Is Multi-Level Governance a Political Choice or a Service Delivery Necessity?

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The notion of multi-level governance first appeared with the establishment of the European Union to describe the transfer of power upwards and downwards. Later, the power transfer appeared not only vertically, but also horizontally by involving non-governmental, voluntary and private sector into public policy making. Apparently, traditional model of policy making has been challenged and replaced by a more complex, decentralized structure, better able to accommodate citizens' needs at various levels. However, whether states transfer authority for the purpose of better service delivery or whether they do it under pressure is still unclear. This paper aims at answering this question by examining various types of multi-level governance and analyzing recent developments in the UK policy as a case.

Introduction

The notion of multi-level governance as "a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers – supranational, national, regional, and local" (Marks,1993, p. 392) first appeared to describe the developments in EU structural policy (Bache and Flinders, 2004, p. 2), particularly, the emergence of partnership principle – "the participation of subnational governmental representatives alongside member-state representatives and the Commission in preparing, implementing, and monitoring development programs" (Marks, 1993, p. 396).

Further, it has been broadened and has encompassed developments not only at vertical but also at horizontal levels by including non-governmental, voluntary and private sectors into the range of actors participating in policy making process (Williams, 2004, p. 97).

There are many arguments for multi-level governance and most scholars agree that the dispersion of power across multiple levels is more efficient than the concentration of governance in one jurisdiction (Hooghe and Marks; 2002; p. 6). The main criticism of centralized government is that it is not well-suited to accommodate diversity; various conditions as well as citizens' preferences may vary from state to state and across the regions within a state. Large jurisdictions are insensitive to

such a varying scale and often "impose a single policy on diverse ecological systems or territorially heterogeneous population," while "multi-level governance allows decision-makers to adjust the scale of governance to reflect heterogeneity." Instead of the unitary, centralized government, authority should be distributed among multiple jurisdictions (Hooghe and Marks; 2003; pp. 235-236).

However, it is not completely clear why states allow competences to be ceded to other levels. Are they willing to transfer authority for some reason or are they under pressure to do so in order to assure efficient implementation? The purpose of this essay is to consider different types of multi-level governance and analyze the reasons for transferring authority to several "layers" and "tiers;" to examine why states allow their sovereignty to be weakened, whether it is a political choice or a service delivery necessity.

For this reason the paper proposes the United Kingdom as a case study and attempts to analyze recent developments in the British political reality in order to illustrate the different types of multi-level governance and to observe the main reasons behind them.

Emergence of Multi-Level Governance

The establishment of the Coal and Steel community in 1951, which, according to Hoffmann (1989) "was launched as a way of promoting the reconciliation of France and Germany" (p. 32), turned out to be the first challenge of the traditional pattern of policy making. Since then, "nations could not escape the smell and noises that came from outside through all the windows and doors" (Hoffman, 1995, p. 73), and eventually ended up with the establishment of the European Union, an unprecedented political entity, that "does not fit into any accepted category of governance" (Sbragia, 1993, p. 24).

Being "not yet a state, nor the replacement of states" (Mann, 1993, p. 128), the European Union raised growing confusion among scholars. Neofunctionalists became concerned over the "fate of the nation-states" (Hoffman, 1995, p. 71) under "the logic of spill-over" (Tranholm-Mikkelsen, 1991, p. 4) and started considering which term was more appropriate "the retirement of a nation-state" or its "actual death" (Mann, 1993, p. 115). In contrast, integovernmentalists claimed that European integration made nation-states more powerful by enabling them to pursue national interests in international arena and bringing domestically defined goals to international negotiations (Moravcsik, 1993, pp. 481-484).

While debating whether European Union was a government-dominated statecraft or a system in which supranational institutions compromised state autonomy, or maybe it was a "swinging pendulum oscillating between two magnetic fields, one country-based and the other transnational" (Wallace and Wallace, 1996, p. 12), Marks (1993) pointed out that "the European community was missing a critical element of the whole picture, namely, the increasing importance of subnational levels of decision-making and their myriad connections with other levels – the emergence of the multi-level governance" (p.392).

As an academic concept, multi-level governance should be defined as a compilation of several theoretical approaches. Jordan (2001) points out that the notion of multi-level governance "contains important residues of neofunactionalism" (p.199) since it emphasizes the new role of the state that is not any more an intermediary link between domestic and supranational institutions. "The presumption of multi-level governance is that [sub-national actors] participate in diverse policy networks dealing directly with supranational actors" (Marks and Nielsen, 1996, p. 42). "Global patterns of governance can hook up with local institutions just as local or regional coalitions of actors can by-pass the nation state level and pursue their interests in international arena" (Pierre and Stoker, 2000, p. 30).

Furthermore, the concept of multi-level governance shares the views with the policy network approach and the "hollowing out" of the state according to which networks play an increasingly important role in governing (Rhodes, 1997; pp. 15, 51-53). As Peters and Pierre (2001) argue "we have been witnessing a development from a "command and control" type of state towards an "enabling state" (p. 131) where government tends to coordinate other implementing bodies rather than assume delivery function itself (Hudson and Low 2004, p. 96).

Peters and Pierre (2001) argue that "multi-level governance is to some extant merely a logical extension of these developments; the combined result of decentralization, the "hollowing out" of the state, a shift from an interventionist towards an "enabling state", budgetary cutback and a growing degree of institutional self-assertion and professionalism at the subnational level" (p. 131).

Thus, "we are seeing the emergence of a complex, open-texture and fluid situation" (Marks, 1993, p. 404), where powers and capabilities traditionally controlled by states are displaced upward, towards supranational authorities; downward towards subnational governments and outwards, towards private and non-governmental organizations (Pierre and Peters, 2000, p. 77) and the term multi-level governance is the most appropriate to capture these developments in delegation of authority.

Types of Multi-Level Governance

In "Contrasting Visions of Multi-Level Governance" Marks and Hooghe (2004) distinguish between two visions which they brand Type I and Type II multi-level governance (p. 16-19).

Type I multi-level governance takes its root in the federalist thought, which is mainly concerned with the power distribution among central and subnational governments. The main characteristic features of the Type I multi-level governances are that the authority is dispersed between limited number of jurisdictions at several levels (mainly international, regional, meso and local levels); these jurisdictions are general-purpose (they undertake multiple functions); the membership is usually territorial and non-intersecting, "every citizen is located in a Russian Doll set of nested jurisdictions, where there is one and only one relevant jurisdiction at any particular territorial scale;" and finally, Type I multi-level governance is characterized by the stable territorial jurisdictions but the flexible policy competences across levels (Marks and Hooghe, 2004, pp. 16-19).

The second vision which Marks and Hooghe (2004) label Type II multi-level governance is distinctly different. First, it assumes the power diffusion not to a limited number of levels but to numerous territorial scales; further the jurisdictions are task-specific, they are specialized in distinct fields and provide particular services; additionally, Type II multi-level governance is characterized by intersecting membership, so instead of "nested," hierarchical structure, it conceives of overlapping jurisdictions. "There is no up or down, no lower or higher, no dominant class of actor; rather, a wide range of public and private actors who collaborate and compete in shifting coalitions"; and finally there is no durability in the existence of Type II multi-level governance, instead it is characterized by the flexible design, so the jurisdictions are produced and abolished according to the citizens' choice and requirements (pp. 20-22).

An example of the Type I multi-level governance is the regionalization - the strengthening of meso- or middle-level or regional governments/institutions. In case of the United Kingdom, if we observe the factors encouraging the empowerment of regional authorities, it will be clear that there was not an apparent necessity for these kinds of changes; rather it seems to be a political decision.

John (2001) divides the forces for regionalization into two categories, top-down and bottom-up factors. According to him, both forces contribute to devolution of state, but the bottom-up factors play the decisive role - they *drive the changes*, whereas the top-down forces *respond to those changes* (p. 111).

According to John (2001), although there are some technocratic reasons behind the top-down forces (such as to find the best means for ser-

vice delivery), they are mainly mobilized to retain and "pre-empt" bottom-up regionalism (p. 111).

So the bottom-up factors consist of the national political movements driven by regional elites and they are demanding for more autonomy or even for independence for regions. In response, central government seeks to mollify those demands by introducing regional autonomy. In other words, central governments tries to "buy off" regional elites (John, 2001, pp. 111-119).

Development of Multi-Level Governance in UK

The New Labour's devolution program is an example of this strategy. Labour's reform package consisted of five major parts. It established the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Greater London Authority, and the Regional Development Agencies in England outside London (Pierre and Stoker, 2000, p. 31).

Although it is generally recognized that the devolution of authority to subnational levels was an appropriate response to the complexities of the newly-emerged system of multi-level governance, Stoker outlines some other specific driving forces behind Labour's reform package apart from the general factors (Stoker, 2004, p. 156).

He argues that the creation of the Scottish Parliament was a response to the rise of Scottish nationalism and its political expression since the late 1960s. According to him the key driving factor was the ability of the Scottish National Party to win a considerable portion of votes which gradually led to the consensus that some form of political devolution for Scotland was necessary (Stoker, 2004, p. 156).

The case of the Northern Ireland is similar too. In response to the growth of extremist politics in Northern Ireland, the Blair Government decided that political devolution would be the best means to restrain nationalist forces and regulate ethnic conflicts (Stoker, 2004, p. 156).

Thus, it becomes clear that the creation of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament are examples of "buying off" or that was a political choice.

On the other hand, institutions that follow the logic of the Type II multi-level governance seem to be the result of the complexity of policy problems and the increased pressure to solve these problems efficiently; in other words their creation is caused by the service delivery necessity.

To support this argument it would be useful to discuss in more detail the transformation of the local government into the local governance which is based on the network approach of policy making; and to identify the factors behind the emergence of networks and partnerships (the de-

velopment of the "joined-up government") which are the examples of the Type II multi-level governance.

In the post-war period in the United Kingdom the local government followed the traditional model of public administration and was the dominant player in delivering services of the welfare state. However, the traditional pattern was first challenged during the 1980s by the Conservatives' attempt to transform councils from service providers into "enablers" (Bochel and Bochel, 2004, p. 134). The aim of the transformation was "to introduce a new, more managerial style with strategic planning that would operate in a framework more conducive to rational decision making" (Bochel and Bochel, 2004, p. 115).

The sub-national government undergone considerable changes under the New Public Management which stressed the efficiency and the customer care. As a result of the consumerist orientation, the New Public Management attempted to make service delivery more efficient. For this purpose the Conservative government introduced market forms and used the competition to choose the cheapest service provider and to save taxpayers' money by keeping down the cost of the service. "Better management meant putting the customer first" (Stoker, 2004, p.13).

Consequently, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the creation of enormous number of public-private partnerships and the involvement of the non-governmental entities in the governing process. First partnerships were introduced by the Conservative government and they were particularly important in areas such as urban regeneration and crime prevention (Bochel and Bochel, 2004, p. 132). However, the real growth in the number and importance of the partnerships occurred under the Labour leadership. The idea of partnership formed the central part of the Third Way and it was the New Labor's approach to introduce partnerships as a form of governing (Newman, 2001, pp. 103-104).

The main goals of joined-up government were to engage public, private and voluntary institutions in order to find holistic solutions to the local problems; to deliver better policy outcomes; to assure better service delivery by bringing together the experience and knowledge of different partners (Newman, 2001, p. 109). As the Commission on Public Private Partnerships argued, there was a need to "manage a diverse public sector effectively so that it enhances social equity by improving the quality of, and commitment to, publicly funded services" (as cited by Bochel and Bochel, 2004, p. 133).

According to John (2001) there were several factors that propelled these developments and one of the factors were social and physical changes of society (such as high level of migration; the degrading of the environment and the aging of the population) that directly affected local public bodies as regulators and providers of welfare services. He claims that the local government on its own was not any longer able to respond

to these policy challenges and tackle the complex social problems efficiently without the outside assistance and it had to concede some of its functions to non public bodies. "The holistic solutions required many sorts of agencies to be involved" (p. 12).

Besides, the shift in political participation played an important role in this process. The involvement of private and non-governmental sectors in policy-making process is also due to the increased public pressure. Since 1970s, in many western European countries, citizens have become more dissatisfied with the outputs of government, more cynical about politicians and more inclined to form various types of associations and coalitions seeking for the better outcomes (Norris, 1999; cited by John, 2001, p. 13).

In response, the public sector sought to find alternative ways of governing. Under the consumer pressure it had to open up boundaries for private, voluntary and non-governmental organizations and improve service delivery (John, 2001, pp. 12-13).

Thus, the complexity of social problems combined with the growing criticism and the active citizenship proved to be a good incentive for government to find holistic solutions to public problems. In the context of social, economic and political changes government was challenged "to be flexible, innovative, adaptive, and to reinvent themselves" (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998, p. 105).

Conclusion

We have discussed the emergence of the multi-level governance and the responsive changes in the British policy. The examination of the processes and the institutions following the logic of the different types multi-level governance makes clear that there is no blueprint for action and we can not argue that generally the emergence of the multi-level governance was a political choice or a service delivery necessity, instead it we can conclude that there are various reasons behind the different types of multi-level governance.

While regionalization and the devolution of authority to the meso level in the United Kingdom seems to be a political choice, the creation of the multiple Public Private Partnerships and the involvement of the non public bodies in the policy making process is more likely to be the result of the increased complexity of policy problems and the necessity to find holistic solutions to them.

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