knowledge and also – and rightly so – the aim to clarify the implications for practitioners with regard to the means to optimise structures and procedures of national and international public services.

The study group thus aims to contribute to the theoretical debate and likewise to facilitate the transfer of research results to the practice. The study group sees two major areas of debate: administrative and management change in supranational administrations, and horizontal as well as vertical administrative interaction in the emerging European Administrative Space.

Administrative and management Change in Supranational Administrations

The study of international and supranational organisations as bureaucracies has been by and large neglected. One reason for this is the dominance of “methodological nationalism” in most individual as well as collective research agendas in public administration. Whatever the precise reasons, as a matter of fact the emergence of administrative bodies and structures “above” and “between” national administrations is as a phenomenon of modern public administration still poorly understood. Only recently and mostly focused on the European Commission, this picture is beginning to change. Therefore, one major area where the study group will elicit debate and encourage research is “management change in supranational administrations”. The agenda is to investigate change of public administrations in the European Union from a comparative perspective by using analytical tools developed by students of comparative public sector reform and classical comparative public administration. The assumption is that there are differences but also similarities. Therefore, the central task is to investigate how far and under what conditions management changes in supranational bureaucracies differ or echo developments of administrative change as we know them from national environments.

Concrete questions are: Do we witness a historical process bringing about a particular management style in Europe and in the EU institutions? Is there a model that captures the particular dynamics of supranational administrative reforms, or are supranational administrative reforms just copies of national ones? What is the impact of national administrative traditions and of recent enlargements upon the administrations of the European Union? It appears that supranational administrations start buying into reform agendas on the basis of NPM, precisely at times when national administrations move towards other models like the Neo Weberian model.

The study group thus invites scholars and practitioners to reflect about management change in supranational organisations on the basis of studying administrative structures and organisational routines, financial management and performance management, personnel management and the dynamics of the relationships between top bureaucrats and elected officials, as well as the influence of the bureaucracy with respect to politicians and national governments, and the distinctive features (if any) of leaders in supranational contexts.

Horizontal and Vertical Administrative Interaction in the European Union

The study of management change and management structures as suggested above focuses on change *within* the bureaucratic bodies which have emerged in the political system of the European Union. This perspective is important in its own right. It is however important to distinguish the explanation of management change from the other important question that arises if one takes a more systemic stance, i.e. to focus administrative interaction *among* the bureaucratic bodies of the European Union and the

member states. The question of administrative interaction in the European Union is an essential dimension of the more general debate about Multi-Level Governance in Europe and elsewhere.

The two topics - management change in supranational bodies and administrative interaction in the EU - are intimately connected. Management change, besides being an important area in itself, turns from the 'dependent variable' into an important explanatory factor ('independent variable') for the varying quality of political processes and policy outputs produced within multilevel constellations.

Concrete questions are: What types of administrative relationships can we observe in the EU multilevel system? Can we relate certain types of administrative relationships to specific policy areas and sectors? Do certain administrative traditions resonate better than others with the requirements of the emerging multilevel bureaucracy? Can we establish the conditions and the context factors under which multilevel bureaucratic interaction produces optimal policy output? What do we learn from comparing the European system of multilevel bureaucratic interaction from multilevel administrative interactions elsewhere in the world? Into the same vein, is the European Administrative Space not just a regional layer in what will be a global system of administrative interaction?

Important Areas of Activity of the Study Group

Management change and administrative interaction should be understood as two connected but distinct perspectives or sets of questions. These sets of questions may be particularly fruitful to investigate in the context of the following broader topics, that are intended as illustrative of the main areas of activity of the Study Group, but not exhaustive, since the Study Group is open, indeed most welcomes, also the investigation of other areas, like:

- the influence of the EU on State-Local governments relations;
- the broader topic of Europeanization of national administrations, a theme which surfaces in many of the below points and might be addressed *per se*;
- the administrative basis of multi-level regulatory governance arrangements and how they address coordination and administrative capacities issues;
- the administrative dimension of international relations of EU institutions with other international and supranational institutions in the world.

Management Reforms in supranational Organisations

The European Union has recently started to engage in reforming its administrative bodies. At least five crucial questions have to be raised about recent supranational reform attempts and endeavours: when and why were management reforms possible, which models have been employed, what is the direction of reforms, what are the specific implications for the respective organisations, and what is the likely impact of organisational change for the EU policy process?

Heterogeneity and Similarities in Multilevel Administrative Interaction

The study group urges for analysis that attempt to establish varying policy types and patterns of multilevel administrative interaction: obviously whether the EU administration is engaged only in policy formulation or also in policy supervision, the administering of funds, etc. may make a huge difference in terms of what kind of patterns of administrative interaction we would expect. It is obvious that such questions ask for a policy-analytical approach and thus the study groups decidedly invites policy area specialists to reflect about how administrative interaction in their particular fields works and how administrative patterns and features reconnect to developments at European and national level in a more general perspectives.

Administrative Integration and Disintegration in the European Union

Closer ties between various sub-groups of public bodies, for example national functional agencies that cooperate with their homologues in transnational networks, may, at the same time, bolster (supranational, transnational) integration *and* national disintegration as national bodies are getting

more distant from their national practices and lose embeddedness in national structures. At the same time supranational and international administrations may converge to a particular management standard. The study group encourages work about the conditions under which integration and disintegration phenomena emerge and with what effects for national and supranational policy-making.

Supranational Law as Encouragement and Constraint

The multilevel system is coined by overlapping and sometimes competing legal orders. There are, for example, direct legal constraints of the EU system of government, i.e. European treaty requirements, consequences of the principle of conferred competences (as opposed to the generality of state powers in constitutional systems), consequences of judicial review of EU administrative action (directly through the European Court of Justice and the EU level administration). There are also indirect constraints through national courts and tribunals for national and sub-national administrations. This is a field which is well known by practitioners in the EU institutions, but which is greatly ignored by political science and management research, while legal research does not look at the management consequences of this framework. The study group thus encourages in particular with respect to overlapping legal orders and frameworks a decisively multi-disciplinary discussion between political scientists, EU lawyers and scholars of public administration and management.

Theorising the Administrative Dimension of Multilevel Governance and Revisiting the Notion of European Administrative Space

Multilevel governance is still an unfinished intellectual undertaking. The study group invites in particular theoretical reflections about the potential contribution public administration is able to make to this debate and also clarify the limitations. Do we need a particular administrative dimension of multilevel governance theory? What is the added value of an administrative dimension for other discussions? Might a consolidated theory of administrative interaction in multilevel constellations be a corner stone for the development of a comprehensive theory of the administration of the EU? Substantiating the notion of the European Administrative Space appears a goal far from being achieved: is the notion of the European Administrative Space useful or an obstacle, should it be theoretically further developed or abandoned? And if the development of the notion of the European Administrative Space represented a major contribution to the understanding of public administration in Europe, in what ways should such an endeavour be undertaken, and what theoretical lenses should be employed?

Instruments

As regards the instruments, besides the organization of the meetings of the Study Group at the annual EGPA conferences, which is a key task of the Study Group, thematic high-level seminars will be promoted that may create opportunities for the advancement of the above outlined lines of activity. The Study Group will also take especial care to integrate young scholars as well as practitioners into the discussions via thematic meetings or special workshops.

Theoretical sources and Methodological issues

The study group encourages multi-disciplinary debate and, where appropriate, multi-disciplinary research (major contributions may come from public administration/public management, political science, economic theory, organization theory, sociological and economic institutionalism, cultural theory, and public policy).

The focus of the study group is, in the first place, to delineate the objects and limits of research questions in order to make a productive intellectual interchange possible. No particular explanatory

approaches shall, however, be favoured *a priori*. Instead, research from a possible wide range of theoretical approaches, methodological strategies and epistemological orientations shall be encouraged. A multidisciplinary approach is employed, as a way of proving the explanatory power of different perspectives as well as identifying some potential *aporia* in common models of interpretation of EU MLG and the investigation of EU administration, and for investigating complementarities among different theoretical approaches.

The focus of investigation may be on the *system* (EU) as well as on *individual institutions* (e.g.: the European Commission, the European Central Bank, etc), on the EU MLG *per se*, as well as on MLG sub-systems operational in specific policy fields. The different perspectives are deemed to be complementary for the development of knowledge about EU administration and MLG: consequently, contributions adopting all perspectives will be considered. Comparative work are especially welcome, and both quantitative and qualitative, as well as of course combined, research strategies are encouraged.

Generating utilisable knowledge and drawing implications for decision-makers

The theoretical orientation of the Study Group does not preclude it from drawing implications of potentially high significance for practitioners. As already outlined, this may be the case in at least two respects. First, by generating knowledge about the ‘functioning’ of the EU administration and MLG that may equip decision-makers with conceptual tools utilisable for the progression of reform agendas. Second, because, as part of the agenda of the Study Group, significant attention will be given to the theoretically rigorous extrapolation of sets of ‘practices’ that may suitably equip practitioners to effectively operate in international/supranational environments.

Publication strategy

The Permanent Study Group will aim for publication of high-quality papers according to three main lines:

- special issues in peer-reviewed journals;
- thematic edited books with top level publishers;
- as well as the creation of opportunities for the publication of single papers;

Chairs of the study group are chosen in such a way as to promote the Study Group through different parts of Europe. The Advisory committee will further contribute to spreading findings of the research work throughout Europe and beyond.

Dissemination strategy

Complementarily to the production of ‘standard’ scientific publications, the Study Group will aim at contributing to shape the public debate from which reform agendas arise also through a carefully crafted dissemination strategy.

The web page of the Study Group will host contributions from scholars in the format of notes summarising the findings of research works in ways more widely accessible than standard scientific publications, as well as short articles from reflective practitioners. The purpose is to more directly contribute to the public debate on EU reforms, also by becoming a point of reference for the quality press. Possibly, a selection of the most significant contributions will be circulated through a regularly

issued 'newsletter' for a target audience of both practitioners (decision-makers in EU institutions and in selected national and regional governments) and academics (active in the field of EU studies broadly intended), to a selected mailing list of academics and policy-makers/practitioners.

Advisory Committee

A highly valuable contribution to achieve the goals of the Study Group will come from top level scholars as well as reflective practitioners with a profound knowledge of the EU system willing to dedicate some of their time to the works of the Study group. For the purpose of making this knowledge and expertise nourish the works of the Study Group in a systematic way, an Advisory Committee has been established. The Advisory Committee of the Permanent Study Group on EU Administration and Multi-Level Governance is part of the governance of the Study Group.

At present, the following scholars and reflective practitioners have agreed to serve as members of the Advisory Committee of the Permanent Study Group:

Scholars

- Prof. Carolyn Ban (University of Pittsburgh, USA, former Dean, School of Public Policy and Affairs)
- Prof Peter Carroll (University of Tasmania)
- Prof Morten Egeberg (University of Oslo and ARENA)
- Prof. Didier Georgakakis (University of Strasbourg)
- Prof Hussein Kassim (University of East Anglia)
- Prof Beate Kohler-Koch (University of Mannheim)
- Prof Christoph Knill (University of Konstanz, Germany)
- Prof Martin Laffin (Durham University)
- Prof Johan Olsen (University of Oslo and ARENA)
- Prof Claudio Radaelli (University of Exeter, UK, Director, Centre for European Governance)
- Prof Alberta Sbragia (University of Pittsburgh, USA, Director, European studies Center, European Union Center of Excellence)
- Prof Theo Toonen (University of Delft, The Netherlands, Dean, School of Public Policy and Administration)
- Prof Jacques Ziller (University of Pavia, Italy, formerly EUI)

Practitioners

- Mr Armando Barucco (Foreign Ministry of the Italian Republic, Directorate General European Integration, Member of Antici)
- Mr Pier Virgilio Dastoli (European Commission, manager)
- Mr Daniele Franco (Bank of Italy - European System of Central Banks, Director, Economic Research Department)
- Mr François Lafarge (Ecole Nationale d'Administration, France)
- Mr Marco Laganà (Unicredit Group, Senior Advisor for Institutional Affairs, formerly European Central Bank)
- Mr Paolo Ponzano (EUI, formerly European Commission, Secretariat General)
- Mr Patrick Vanhaute (OECD)

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