

CHAPTER 10

REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses institutional local government reforms, particularly those inspired by the New Public Management, in an internationally comparative perspective. Since the late 1970s the reform of municipal administration has been formulated and encouraged by a conceptual current that developed into the internationally known and influential New Public Management (Hood 1991). Emerging out of New Zealand and Australia into the UK, and rapidly expanding particularly into Anglo-Saxon countries, the New Public Management (NPM) reform program focused on three points (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2003, 2011). First, NPM was imbued with the neoliberal policy directed at rolling back the welfare state, including its local government dimension, to a lean state format by reducing functions and by privatizing as many tasks as could be taken over by the market. Second, it postulated that the production and delivery of the remaining public functions should be outsourced and contracted to NGOs or private providers by way of competitive tendering.

Third, in its managerialist component, NPM aimed at undoing the hierarchical Weberian public administration model and its alleged shortcomings (rigidity, fixation on legal correctness, and neglect of economic efficiency) by importing private sector managerialist concepts and tools into public administration. Reminiscent of the policy/administration dichotomy advocated in U.S. public administration doctrine, policymakers were to be restricted to setting general policy goals while the managers were to be given flexibility and autonomy to attain these goals. Most famously, political leaders should “steer” while the managers should “row” (Osborne and Gaebler 1992). Internally, hierarchical control should be replaced by performance-based monitoring and evaluation.

The NPM reforms have evolved differently in U.S. and European local governments. First, local governments on each side of the Atlantic are rooted historically in different institutional contexts. Second, they have different political and managerial starting points from which the reforms could be adopted and adapted. Our chapter analyzes the effect of NPM reforms on local governments in the U.S. and European contexts, and concludes with an intercontinental comparison and suggestions for future research.

The geographical bases of the comparative analysis are the U.S. (296 million inhabitants) and Europe (491 million inhabitants). We define Europe as the European Union’s 27 member countries. Germany, France, and the UK, the three largest countries demographically, account for 16.7 percent, 12.6 percent, and 12.2 percent of the population, respectively. (Norway and Switzerland are outside the EU.) This regional scope invites three comparative dimensions: an intra-European, an intra-U.S., and an intercontinental (“transatlantic” Europe-U.S.).

We take essentially an institutionalist approach to comparatively address institutional change in local government administrative and operational structures. Our analytical and explanatory frame draws on *historical institutionalism* (Peters 1995; Thoenig 2003), emphasizing the historically grown institutional and cultural traditions, or path-dependencies (Pierson and Skocpol 2002) that may impinge on the institutional trajectory (such as *civil culture* versus *rule of law* traditions), on *discursive institutionalism* (Schmidt 2008) which hypothesizes the influences of discourses (such as New Public Management), and on *actors-centered institutionalism* which highlights the possible impact of actors and their policy decisions (such as individual policymakers or the European Commission). Directing our developmental analysis at the period since 1980, we choose the concept of *starting conditions* or *starting point* (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011) to capture the specific institutional setting and problem constellation which propelled or retarded the development at this point.

We begin (section 2) by discussing the functional and territorial structure of local governments. This provides essential background information for the analysis in section 3 of how local governments have evolved in response to NPM reforms and other pressures. We focus on three dimensions of institutional change: leadership, internal reorganization, and external reorganization. Section 4 analyzes how local governments have altered their external operations to respond to a market orientation, most noticeably in increased efforts at contracting for services. The

concluding section provides a comparative assessment and theoretical interpretation of local government reforms under *government* versus *governance* auspices.

2. FUNCTIONAL AND TERRITORIAL PROFILE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

We begin with a sketch of the functional and territorial profiles at the local government level. Setting a pattern for the chapter, we begin with Europe and then present the U.S. comparison.

2.1. Functional and Territorial Profile of European Local Governments

Dating back to medieval times, European towns took on important tasks, such as providing marketplaces, basic local infrastructure and safety, as well as local charities looking after the urban poor. The expansion of the functions of modern local government was, in the course of the 19th century, prompted by and geared to industrialization and urbanization with Britain as Europe's frontrunner and other countries, particularly Germany, following suit. As the central government levels typically left it largely to the local government level to deal with the social ills and infrastructural problems caused by rampant industrialization and urbanization, a multifunctional profile of local government took shape which was scorned by contemporary market-liberal and conservative critics as municipal socialism. Absorbing traditionally existing single-purpose boards and organizations, local governments arrived most pronouncedly at first in England's Victorian local government model, at a *multifunctional* profile that has become the path-dependent hallmark of European local government (Wollmann 2004a).

With the advent of the (national) welfare state in the early 20th century, which expanded after 1945 and climaxed during the 1960s and early 1970s, the multifunctional role of the local government levels was ever more accentuated, particularly in the UK, Germany, and Sweden, in which the national governments put the local authorities in charge of implementing the lion's share of the advanced welfare state and proceeded to buttress their territorial basis and capacity by (large-scale) territorial consolidation (see also below section 3). Exemplary of this development has been Sweden in making the local government levels the operational basis and pillar (Pierre 1994) of the Swedish Welfare State Model.

Varying in functional composition and importance between the countries (see Marcou and Wollmann 2008), the local government responsibilities in most European countries typically cover urbanism and urban planning (often including issuance of building permits), social services (including social benefits in Sweden

and Germany), leisure and culture, public utilities (particularly in Germany in the traditional form of multifunctional city works (*Stadtwerke*), and infrastructural facilities.¹ The local authorities are commonly responsible for the construction and upkeep of primary and secondary school buildings and technical personnel, while in half of the EU countries they are also financially responsible for staff (teacher) remuneration (e.g., in Sweden since 1990). The involvement of local government in health care varies according to the country-specific health care system, be it public or insurance-based. In Sweden the operational and financial responsibility for the public health system has been entirely placed on the *landsting kommuner* (the upper local government level). In the UK since 1948, it has been completely turned over to the National Health Service, a self-standing public agency.

Sweden has the largest municipal sector (87 percent in 2005; see table 1), and they enjoy a remarkably high degree of local autonomy, financed predominantly from locally levied taxes. In the UK, local government staff account for more than half of the total public employment (Wilson and Game 2006), although since the Thatcherist centralist shift, it has experienced increasing central government control. With some 30 percent of local level personnel, Germany and France are in the middle, with the labor-intensive school function lying with the *Länder* and central government, respectively. The data on Spain evidence the dramatic shift of functions which the country has experienced in being transformed since 1978 and the end of the Franco regime. It has become a quasi-federal state with the public functions transferred from the central state level largely to regions and to a distinctly lesser degree to the municipalities. Finally it should be highlighted that, notwithstanding decentralization in France since 1982 and in Italy since the late 1990s, the local percentage of total personnel still stands at 51 and 54, respectively, which reveals the continued dualism of central and local administrative units and personnel in the subnational space with the legacy of the centralist Napoleonic state still shining through.

From its origins in the 19th century, the development of modern local government in European countries has been shaped by the organizational principle of multifunctional territoriality, according to which special functions, single-purpose actors, and institutions should be absorbed and integrated within a territorially defined local space to be operated and coordinated by the multifunctionally responsible elected local authority. Two groups of countries are distinguished in the further development of the European local government systems. Group 1 is exemplified by the UK, Sweden, and some of the German *Länder* and hence is classified as the *North European* pattern (see Norton 1994, 40). The territorial consolidation of the municipal level was promoted by the national governments particularly during the 1960s and 1970s by merging existing small-size municipalities.

In line with the then prevalent reformist *zeitgeist*, the underlying concept and driving political will was to prepare the territorial and institutional ground for further expanding the functional role of the local governments in the implementation

1. For detailed and substantiated overviews see Dexia 2008, 63ff.; Marcou and Wollmann 2008, 115; for an earlier “classic” treatment see Norton 1994.

**Table 1. Structural Data on Municipalities and Intermunicipal Bodies
(in 2005)**

	Number	Average population	Average area (km ²)	% less than 5,000 pop.	Intermunicipal bodies
Germany	12,340	6,690	29	77	1,708 ^a
France	36,683	1,720	15	95	15,440 ^b
Italy	8,401	7,270	37	71	634 ^c
Sweden	290	31,310	1,552	4	0
England	389	139,480	562	0	0
Spain	8,111	5,430	62	85	1,080 ^d
Hungary	3,175	3,170	29	91	2,590
EU (27)	92,506	5,410	47	82	

^a *Verwaltungsgemeinschaften, Ämter* etc.

^b 12,840 *syndicats* plus 2,601 *communautés* (à propre fiscalité).

^c 356 *comunità montane* plus 278 *unioni di comuni* (plus numerous *consorzi*).

^d 81 *comarcas* + some 1,000 *mancomunidades*.

of the national welfare state, as epitomized in the Swedish notion of the local welfare state (Pierre 2004). Hence the basic idea was to further accentuate the organizational principle of *territoriality* geared to *multifunctionality*. The North European type territorial reforms characteristically hinged on the assumption (and political will) that, while the affected municipalities should be given the opportunity to be heard, it was seen to fall to the power of the national government level to carry through such reforms, and in the last resort, coercively by way of binding legislation. Among the North European type reforms, the one carried out in the UK in 1974 stood out by its unparalleled scale in arriving at bottom level local government units (districts/boroughs) averaging 140,000 inhabitants (see Stewart 2000 for criticizing the “sizeism” of the British reform variant); it was followed by Sweden with municipalities averaging 34,000 people (for further comparative data see Norton 1994, 40; Dexia 2008).

By contrast, the *South European* pattern appears in most other European countries; the often extremely small-size municipalities have been left more or less unchanged, while a new layer and type of intermunicipal body has been put in place, meant to operationally support their member municipalities in the delivery of public services.² France has become exemplary of generating a complex multitude of intermunicipal bodies (*intercommunalité*) with the *syndicats* and *commautés* adding some 15,400 units). Other countries of the South European territorial format have similar, but less numerous, intermunicipal patterns (see Norton 1994,

2. Insofar as in these countries central governments took the policy initiative to bring about territorial consolidation, such policy moves were typically premised on *voluntariness* (in French *volontariat*), that is, making amalgamation contingent on the consent of the local councils or local populations. Such voluntary consolidation attempts almost completely failed in France and Italy during the early 1970s (Norton 1994, 40ff.).

40; Dexia 2008, 67 with overview on all European countries concerned). Generally speaking, in these countries the organizational principle of multifunctional territoriality embodied in the municipalities has remained relatively weak while the inter-municipal bodies come close to a single deterritorialized organizational logic.

In recent years a new round of local level territorial consolidation has been under way in a growing number of countries (Wollmann 2010). It has been conceptually and politically driven by mounting criticism of the function of small-size municipalities and intermunicipal bodies, and by the intention to improve the administrative performance (e.g., coordination capacity) of local government by having territorially enlarged and viable municipalities. Local government consolidation has occurred in a radical way in Denmark in 2007 (arriving at municipalities averaging 55,000 inhabitants), but more moderately in East German Länder. France has recently (2008–10) embarked on a legislative reform process which, according to the recommendations of the high-caliber reform commission (see Comité Balladur 2009), might pave the ground for having territorially consolidated multifunctional new municipalities (*communes nouvelles*). So the territoriality-based multifunctional organizational logic of local government aiming at providing for its operational and administrative capacity appears to be in line with the classical European local government model (Wollmann 2010).

2.2. Territorial and Functional Profile of U.S. Local Governments

U.S. local governments developed structure and function from the bottom up, as creatures of the 50 states; the U.S. Constitution is silent about local governments. Consequently, NPM and any other reform is unlikely to be adopted in the same fashion and degree across all U.S. local governments. Second, the neoliberal argument (Tiebout 1956) for structuring local governments to maximize economic efficiency (i.e., to match as closely as possible local preferences for goods and services), has precedent in the peculiar feature of primary and secondary education in the U.S. being a function of independent school districts that do not conform to the boundaries of multifunctional general local governments such as counties and municipalities. More recently, the territorial profile of local governments in the U.S. has been shaped by a trend of layering new single-purpose special districts across the jurisdictional boundaries of traditional multifunctional local governments.

States in the U.S. typically use a two-tier system of multifunctional local governments, with counties as the upper level and municipalities as the lower level. The default powers of U.S. local governments are established on a principle known as Dillon's Rule (Dillon 1911), that local governments are "creatures of the legislature" and have only those corporate powers that are specifically delegated to them by their state government (Goodnow 1895, 1). The alternative regulatory framework is *home rule*, in which local governments are allowed broad powers to act as they wish—unless the legislature specifically prohibits an activity (Krane et al. 2001; Wood 2006).

School districts are single-purpose districts that usually cross two or more general-purpose local government jurisdictions, *and* have independent property tax authority. The U.S. Constitution is also silent on education, reserving this power to the states, which, in turn, largely have left education policy to local school districts.³ Yet school districts account for over half of all state aid to local governments.⁴ They account for about half of all local government employment in the U.S., and 31 percent of all U.S. civilian employees. School district consolidations have reduced the number of districts 14 percent over 30 years (table 2), but the number of employees has not declined concomitantly.

Aside from education, cities and counties are multifunctional. Public safety accounts for 20 percent of general fund municipal expenditures, housing and environment 20 percent, and social services 9 percent. Distinct county responsibilities include revenue collection and administration, local corrections, and they are delegated by the states for welfare and income maintenance administration.

Many public policy problems span traditional local government jurisdictional boundaries. Table 2 highlights the explosion of special local government districts, increasing 44 percent in the last 30 years. For example, independent watershed districts are created to govern a watershed area. These are independent, single-purpose local government units, usually spanning two or more municipal or county jurisdictions. Many special districts were created to bypass the property tax limitations on counties and municipalities, implemented with the property tax revolts in the 1970s and 1980s. Each special district can have a specific revenue source (a property tax, sales tax, or fees). Many of these special district governing bodies are directed by boards populated with members chosen by separate direct elections. In others, the governing boards are populated by representatives of specific member governments, such as on a metropolitan planning council.

An alternative solution to transjurisdictional service delivery problems, used more frequently in recent years, is to create interlocal service delivery agreements (ILAs), whereby multiple units of general local governments (counties and municipalities) agree to share sovereignty to provide a service or regulate a problem that affects each of them and is better addressed jointly.⁵ ILAs allow local governments

3. Curriculum and personnel policies are decided almost exclusively at the school district level (sometimes within some broad state guidelines). There is a growing movement by governors and state school superintendents to adopt “a uniform set of academic standards” at the national level to replace “the patchwork of standards” across the states (Dillon 2010).

4. This is a consequence of states being forced by state courts to equalize educational opportunities across school districts to conform to state constitutional requirements. In some southern states (e.g., Virginia), the budget and taxing authority of school districts is shared with county governments.

5. Interlocal agreements (ILAs) can take many forms, ranging from an informal handshake agreement to elaborate contracts structured according to statutory requirements and filed with a state agency and county recorder.

Table 2. Numbers of U.S. Local Governments, and Change 1977–2007

	Counties	School districts	Special districts	Municipal	Town or township
1977	3,042	15,174	25,962	18,862	16,822
1987	3,042	14,721	29,532	19,200	16,691
1997	3,043	13,726	34,683	19,372	16,629
2007	3,033	13,051	37,381	19,492	16,519
Change 1977–2007	Insignificant	-14%	+44%	+3%	-2%

Source: U.S. Census of Governments.

to respond to a specific service market through collaboration instead of creating a special district (although some ILAs in fact create special districts, e.g., for rural fire service). Research on ILAs suggests that a majority of cities and counties are involved in at least one ILA (Henderson 1984; U.S. ACIR 1985; Agranoff 1989). Unfortunately, since most states do not collect systematic data on interlocal agreements, there is no reportable total number of agreements.

Some states have permitted directly elected metropolitan governing bodies as a new local government level, including Portland, Oregon, and Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota (Sellers 2008, 236). However, city-county consolidation (i.e., amalgamation) is a rare event in the U.S. The most famous consolidated governments (New York City, New Orleans, St. Louis, and Indianapolis) were created by legislative fiat. Consolidated city-county governments only make up slightly more than 1 percent of the 3,043 county governments in the U.S. and about 1.5 percent of the 19,371 city governments (Durning 2003; Leland and Thurmaier 2004; 2006). Most consolidations are created by referendum, and since 1974 there have only been 40 successful referenda to politically consolidate the principal city with its county. The difficulty in consolidating general local governments predates the NPM reform movement, suggesting that NPM arguments against consolidated governments resonated with citizens well before NPM advocates reiterated them.

3. INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This section addresses the leadership, management, and other institutional changes which have occurred in local level administrative and operational structures since the 1980s, with attention to the influences of New Public Management reforms. Local government leadership reforms are essentially aimed at strengthening the operational capacity of local government. Although also inaugurated during the 1980s, they did not conceptually hail from NPM but emerged from a widely shared

perception of a performance deficit (as well as democracy deficit) of local government. Internal management reforms have focused on overcoming the rigidity and hierarchical inefficiencies of Weberian organizations with flattened hierarchies and performance-based evaluation and compensation. External reorganization includes two forms of privatization. One form is the transfer of local government functions to organizations outside local government, but still remaining in municipal ownership (e.g., with municipal corporations). Alternatively, it may refer to selling local government assets into private sector ownership.

3.1. European Institutional Reforms

In European countries, local administration using local level organization and professionalized staff was first built up in Britain and in Germany in order to cope with the rising local government tasks in the course of the 19th century (Schröter and Röber 2000). By contrast, in Sweden, local level tasks were carried out primarily by laymen, being a latecomer to industrialization and a largely rural country well into the 20th century (Strömberg and Engen 1996, 267; Wollmann 2008a, 293ff.; 2008b: 226ff.). With the advent of the advanced national welfare state after 1945 and its climax in the 1960s and 1970s, local government and its administration reached an unprecedented scope of welfare state-driven activities going hand in hand with the claim that this repertoire of welfare services was best performed in house, by local public personnel. The UK and Sweden went furthest in claiming and practicing this monopolist public service production. Germany developed quite differently under the *subsidiarity principle*; social services were delivered largely by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Bönker et al. 2010). In France public tasks were discharged almost exclusively by central government personnel essentially until the decentralization of 1982, so that the buildup of local level administration came correspondingly late. Among other historically Napoleonic centralist states, municipal administration was built up in Spain after 1978, and in Italy after decentralization in the late 1990s (albeit still in limited scale).

3.2. Leadership Reforms in European Countries

Two major reform currents can be distinguished among European countries (see Borraz and John 2004; Berg and Rao 2005; Reynaert et al. 2009; Wollmann 2009). A minority of European countries historically are based on the *government by committee* local government system (UK, Scandinavian countries). Most other Continental European countries are premised on the *council/mayor* local government form.⁶ In the *government by committee* system, executive decision-making and

6. For overviews see Borraz and John 2004; Wollmann 2008c, 2009. A conspicuous recent spree of publications on local leadership reforms evidences the salience of that issue. See the special issues in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28(1) (2004); and *Local Government Studies* 34(2) (2008); Berg and Rao 2008; and Reynaert et al. 2009.

control over local administration is exercised by sectorally responsible, collectively deciding standing committees of local administration. It has been increasingly criticized on two scores. First, the sectoralizing of committee responsibility has been conducive to the sectoralization and departmentalization in the conduct of local government functions. Second, collective decision-making has impeded identifiable political accountability. Hence, the reforms of the *government by committee* system were essentially directed at concentrating the executive (decision-making as well as administrative) functions upon one (executive) committee and at decollectivizing decision-making by individualizing responsibilities and accountability.

In England, the reform introduced by parliamentary legislation in 2000 laid down various options (Wilson and Game 2006, 93ff.; Rao 2005). In the *cabinet with leader* variant, a council-elected executive committee with a council-elected leader is installed; this is somewhat tailored on the national level cabinet government, with the leader resembling a local prime minister. About 300 of the 311 local councils have adopted this form. The second option (*directly elected mayor with cabinet*) is a conspicuous novelty in the British local government tradition, largely inspired by the U.S. example of directly elected mayors; a directly elected mayor and a cabinet are put in place whose members the mayor may, from among councilors, appoint and dismiss at pleasure. This option may be understood as a presidential form of local government; the introduction requires approval by local referendum and only 7 of the 311 local councils have adopted this form (Copus 2009, 48). The third legislative option (*directly elected mayor with council-appointed city manager*) is also an institutional novelty, drawing on the prevalent council/city manager local government form in the U.S.; it was installed in 2002 by local referendum in only one local authority and it was abolished in 2008, again by local referendum.

The operational performance of Sweden's traditional *government by committee* system also has been criticized for functional fragmentation and blurred accountability since the 1980s. Different from the UK's top-down legislative intervention, Sweden's municipalities have been reforming their local government from bottom up and individually, within their organizational autonomy. While leaving the traditional system of sectorally responsible standing committees still in place, the chairpersons of these committees as well as the chairperson and most members of the most influential executive committee (*kommunstyrelse*) are now elected by the council majority party (see Montin 2005); the chairperson of the executive committee comes close to the position of local prime minister. Thus, Sweden's municipalities have, in a bottom-up development, also moved toward a local parliamentary form.

The *council and council-elected mayor* form which is prevalent throughout Continental European countries historically dates back to France's municipal legislation adopted in 1790 immediately after the Great Revolution. The revolutionary institutional novelty was that local government was conceived as a quasi-parliamentary system in which the legislative decision-making function was given to the elected council while the council-elected mayor was assigned the executive function. This was construed as a dualistic scheme in which the mayor executed the

decisions passed by the council as well as public functions delegated to him/her by the central government. The quasi-parliamentary institutional arrangement of having a council-elected executive mayor, acting in a dualistic task model, has become the institutional blueprint throughout the Continental European countries, including central and eastern Europe. With some slight variations between countries, the *elected council plus council-elected executive mayor* form was in place in Continental European countries well into the 1980s—with the sole exception of two South German Länder (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria) where, drawing on the U.S. example in the 1950s, they introduced the direct election of the executive mayor (Wollmann 2004b).

Since 1990, the directly elected executive mayor reform has been introduced in a growing number of Continental European countries to address the perceived performance deficit and democracy deficit. The German Länder, in a form of institutional isomorphism, were the first European countries to sequentially (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) enact this reform, followed by Italy in 1993 (Bobbio 2005, 41ff.). As a noticeable peculiarity, some Länder have included a referendum procedure to recall as sitting mayor, drawing on a U.S. model to counterbalance the powerful position of the mayor. Cities in Italy, in 1997, inaugurated the position of a city manager (*direttore generale*—appointed by the mayor, not by the council), adopting NPM ideas and also leaning on U.S. examples (Lippi 2003, 152). An increasing number of central east European countries have also turned to installing directly elected executive mayors (Wollmann 2009).

The quasi-parliamentarian *council-elected executive mayor* concept originated in 1790 in France and has remained in place to this day. It should be added though that in France's local council election system, the local council election process comes very close to the direct election of the executive mayor. In fact, for a number of country-specific peculiarities (especially the practice of multiple memberships of mayors, sitting also in upper level elected bodies, including the Assemblée Nationale, dubbed *cumul de mandats*), French mayors have become arguably the strongest among European mayors, rising to a powerful position likened to a local president—if not a local “monarch” (Mabileau 1997, 353; Hoffmann and Martinot 2003, 166ff.).

3.3. Internal Management Reforms in European Countries

The range, focus, and timing of NPM-driven local administrative modernization have shown noticeable differences between European countries, particularly along the legal and cultural divide between the Anglo-Saxon common-law based *civil culture* tradition and the Continental European Roman law-rooted *rule of law* (*Rechtsstaat*) tradition (Wollmann 2000a; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). The acceptance and implementation of NPM concepts in Anglo-Saxon countries, with the UK taking the lead, was essentially facilitated by the common-law tradition in which a distinction is not made between public law and private law, nor between public and private sector, so that transferring managerialist principles and tools from the

business sector to local administration did not have to struggle with legal and cultural barriers.

By contrast, the Roman law-rooted rule of law tradition in major Continental European countries made them legally and culturally much less accessible for and receptive to the NPM message. In Germany, for instance, the NPM discourse (manifest in the New Steering Model) made its entry only in the early 1990s, while in France it has, at least in explicit terminology, hardly been taken on. In Sweden which stands somewhat between the rule of law and the Civil Culture traditions, and where managerialist concepts (e.g., management by objectives) had already been accepted and implemented in the planning reform movement during the 1970s, NPM entered the administrative reform agenda during the 1990s (see Wollmann 2000b).

As to the initiation of NPM-inspired local level modernization drive, the UK stands out as an all but exceptional case, in that the modernization of local administration was largely imposed on the local authorities by central government, be it by making competitive tendering (CCT) obligatory by national legislation, or by introducing centrally designed and controlled indicator-based performance management for the local authorities (e.g., the Best Value regime). Similarly in Italy (in 1993), national top-down legislation had a strong NPM-related tendency for the municipalities, particularly by obliging them to adopt performance reviews (Bobbio 2005, 42; Lippi 2003, 144).

In most other European countries, NPM-inspired reforms were initiated bottom-up by the local authorities themselves, often also involving local government associations. Germany and Sweden are cases in point. The focus and accentuation of conceptual NPM components have varied according to country-specific starting points. In the UK, the NPM modernization drive was directed at dismantling the local government production monopoly by introducing market-type principles and procedures into local government operations. By contrast, in Continental Europe the rule of law tradition went hand in hand with a Weberian bureaucratic administrative model, with municipal administration being externally regulated by detailed legal provisions while being internal hierarchically directed and controlled. The NPM-inspired reform discourse largely singled out the managerialist component directed at the Weberian bureaucratic model.

As comprehensive national comparative evaluation studies on NPM-inspired local level modernization are still largely lacking, only scant and fragmentary empirical findings are available on results and impacts of NPM modernization in local government. Drawing on a recent evaluation study on NPM- / New Steering Model-inspired modernization of German local authorities (probably the most comprehensive pertinent evaluation study yet internationally available), it could be argued that, after NPM-inspired municipal sector modernization aiming at overcoming Weberian administration gathered rhetorical and practical dynamics in an early takeoff phase, it has in the meantime noticeably faded and even given way to some re-Weberization. However, there are reliable hints at a distinct shift in the administrative culture, complementing, if not replacing, the previous fixation on

legal correctness with an economic efficiency orientation (Bogumil et al. 2007; Kuhlmann 2008; Kuhlmann et al. 2008).

3.4. External Reorganizing Reforms in European Countries

In European countries the external reorganization of local governments has been driven by the market-oriented components of NPM, by the market-liberalization policy ever more actively pursued by the European Commission, as well as by budgetary pressures besetting most of the countries. While the general current has been pointing at the outsourcing of local government activities and responsibilities, the focus, timing, and rate of the pertinent changes have varied depending on country-specific starting conditions and path-dependent legal and cultural givens. The following is only a selective and exemplified picture of a much more diversified development.

In the UK, social services were entirely delivered in house by local government staffs into the late 1970s; under central government pressure since then, the local authorities have gone furthest in outsourcing social services to outside (mainly commercial) providers by way of competitive tendering (Wilson and Game 2006, 353ff.; Bönker et al. 2010; Hill et al. 2010). Another far-reaching change in the conduct of public functions has occurred since the 1980s, when central government has proceeded to create self-standing, local level, single-purpose institutions known as *quangos* (quasi-nongovernmental organizations) for the implementation of administrative tasks. These are meant to carry out public functions largely under central government direction and intentionally outside local government (Skelcher 1998); the quangoization of the local level is a unique feature of England's subnational local space. By now there are some 5,000 quangos (Wilson and Game 2006, 145).

In Sweden, where social services were also delivered almost entirely in house by local government personnel, the NPM has had only limited repercussions, with 80 percent of local level activities and services still being rendered by in-house local government personnel. This probably reflects and is caused by the still broad public support of the municipal sector-based service regime (Montin 1993; Wollmann 2008a, 329ff.). German social services were traditionally delivered by NGO welfare organizations. In 1994 new federal legislation on the care of old and frail people stipulated that the care market which had come to be increasingly oligopolized by the NGOs was open to all providers, including private commercial ones (Bönker and Wollmann 2000; Bönker et al. 2010).

Cross-country commonalities as well as divergence characterize the field of public utilities (e.g., water, sewage, energy, and public transport). In the UK significant segments of public utilities (e.g., water, energy) were transferred to national agencies in the 1940s and have been materially privatized since the 1980s. In France, as early as the 19th century, many municipalities (due to their small size and lack of operational resources) proceeded to outsource the provision of public utilities by way of *gestion déléguée* to external public and private enterprises, which has been identified as the early French variant of public private partnerships (Lorrain 1995;

Marcou 2002, 21). In Germany and Sweden (and to a lesser extent Italy), the provision of a broad scope of public utilities has traditionally been a key function of local government. The services were produced either by municipal administration or in organizationally self-standing (typically multiutility) municipal corporations, with the German *Stadtwerke* as an exemplar.

The production of public services and public utilities has in recent years seen far-reaching changes. First, shifts were pushed by the market-liberalization drive of the European Commission which criticizes the existing local production as “protected local markets, if not local monopolies” and appears determined to make market competition prevail. Second, the municipalities have been increasingly beset by budgetary woes. Thus, they sought to improve their operational economy and competitiveness by *outsourcing* to outside “corporatized” (but still municipal) units. Second, international and national providers of services and public utilities have increasingly sought to have access to local markets; the municipalities have been ready to cash in and partially or wholly sell their municipal assets, particularly public utilities, to profit seeking firms.

The local actor levels throughout Europe have shown an organizational fraying of territorially defined, multifunctional, elected local government as the dominant actor in the local arena. There has been a corresponding increase in pluralization of actors, be they municipal, semipublic, NGO, or for-profit organizations. The UK represents an extreme case of the quangoization of the local level, with a multitude of single-purpose local level actors directly financed and controlled by central government.

As traditional multifunctional local government is increasingly surrounded and “satellitized” (see Huron and Spindler 1998, 74) by a multitude of single-purpose actors, it is increasingly challenged to live up to its political, democratically legitimated mandate to advocate and ensure the common interest of the community in coordinating multiple policies and functions.⁷ However, there are empirical signs of a remunicipalization of services in reaction to the negative fallouts of some material privatization, such as the loss of political accountability of service production and uncontrollable rise in tariffs (Wollmann et al. 2010; Wollmann and Marcou 2010b).

4. U.S. REFORMS

The primary NPM manifestation, the Reinventing Government Movement promoted by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and Vice President Gore, arguably had three effects on local governments. First, more services were devolved from the federal to

7. For a discussion of the juxtaposition of the multifunctional and single-function organizational logic see Wollmann 2004.

state and especially local governments, but without funds to support provision. Second, personnel systems came under pressure to be more flexible and more responsive to environmental changes (political and economic). Third, the increased demands from devolution combined with the lack of concomitant funds to increase pressure on local governments to contract with private sector firms and NGOs to provide services. Yet the increased pressure to contract for service delivery does not represent a radical departure from previous local government management practices.

4.1. U.S. Leadership Reforms

Within the limitations of state constitutions and statutes, residents of communities in the U.S. can choose their form of local government, including the arrangement for political leadership. Counties use a commission form similar to the government by committee group in Europe, or a chief executive-council form. County elected executives and commissioners normally are elected in partisan elections. The two main models at the municipal level are the *directly elected mayor-council* form and the *council-manager* form. The *town meeting* form of local government is found mostly in a few New England states; in this form, the directly elected town president conducts the meetings of town residents in a direct democracy model.

The mayor-council form uses a directly elected mayor with a two- to four-year term, and a city council that is usually elected by districts, although there can be variants with at-large or mixed (at-large and district) representatives. The directly elected mayor-council form is the oldest, and continues to be very popular, especially in large cities; about 43 percent of all U.S. cities over 2,500 population used the mayor-council form in 2007. It has the highest use in cities under 5,000 population and over 500,000 population (Svara and Nelson 2008). Especially in the large cities, the mayoral and councilor elections are based on partisan campaigns. The directly elected mayor is also an executive mayor, that is, exercising the chief executive function.

The council-manager form of government was first adopted in 1908 and in 2008 was the form used by more than 3,500 cities with populations over 2,500 and more than 370 counties (Svara and Nelson 2008). The council-manager plan suggests electing council members at-large and choosing a mayor from among the elected councilors, usually rotating the mayor each year among council members. Elections for the mayor and councilors are almost always nonpartisan. In addition, it calls for appointing a generalist administrator (i.e., city manager) to be the chief administrative officer (CAO) for the municipality. The council-manager form was a response to the 19th century mayoral and council electoral spoils system that was often viewed as corrupt (especially by those who were not in power). It has strong managerialist roots to bring business-like practices—where appropriate—to management of municipal services, and predates NPM reform efforts. Efficiency is a core value of council-manager governments, but not to the exclusion of equity and service effectiveness, as made clear by the ICMA Code of Ethics (ICMA 2010).

The current controversy in local government political leadership is the argument by Frederickson et al. (2004, 7) that municipalities have been increasingly fusing the two basic forms of government into a “dominant modern form of American local government, the ‘adapted city,’” whereby the mayors are directly elected, the councils adopt a hybrid representation (at-large and district seats), and they retain a professional city manager as the CAO. Frederickson and others identify similar pressures for change as found in European governments: citizens desiring stronger, more focused leadership of the community, responsive to dominant constituencies, and able to develop and execute an economic development vision for the community.

Svara and Nelson (2008, 10) strongly disagree, arguing that the council-manager form has always operated with various combinations of electoral features and differing degrees of shared executive authority with the mayor. In their view, the key feature of the council-manager form is that the professional top administrator is assigned the executive responsibilities, and is accountable to the entire council, regardless of whether or not the mayor is directly elected, either in partisan or non-partisan elections. They also note (table 3) that the use of a chief administrative position is slowly expanding in local governments that use elected executive forms of government although the United States lags behind European countries. In 2008, they report that almost half of mayor-council governments and over half of town meeting governments also have a chief administrative officer (CAO) or city administrator (2008, 8). Increasingly, counties are hiring professional county managers with the same basic educational training that city managers have (a Master of Public Administration), whether they operate in the commission or the executive-council form.

The hybrid system of a directly elected *non*-executive mayor and an executive municipal (or county) manager (CAO), working with an elected council, highlights the strategic leadership potential of an elected mayor without sacrificing the professional executive management of routine tasks of public service delivery. It comports with the NPM prescription for elected officials to steer and managers to manage. If Svara and Nelson are correct, however, the credit for this reform does not belong to NPM.

4.2. Internal Management Reforms of U.S. Local Governments

Apart from restructuring local governments into a hybrid council-manager form of government, there have been few noticeable enduring reforms to restructure the internal operations of U.S. local governments. Historically local governments have operated with their own-source personnel, including independent personnel systems. States traditionally do not dictate civil service structures for their local governments, even for municipalities without home rule powers. The rise in federal social welfare activities in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in increased numbers of local

Table 3. Major Forms of Government (cities over 2,500 population), 1990–2007

Form of government	1990		2007		Change in form of government		
	%	(number)	%	(number)	%	(number)	Cities larger than 10,000
Mayor-council	54.5%	(3,645)	43.5%	(3,131)	–14.1%	(–514)	–515
Council-manager	36.2%	(2,420)	48.9%	(3,520)	45.5%	(1,100)	574
Other	9.2%	(617)	7.5%	(543)	–12.0%	(–74)	–47
Total	100.0%	(6,682)	100.0%	(7,194)	7.7%	(512)	–27

Source: *The Municipal Year Book* 1991 and 2008. The number of cities under 10,000 was 3,914 in 1990 and 3,926 in 2007. The number of cities over 10,000 was 2,768 in 1990 and 3,268 in 2007. Adapted from Svava and Nelson (2008).

personnel being funded wholly or partly with federal funds, especially for urban development, labor training, and welfare programs. However, the number of federally funded personnel has declined after the 1978 peak in federal grants to states and local governments. On the other hand, counties increasingly have state funded program personnel, especially regarding elderly healthcare, income maintenance programs, and services for troubled youth. School districts receive some federal funds for remedial education activities, but these are usually small shares of total school budgets; most school district positions are considered own-source FTE even when a majority of the district's budget may be funded by a state subsidy.

The NPM reform prescriptions are but a variation on a consistent theme of U.S. local administration that emphasizes efficiency in service delivery. Local government management has not been immune to the influences of various reform waves at the national level, for example, performance management in the 1950s, 1970s, and the 1990s. And the influence of the equity emphasis from the New Public Administration of the 1970s (Frederickson and others) is evident in local affirmative action policies and preferential contracting policies for women- and minority-owned firms. Yet the enduring value in local administration has been delivery of basic public services in an efficient (i.e., low cost) manner. The indictment by Osborne and Gaebler (and other NPM advocates) of local government administration seemed out of place to many local government managers, at least those operating under the council-manager form.

Recent reforms in personnel practice in U.S. local governments represent a somewhat paradoxical shift to market-oriented practices in the face of increased professionalization in the council-manager form of government. To what extent the shift to market-oriented practice is a consequence of the NPM arguments is debatable, although inflexible civil service systems were a principal target of the Reinvention Movement (Osborne and Gaebler). Market reforms take several forms, and the consequences of these changes include less job security for employees and less predictable wages for those who retain positions.

Conforming to the NPM critique against hierarchical organizations, many municipalities are moving away from narrow pay step systems and pay grades, to broader pay bands for greater flexibility in hiring and moving people around, for example, from 25 pay grades to 5 (Gerhart and Rynes 2003). There also is some movement toward team based management and group incentives for gain-sharing; group gains result in group profit shares (Graham-Moore and Ross 1990; and Perry, Mesch, and Paarlberg 2006). Third, there is movement toward skill based pay for job enrichment and horizontal job enlargement; this involves doing more with less, multitasking, and using a smaller workforce to accomplish more (Hackman and Oldham 1980). Finally, local governments are increasingly integrating HR functions with strategic planning and budgeting; hiring decisions are made more carefully today in terms of how they dovetail with the central priorities of the organization and how well the organization can afford these.

Taken alone, these changes would indicate a slide back to the spoils days of Tammany Hall. Yet the ability to respond to market environments is possible, in

part, because local governments have become increasingly more professionalized in executive management, as noted by Svava and Nelson (2008). As city/county managers are increasingly rewarded (or not) based on performance metrics applied by their city councils, they have increasingly been inclined to use the same structure throughout their organizations, and especially with department heads.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has recently (2006) formally and explicitly supported research and recognition of local government management innovations with a renewed partnership with the Alliance for Innovation (www.transformgov.org) which seeks to join the research capacities of universities with public administration scholars with the local government managers who are management innovators. Research on local government innovations is rather scarce, especially compared with the vast supply of innovation literature related to private sector management practices. While there are some general works on government innovation (e.g., Borins 2000; 2008; Light 1998; Abramson and Littman 2002; Bekkers, van Duivenboden, and Thaens 2006; and Veenswijk 2005), there is only a smattering of innovation studies specific to local governments in the U.S. For example, Ihrke et al. (2003) study city council member perspectives on innovation, while Johnson and Walzer's volume (2000) focuses on innovations in contracting for services. Other research focuses on e-government or specific services. It is difficult to discern any major reform trends from this literature, although internal operations innovations surely are implemented across a wide range of U.S. local governments.

4.3. External Market Orientations of U.S. Local Governments

One consequence of NPM reforms at the central government level has been the devolution of more functional responsibilities to local (and state) governments. Given the constraints on local own-source revenues, local governments have responded to these mandates by increasingly contracting with NGOs, private firms, and other local governments to deliver services.

Some services have been particularly identified for contracting to the private sector. Municipalities and counties are increasingly contracting with NGOs for social service delivery, funded by local and state funds. Municipalities and counties have long contracted with private firms for the repair and replacement of roads and highways; only minor repairs (such as filling potholes) is provided by in-house employees. A clear trend in the last 20 years has been for municipalities to contract with private firms for solid waste collection, supported by fees in pass-through contracts instead of funding municipal workers through property tax bills. In some cases residents pay for services directly to the private firms, while in many municipalities, residents pay for water, sewer, and solid waste services directly to the city, and the fees are passed through to the private firm. Privatization of solid waste collection services has allowed municipalities to reallocate those property tax dollars to other services (and sometimes to reduce taxes).

Increasingly, ILAs are used as an alternative service delivery mechanism to increase service effectiveness (e.g., solid waste collection and collective use of

landfills) and to reduce costs (e.g., pooling resources to support a single crime lab in a metropolitan area instead of each entity maintaining its own lab). Shared sovereignty over collective (joint) service delivery via ILAs must be agreed to by the elected officials (councils and mayors), and it must be implemented by personnel in the collaborating local governments. Understanding the impetus for agreements, the effects on local governments, and the management of networks and management *within* networks is an active area of research for many public administration scholars in the U.S. (e.g., Agranoff 2007; Agranoff and McGuire 2001; Carr, LeRoux, and Shres 2009; Chen and Thurmaier 2009; Wood 2006; and others).

Increasing use of contracts with NGOs and private firms to deliver services is affecting the internal accountability structures and personnel requirements of U.S. local governments. There is increasing demand for contract management skills, and employees find themselves operating in networks of local governments with multiple and blurred accountability lines. Brown, Potoski, and Van Slyke (2006) note that local governments often lack contracting capacity, and they must carefully evaluate whether contracting is a viable option for each service.

The privatization agenda of NPM (a large component in the models exported from New Zealand and Australia) has been relatively unimportant in the U.S. Few parastatals have existed in the U.S. to privatize (e.g., no airlines, and Amtrak is small). With the exception of certain states (e.g., Iowa, Kansas, and Ohio), most power utilities in the U.S. are investor-owned corporations, while the water and sewer services are almost always municipally owned utilities. There was a brief period when some municipalities experimented with privatization of water supply, but the efforts evaporated quickly and without widespread adoption. The municipal water and sewer utilities are operated as quasi-independent enterprises, dependent on fees for services as the business revenues model. County governments are seldom involved in water and sewer services (except in consolidated city-county governments), and rural water and sewer services are most often the responsibility of individual property owners (who usually drill their own wells and install their own septic (sewer) systems), subject to state (and sometimes county) regulations. Similar to the trend observable in European countries, a reversal of privatization in the water supply sector and other services appears to be under way (Hefetz and Warner 2007).

5. INTERCONTINENTAL (“TRANSATLANTIC”) ANALYSIS

We conclude this chapter with a summary intercontinental (“transatlantic”) comparative analysis and with a brief discussion of its conceptual government versus governance implications.

5.1. Comparative Intercontinental (“Transatlantic”: U.S.-European) Analysis

An intercontinental comparison and interpretation of our accounts identifies some crucial features and differences between the European and the U.S. local government systems. While in both systems the subnational local space generally has a two layer structure, it exhibits important differences in the territorial organization, size, and functional profile. In Europe, the municipalities as the lower local government layer have been traditionally designed and put in place as elected local authorities with comprehensive territorial as well as functional coverage, beyond which special-purpose authorities do not exist. From the arrival of the national welfare state, the local authorities have been charged with a range of welfare state responsibilities. On average the local government levels of the EU countries (see Dexia 2006) employ about 30 percent of the entire public sector personnel (though in Sweden it is 87 percent). Territorial consolidations (during the 1960s, 1970s, and more recently in the 2000s) have aimed at strengthening the operational potential of local administration by achieving economies of scale through consolidations (amalgamations). The current average population of municipalities in the 27 EU countries is 5,000, ranging between 140,000 in the UK (as result of aggressive consolidations) and 1,560 in France (in the absence of consolidations).

In the U.S., the territorial and functional setting of the local government level is distinctly different. Local governments in the U.S. employ about 64 percent of the public sector workforce, twice as large as in EU countries. Special-purpose districts, most importantly school districts, have historically coexisted with the general-purpose counties and municipalities. Thus, local government institutions are not only territorially, but also functionally fragmented. Territorial consolidation has been negligible. The significant differences in the territorial, functional, and personnel profiles of the two local government systems have a bearing on the rate and direction of institutional reforms. Different institutional and cultural traditions also weigh on their institutional developments.

European countries have recently shown a remarkable reform dynamic with regard to local political and executive leadership, both in the government by committee group (UK and Sweden) and in the mayoral group (Continental European countries). The driving forces are generally perceived as performance and democracy deficits. In both reform strategies (executive committee with leader and directly elected executive mayor) the political and executive leadership has been institutionally merged without singling out a city director as a self-standing executive position, meant to avoid the politically and operationally costly role conflicts between the two position-holders. (Italy has so far been an exception, institutionally separating the political role of the directly elected mayor and the administrative executive function of a city director [in line with NPM].)

In the U.S., in contrast, there has been considerable continuity in the institutional setting of local leadership in that the directly elected mayor has been introduced and retained since the end of the 19th century. For much of the 20th century

there were two stark models of municipal administration: a directly elected mayor as political and administrative executive, versus a council-manager form with an appointed executive and collective political leadership. In the last decades, there has been a gradual institutional hybridization of these forms, with more and more municipalities adding the position of an executive city manager to an elected mayor, and council-manager cities choosing to elect a mayor at-large for political leadership. The hybrid model has the virtue of blending traditional public administration as well as NPM concepts, emphasizing the separation between the political and the administrative functions, and an efficient operations approach to city management.

With regard to internal administrative reorganization, European local government systems shared the starting condition of a local administrative fabric which was tailored to the in-house implementation of multifunctional welfare state tasks. In Continental European countries, the rule of law context accentuated a legalist and hierarchical Weberian administrative model. The NPM-inspired modernization strategies were fueled in some European countries (such as the UK) by neoliberal policy tenets directed at overcoming the hierarchical model by introducing private sector managerialist concepts. Although the NPM modernization drive energy has faded, still there have been noticeable managerialist changes in local administration throughout European countries. In the U.S., local governments have experimented with more flexible and flatter organizational hierarchies, reducing the number of pay grades and moving performance evaluations and remuneration from individuals to work teams responsible for collaborative results within the organization.

Regarding external reorganization, the starting condition in most European countries was again marked by a traditional multifunction model which, in the heydays of the welfare state, included the provision of social services as well as public utilities. Under the impact of the marketization imperatives of NPM and the European Commission's market liberalization policy, local governments in most European countries turned to hiving off, outsourcing, and privatization to external actors and providers. The impact has, by and large, been significant through the pluralization and extension of governance-type actor networks.

U.S. local governments have increased their willingness to contract with private sector firms, NGOs, or local governments to deliver services. The NPM focus on contracting for services instead of providing them in-house is widely adapted by U.S. cities and counties. Solid waste disposal, for example, largely has been shifted to a fee for service basis using private waste haulers for collection services. Airports and major recreation venues (such as sports stadiums) are operated as quangos using a business financial model even if wholly owned by the local government. But the privatization drive from NPM fell flat in the U.S. because there were few entities to privatize, especially at the local government level. Alternatively, special districts cover a range of functions and usually span two or more municipal or county jurisdictions. While in some regards they are similar to intercommunal bodies in European countries (particularly to the syndicates and *communautés* in France), they are in principle self-standing local government units, independent of the

traditional multifunctional local governments. That said, it is not clear that one can attribute the development of U.S. local governments to NPM ideology alone, as the historical starting point for special districts and lean governments was set in the U.S. long before NPM was born.

5.2. From Local Government and Local Governance?

Local *government* is understood as the traditional, territorially defined, multipurpose elected local authority, while local *governance* is conceived as networks of typically single-purpose actors and organizations operating outside the realm of the local government organization to provide public services (Rhodes 1997; Berry et al. 2004; Thurmaier and Wood 2002). Under our definitional and conceptual auspices the development of the local institutional setting and actor constellation presents a somewhat conflicting and contradictory pattern.

On the one hand, the preceding comparative analysis points to traditional local government having been strengthened in two crucial dimensions. First, in most European countries the political and operational leadership capacity of local government has been enhanced through a type of local parliamentarism in England and Sweden, and through a form of local presidentialism in most of the continental European countries. Second, internal administrative reorganization has improved its operational capacity particularly through the NPM-induced introduction of cost-accounting, performance monitoring, and economic thinking in municipal administration. Thus, the political and operational stances of the traditional local government have been consolidated and reinforced. This also pertains to its political mandate and legitimacy to represent, advocate, and ensure the common interest of the local community in the local level political process.

On the other hand, the position and the role of the traditional local government have been influenced and challenged by the emergence and expansion of actors and institutions resulting from hiving off, outsourcing, and privatizing local government functions to external actors and organizations; these constitute local governance networks essentially operating outside and beyond the immediate organizational fabric and reach of local governments. The previously tightly defined and public-sector-centered institutional fabric of local government has tended to fray out. These governance actors and organizations are premised on their special-purpose logic of operational flexibility and single function efficiency, as well as an ability to mobilize additional nonpublic (voluntary or private sector) financial and human resources in local level activities. They are likely to challenge, and run counter to, the logic of general-purpose local government and its common interest commitment and mandate (Wollmann 2004a).

In order to cope with these challenges local governments have embarked upon various strategies. In conspicuously deviating from the organizational scheme of traditional local government, some municipalities have exhibited institutional isomorphism and radically changed their organizational fabric by borrowing a variant of organizational structure from private sector companies. For example, a cohort of

neoliberal policy-committed French mayors during the 1980s set on devising their municipality as *ville entrepreneuriale* or *ville stratège* (Maury 1997; Wollmann 2008a, 230ff.; Kuhlmann 2009). Likewise, in Hungary, in the early post-1990 transformation period, NPM-inspired “entrepreneurial local government” was attempted as an organizational blueprint (Soos 2003, 248f.). In Germany, a significant number of municipalities adopted an organizational scheme dubbed *Konzern Stadt* (city holding), tailored on the organizational principle of private sector holding companies (Bogumil and Holtkamp 2006, 96). However, the *Konzern Stadt* design has apparently lost attraction and momentum also among German local authorities in recent years. Overall, these entrepreneurial overtures have been short-lived.

Another strategy explicitly anchored in the traditional local government structure creates intraadministrative special operational units and/or special council committees that are meant to keep in check the single-purpose dynamics and centrifugal drift inherent in the governance network that includes entirely or partially corporatized (hived off) municipally owned companies “satellitizing” local government (Huron and Spindler 1998, 74).⁸

Local government’s potential to influence and coordinate local level activities and services in a governance framework has been bolstered through the recent strengthening of its government structures, particularly of its political and executive leadership. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that these developments of leadership, external contracting, and interorganizational governance forms have occurred, in U.S. local governments, more independently from the NPM reforms than this was, by and large, the case in European countries. In the U.S., the contracting for services (to private, public, and nongovernmental organizations) takes advantage of market efficiency, but simply continues the historical push for increased efficiency as a high value of U.S. local governments. The increased use of special districts to address complex service problems can be mistaken as an outcome of NPM’s market orientation, but they are better understood as consequences, perhaps unintended, of restrictive local tax policies, as well as the transjurisdictional solutions to transjurisdictional problems (Chen and Thurmaier 2009; Thurmaier 2006).

In general terms, vis-à-vis the multitude of governance-type single-purpose organizations each pursuing its specific goals and particular interests traditional local government has the crucial task to mediate between and coordinate the multifarious functions of interests of a plurality of local level actors—ideally with the aim to arrive at the elusive common good and public interest. Among the modalities to bring about multiactor coordination, the distinction has been made between hierarchy, negotiation, and market (Kaufmann et al. 1986; Wollmann 2002). Coordinating functions and activities of actors in governance networks requires

8. For intralocal government arrangements to steer corporatized companies and operational units, *Beteiligungssteuerung*, in the case of German municipalities, see Bogumil and Holtkamp 2006, 95ff.

interaction, persuasion, and bargaining. Depending on the public service and the competencies of the governance actors, the local government may act as a network hub, a network node, or a peripheral network actor (Friend 1976; Berry et al. 2004; Thurmaier and Wood 2002).

Since the traditional general-purpose elected local government is politically mandated to pursue the common interest of the local community vis-à-vis a plurality of single-purpose and particular-interest actors, while the governance-type actors strive for optimal flexibility and efficiency in the fulfillment of their specific functions and interests, the structures and logics of local government and local governance can be viewed as mutually complementary and supportive rather than contradictory and mutually exclusive (see Wollmann and Bouckaert 2006, 34f.).

6. PERSPECTIVES AND NEEDS OF INTERNATIONALLY COMPARATIVE RESEARCH

Finally we turn to discuss the need for, and potential of, internationally comparative research on local government reforms. The desirability of further comparative work includes the study of local government systems at large. This holds true for cross-European countries research (for available overviews—with varying country coverage—see John 2001; Bobbio 2002; Kersting and Vetter 2003; Denters and Rose 2005; Dexia 2008; Marcou and Wollmann 2008; Wollmann 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Kersting et al. 2009; Kuhlmann 2009; and, still indispensable, Norton 1994). The UK/England is somewhat overrepresented in existing comparative literature, probably still reflecting, besides an Anglophone dominance (Baldersheim and Wollmann 2006), the pace-setting role which British local government has historically played in the development of European local government. The inclusion of south European and central east European countries has been neglected, arguably also for language reasons. Finally, the scarcity of internationally comparative work shows a conspicuous gap in the intercontinental (Europe/U.S.) comparative dimension, with the noteworthy exceptions of Norton (1994), Sellers (2002), and Bobbio (2002). The emerging paradigm shift from government to governance offers a fresh opportunity for intercontinental research; the ways in which governance can evolve on each continent is conditioned by the historical nature and role of its local governments, and careful comparative research could provide insights and lessons for practice to benefit practitioners and scholars on both sides of the Atlantic.

When it comes to the NPM-induced local government reforms, the need for comparative research is even more manifest. Some internally comparative research has been conducted on NPM-guided public sector modernization on the central government level. For example, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) include the comparative analysis and international overviews by international organizations, such as

OEDC. More typically they are focused on the central government level, and broadly comparative work and publications on local level administrative modernization are still missing, except for treatments on selected countries (Wollmann 2008a; Kuhlmann and Fedele 2010).

Further research is needed regarding comparative analyses on local level, NPM-inspired modernization that singles out and focuses on policy and service fields to analytically track the reforms. Such policy-related research may be particularly penetrating and revealing. For an attempt at combining cross-country country and cross-policy comparisons see Wollmann and Marcou (2010a; 2010b). While available studies on NPM-inspired local level reforms have largely focused on the concepts and the implementation of such reforms, the evaluative analysis of the results and outcomes has so far been largely neglected.⁹ This seems understandable in view of the formidable methodological and empirical problems of analyzing public sector reforms (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2003), but needs to be tackled and overcome.

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