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RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR THE FUTURE

A Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem 2010 februárjában díszdoktorai közé választotta Geert Bouckaertet, a Leuveni Katolikus Egyetem közigazgatás-tudományokkal foglalkozó professzorát. Bouckaert professzornak jelentős szerepe volt az európai közigazgatás-tudomány fejlődésében, és hosszú időre visszanyúló kapcsolatai vannak egyetemünk Közzszolgálati Tanszékével. A következőkben közöljük Bouckaert professzornak a díszdoktorrá avatási ünnepségen elhangzott előadását, amelyben a közigazgatás-tudomány jövőjét, illetve annak oktatását érő legfontosabb kihívásokat és válaszlehetőségeket elemzi. A tanulmány eredetileg a Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem angol nyelvű folyóiratában, a Society and Economy-ben jelent meg.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the field of public administration is subject to a range of influences and dynamics, with a past, a present, and a future. Looking at the main influences and dynamics, it is important to see how the future of researching public administration could look like, and perhaps should look like. The difference between 'should' and 'could' depends on these influences and dynamics, e.g. our debates and academic agenda setting, but also resources in money and people, hazard (such as a sudden crisis of governance of the banking sector), or perhaps on serendipity (like the use of cultural theory from anthropologists).

It is useful to focus on some aspects of this future, also from the point of view of how to shape the research in public administration in the next decades. This is a strategic position which should be picked up by the existing and legitimate platforms, such as EGPA, the European Group for Public Administration, and NISPAcee, the Network of Institutes and Schools in Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe. This should also be shared by the constituting and leading research institutes in Europe and beyond, and by the major fund providing institutions such as the European Science Foundation and national foundations.

1. DISCUSSING THE FUTURE IS MORE THAN LISTING INTERESTING TOPICS

It is tempting to reduce such a reflection to listing topics of research, even if it is important to debate priorities for research. It is even necessary for countries and for Europe to focus on priorities since research is part of an economic strategy, definitely within the Lisbon criteria where three percent of GDP should be reserved for research. However, it seems much easier to define these content priorities within medicine, or the so called hard sciences of engineering or physics than in the humanities or the social and economic sciences in the broad meaning of the word.

It is clear that major funding sources do put forward themes which suggest priorities, e.g. the European Seventh Framework Programme, even if this particular call seems more the result of a political compromise than a clear cut and generally accepted set of priorities.

Academic efforts have been made elsewhere to produce those lists and most of the time they are related to what the community thinks the issues, trends or problems will be for future governments and administrations. Major examples of these very well considered brainstormings are the Minibrook Conferences in the USA which are organized every twenty years and which took place in 1968, 1988, and 2008.

EGPA will organize such a reflection also within the European scene in general, and within EGPA in particular. For that reason a 'Future of PA'-group will be launched within EGPA during the 2010 annual conference which is in Toulouse, on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the foundation of EGPA (EGPA 2009) within IIAS, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences.

2. NATIONAL CONTINGENCIES ARE AN IMPORTANT CONTEXT

Obviously, there is also a path-dependency in conducting research. Our next research agenda is depending on our past research agenda. Even if we are not so much depending on heavy capital infrastructure, we do depend on human resources with their specialized skills and knowledge. Teams are changing incrementally, in most cases. The opportunities to change gear or direction are quite rare. This is an additional reason to pay attention to strategic planning for our research agenda since this determines our research capacity and activities, assuming that we benefit from an accumulation of knowledge and that we are a learning academic organization. Both assumptions, developing strategies and learning, are not obvious, they are not happening spontaneously, and therefore they need to be organized.

It is clear that this past research agenda is not generic, but mostly contingent. It depends on the country, and on the related administrative and political culture. The dominant research object determines the research agenda. In some cases it is purely problem driven research.

In a series of articles in the British journal *Public Administration*, edited by Kickert and Stillman (2004), overviews of these national research agendas were described for Denmark, Norway, Germany, The Netherlands, and Portugal. Summarized trends for these countries demonstrate their differences and their contingencies. What is clear is the contingencies of the system features which seem to determine the past research agendas and therefore also the future ones. Transition countries, such as e.g. Hungary, have had solid research on different current issues and challenges such as e.g. the role of the third sector (Jenei and Kuti 2003), or on local government (Jenei and Szalai 2002).

What remains as a question is to what extent a converging strategy may be developed within Europe, and how we define a European way of conducting research in PA for the future. A second conclusion is that we need to develop a strategic research plan, and link this to capacity planning, taking the past into account.

3. SHAPING OUR ELITES: TEACHING OUR CIVIL SERVANTS AND RESEARCHERS

Interaction between research and teaching is crucial. We should not only guarantee that our teaching is research driven, we should also guarantee that we have the elites in place for our administrations but also for conducting our research. Therefore it is important, from a research strategy, to include our teaching strategy in order to answer the ultimate question: who will shape our elites?

It seems that four major trends are affecting our university teaching and research in the field of public administration (PA): Europeanization, public sector reform in member countries, globalization, and marketization. Each of these four trends may have a different impact in different European countries. However, the combination of these four trends, in their different intensities, will affect the field of Public Administration in a substantial way.

EUROPEANISATION

The European political and administrative scene has changed dramatically in the last twenty years. The European Union has taken significant steps forward with a significant impact on the functioning of the public sector in its member countries. There is an increasing legal, political, and administrative reality which becomes a European Administrative Space. Even if there are variations between countries, there is a certain "acquis communautaire" which is visible. From a quality control point of view, there is even a Common Assessment Model (CAF) that is getting accepted as a major frame or reference for quality in the public sector in the member countries (and even beyond).

A second significant trend is obviously the fact that Central and Eastern European countries have joined the EU. They have made, and are still making choices to remodel, train and upgrade their civil service, but also their research capacity in the field of public administration. Establishing a new academic and administrative elite is a challenge. It brings Le Monde even to ask the key question: "who is shaping our elite?", i.e. the public sector elite (Floc'h 2008). In 1991 the Polish government took a decision to have an explicit policy on shaping its administrative elite, also in the context of the European Union, and to invite the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) of Maastricht, the College of Europe in Bruges, and the European Institute in Florence (Jacqué 2008). Today, Poland hosts the College of Europe in Natolin which focuses more on enlargement and integration, as well as an EIPA-antennae with a focus on financial management in the public sector.

A third irreversible trend which has affected the teaching of public administration directly and therefore research indirectly, is the Bologna process towards a bachelor-master-PhD structure within the European Educational Space. This Open Method of Coordination has resulted in one of the strongest converging momentums of change in national education policy across Europe, and as a consequence also in research training. Obviously, the practice of exchanging students with Erasmus programs, the transfer of credits as regulated within the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the still hesitant but clear pilots to have diplomas offered by

more than one university, are all expressions of a converging system with an enormous impact on teaching our field of PA. Unfortunately, the circulation of doctoral students is still underdeveloped but should become a next priority. This should strengthen an emerging European Research Space which will affect the process of generating, transferring, and using knowledge. To the extent that research is affecting teaching, the European Research Space will affect also its teaching.

The European project in itself has also become a topic of research and teaching, and resulted in a new field of 'area studies', with interfaces to a range of disciplines such as history, economics, law, political science, policy sciences, management (of multi- or international organizations), and public administration.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

Public sector reform has been an issue within OECD countries in general for several decades (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). This was a very Anglo-American driven agenda, with key countries setting reform frames, such as, New Zealand and the UK, and focusing on performance (Bouckaert and Halligan 2008). However, continental Europe was also influenced, and even if a 'maintain' position initially was dominant, reform did happen, including in the European Commission, perhaps resulting in a Neo-Weberian system (Pollitt et al 2008).

From an overview of reforms in OECD countries (OECD 2005) it seems that there has been a converging pattern of answers or solutions to a shared set of problems and challenges. This emphasizes the importance of (bench) learning, and of conditions for successful transfers of knowledge and good practice.

These reforms of the research object of public administration have also impacted research and teaching. First, PA shifted its content from law, political science, policy, and public administration in its strict institutional meaning, to also including economics and public management. Public management became a new pillar in teaching and researching the public sector, government and the state. A second consequence was that comparing and comparisons became a normal part of teaching and research. Comparing is now fully part of our research strategy, even if there are debates of how comparison could be functional in a research strategy: most similar or most different; small N or larger N, the object of comparison (organizations, policies, countries), clustering of cases. A third consequence of these reforms was that all policy fields professionalized their policy and management cycles within their field. As a consequence the field to research has expanded. This has an implication on where research in public administration is located, or should be located.

Policy fields such as education, health, security, culture, sports, justice, etc. requires a research blend of public administration with field experts who are also exposed to the management of schools, hospitals, police stations, museums, training centers, courts, etc., and also to policy expertise (strategic planning, budgeting and financing, performance and monitoring, reporting, evaluation, etc.) in all relevant policy fields.

Specialized research programs have been established for policy and management in all these policy fields, mostly in the faculties that are equipped and related to

these policy fields (Faculties of Arts, Sports, Criminology, Educational Sciences, Agriculture, Health, etc.). This has an impact on PA and the way it is organized at universities. Whereas previously public administration was predominantly a vertical department (within politics, or law, or management, or economics), it now also has a horizontal dimension with modules in all other university faculties related to these policy fields. There is a significant increase of research programs in all these policy fields (environment, culture, education, social policy, leisure, etc.). As a consequence more management and policy related research and teaching is integrated in all these vertical programs (e.g. strategy, implementation, evaluation) to strengthen management of museums, hospitals, schools, sports centers, natural parks, police, prisons, courts, etc. A final impact is that 'governance' becomes the new paradigm which also is expressed in master titles and PhD topics. Recent examples are the Hertie School for Governance (Berlin), or the Master of European Governance and Administration (Potsdam, IEP Paris).

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization has two major consequences on research. First, the topic of interdependencies in fields of e.g. environmental problems, economic and financial crises, migration, natural disasters or fragile energy supply have influenced an awareness that classical national solutions are not fit for purpose at all to manage these major and globalized societal problems. This includes governing and managing international organizations and global policies, and how this cascades down (or not) to national policies and administrative systems. Area studies remain important, but research on globalized governance of policy fields is lacking in many research agendas and will require new types of methodologies such as e.g. simulations and scenarios, modeling, or comparing experiments.

A second issue is that in a globalized world researchers should be moving. Within the European scenery this mobility of students, PhD students, and researchers is not equalized. There is a net 'import' of Erasmus exchange students in Finland, Ireland, Malta, Sweden, and the UK. There is a net "export" of students for Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey. The other countries within the European exchange programs have a more balanced number. It also seems that increasingly American students are visiting programs in Europe compared to the previous decades. Increasingly, many programs are exposed to significant numbers of Chinese candidates. All this applies also to researchers, but to a lesser extent.

MARKETISATION

Increasingly, research and education become part of market mechanisms. A market means that there is a supply of programs and research capacity with specific features that fit a marketing mix (Price, Product, Place, Promotion). The price of a research program is linked to prestige and quality (which is officially assessed). The

product, a PhD-diploma or research output, but also a network, and a channel for the job market, is derived from the content of this research, the reputation of staff, the prestige of an institution. Attractiveness of a place remains an important factor. Websites and promotion on research and teaching markets become a standard operating procedure, including rankings of best places to conduct research.

Elements such as benchmarks, rankings, accreditations all add to quasi market mechanisms in the field of research and teaching in general, and research and teaching public administration in particular. This is not a perfect open competition because of constraints in language, location, entrance requirements, recognition, or fees. Nevertheless there is a shift away from a more monopolistic position of national programs, to a more internationally competitive and global market. This has a huge impact on research capacity building.

In this context classical national schools (the so-called 'écoles nationales', or the traditional law based administrative schools) within the public sector, who still have a clear monopoly, may come under pressure since they are internally oriented and in some cases disconnected from the above mentioned trends.

Universities are still capable of offering and shaping the administrative and research elites in countries if they take these trends into account. Research assessments will increasingly become the name of the game, as a result of this marketization. However, a key question will be who will conduct these research assessments and for what ultimate purpose. It is clear that allocation of resources will be a consequence.

In conclusion, our research strategies will have to take into account the four major trends of Europeanization, globalization, public sector reforms, and marketization to define strategic research plans and to build and secure the research capacity.

4. STARTING A DEBATE FOR THE FUTURE

Three elements have been developed for the debate on the future of research in public administration:

1. Listings of topics for a research agenda (necessary but not sufficient);
2. Current national research strategies or strategies of leading institutions as a contingency need to take changing circumstances into account;
3. The interaction of teaching and researching and the influence of Europeanization, globalization, public sector reforms themselves, and marketization are influencing supply and demand in the field of public administration..

There are three more issues which should be part of the debate of developing the future of public administration research. Most of these issues are lacking in discussions on the future of research in public administration. So the following questions need also to be addressed:

4. What kind of scientific research do we want?
5. Is there a specific European voice in this research, (partly) complementary to the American voice which we recognize and appreciate?
6. How should we organize progress in knowledge in public administration?

There should be a focus on:

- Comparative research: national and international;
- Long term data series should be developed. These data series could be quantitative or qualitative but should be comparable in time. Survey based quantitative data should be replicated in several countries. This results in a special concern for languages and translations. Particular technically defined key words, such as agency, accountability, politics/policy, efficiency versus effectiveness, governance are difficult to translate in the 22 other official languages of the EU. On the other hand, there are also words in 'local' languages which are not well traveling to other languages, including English. There is a particular concern if comparable questionnaires need to be replicated across language areas. A range of concepts and terminology complicate comparative research in the European scene.
- Multidisciplinarity is necessary, possible, and desirable.
- Theory testing and building, or model testing and building should be our focus. In this matter we should not just look at neo-institutionalist theories and models but also re-integrate bureaucratic and managerial theories and models.

IS THERE A EUROPEAN VOICE?

There is not one model for public administration in Europe, but a broad range of models. The variety of models corresponds probably to the politico-administrative cultures in Europe. As a consequence, research will be less generic and more contingent compared to the field of economics. However, there are sufficient, significant and substantial common denominators to guarantee comparative research across Europe.

These contingencies are crucial and result in some differences (Cepiku et al 2007; Favre and Kilchenmann s. a.; Randma-Liiv and Connaughton 2005), even if there are converging mechanisms.

A first difference between Anglo-American and European research programs is that Anglo-American programs are more bottom up, more inductive and more focused on empirical studies. European programs are probably more deductive, i.e. based on law, on political models, and sometimes more normative (e.g. the Rechtsstaat).

A second difference is the influence of common law versus administrative law, which is driving the content of research objects. It results not only in the status of law in research but also in focusing on the difference of State of Law concepts versus general interest as criteria to judge factual cases.

Third, there are differences in the politics of exporting models. Some countries are aware that their domestic models remain domestic, and have no ambition to export this, through research, teaching and training. Others have a clear mission to export their domestic models, e.g. the French ENA. Finally there are countries that export their model which they consider to be generic. These different (non-) export strategies have an impact on the way research programs are designed. It is ultimately a debate on how generic basic mechanisms are in public administration, or not.

Fourth, scientifically PA is a field supported by disciplines, but it is not a discipline as such. As a consequence, the emphases of different disciplines varies according to the politico-administrative context. Hajnal (2003) demonstrated clearly that average continental teaching programs focus more on political science, Nordic programs emphasize more managerial components, and Central and East European programs are more legal but are turning more managerial. *Mutatis mutandis* this probably also applies for the research programs.

TEN SUGGESTIONS TO ORGANIZE THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Among the possible scenarios we want to exclude the possibility that public administration as an academic field of research will disappear, or will be absorbed by private or not-for-profit administration. It is possible that relabeling occurs, e.g. governance, but in reality it will ultimately always refer to public administration. Finally, it could be that a further fragmentation occurs into a range of specialized fields for research and training or teaching, such as policy, management, and institutions, in a generic way or even in policy field specific areas, e.g. security policy, police management, or cultural policy and museum management, etc. I conclude with ten suggestions to guarantee a successful future for research in public administration.

First, we need to organize the debate on PA's future. There are clear examples such as the efforts by the Royal Academy of the Netherlands. In the USA there are the above mentioned organized debates on challenges and future public services as drivers for PA research such as Minnowbrook I (1968), II (1988), and III (2008), but also the Wye River Plantation debates (1990) or the Building Bridges Tour by ASPA (2000), or even the Big Questions/Big Issues as organized by The IBM Center for the Business of Government, which resulted in "Six trends transforming government" (2006).

Second, we need to learn from others to upgrade ourselves. From economics we need to import models and quantification; from psychology we could import experiments; from political science we need to import more surveys which could be repeated to build time series.

Third, we need to strengthen our European actions through a higher presence in ESF Framework Programs, European Collaborative Research Programs (ECRP), and COST-networks in our field. We also need to have a higher visibility in transnational Research Programs such as Norface. It is crucial to elevate our international comparative research programs at this European level.

Fourth, we should turn one of our specificities, i.e. the interface between practitioners and academics, and the interaction with our object of research, i.e. the functioning of the public sector, into an asset and a strength. From an academic point of view we need to focus upon the purely academic, but also on the two way bridge from academia to practice.

Fifth, we need to export public administration. The art and science of building administrations, nations, and states should be driven by our research. In some countries this even becomes part of their foreign policy or development aid. However, we also need to export our multidisciplinary and synthetic view to other disciplines.

Major breakthroughs have been realized by combining disciplinary views into other disciplines, e.g. economics and law, or economics and institutionalism.

Sixth, we need to apply the Commission's Green Book conclusions on the European Research Area (ERA) to our field (Commission, 2007). It applies to all research fields but its conclusions are even more applicable to social sciences in general and to public administration in particular. The main recommendations by this Green Book are to guarantee:

- Adequate flow of competent researchers: we have already all types of circulating students, but we need more flows of researchers;
- World-class research infrastructures: in our case this means not just libraries but also survey or case based data-sets to conduct quantitative research or case surveys;
- Excellent research institutions: in our case this means a critical mass recognized scholars in a relatively stable environment which helps to accumulate knowledge and research skills, and to maintain the above mentioned infrastructure;
- Effective knowledge sharing: this means in our case also shared PhD training, shared and stable platforms and networks of researchers, and more discussion papers for a contradictory debate;
- Well coordinated research programs and priorities: this means sharing research strategies, developing complementary and synergetic research skills and foci, and a modular concept of projects as part of a program;
- Finally, opening of the European Research Space to the world. In our case this means to organize the interfaces to other continents, but also to be present at a globalized research agenda.

Seventh, we need to further strengthen EGPA and NISPAcee, and its collaboration. Together we constitute the European voice in public administration.

Eighth, we need to push databases not just on the substance of our field of research but also on the field itself. It is important that we are informed on what others in the field are doing. For that purpose a database on journals in Europe which are not in English on public administration, public policy, and public management, is crucial. Language is not a neutral vehicle, and English is our horizontal communication vehicle but we also need our vertical local languages to bridge our scientific and comparative knowledge to the contingencies and to 'translate' trends, causalities, and other more general findings. With our publication database PA@Babel EGPA has tried and is trying to bridge this gap.

Another crucial database, which is covered by WOTPA under the responsibility of our colleagues of Lausanne and with the support from Erasmus, Rotterdam, and Tor Vergata, Rome we need overviews of Bachelor, Master, and PhD training, but also of PhD thesis topics. This is a crucial mediator to share human resources in our field.

Ninth, we will strengthen our field by organizing dialogues. Within EGPA we have organized the Transatlantic Dialogues (TAD) with our colleagues from ASPA; together with NISPAcee we have organized the TransEuropean Dialogues (TED), and we have started to organize Mediterranean Dialogues (MED). The purpose is to generate ideas, to create a common speech within the field, to cross-fertilize prac-

tices of research, and to better understand our own research conclusions. What is lacking is an organized dialogue between traditional disciplines constituting public administrations and new disciplines to better understand, explain, and perhaps predict our complex realities within public administration.

Tenth and final, we need to move our research organizations from individuals, like the German 'Lehrstuhl' to teams of researchers. Ultimately, within Europe, we need to have networks of teams of researchers to develop, and implement our shared research programs. This will be the only way to guarantee cumulative research programs built upon modular research projects in order to accumulate knowledge on how our systems work.

These ten guidelines should guarantee solid research in public administration for the future.

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