

Chapter 1

Current Discussions on the Question: Remarks of Local Government's Reform through Comparative Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Subject of local governments has been attracting the attention of researchers from various disciplines in recent years. Local governments themselves and other related actors undergo a transformation in the face of new public management, good governance, direct democracy, decentralization and other reform waves. Thoughts directing reforms, reform tools and reform results have diversified. In addition, new problem areas have arisen in the local governments after the reform process. Number of studies analyzing local governments both during and after the administrative reform process from a comparative perspective has increased as well. Currently, there is a need to analyze local governments from comparative perspective via different theoretical discussions and country studies. This part will present current discussions as an introduction to comparative local government studies introduced in general terms throughout the book. Particularly the question remarks to have arisen after the local government reform will be addressed and analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

Significant political-administrative reforms have been made recently in the system of sub-national governments and politics in developed and developing countries in the world. Particularly the reforms which gained strength in 1980s and based on free market economy, privatization policy, New Public Management and the Governance-and grassroots democracy based implementations which gained more

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popularity in 1990s have transformed local governments and politics. In addition, firstly economy- and then politics- and government-based supranational institutionalism to have rooted in different continents starting from 1950s have also brought to the agenda the principles closely related to local governments and politics. This transformation points a necessity to make a theoretical discussion on normative base, current situation and the future of local governments and politics, and to analyze the outcomes of the reforms to have taken/taking place recently in the local governments and politics with the contributions of country case studies. Thus comparative local government discipline comes to the fore.

With the increasing interest in the Comparative Local Governments studies, areas of analysis related to the sub-system of local governments have diversified as well. Many studies have been conducted, analysing particularly the administrative reform process, its results and the relations valid in that period. Unending transformation in the field of local governments continuously offers new question marks. For this reason, it can be concluded that dynamism of the field of comparative local governments will be on increase. This part will discuss the question marks which will be addressed by the Comparative Local Governments, the importance and study fields of which have considerably increased, in the post-reform period and will summarize the subjects to be focused on in near future. Moreover, integrity is achieved throughout the book by analysing the current issues related to local governments in depth in the scope of both the theoretical studies on local governments and in the country studies and inter-country comparative studies given in the book.

THE EVALUATION OF COMPARATIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The sub-study field *Comparative Local Government* has an interdisciplinary nature combining empirical and theoretical approaches on local governments from the fields of political science, public administration and public policy studies. Comparative analysis method is not a new approach towards analysis of government systems. This is a field studied for quite a long time (Harris, 1948; Humes, 1959; Humes & Martin, 1961) and it consists of current, comprehensive studies on general political-administrative system (Caramani, 2014; Hague & Harrop, 2007; Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014; Peters, 1998). However, it offers innovations in terms of academic knowledge regarding local governments and politics (Lidström, 1999; Wolman, 2008). Before touching upon local governments and politics, the main subject of the research, one should focus on development and theoretical background of comparative public administration discipline. Comparative public administration is, firstly, a sub-field of public administration and is based on comparative analysis of administrative processes, structures and public policies. Importance of comparison, as a field of specialty, cannot be limited only to a country or a case study. Development of comparative analysis method is significantly affected by colonialism era, improvements in worldwide information flow and international institutionalization triggered by human development. Above all, comparative analysis has gained a sound position in public administration with emergence of institutions equipped with global aims after World War II (Otenyo & Lind, 2006: xxi; Waldo, 2006: 135).

Having lost importance relatively till recent times, comparative public administration has started to attract academic attention again. Importance is given mainly to the empirical-based “new public management” (NPM) studies centred on comparative approach (Hoffmann-Martinot & Wollmann, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2005). At this point, solution of the semantic confusion where public administration is regarded “foreign management study” has also contributed to this field. As stated by Fred Riggs (Cited by: Otenyo & Lind, 2006: xxii), “All subjects of Political Science and all scientific interpretations of

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