

A distinct subset of multi-level governance? Patterns of co-ordination between national, European and international administrations

FIRST DRAFT, PLEASE DO NOT CITE WITHOUT PERMISSION

Arthur Benz, Andreas Corcaci, Jan Doser

Abstract

The concept of multi-level governance adds a crucial dimension to the debate about political decision making by conceptualizing policy co-ordination across territorial levels of government. Though it refers particularly to politics, multi-level governance to some extent obfuscates the role administrations play in preparing and implementing political decisions. Starting from the observation that administrations at different levels of governance are linked through various patterns, we assume that multi-level administration constitutes a particular subset of multi-level governance, characterized either by specific interaction patterns or by specific conditions of co-ordination.

Based on the literature on multi-level governance, the article firstly provides insights into the manner and extent to which administrative and political arenas differ in terms of predominant modes of governance and patterns of co-ordination across territorial levels. Secondly, by considering power structures and modes of co-ordination as relevant analytical dimensions, we suggest a typology covering the particular co-ordination patterns of multi-level administration. Finally, we discuss the dynamics of administrative co-ordination across levels, specifically change mechanisms underlying the evolution of co-ordination patterns and potential consequences. Departing from the view that administrations merely constitute a by-product of governance as a whole, this article shows that research on the interaction between national, European and international administrations highlights particular patterns of multi-level governance so far not appropriately dealt with in existing theories. Therefore, our analytical framework can pave the way for a focused research agenda linking approaches to multi-level governance and public administration.

Keywords: multi-level governance, multi-level administration, international public administration (IPA), co-ordination, dynamics of administration

1. Introduction

The concept of multi-level governance (MLG) provides an analytical tool to describe emerging structures and processes of policy making and politics cutting across territorial boundaries of jurisdictions – those of local or regional governments, nation states, international and supranational organizations. In view of a reallocation of political power (or ‘authority’) from national governments to transnational institutions or sub-national governments (Marks *et al.* 2010), it emphasizes interdependence of decisions made in separate jurisdictions and the need to co-ordinate these decisions in order to manage interdependence. Moreover, the concept points out the interplay of multi-level and ‘domestic’ (i.e. intra-level) politics and policy making (Putnam 1988), the latter being particularly relevant in democratic governments.

While this definition of the concept can be taken as a common denominator of research, publications that ‘mushroomed’ (Stephenson 2013: 818) over the last two decades address different issues and a variety of patterns of MLG. Many of them focus on particular processes of policy making, while others intend to identify the characteristic features of MLG through categories such as networks, distribution of power, power sharing, and dynamics of structures or patterns of co-ordination. To an increasing extent, questions of legitimacy and democracy have also been addressed in the relevant literature. Moreover, the concept has ‘travelled’ from European studies to research on comparative federalism and international relations. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that theory building has gone in different directions (e.g., Piattoni 2010).

Interested in the effectiveness and legitimacy of politics beyond established jurisdictions, scholars applying the concept of MLG usually do not distinguish between ‘high politics’ of legislation or political agreements and policy making within administrative units. Meanwhile, an increasing number of studies deal with administration in international organizations (IOs) and the European Union (EU), and some of them focus on relations between different levels of administration (Egeberg 2006). However, neither studies on MLG in general nor those on multi-level administration (MLA) have sufficiently distinguished institutional contexts, actor constellations, and patterns of interaction in governmental and administrative relations. To be sure, theories and concepts elaborated in research on MLG are highly relevant when we study patterns of interaction and co-ordination between international, European and national administrations. Yet, it is relevant to understand the particular role of administration in this context and to identify the particular structures, processes, dynamics and consequences of inter-administrative relations.

The article aims at providing first insights into the manner and extent to which administrative and political arenas differ in terms of predominant modes of governance and, subsequently, patterns of interaction and co-ordination across territorial levels. Starting from the literature on MLG, we argue that MLA indeed forms a distinct analytical category that yields new research opportunities. Secondly, by considering power structures and modes of co-ordination as the relevant dimensions to characterize MLG, we suggest a typology covering the particular patterns of MLA. In view of the fact that both structures and modes of co-ordination can be combined to various patterns, we finally illustrate the dynamics of inter-administrative relations and the underlying mechanisms of change in reference to the International Energy Agency (IEA). Departing from the view that administration merely constitutes a by-product of governance as a whole, this article ultimately seeks to pave the way for a focused research agenda on MLA and its specific interaction patterns.

2. State of research on multi-level governance

As mentioned above, MLG describes a wide field of empirical research and covers different theoretical approaches. Although scholars had studied various aspects of MLG before, the concept gained attention when Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks introduced their actor-centred theory of European integration under this label (Hooghe and Marks 2001; see Bache and Flinders 2004). They explained the differentiation of levels in Europe as a result of mobilization of actors representing regional and local governments and administrations. Meanwhile, Hooghe and Marks extended their approach to comparative research on the rise of ‘regional authority’ in nation state governance and to research on international organizations. While they described MLG in the EU as highly dynamic patterns of interaction between actors, their comparative research distinguishes between structures of divided and shared powers in territorially or functionally organized multi-level systems (Hooghe and Marks 2014; Marks *et al.* 2010).

Designed to explain European integration and regionalization of nation states, this concept of MLG focuses on changes in structures or constitutions. According to Hooghe and Marks, rescaling of governance functions and the legitimizing power of national and regional communities constitute contrasting forces, which mobilize actors to support international or European integration and regionalization (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Thus, their explanation partly deviates from other integration theories, yet still conforms to them to some extent. In any case, while they started with an actor-centred approach, their revised theory raises the question of how functional and community pressure advances or constraints a shift in authority (Knodt and Corcaci 2012: 105-108).

As to community, it seems obvious that parties articulate interests to change power structures. However, when general debates about European integration or regionalization translate into policy making, actors interested in specific powers or functions enter the scene. While preferences of parties on centralization or decentralization are relevant, they do not tell us very much about the causes and consequences of changes in the allocation of power. Interestingly, integration theories right from the beginning emphasized not parties, but executives. According to intergovernmentalist theory, executives favour integration in order to gain power and autonomy against national parliaments or interest groups (Moravcsik 1998). For a similar reason, regional executives tend to choose participation in European or national policy making over the sole responsibility for policies. Nonetheless, this approach only explains general institutional interests in changes of authority rather than particular decisions on the reallocation of power. Functionalist theory is more precise in this respect as it emphasizes the importance of policy experts who engage in networks with other actors across borders (Haas 1964). Actually, these experts could be identified as administrative actors in many cases. Integration does not only take place as politics between national politicians, but is at its core driven by administrative officials at different levels. Therefore, though without making this explicit, functionalism is deeply rooted in concepts of administration and could be re-interpreted or even re-formulated as a theory of MLA.

The distinction between politics and administration has been also neglected in studies on multi-level policy making, although different actors have been considered in the relevant literature. Fritz W. Scharpf's seminal publications on the joint-decision trap (Scharpf 1988, 2011) have mainly been adopted in research on treaty amendments and European legislation, although the concept emerged from studies on intergovernmental policy making within redistributive policies. As Scharpf has discovered, parties, parliaments and governments might set the frame for policy making by determining aims and resources, but it is up to administrations representing interests of their jurisdiction to cope with redistributive conflicts; and they manage this task by developing routines of incremental adjustment of programs.

Certainly, significant changes of institutions or policies require legislative decisions or agreements among governments. In these instances, policy making is affected by party competition, and powerful interest organizations in domestic politics tie the hands of governments. It is useful to consider multi-level policy making as a 'two-level game' (Putnam 1988) in this context, linking negotiations between government delegates and processes inside governments. However, the impact of parties, parliaments and interest groups certainly depends on the degree of politicization of the issues at stake. Many of the policies covered in empirical

studies on MLG either concern specific or technical issues dealt with by civil servants or experts, which in turn attract special interest groups.

Even if highly politicized issues are at stake and parties or interest organizations cause a confrontation among policy makers, deadlock will not automatically occur. Stimulated by Scharpf's theorizing and Putnam's approach, research on European policy making, comparative federalism and international relations has revealed a number of reasons as to why policy makers can avoid the 'joint decision trap' (see Falkner 2011). Actors can find 'escape routes' from deadlock situations by engaging in informal negotiations (Héritier 1999) and by shaping institutional rules (Héritier 2007). Multi-level policy making is not only driven by actors tying their hands in two-level games, but also by the dynamics of power structures (Farrell and Newman 2014). Actors can shift decisions threatened by gridlock from one arena to another where issues and conflicts are reframed. They can mobilize support by interest groups (Blom-Hansen 1999: 45-49), experts or policy entrepreneurs (Peters 1997). Moreover, joint decision making at the European level can be linked to political processes in IOs or conferences (Falkner and Müller 2013). In comparative research on federalism, shifting processes to different arenas has also been highlighted as the most important way of avoiding deadlocks in MLG (Benz 2013; Painter 1991).

A closer look at this literature reveals that civil servants constitute significant actors within these various patterns of strategic policy making. They mainly assist political leaders in negotiations, but they also co-operate in multi-level relations on their own. Administrative experts participate in informal negotiations, depoliticize issues in case of stalemates among governments, prepare compromises and pave the way for exits from the joint-decision trap. To be sure, this does not mean that administrations actually make policies in multi-level systems. What should be emphasized instead is their particular role. Additionally, administrative relations must differ from patterns of MLG in the relations of governments and parliaments to make multi-level policy effective. Administrations have to follow their own logics in order to countervail bargaining and confrontations among actors who pursue national, party-political or particular societal interests (Trondal 2015: 489).

Distinguishing a particular subset of MLG in administration does not imply a revival of the old dichotomy between politics and administration, which has been described as "a convenient fiction rather than a description of any reality" (Campbell and Peters 1988: 82). Civil servants whose activities reach beyond their jurisdiction participate in policy making and they closely work with members of government (in the sense of the elected executive in a democratic state). However, although they participate in politics and policy making,

administrative actors can be distinguished from governmental actors according to their institutional position and their functions. This does not only signify a difference in principle (Overeem 2012: 137-166) but also has real-world consequences, not the least in multi-level relations between governments and administrations. Therefore, we can conceptually divide MLG into two different subsets: one established by multi-level relations between governments and the other consisting of relations between administrations. Without claiming to include all relevant aspects, the following reasons speak for such a distinction:

- Firstly, it is up to governments to make binding decisions legitimized by the agreement of parliaments. Administrative decisions are binding as far as they are grounded in existing law that must be implemented. Hence, their legitimacy is based on the rule of law and differs from the legitimacy of democratic governments. Administrative actors in MLG are partly, if not primarily, responsible for preparing and implementing decisions made by executives, both concerning the formal transposition and the administrative implementation of international agreements into national law. Yet, although they have functional power to shape policies, they do not possess the ability to make final decisions.
- Secondly, in multi-level relations, administrative actors exhibit a supportive role as experts or policy specialists. They provide and communicate information and deal with details, whereas members of governments represent general interests of the member states and leaders of IOs stand for transnational interests. As a rule, governments make the results of their interaction public, while administrative relations across levels evolve in private.
- Thirdly, governments at the national or sub-national level are usually influenced by party politics and guided by ‘topocratic’ interests (i.e. those concerning their jurisdiction), whereas administrations more often show ‘technocratic’ interests (for these concepts, see Beer 1978). They follow professional standards which are shared by administrations in different jurisdictions. It goes without saying that high-ranking civic servants defend the interests of their state or organization and are committed to their political leaders. Nonetheless, they not only aim at solving problems by using their expertise, but are also expected to do so.
- Finally, forms of interactions among governments and administrations differ. In MLG, governments meet in conferences or work according to institutionalized or standardized procedures. They may also interact through the media in order to build up pressure on other governments in the context of competitive relations. In contrast,

administrations often establish continuous working contacts in their policy field or more dense relations within networks. These patterns of interaction may even persist when governmental relations break down. In general, administrations contribute to institutional continuity in MLG whereas governmental relations are characterized by discontinuity.

Similar to the complex nature of nation states and their governments, the EU and IOs should analytically not be regarded as homogenous actors (see, e.g., Elsig 2010: 351). A distinction between governmental and administrative branches, which are inherently fragmented, can also be made. Accordingly, we will discuss international public administrations independently from the political bodies of their corresponding organization in the same way we separate national public administrations from their governments.

3. Patterns of co-ordination in multi-level administration

Starting from the assumption that governance is characterized by “the patterns and modes of co-ordination among actors across the boundaries of institutions, territories, or levels” (Benz 2015: 37), we identify vertical co-ordination as the way actors of overlapping jurisdictional entities interact to fulfil their (common) goals, to cope with the interdependence and the reciprocity of their policies. Patterns of co-ordination are thus understood as a conceptual tool or instrument within a modular approach to build a theory of MLA (see Scharpf 2010: 75).

In the literature on MLG, such patterns are categorized as ‘mutual adjustment’, ‘intergovernmental negotiations’, ‘joint decision making’, ‘hierarchical direction’ (ibid: 69-75), ‘persuasion’ (Bell *et al.* 2010: 851-854), ‘institutional competition’ or ‘yardstick competition’ (Benz 2012). These patterns can be grouped according to different modes of governance with specific characteristics such as the underlying structure, the degree of obligation to participate or flexibility during implementation processes (see, e.g., Treib *et al.* 2007: 13). Based on different criteria, scholars suggest typologies distinguishing between ‘hierarchy’, ‘negotiation’, ‘competition’ and ‘co-operation’ (Tömmel 2009: 13), ‘coercive’, ‘co-operative’ and ‘persuasive modes of co-ordination’ (Benz 2015: 37) or simply ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ modes of governance (Moos 2009: 399). These modes represent ideal types, which usually do not appear in their purest form but constitute complex patterns of interaction between different actors. For example, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) can be understood as an empirical example of yardstick competition used by the European Commission, which is related to the modes of competition and co-operation (Benz 2007: 511-513).

But how do these modes and patterns of governance differ between governments and administrations? If we take the formal allocation of powers between levels as a decisive condition, an important difference between multi-level relations of governments and administration can be observed. The division of competences between the national and international levels depends on the willingness of governments to delegate powers in the context of agreements, the establishment of international organizations or amendments of EU treaties. This willingness varies between policy fields (Koremenos 2008: 159-161), although governments tend to maintain powers to participate in international or European policy making. Hence, sharing of powers between governments is the rule in multi-level systems beyond the nation state. In contrast, powers of administrations result from different processes. In order to fulfil the functions delegated to them, IOs and the EU introduced their own administrative bodies, either in co-operation with national governments or independent of them, but always based on powers delegated by the respective political organization. If bureaucrats have a strong impact on the design of an IO, administrative bodies are likely to become independent from the national level (Johnson 2013). In contrast, if national governments delegate powers to make political decisions in IOs, they tend to maintain their administrative powers to prepare or implement these decisions in their own domain (Kelemen 2003). In any case, national and international administrations receive their tasks, competences and instructions at each level from their political principals, who agreed upon the allocation of competences between levels in advance.

As a consequence, multi-level relations among governments reveal a mutual dependence due to shared powers. In contrast, administrative relations are asymmetrical, characterized by a division of powers. Although powers may intersect, they rarely are shared in MLA. This asymmetry is the result of delegation processes at each governance level, which create administrative systems at the (sub-)national and international level (i.e. the IPA) that are either more centralized or more decentralized. In the case of a power asymmetry favouring an IPA, policies co-ordinated between governments within the IO operates in a hierarchical structure, although rules that need to be implemented and administrative powers are usually determined in joint decisions, either by the political bodies of IOs or through EU legislation. Moreover, international or European administration tend to co-operate and communicate with national administrations even under these institutional conditions. Governance in the ‘shadow of hierarchy’ has been identified as an important pattern in the EU (Börzel 2010). However, it prevails in administration, but not in the legislative arena or in negotiations among governments, and the same holds true for IOs. In other policy fields, international

administrations have to rely on the support or co-operation of national administrations, which maintain the powers to implement decisions of governments even if these decisions were made at a level beyond the nation state. Formal sharing of power is an exception in MLA, but structure can emerge from ongoing relations in the shape of inter-administrative networks. Therefore, multi-level co-ordination between governments and administrations evolves under different institutional conditions with regard to the division of powers.

Despite the institutional autonomy of administrations in multi-level policy fields, national administrations may profit from support by their international counterparts when preparing or implementing decisions of political bodies. In a similar vein, international administrations cannot simply rule from the top even if they have the right to do so, but they need to consider the particular conditions in the member states. In order to prevent major implementation problems, they must gain expertise or information, which is mainly available at lower administrative levels (Maggetti and Gilardi 2011: 831-834). Consequently, although administrative powers are usually not shared but separated, policies made at different levels are interdependent and require co-ordination.

Interdependence of administrative policy making finds expression in two characteristic structural features. The first has been discussed as 'internationalization' or 'Europeanization' of national public administration (NPA). It concerns the structural adjustment process of the lower level in response to the delegation of authority to the international level and the resulting power asymmetry between administrations. Structural adjustments are expected to become necessary if national administrations depend on the international level to fulfil their tasks. A possible indicator for internationalization is the establishment of special administrative departments responsible for relation with individual IPAs (Lægreid *et al.* 2004: 357-358). The second feature, the extent of 'autonomy of the IPA', refers to the capability of administrations at the international level to perform its day-to-day work without disturbances or support from individual governments. Their activities are pre-structured by the political body of the IO and they affect all member states, subsequently enabling administrations to act independently from the influence of governments. Many indicators for the degree of autonomy of IPAs have been suggested within the relevant literature, such as the latitude and depth of the IO's political mandate, the amount and volume of financial resources, the right to decide on spending, or IPA autonomy concerning the selection of its staff (see, e.g., Nedergaard 2007: 18-28).

Beyond the structural dimension, patterns of MLA vary due to different modes of co-ordination applied. They can compel actors to harmonize their actions, either by forcing them to implement a particular policy or by subjecting them to specific co-ordination patterns,

leaving no exit option (*coercive co-ordination*). They can also be based on co-operation, where actors voluntarily negotiate or mutually adjust their policies. This mode of *co-operative co-ordination* aims at changing incentives for policy making, either by trading issues or mobilizing motivating factors. A third mode, *persuasive co-ordination*, applies when actors engage in communicative relations without commitment to joint action, but with the aim to influence and accommodate their preferences (Bell *et al.* 2010: 852-853; Benz 2015: 37).

With respect to the structural dimension, we differentiate three types of MLA systems. They constitute enabling and constraining opportunity structures for the selection of co-ordination modes. The first type, *hierarchy*, can be described as a highly interdependent and centralized system in which an autonomous IPA interacts with 'internationalized' NPAs. In this case, we expect patterns of co-ordination that allow the international administration to execute its policies (i.e. policy enforcement), apply incentives (at least if necessary resources are at its disposal), negotiate agreements in the shadow of hierarchy, or give authoritative advice to national administrations and issue recommendations. The second type, *intersecting powers*, is characterized by an autonomous IPA interacting with powerful and highly internationalized NPAs. As a consequence, we expect that administrations from both levels try to find common ground for joint action voluntarily because of shared objectives and competences. The pattern of joint decision making, i.e. compulsory negotiation *de facto* excluding exit options, has been observed and intensely discussed in MLG beyond the state. Yet in MLA, we expect voluntary negotiations in networks, yardstick competition inducing decentralized administrations to achieve shared performance standards, or in deliberative consultations, determined to exchange experience and review existing policies. In the third type, *decentralization*, an IPA is not able to exert formal power and enforce its policy. Instead, it needs to rely on the voluntary compliance of national administrations, which in turn may be virtually unaffected by the international policy-making processes. In this setting, co-ordination results from assistance through information, resources and expertise offered by the IPA, as well as lesson drawing and voluntary transfer of policies from the upper to the national level. Coercive co-ordination could result from 'institutional competition' but this pattern again applies to interactions between states or governments (e.g. tax competition or regulatory competition) but not between administrations responsible for particular policies.

Based on these analytical distinctions, we offer a first typological account of the expected patterns of co-ordination, depending on the applied modes of co-ordination and the vertical structure of MLA (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: Structures, modes and patterns of multi-level administration systems

Vertical structure	Mode of co-ordination		
	<i>coercive</i>	<i>co-operative</i>	<i>persuasive</i>
<i>Hierarchy</i>	policy enforcement	negotiations in the shadow of hierarchy	recommendations
<i>Intersecting powers</i>	(joint decision making)	negotiations in networks yardstick competition	consultation
<i>Decentralization</i>	(institutional competition)	assistance	policy proposals

Source: authors' illustration

Assuming a correspondence between the structure and the available modes of vertical co-ordination within a MLA system (Benz 2006: 32), the specific division of powers between international and national administrations provides opportunities that expand or limit the spectrum of available co-ordination patterns. IPAs within hierarchical structures are in a position to use modes based on co-operation or persuasion as well as those based on coercion as a consequence of their formal power and organizational capacity. In contrast, IPAs with intersecting powers or those without competences are more limited in their strategic decisions on how to interact with national administrations. In this context, it is important to note that formal power and power resources do not determine modes of multi-level co-ordination. An international administration can choose among the most appropriate and effective modes in a given situation, depending on its vertical structure.

The following examples seek to illustrate the correspondence between the asymmetry of formal powers and the possibility to use different governance modes, whereas further empirical research is needed to uncover variations in more detail. The International Labour Organization (ILO) represents an international administration with limited powers, therefore depending on the national administration it interacts with; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stands for a powerful administration within a hierarchical structure; and in the field of implementing state aid control, the European Commission in turn is *de facto* embedded in a variety of networks

with national administrations. At first glance, the secretariat of the ILO might be considered a 'weak' IPA because it cannot implement its policies without the willingness of its member states. Its administrative staff subsequently relies on technical co-operation or other persuasion-based instruments to achieve its goals. This includes the monitoring of member state activities according to specific standards, advanced training for national administrators, and the preparation of legislative proposals in the case members fail to implement agreed upon policies (policy proposals; Hartlapp 2007: 659-669).

In contrast, the administration of the IMF could be classified as 'powerful' because it is embedded in a more centralized system and due to its ability to force national governments and thus their administrations to implement policies. Therefore, the IMF is able to use a wide range of governance modes ranging from coercion to persuasion. On the one hand, it formulates specific conditions under which loans are granted to its member states, thereby enforcing compliance through conditionality. On the other hand, the IPA offers counselling and advanced training for national administrative staff to help member states build working economic institutions on their own. In contrast to the ILO staff, however, nation states approach the IMF administration to seek authoritative advice (recommendations) and to show their willingness to act responsibly in the future. As a result, this organization can use the financial dependence of its members to impose its will on governments and their administrations, using different patterns of administrative co-ordination (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 56-63).

State aid control in the EU constitutes an example for a strategic use of co-ordination modes within a centralized system of MLA, which interacts with national administrations strongly defending their policies against international encroachment. According to European law, member states can design and execute their own state aid policies as long as these are consistent with the rules of non-discrimination, which are enforced by the Commission. In practice, several instances of non-compliance by the member states can be observed where they sought to subsidize the national economy through state aid (Blauberger 2009: 720). In case of infringements of EU law, the Commission is in a position to act flexibly and without many formal restrictions. It can institute proceedings against national governments, but also engage in negotiations with responsible administrations in order to find common solutions. The Commission developed a variety of soft and hard modes of governance over a long period of time in order to prevent clashes between state aid and common market policies (ibid: 720-735). Following Hofmann, the Commission acts in a self-restraining manner, although it could legally rely on coercion to enforce its policies (Hofmann 2006: 204). However, addressing the multitude of detected or undetected infringements is restricted by the lack of capacity (i.e.

different types of resources including staff and information) necessary to identify and deal with them. A possible explanation for this complementary strategy of the Commission is that it engages in activist behaviour and fine-tunes its decision, for example to account for national peculiarities (Corcaci 2015: 3-4).

To summarize, the formal delegation of policies to IOs regularly entails a separation rather than sharing of power between international and national administrations. To exercise powers assigned to them, national and international administrations need resources to fulfil their tasks effectively, in particular information and expertise. As a consequence, power asymmetry in either hierarchical or decentralized multi-level structures goes along with interdependence between the different levels of administration. This enables the actors to use modes of co-ordination in a spectrum the availability of which depends on the structural conditions of MLA. Depending not only on structures but also on the strategic interaction of administrations, these patterns of co-ordination evolve over time (i.e. emerge and change) in a highly dynamic fashion, as will be discussed in the next section.

4. Emergence and change of multi-level administration

MLG has been defined in the literature on European integration as a transformative process of authority migration. The dynamic nature of governance structures that has been said to result from this process (Hooghe and Marks 2001) gives reason to assume that MLA is in constant flux as well. However, while integration theories seek to explain changes and shifts in power and actor constellations, we so far lack an approach dealing with the dynamics of administrative co-ordination patterns. Bureaucrats are not primarily concerned with the allocation of competence, which are established through the foundation of administrations and do not require regular overhauls in the context of increasing integration. Thus, administrative dynamics are constrained by the vertical structure of MLA systems as outlined above. They result from the choice of co-ordination modes as well as the opportunities and constraints when it comes to applying these modes. Therefore, political integration is not the foremost concern of MLA. Instead, patterns of co-ordination and their dynamics are the relevant aspects. Studies on MLG have neglected their emergence and change. As far as these processes are addressed, an integration perspective still predominates. This is obvious for the literature on a common European Administrative Space (e.g., Olsen 2003; Trondal and Peters 2013), which is concerned with the integration of administrations in Europe. In a similar vein, this perspective characterizes (neo-)functionalist approaches to European integration, which take the particular position of administrations into account by emphasizing both the role of administrative staff

and the functional needs with regard to certain processes of change, such as the development of organizational tasks (Knodt and Corcaci 2012: 25-27; see Haas 1964).

MLA evolves in the context of institutional structures, implying a particular allocation of powers between international administrations and their national counterparts. Certainly, these structures are affected by integration or disintegration processes, leading to institutional change in the form of altered power relations. Administrations as part of such structures are in turn embedded in a wide range of relations cutting across national, European or international jurisdictions. Hence, the emergence, evolution, and transformation of particular practices deviates from the logics of political integration. In order to understand these changes, external shocks and evolving environmental conditions as well as internal institutional features of administration and conditions or impulses favouring policy learning have to be taken into account as the main driving forces. These forces induce mechanisms of change, i.e. political processes aiming at modifying preferences, power and ideas as the main dimensions of collective action. In multi-level settings, different processes of interaction among 'change agents' or actors interested in maintaining the status quo constitute these mechanisms. As a rule, change needs to be negotiated, either in communicative discourses relating to the evolution of ideas or in coordinative discourses leading to new rules or standard operating procedures (Schmidt 2010), although it may be induced by independent action of an IPA. These processes can be induced and evolve inside the administrative sector, or they can signify responses of administrations to pressure from political actors at the international or national level. This second mechanism presumably translates external shocks into change of patterns of administrative governance, whereas endogenous forces of change immediately affect the practice of administration.

Depending on the forces and mechanisms, different modes of change are likely to occur. Recent theories of institutional change have suggested to distinguish between displacement, layering, drift, and conversion (Mahoney and Thelen 2010: 15-22; Streeck and Thelen 2005). Although these modes refer to rules and the allocation of power, they can also be applied to describe changes in patterns of co-ordination, which might be based on rules and power structures, but also result from emerging constellations of actors or their way of interaction. IPAs come to exist as organizational units of international organizations, responsible for the support of their operation and the implementation of their decisions. MLA emerges in this structural context defined by the particular powers delegated to an international administration, the resources available to it, and the expertise acquired by its staff. In principle, IPAs can apply the whole range of co-ordination patterns. In reality, their power, resources and expertise is

limited compared to their national counterparts. These relations change during processes of integration or disintegration within a given policy area. Considering these conditions, administrations select the mode of co-ordination they deem most appropriate to pursue their goals, with actors from the international level usually taking the lead and thus adopting the role of change agents.

Depending on the foundation of IPAs, they are established either as secretariats of subnational organizations responsible for the implementation of their policies or as administrative units of intergovernmental organizations. In the former case, linkages to national administrations tend to aim at the enforcement of policies, while co-operative modes of co-ordination are expected in the latter case. In general, we expect a trend towards a combination of different patterns in a process of layering.

Coercive modes are likely to be introduced under political pressure and as a response to external shocks. They usually can be traced back to political decisions. Not only does politics react to pressure or shocks and pushes for effective measures. Support from the political sector is particularly important since coercive modes need to be legitimized by an explicit delegation of power. Representatives of national governments tend to establish these modes of co-ordination either to implement a program they have negotiated while they do not rely on the national administration, or they relinquish administrative power to the international level in a strategic two-level game in order to reduce the influence of special interest groups or political parties (Grande 1996). However, enforcement of international or European policies against powerful national administrations or private actors can turn out as a demanding task. As soon as the pressure of external shocks fades away, resistance against administrative action from above rises. Therefore, IPAs either displace coercive measures in case they lack sufficient resources to enforce them or they convert them into co-operative or persuasive modes. Moreover, different patterns of co-operation and persuasion can also constitute additional layers of a more differentiated infrastructure of MLA, which allows for flexible modification of administrative governance.

Co-operative modes evolve if an IPA can use resources to set incentives or provide assistance. Moreover, continuous interaction with national administrations can generate networks that support co-operation. Networks make negotiations more effective (Scharpf 1997: 197-204) or can be used to organize yardstick competition (Benz 2012: 263). All these modes require the willingness of national administrations to participate. While negotiations and assistance can include one or many national administrations and are more effective in exclusive or bilateral relations, yardstick competition requires multilateral interactions. Nonetheless, co-

operative modes are likely to be introduced among a limited number of administrations only, whereas their scope may increase over time. In contrast, a crisis leading to divides among member states or circumstances that affect national administrations differently can cause a decline of co-operative relations or increase the selectivity of participation.

IPAs usually use *persuasive* co-ordination to extend their impact on national policy making without having the power to implement a policy or enforce national implementation. The adoption of persuasion is driven by the functional logic of integration, as administrations rely on their expertise in order to widen their scope of action. They can apply the corresponding co-ordination patterns regardless of decisions from the political arena. As a rule, they add to coercive or co-operative modes by way of layering, but their application can also lead to a drift or conversion of the substance of co-ordination. Recommendations, consultation and policy proposals express endogenous processes of policy learning in a multi-level administrative system.

The International Energy Agency provides a good case to illustrate these dynamics of MLA. With the foundation of this IO in reaction to the oil crisis in 1973, an emergency oil supply mechanism (Emergency Sharing System [ESS]) was established as the ‘centrepiece’ of the organization (Van de Graaf and Lesage 2009: 300-302). After going through an internal learning process, the organization realized that this formal procedure, which can be interpreted as a coercive co-ordination pattern due to its enforceability, failed to take effect as expected. The secretariat displaced the original mission of managing an international oil sharing system with a new, more indirect approach. It implemented more flexible market-based mechanisms, the so called Coordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM) in 1984 (Florini 2011: 41). In the context of evolving oil markets, which brought about a more global and uncertain energy market, the IEA also intensified the exchange of knowledge (consultation) with administrations and the oil industry (Jacoby 2009: 348). This development not only illustrates the shift from a coercive to a co-operative mode of co-ordination, but also the combination of different patterns.

In order to deal with the increasing relevance of non-member states such as China and India, the IEA’s secretariat has converted its initial restricted setup of administrative co-ordination patterns. By “generating norms of appropriate behaviour and best practice” (Florini and Sovacool 2009: 5243), the administrative staff has expanded its activities and overall scope through the development of new response mechanisms and closer co-operation, the increase of recommendations, information sharing and other persuasive forms of co-ordination. Today, IEA staff performs a wide variety of tasks that span from energy preparedness to publications, dialogues, trainings, policy reviews, recommendations including compliance and monitoring,

and more. Instead of focusing solely on oil, the IEA now also deals with gas and electricity markets, renewables, climate change, and energy efficiency. Its evolution from co-ordinator of oil-related questions to the involvement in a wide range of energy-related issues is an example of how new co-ordination patterns are added to existing ones through layering and against the background of several shifts in the international environment, especially changing energy markets, the rise of alternative energy sources and the emergence of multi-polarity (Florini 2011: 42-43).

Due to these dynamics, co-operative modes beyond hierarchy (negotiations in networks, yardstick competition and assistance) seem to indicate a consolidation of MLA, at least in areas where an IPA interacts with highly developed nation states. In general, persuasive modes play an important role in the development of administrative governance. IPAs are of course interested in extending their power and resources. However, in contrast to national administrations, which receive their power and resources from legislation, they need the support of at least a majority of member state governments of the respective IO or the EU in order to achieve this goal. Therefore, an extension of formal power and resources seems unlikely as long as is not forced by external pressure. In order to extend their power, IPAs either have to rely on and increase their expertise or co-operate with national administrations. Moreover, conferences of political leaders often commission IPAs specialised in a single policy field to provide advice or elaborate proposals for problem solving, thus ‘orchestrating’ IOs or bodies to take co-ordinated action required to solve urgent problems (Abbott *et al.* 2015). For instance, from the 2005 Gleneagles summit onwards, the IEA’s administrative staff was asked by the G7 countries to conduct research, offer policy recommendations, foster energy efficiency, clean fuels, renewable energy, and propose alternative energy scenarios (Florini 2011: 43). This way they contribute to increasing the relevance of persuasive co-ordination.

For these reasons, we do not expect a continuous rise of autonomous international administrations, in fact we observe an intensification of multi-level interactions in different fields of administration. Moreover, co-operative and communicative relations evolve independently of formal institutional structures. These typical MLA patterns have far-reaching consequences for democratic legitimacy and political control both at the national and international level of politics.

5. Conclusion

The concepts and hypotheses outlined above require further elaboration. Our brief impressions drawn from selected causes and empirical literature should demonstrate the relevance of the

framework, although we are aware that they cannot prove our assumptions. Moreover, the causes, mechanisms, and effects of dynamics of MLA need to be studied in greater detail. As outlined in this article, we have good reasons to believe that a focus on the administrative dimension of MLG provides new insights into policy-making beyond the nation state.

Research on MLG has so far focused on interactions between representatives of governments or supra-/international organizations in the context of different types of actor constellations, structures and procedures. It has neglected the particular role of administration and administrative patterns of co-ordination. Therefore, we suggest considering MLA as a distinct subset of governance cutting across different territorial levels. In order to achieve this task of conceptualization, we first introduced MLA based on a discussion of the state of research. Administrative interactions between levels of governments differ from governmental relations as regards their emergence, the relevant modes of governance, the evolution and change of co-ordination patterns and the consequences. By understanding MLA as a subset of MLG, we emphasize its close linkages with political arenas. However, in order to understand the operation of MLG in the sense of politics and policy-making, an understanding of the specific modes and patterns of co-ordination in administration proves to be fruitful.

Compared to national administration, MLA appears as a particular type. However, this distinction is apparently not sufficient if we take into account the increasing plurality of international and national administration. Our analytical framework should allow researchers to identify variations in MLA resulting from this plurality. It should provide a basis for comparative research in this field. Our conceptualization of patterns of co-ordination is meant to pave the way for the development of a comprehensive theory of MLA and for much-needed empirical research on the subject matter.

References

- Abbott, K., Genschel, P., Snidal, D. and Zangl, B. (2015) 'Orchestration: Global Governance through intermediaries', in *ibid* (eds) *International Organizations as Orchestrators*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-36.
- Bache, I. and Flinders, M. (eds) (2004) *Multi-level Governance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barnett, M.N. and Finnemore, M. (2004) *Rules for the world: International organizations in global politics*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Beer, S. H. (1978) 'Federalism, Nationalism, and Democracy in America', *The American Political Science Review* 72(1): 9-21.
- Bell, S., Hindmoor, A. and Mols, F. (2010) 'Persuasion as Governance – A State-Centric Relational Perspective', *Public Administration* 88(3): 851-70.
- Benz, A. (2003) 'Konstruktive Vetospieler in Mehrebenensystemen', in Mayntz, R. and Streeck, W. (eds) *Die Reformierbarkeit der Demokratie: Innovationen und Blockaden*, Frankfurt a.M. and New York, NY: Campus, pp. 205-36.
- Benz, A. (2007) 'Accountable Multilevel Governance by the Open Method of Coordination?', *European Law Journal* 13(4): 505-22.
- Benz, A. (2012) 'Yardstick Competition and Policy Learning in Multi-level Systems', *Regional & Federal Studies* 22(3): 251-67.
- Benz, A. (2013) 'Balancing Rigidity and Flexibility: Constitutional Dynamics in Federal Systems', *West European Politics* 36(4): 726-49.
- Benz, A. (2015) 'European Public Administration as Multilevel System Administration – a Conceptual Framework', in Bauer, M. and Trondal, J. (eds) *The European Administrative System*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 31-37.
- Blauberger, M. (2009) 'Of 'Good' and 'Bad' Subsidies: European State Aid Control through Soft and Hard Law', *West European Politics* 32(4): 719-37.
- Blom-Hansen, J. (1999) 'Avoiding the 'joint-decision trap': Lessons from intergovernmental relations in Scandinavia', *European Journal of Political Research* 35(1): 35-67.
- Börzel, T. (2010) 'European Governance: Negotiation and Competition in the Shadow of Hierarchy', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48(2): 191-219.
- Campbell, C. and Peters, B.G. (1988) 'The Politics/Administration Dichotomy: Death or Merely Change?', *Governance* 1(1): 79-99.
- Corcaci, A. (2015, forthcoming) 'Conceptual considerations on compliance in the European Union', in Lhotta, R., Lembcke, O., Frick, V. (eds) *Politik und Recht. Umriss eines politikwissenschaftlichen Forschungsfeldes*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Egeberg, M. (ed.) (2006) *Multilevel Union Administration: The Transformation of Executive Politics in Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Elsig, M. (2010) 'The World Trade Organization at Work: Performance in a Member-Driven Milieu', *The Review of International Organizations* 5(3): 345-63.
- Falkner, G. (ed.) (2011) *The EU's Decision Traps. Comparing Policies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Falkner, G. and Müller, P. (eds) (2013) *EU Policies in a Global Perspective: Shaping or Taking International Regimes?* London and New York: Routledge.
- Farrell, H. and Newman, A.L. (2014) 'Domestic Institutions beyond the Nation-State: Charting the New Interdependence Approach', *World Politics* 66(2): 331-63.
- Florini, A. (2011) 'The International Energy Agency in Global Energy Governance', *Global Policy* 2(s1): 40-50.
- Florini, A. and Sovacool, B. (2009) 'Who governs energy? The challenges facing global energy governance', *Energy Policy* 37(12): 5239-48.
- Grande, E. (1996) 'Das Paradox der Schwäche. Forschungspolitik und die Einflußlogik europäischer Politikverflechtung', in Jachtenfuchs, M. and Kohler-Koch, B. (eds) *Europäische Integration*, Opladen: Leske+Budrich, pp. 373-99.
- Haas, E. B. (1964) *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hartlapp, M. (2007) 'On Enforcement, Management and Persuasion: Different Logics of Implementation Policy in the EU and the ILO', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 45(3): 653-74.
- Héritier, A. (1999) *Policy-Making and Diversity in Europe. Escaping Deadlock*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Héritier, A. (2007) *Explaining Institutional Change in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hofmann, H.C.H. (2006) 'Administrative governance in state aid policy', in Hofmann, H.C.H. and Türk, A.H. (eds) *EU Administrative Governance*, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, pp. 185-215.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2001) *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2014) 'Delegation and pooling in international organizations', *Review of International Organizations*, doi:10.1007/s11558-014-9194-4.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G., and Schakel, A.H. (2010) *The Rise of Regional Authority: A Comparative Study of 42 Democracies*, New York, NY: Routledge Chapman & Hall.
- Jacoby, K.-D. (2009) 'Energy Security: Conceptualization of the International Energy Agency (IEA)', in Brauch, H.G. et al. (eds) *Facing Global Environmental Change. Environmental, Human, Energy, Food, Health and Water Security Concepts*, Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, pp. 345-54.
- Johnson, T. (2013) 'Institutional Design and Bureaucrats Impact on Political Control', *The Journal of Politics* 75(1): 183-97.
- Kelemen, R.D. (2003) 'The Structure and Dynamics of EU Federalism', *Comparative Political Studies*, 36(1/2): 184-208.
- Knodt, M. and Corcaci, A. (2012) *Europäische Integration. Anleitung zur theoriegeleiteten Analyse*. Konstanz: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft and Munich: UVK/Lucius.
- Koremenos, B. (2008) 'When, What, and Why do States Choose to Delegate?', *Law and Contemporary Problems* 71(1): 151-92.
- Lægreid, P., Steinthorsson, R.S. and Thorhallsson, B. (2004) 'Europeanization of Central Government Administration in the Nordic States', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 42(2): 347-69.
- Maggetti, M. and Gilardi, F. (2011) 'The Policy-Making Structure of European Regulatory Networks and the Domestic Adoption of Standards', *Journal of European Public Policy* 18(6): 830-47.

- Mahoney, J. and Thelen, K. (2010) 'A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change', in *ibid* (eds) *Explaining Institutional Change. Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-37.
- Moos, L. (2009) 'Hard and Soft Governance: the journey from transnational agencies to school leadership', *European Educational Research Journal* 8(3): 397-406.
- Moravcsik, A. (1998) *The Choice for Europe. Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, London: UCL Press.
- Nedergaard, P. (2007) *European Union Administration: Legitimacy and Efficiency*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Olsen, J. (2003) 'Towards a European administrative space?', *Journal of European Public Policy* 10(4): 506-31.
- Painter, M. (1991) 'Intergovernmental Relations in Canada: An Institutional Analysis', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24(2): 269-88.
- Peters, B.G. (1997) 'Escaping the Joint-Decision Trap: Repetition and Sectoral politics in the European Union', *West European Politics*, 20(2): 22-36.
- Piattoni, S. (2010) *The Theory of Multi-Level Governance: Conceptual, Empirical, and Normative Challenges*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Scharpf, F.W. (1988) 'The Joint Decision Trap: Lessons from German Federalism and European Integration', *Public Administration* 66(3): 239-78.
- Scharpf, F.W. (1997) *Games Real Actors Play: Actor-centered Institutionalism in Policy Research*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Scharpf, F.W. (2010) 'Multi-Level Europa – the case for multiple concepts' in Enderlein, H., Wälti, S. and Zürn, M. (eds) *Handbook on multi-level governance*, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, pp. 66-79.
- Scharpf, F.W. (2011) 'The JDT Model: Context and Extensions', in Falkner, G. (ed.) *The EU's Decision Traps. Comparing Policies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 217-36.
- Schmidt, V.A. (2010) 'Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth 'new institutionalism'', *European Political Science Review* 2(1): 1-25.
- Schickler, E. (2001) *Disjointed Pluralism. Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stephenson, P. (2013) 'Twenty years of multi-level governance: 'Where Does It Come From? What Is It? Where Is It Going?'', *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(6): 817-37.
- Streeck, W. and Thelen, K. (2005) 'Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies', in Streeck, W. and Thelen, K. (eds) *Beyond Continuity. Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-39.
- Tömmel, I. (2009) 'Modes of Governance and the Institutional Structure of the European Union', in Tömmel, I. and Verdun, A. (eds) (2009) *Innovative governance in the European Union: The politics of multilevel policymaking*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 9-26.
- Treib, O., Bähr, H. and Falkner, G. (2007) 'Modes of governance: towards a conceptual clarification', *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(1): 1-20.
- Trondal, J. and Peters, G. (2013) 'The rise of European administrative space: lessons learned', *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(2): 295-307.
- Trondal, J. (2015) 'The European Administrative System Reassessed', in Bauer, M. and Trondal, J. (eds) *The European Administrative System*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 482-505.

Van de Graaf, T. and Lesage, D. (2009) 'The International Energy Agency after 35 years: Reform needs an institutional adaptability', *Review of International Organizations* 4(3): 293-317.