Call for Papers

A threat to autonomy? Control and supervision of local and regional government activities

OLA-CEMR Conference,
26-27 June 2015, Germany
University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU)

Control and supervision by whom?: the government, the E.U. (judicial decisions, review of project funding), by different local government entities, by external service providers, the role of the citizen-judge, consultants

Local and regional authorities are facing different challenges to their self-government: changes in their national governance system, the completion of the EU internal market, the introduction of the public management concept, and the Stability and Growth Pact – all these elements include instruments of control and supervision of local and regional authorities and can constitute a threat to their right to self-government. With these developments, a number of supervisory measures have been introduced in the name of proper administration for a variety of reasons (for instance, to ensure that the principle of transparency, or the more strict principle of the rule of law and harmonised application, are respected). For this reason, there are a variety of persons, administrative bodies, and procedures involved at the local government level to perform this supervision. They can fill the need for evaluations requested by local government entities on a voluntary basis, or they can work to ensure the respect of obligations imposed upon local authorities by legislation –which ultimately comes from national government or EU primary or secondary law. This supervision can also result from the obligation to respect judicial precedent. In this perspective, it can therefore be interesting to determine exactly who is involved in this process –knowing that they are often specialised –as well as how they are involved in meeting the need for supervision, depending on the type of supervision at hand (legal, fiscal, or budgetary). Articles can also reflect on mandatory or voluntary evaluation procedures, on the qualitative evaluation and audit process, and on how purely financial aspects are handled; they may also take into consideration the demand for information and control coming from local citizens who are interested in the proper and transparent administration and organisation of the local government entity where they live. Articles may also study the different ways that those tasked with supervision and verification can set objectives and determine whether practices are compliant or compatible. As a result, it is important to study all those involved in this research category, and to present the scope of their supervisory and investigatory activities.

Control and Supervision of What?: Policy choices, administrative legality (public procurement, state aid, stability and growth pact, etc.), local finances

With the changing legal and financial environment of local authorities, expectations and pressure have also increased: they are held responsible for the efficient and effective use of their powers, for providing the basic public services, and for meeting the needs of their citizens, which are increasingly demanding, heterogeneous and divers. Considering the growing variety of tasks devolved to local authorities, the challenges resulting from dwindling public resources following the 2008 financial crisis are extremely varied. In this context, it is therefore important to reflect on the need for supervision and management systems to improve the effectiveness of public policy at the local and regional level. At the same time, the diversity of resources among local governments, paired with the difficulties in measuring performance at the local and regional levels in the midst of so much uncertainty, amplifies and multiplies the risks that are run when government decisions are made. As a result, the liability of those involved in local government management calls for serious reflection. In this case, the main issues at hand are the following: What is the theoretical basis for the evaluation of public policy? What are the legal measures and the evolutions in policy in this field, both at a national and local level, and how do they interact with the European legal system? What is the role of auditors and how do they exercise their authority? What kind of voluntary assessment and evaluation systems exist at local and regional level, and what role can national associations of local and regional authorities play?

Control and supervision of whom?: elected officials, civil servants, external service providers (private businesses, associations, public service compensation, etc.)

A good deal more reflection is needed on the attractiveness and the expanding use of this type of control and supervision.
By establishing a common denominator without regard to the different statuses, the goal in this case is to examine the attractiveness of the statuses of those involved at a local and regional level. What sets apart those at a local level who are subject to control and supervision? It is clear that they do not simply fall under the category of ordinary "government entities" or "civil servants", who just happen to be at a local or regional level.
Supervision is increasing as a result of the appearance of new causes for liability, the pressure created by the threat of removal from office, or the further development of anti-corruption measures in the public sector. Required to justify even the smallest resource allocation, are both local and regional governments losing autonomy just as they are following new rules of fiscal management? Having established the increase in supervision, articles should examine the cycles and the intensity of supervision affecting local autonomy.

Control and supervision for what reason: effectiveness of supervision, good and bad reasons to supervise, opportunities for supervision, use for purposes other than those originally intended = specific round table on alternative solutions; noble and less noble reasons, such as the opportunity provided by the crisis (to reduce budgets)

The supervision of government activities is a necessity in a democratic society.
In a society in which the rule of law is respected, is the control and supervision of public activities at a local and regional level useful? Why then is so much government time and energy devoted (at great cost) to supervising local government activities? Because, with all due respect to de Tocqueville, it is possible to find, at this level of public administration, problems, unscrupulousness, and even corruption, which have an effect on government operations. Better efficiency, financial constraints, budget cuts –all of these are noble and less noble reasons cited to justify supervision, which takes many forms.
In order to determine the problems that impact the supervision of local and regional government activities, it is therefore useful to adopt an outcome – based approach: is the supervision successful? What are the results? How is it sometimes used for purposes other than those originally intended? Lastly, if possible, certain solutions may be proposed, with no small amount of modesty.

Precedence will be given to articles that provide answers to each of these questions and which, all while meeting demanding academic and theoretical standards, keep their reflection firmly grounded in reality and offer suggestions which are practical and, preferably, are applicable on a European level. Comparative studies or studies taking a European perspective are of particular interest.

The team of Friedrich-Alexander **University, CEMR** *(The Council of European Municipalities and Regions)* **and OLA** (*Observatory on Local Autonomy*) organise a two-day symposium on this topic, on **26 and 27 of June 2015**. The symposium will be held in Erlangen and Nürnberg.

The conference organisers will cover expenses related to the accommodation and meals of all selected speakers. Participants will be in charge of their travel expenses.

If several authors are submitting a single proposal, OLA reserves the right to cover costs for only one of them.

The *bilingual* **(**English and French) publication of the proccedings is planned with a famous European publishing house.

Submission and Selection

Proposals should be submitted **no later than Monday 8 December 2014** to Ms Line Salmon-Legagneur: line.salmon-legagneur@univ-lille2.fr.

Notification of acceptance will be sent by email by 9 January 2015**.**

For further information, please contact:

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Paper Proposal

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Erlangen and Nürnberg (Germany), 26-27June 2015

Contact Details

Last Name:

First name:

University / Institution:

Discipline:

Position:

E-mail address:

Telephone:

Postal address:

Presentation of the person(s) submitting the proposal, 15 lines maximum

- in French AND English

Current link to CV of the person(s) submitting the proposal (if available)

Provisional Title

Keywords: (5)

Abstract

- English or French

- 2000 characters maximum (spaces excluded)