

The concept of Neo-Weberian State confronted by the multi-dimensional concept of governance

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The Centre for Social and Economic Strategies (CESES) applied the multi-dimensional concept of governance in an empirical analysis of the development of the Czech Republic after 1989. The research was focused on strategic qualities of governance and applied the multi-dimensional concept of governance. (Potůček et al. 2007). This concept, its application, and its relationship to the concept of neo-Weberian State might be of some interest to participants of the first NISPAcee-EGPA Trans-European Dialogue, Tallinn, 29. - 31.1. 2008. Why? As states are not developing in a vacuum; we experience fast and profound economic, societal, cultural, and political changes. Even more so post-communist countries, with their return to democratic principles, replacement of the old cadres by new (sometime poorly educated) administrative elites, mass-scale and fast privatization, newly acquired national sovereignty, etc. We live in the globalizing world, and Europe is reacting to this development by bold ambition to integrate itself...

1. The Multi-Dimensional concept of Governance

Governance means “... *collective capacity to influence the future for the better.*” (Dror 2001:xi)

A brief overview of the available literature already reveals certain preconditions of a sound analysis that are shared by most theoreticians: namely that **governance is a holistic, multidimensional concept**. At the same time, many add, it is also foggy and fuzzy.

The holistic approach is certainly much easier declared than applied in research practice. There is a legitimate second step of its application – to define the components of the whole to be studied.

The multidimensional approach makes it possible to identify all relevant aspects of the complex phenomenon studied – and to decide later, which of them should be taken into consideration when approaching a specific cognitive problem in a rigorous scholarly manner.

Three constitutive dimensions of governance in contemporary societies were defined in our research.

Dimension 1: Vertical layers of governance (mostly familiar as multi-level governance). This dimension enables us to analyze (increasingly relevant) relations between EU institutions, central and regional layers of governance.

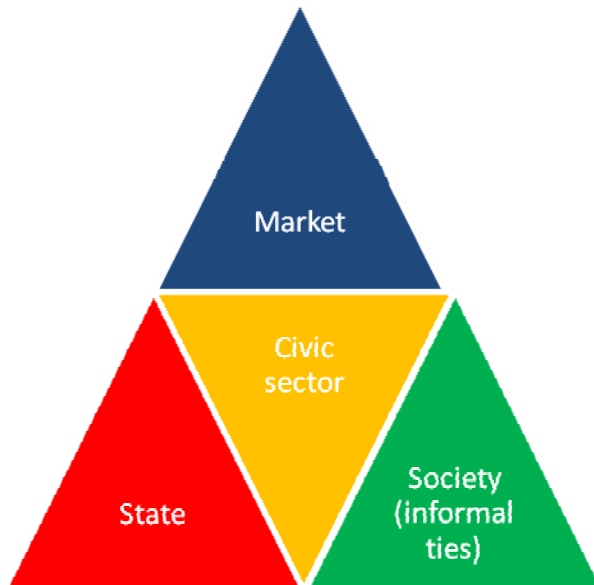
The recent transitions of public administration in CEE NMSs that shifted considerable responsibilities from the central to regional and municipal levels of public administration, and

the EU's enlargement that shifted certain parts of sovereignty of the new Member States to Brussels, is a good example of this tendency.

It should be noted that particular layers are not constituted by public administration only, and that relationships between layers are not necessarily based on hierarchical subordination exclusivity.

Dimension 2: Regulators - market, state, and civic sector.

Figure 1: The concept of governance based on market-state-civic sector interface



The CEE countries represent a fertile field of natural experimentation within this dimension. (More on this concept and its application to post-communist societies in Potůček 1999.) Of course, there are other relevant regulators which are not considered here - namely media.

Dimension 3: Actors' networks and networking.

Horizontal, mostly informal ties of collaboration and concerted action; they emerge and operate around specific agendas, interests, problem areas.

The spread of democracy around the globe in the late 20th century, coupled with an upsurge in the new information and communication technologies, has inspired some scholars to develop the concept of network society, interpreted as the embodiment of a new historical trend: *“Dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organized around networks. (...) The new information technology paradigm provides the material basis for (their) pervasive expansion throughout the entire social structure. (...) Presence or absence in the network and the dynamics of each network vis-à-vis others are critical sources of domination and change in our society.”* (Castells 2000:469)

2 May the multi-dimensional concept of governance bring some inspirations to the neo-Weberian concept of state (Pollitt 2008)?

1. These two concepts are compatible at the general level. The multi-dimensional concept of governance makes the reasoning about the neo-Weberian concept of state more realistic in terms of its broader environment.
2. This concept makes absent, emerging, changing, or failing functions of the (neo-Weberian) state, as induced by changing global and European environment, explicit and apt for further analysis:
 - a. The push to integrate (or, at least, coordinate) national administrations at (from) the European level due to the competitive pressure of a globalized market on particularized and weakening nation states;
 - b. The apparent tendency of the European Commission to by-pass national administrations via direct collaboration with regional administration. Sometime this tendency is justified by ossified administrative structures at the central level;
 - c. The shift from direct steering to indirect regulation between different vertical layers of governance. Example: EU's open method of coordination;
 - d. The crystallization of the state's function in creating regulatory milieu for the market;
 - e. The increasing engagement of enlightened state (regional) authorities in collaboration with the civic sector (deliberation, participation) due to increasing information asymmetry between them;
 - f. Non-orthodox patterns of co-steering, institutional hybrids, blurring boundaries of responsibility;
 - g. Mushrooming issue-specific networks crossing all traditional boundaries, entering public spheres, and influencing public decision-making;
 - h. Higher chances for free-riders maximizing their private profits where neo-Weberian state is non-existent or weak;
 - i. ...

3 The application of the 3-dimensional concept of governance: the Czech Republic's case

For the purpose of this presentation, I have selected seven case studies in different public policy areas. The first five of them have been defined predominantly at the national level and deal with important policy issues: sustainable development, economic growth, social inclusion, employment and security. The sixth case applies the sustainable development concept on the regional level (Liberec region) and the last case is dealing with strategic planning at the municipal level (Hradec Králové). All cases represent different attempts to strengthen strategic governance in the country in the beginning of the 21st century. What follows are the preliminary generalizations from these attempts.

Dimension 1: Vertical layers of governance

All in all, it is safe to say that internationally induced policy tasks often clashed with the wall of misunderstanding, incompetence, internal strife, and political opportunism both at the national and regional level. A classic example of this is the fate of three consecutive sustainable development strategies, with only the last of them passed by the Czech government long after the expiry of the deadline it had committed itself to honour. Jabůrková – Mátl (2007:290) see it in another policy field as follows: “... *the execution of the European Employment Strategy in the framework of MLG ... does not implement the principles of good governance, and does not produce the features of strategic planning and management.*”

Dimension 2: Regulators - state, market and civic sector

The state is by far the most relevant regulator in all analyzed policy fields. The role of the civic sector in governance has been relatively weak in the Czech Republic. The market and its institutional embodiments were taken seriously only in the strategy of economic growth.

Note: The selection of seven public policy areas is biased as for dimension 2. In other areas (e.g. economic policy, pension reform or the regulation of gambling industry, the role of the business sector in governance is considerable).

Dimension 3: Actor's networks and networking

The preliminary findings, limited to our seven case studies, suggest that networking is not the decisive vehicle of governance there. There are two conditions which should be met in order to make them its relevant dimension:

- a. The government takes the partnership with civic sector organizations seriously, and creates the sufficient administrative capacity in collaborating with it.
- b. There exists a competent and cohesive group of professionals and experts who join themselves in an effort to raise the corresponding agenda.

These conditions are rarely fulfilled.

Conclusion

The contribution tries to match two theoretical perspectives, one stemming from public policy stream of reasoning, and the other following public administration tradition: the juxtaposition of the multi-dimensional concept of governance and the neo-Weberian concept of state. This confrontation leads to the generation of a set of not-yet-answered research questions which might be of some interest to scholars from both sides of the Trans-European Dialogue.

Quoted sources

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