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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Local Governments and Their Intergovernmental Networks in Federalizing Spain by Robert Agranoff. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010, ISBN 9780773536166

This book is a most useful offspring of years of systematic analysis of the territorial dimension of Spain's politics. The author has made long-standing efforts to examine and conceptualize the nature and functioning of the federalizing Spanish *Estado de las Autonomías* (State of Autonomies). An expert on intergovernmental relations (IGR) in the US, Prof. Agranoff has carried out IGR research in Spain since 1990. In this book he presents his findings on Spanish local government's horizontal and vertical connections.

As part of a larger international research project on the role of cities in multilevel systems, the author engaged with the complexity and ambiguity of Spain's overlapping multijurisdictional intergovernmental system. The analyses presented in this volume focus on the IGR of local governments, their region or autonomous community (*Comunidad Autónoma*) and the central government. Certainly this book fills a gap in the virtually non-existent literature written in English on Spain's local government.

The book includes chapters dealing with the dynamics of IGR and how they influence local governments, and particularly those of Spanish municipalities in the development of federalizing Spain. Methodologically, the study combines developmental and legal analyses with a field study that includes an examination of documentary evidence, reports, and statistical studies. The field work carried out by Prof. Agranoff involved structured discussions with central, regional (*Comunidades Autónomas*), and local government officials, as well as observations at municipal and provincial official meetings and citizen forums, particularly in Andalucía, Madrid and Valencia.

Following an explanatory introduction, chapter two reviews the emerging role of local government in modern governance in the case of Spain. The shared role of the meso—or regional—governments in overseeing local governments is identified in chapter three. It is accurately pointed out that local governments in Spain have recently fallen within the regional orbits of the *Comunidades Autónomas*. The formal status of local governments, including basic laws and court decisions, is laid out in chapter four.

Chapter five takes a look at local government organization and financing. It concentrates on Spain's particular mayor-commission for government, a sort of mini-parliamentary structure at the municipal level. The patterns of revenue sources and budgets, and how provincial and local governments—largely intergovernmentally—are financed by these are also reviewed. Chapter six analyses local politics as they affect the intergovernmental dimension. Rather than the usual examination of election trends, the IGR analysis looks at political parties, and the nationalization of local elections.

Local governments within the international system are dealt with in chapter seven. Modes of access to and interaction with foreign affairs are examined, along with modes

of intergovernmental representation at the level of the European Union. Chapter eight presents three brief IGR policy cases: the IGR interconnections related to infrastructure provision; local government impacts on immigration; and the connections between the building industry, land developers and local governments. In chapter nine the analysis turns to proposals for reform and problems of performance in Spanish local government. Such proposed reforms are assessed in the light of local capacities to handle increases in their powers and revenues, as well as those proposed to decrease intergovernmental oversight.

The concluding chapter ten is of a prospective nature and mainly examines how the reform of local government can be placed in the context of the regional reform of the *Comunidades Autónomas*. The problematic issue of whether Spain's local governments can acquire more self-government than their counterparts in other federal countries, or whether their supporters can muster the power to achieve greater autonomy, is pondered with regard to future developments.

This book by Robert Agranoff is most useful for all those interested in comparative and in-depth studies on IGR. It is to be read with profit not only by students of territorial politics, public policy-making or related realms, but by anyone interested in the wider themes of both the spatial dimension of power and the legitimization of contemporary plural polities. In particular, this volume is to be welcomed by those researchers engaged in attempts to shed light into the intricacies of intergovernmental relations and the institutional accommodation of territorial interests in Spain.

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Finance and Governance of Capital Cities in Federal Systems edited by Enid Slack and Rupak Chattopadhyay. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009, ISBN 978773535657

Finance and Governance of Capital Cities in Federal Systems aims to gather and analyze lessons on governance and financing issues from different capital cities. It offers a comparative examination of capital cities in 11 federal countries: Canberra (Australia); Brussels (Belgium); Ottawa (Canada); Addis Ababa (Ethiopia); Berlin (Germany); New Delhi (India); Mexico City (Mexico); Abuja (Nigeria); Pretoria and Cape Town (South Africa); Bern (Switzerland); and Washington, DC (USA). The analysis in each case-study and the comparison between them cover the following dimensions: governance structure of the capital city (institutions, responsibilities, and fiscal arrangements); funding of the capital city; emerging issues in governance and finance; and insights into the status of metropolitan areas, including megacities, within federal countries, highlighting the diversity among capital cities in these countries. The book has 13 chapters, one for each of the 11 federal capital cities researched, an introduction and a final chapter with comparative conclusions.

As this book points out, capital cities are different from other cities, not only because they host the national government and other important national institutions,

but also due to their distinctive cultural and symbolic role in the country. As Enid Slack and Rupak Chattopadhyay argue, and I concur with them, there are numerous advantages and disadvantages, not all tangible, which result from being capital city in all types of state political organization. Whether these benefits are more important than the costs depends in part on the federal-local financing arrangements, as these cities, located in different parts of the world, demonstrate.

The case studies included in this research cover the three broad categories of governing structures in federal countries. The first category is the federal districts, where the capital takes the form of a federal district or territory with a legal status that differs from that of the state or provincial jurisdictions that surround it. A federal district is outside the jurisdiction of individual states and takes on local and state responsibilities, although the extent of these responsibilities varies. The second category is the city-state, where the federal capital has the status of a city-state. This form of federal capital combines local and state functions and, unlike federal districts, faces no restrictions on its state functions. Finally, the third category covers cities in states or provinces where the capital city is a municipality situated within a state, with the same status and functions as other cities in the state, depending more for its financing on the state than on the federal government.

The empirical evidence provided by the authors confirms that capital cities in federal countries vary enormously in demographic size. As is common also in unitary countries, the political and administrative boundaries of federal capitals do not always coincide with those of their economic and functional regions. In most cases, the capital city is only the centre of a larger metropolitan area, which creates well known problems of metropolitan governance. In some cases, the city competes with others for hosting the capital, as this would mean a greater reputation, employment and economic potential. In some of these cases, the city that lost the competition to host the capital received some form of compensation (for example, Zurich received the new Federal Institute of Technology), and in one case where the capital function was taken away, the city (Bonn) was compensated. Some of these capital cities in federal countries are planned and purpose-built to be the capital, and in some cases the capital has moved from one place to another.

The cases examined in this book show that the fiscal relationship between capital cities and their national governments is quite diverse. Although in most cases federal government provides aid to its national capital, there is huge dissimilarity in the quantity and nature of such aid. These case studies prove that the governing structure in federal capitals is a key factor that determines the degree of local autonomy and the extent to which the federal government can influence its capital. In most of the federal countries examined, the revenues and expenditures of capital cities are similar to those of other cities in the country, although some receive additional federal funding as compensation for specific expenditures or tax exemptions, a central-local support that varies enormously from country to country.

Taken together, the evidence provided draws attention to huge differences, not only between capitals in federal countries and capitals in unitary states, but also between capital cities in federal countries, in terms of governing structures, roles and responsibilities, and the funding system. When a city is planned and created specifically to be the federal capital, it tends to adopt the federal district model, while in the other cases

there seems to be no association between the institutional model adopted and the characteristics of the city in demographic or economic terms. Compared with the other two models, the federal district is the one in which the federal government exerts more influence and control over capital city affairs.

Numerous observations about the conditions that capital cities in federal countries need to fulfill in order to guarantee a successful urban governance system, updated information on these 11 cities and countries, and lessons we can take from these case studies for future action, make this well organized collection of essays a useful source for all those working on local government and urban governance issues in federal countries, and also, I would add, for those researching or planning capital cities in unitary states.

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Territory and Electoral Rules in Post-Communist Democracies by Daniel Bochsler.
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, ISBN 9780230248274

The research puzzle addressed in the book arises from the observation that electoral system theory fails to predict the number of parties participating in elections in Central and Eastern Europe. As every political scientist knows, proportional electoral rules lead to large party systems, plurality or first-past-the-post electoral systems lead to small party systems, and mixed systems produce something in between. Post-communist countries seem to defy these rules completely. Bochsler shows that electoral system theory still holds when one accounts for an intermediating variable, namely party system nationalisation, which is understood as the degree to which parties are able to obtain equal vote shares across the territory. Party system nationalisation is affected by the electoral system as well, and it takes several chapters to come up with a final model predicting the number of parties in post-communist parliaments.

Several important contributions are made across the chapters. First, a new measurement of party nationalisation is introduced (chapter three), which, in my view, is superior to alternative measurements when used in a comparative research framework. Secondly, party nationalisation is for the first time applied to post-communist countries and the explanatory value of electoral system characteristics, especially the district magnitude or effective entry threshold, for party nationalisation is laid bare (chapter four). Thirdly, in chapter five the properties of mixed electoral systems are analyzed in depth and it is shown that such systems are similar to proportional representation to the extent that they allocate a substantial number of compensatory seats. Fourthly, and finally, it is shown that the impact of electoral systems depends on the degree of nationalisation of party systems (chapter six). In sum, Bochsler's book provides valuable research for the literature on electoral systems as well as the literature dealing with party system nationalisation.

In this review, I would like to go into more detail on the book's contribution to the nationalisation literature. A dominant view is that decentralization or subnational

power is associated with denationalization of party systems. There is controversy, however, about the causality between the two variables. Contrary to Chibber and Kollman (2004), who forcefully argue that party nationalisation is a consequence of the degree of government centralisation, Bochsler argues that ‘... in key countries, the impact appears to work the other way round’ (p.84). However, this observation is based on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina alone. Bochsler also refers to ‘recent developments in Macedonia’ but does not go into much further detail (p.75). The empirical evidence is, in my opinion, too thin to provide a credible challenge to Chibber and Kollman (2004).

Overall, the relationship between regional authority and party system nationalisation is under-researched in this chapter for two reasons. First, Bochsler uses budget centralisation as a proxy for decentralisation, which does not necessarily entail political or decision making decentralisation. Secondly, the analysis is restricted to a bivariate cross-sectional analysis with only 17 cases at one point in time, due to the availability of fiscal data. This is a missed opportunity because several decentralization indicators have been developed in the literature which also comprises post-communist countries (for example, Brancati, 2006 and Hooghe *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, an important finding in this chapter is that party nationalisation in the region is driven by the absence of relevant territorial social divides, by super-presidentialism, and by nationalising electoral systems (high thresholds).

Finally, I would like to draw attention to Bochsler’s website, <http://www.bochsler.eu>, which provides downloadable excel files with electoral data for national elections disaggregated at different territorial scales. Next to this, Bochsler has written an excel macro which allows one to calculate party system national scores according to various operationalizations. I compliment Bochsler for making the study of nationalisation of party systems in post-communist countries accessible to the whole academic community and beyond.

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