

Commentary to the habilitation thesis “The concept of governance and possibilities of its use for understanding and analysing current public and social policies”

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Public and social policies have been set since time immemorial to respond to social problems that are changing in today's world and are occurring in a dynamic, complex and diverse environment. These policies are required not only to be effective but also to work efficiently to address these problems successfully. However, the efficiency of public and social policies is not influenced only by *the design and context of a country's political system* at the national or supranational level at the policy-making stage (which includes political actors and administrative officials and the specific nature of their institutional environment); neither by *the design and context of the tools and measures of particular public policies* (in addressing specific social problems at regional and local levels at the policy implementation stage). It is greatly affected by *the mode and circumstances related to the governance of these policies* at the policy-making and/or policy implementation stage in which knowledge about policy outputs, outcomes and effects is used.

Previous experience shows that *there are more ways how to govern public and social policies*. Experts dealing with this issue, which is commonly associated with the concept of "governance" in the English literature, draw on the experience of many governments and various political and social actors who are directly or indirectly involved in processes related to public and welfare reform. These reforms are accompanied by an attempt to change or replace the existing model of public administration with another one that is usually less costly, better functioning and more targeted to existing social problems. In this context, the available literature identifies *three ideally typical public administration models based on different approaches to the governance of particular public and social policies*: “*public administration*”, “*new public management*” and “*new public governance*” (see Chapter 3). In the first model, the governance of public and social policies is fully in the hands of state actors who operate in an environment that works on the principles of a rationally managed bureaucratic organization and thus clearly follow defined rules during the process of policy-making and implementation. In the second model of public administration, governance of public and social policies at the stages of policy-making and implementation is ensured by state and non-state actors who use managerial techniques imported into public administration from

the private sector. As a result of privatization and Europeanisation, particular policies are made not only at the central level (within the political networks), but also at regional and transnational levels. Their delivery is realized through a larger number of specialized state agencies with decentralized power in cooperation with non-state providers, on the basis of contracts. In the last public administration model, the governance of public and social policies is based on an even larger spectrum of mutually cooperating actors who are involved in the process of their formation and implementation. These actors come from different societal sectors (state, market, or civil sector) and operate at different policy levels (national, regional or transnational). Policies are provided in an integrated, rational functioning system based on accountable management and quality services delivered to empowered citizens.

Analysing and understanding the capabilities of current public and social policies to respond adequately to existing social problems is complicated by at least two facts. First, the current public and social policies are shaped and implemented in different (geographic, political, cultural, economic and social) environments of an individual country. At the same time, some of the policies examined may be characterized by *a mix of public administration models* and thus by *a mix of different modes of governance*, because within one and the same public administration model, we can simultaneously identify elements of traditional public administration, new public management and/or one of the approaches of new public governance. Second, the concept of governance, which in the Czech environment is called "řízení a správa" or "vládnutí", is currently *used by various streams of authors in political sciences who perceive, define and examine it quite differently*. It follows that using the public administration models to understand and analyse the governance of public and social policies may be misleading or inaccurate. For example, Kjaer (2004) distinguishes three groups of such authors: 1) public policy and public administration scientists who pay attention to the governance of the reformed public sector and place great emphasis on "exploring networks of actors" involved in the policy-making and policy implementation processes; 2) international relations experts interested in "global governance" and "multi-level governance"; and 3) scientists in the field of comparative policies, who compare economically advanced countries in the world with the development and democratization processes in less economically advanced countries to find out whether the second type of country is characterized by "good governance". These authors differ in how they define the concept of governance, whether they focus on policy-making processes at national or transnational levels and/or the policy implementation processes of particular public and social policies at regional and local levels,

and, subsequently, how they explore this concept, i.e. what analytical frameworks or theoretical perspectives they recommend to use (*see chapters 2 and 3*).

In connection with the aforementioned facts, we will try to present the results of our long-term work in this habilitation thesis, which should outline *the possibilities of using the concept of governance to understand and explore the modes and circumstances related to the governance of contemporary public and social policies*. These results are in particular two-fold. In the first case, we present the theoretical knowledge on how to understand, define and empirically investigate the concept of governance in political science as a whole, and in the field of public and social policy and administration as one of its sub-disciplines. Subsequently, we present the results of the empirical investigations we have carried out over the last few years that represent our practical experience with the study of governance in the field of selected social policies in the Czech Republic and other European countries. These two aspects are reflected in the structure of the submitted habilitation work: the theoretical-conceptual part is more general (*chapter 1 to 4*); the empirical part presents specific theoretical knowledge and empirical findings obtained from the research activities we conducted in recent years (*chapters 5 to 9*). Given that this habilitation thesis is presented as "a collection of published scientific papers" and in our previous publications was presented in separate chapters that used more or less only one of many possible theoretical perspectives and analytical procedures to explore the theme of governance (*chapter 4 to 9*), we felt it was necessary to create an additional text that would elaborate our existing narrower concept and provide a wider theoretical and conceptual framework. For this reason, we created *the first three chapters, which represent a summary of theoretical knowledge about how it is possible to define the concept of governance theoretically and to empirically explore it in political sciences*. The knowledge contained in these three chapters was used for reflecting on the remaining chapters of this work, in which we present our published scientific papers dealing with the governance issue. At the same time, the theoretical and analytical perspectives contained in the first three chapters that we have not yet used will help us in our future research to understand the processes linked to public policy-making in an international environment at national and transnational levels.

As was mentioned above, this habilitation thesis is divided into a theoretical-conceptual part and an empirical part. In the first (*chapters 1 to 4*), we discuss the reasons (*chapter 1*) and possible ways of defining and investigating the concept of governance in the political sciences (*chapter 2*). Emphasis is placed on the understanding, definition and operationalization of this concept by authors dealing with public policy and public administration issues (*chapter 3*),

whose findings make a significant contribution to understanding how contemporary public and social policies are governed. In the same chapter, we propose concrete steps that can be used to operationalize the concept of governance in order to best understand the processes and phenomena that can be explored in public policy as a scientific discipline and in societal practice. Based on these findings, we propose the comprehensive multi-dimensional model of governance (*chapter 4*) that we created in 2012. We have used it in modified form as a methodological framework for the analysis of the governance of upcoming selected social policies in the Czech Republic and other European countries (with an emphasis on the governance of these policies at the implementation stage).

In the second, empirical part, we present in original form several of our authors' contributions that have been published in Czech or English in the last eight years (from 2011 until 2018). In fact, we show how the concept of governance can be used to explore different social policies using our multi-dimensional model of governance (chapters 5 to 7), or without it (chapters 8 and 9). Specifically, we show the following: the changes in the modes and circumstances related to the governance of the Czech labour market policy that occurred during and after the reform of the Public Employment Services between 2011-2016 (*chapter 5*); how the design and modes of governance of the Czech and Norwegian childcare policies for pre-school children devolved in the last decade (by 2018) in relation to the situation of households with dependent children in both countries (*chapter 6, written in English*); the trends in the development of childcare policy for pre-school children and elderly care policy that have occurred in the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Germany and Denmark in the last decade (before 2013) (*chapter 7, written in English*); our experience with the formation, administration and implementation of local employment projects in the Czech Republic by 2014 (*chapter 8*); and the type of local governance that prevailed in state and non-governmental organizations in the Czech Republic in 2011, in terms of their ability to react flexibly to changes in the labour market at that time (*chapter 9*).

From the above, it follows that most of the chapters of the submitted habilitation thesis consist of texts that have already been published in Czech or English journals or monographs (*chapter 3 in part and chapters 4 to 9 completely*). The exception is the first two chapters and the second part of the third chapter, which are being prepared for publishing, together with the new empirical data we collected last year.

For the creation of the individual chapters of this thesis, we have used the following contributions in particular (*in the case of two contributions that were created in co-authorship, we give the authors' estimated share in brackets after their names*):

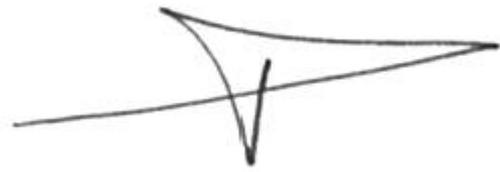
- HORÁK, Pavel. 2012. Měření governance jako způsobu řízení, koordinace, kontroly a realizace veřejných politik a programů na regionální a lokální úrovni [The measurement of the concept of governance as a way of management, coordination, control and implementation of public and social programs at regional and local levels]. *Fórum sociální politiky*, (6)4: 2-10. ISSN 1802-5854. (*used in chapter 4*)
- HORÁK, Pavel. 2018. Zhodnocení reformy systému veřejných služeb zaměstnanosti v ČR z perspektivy změn ve způsobu jeho řízení a správy [Evaluation of the reform of the public employment services in the Czech Republic from the perspective of changes in its governance]. *Fórum sociální politiky*, 17(1): 2-12. ISSN 1802-5854. (*used in chapter 5 a partly in the first section of chapter 3*)
- HORÁK, Pavel, Horáková, Markéta (75/25). 2017. Childcare policy in the Czech Republic and Norway: two countries, two paths with many possibilities. *Central European Journal of Public Policy*, 11(2): 43-60. ISSN 1802-4866. doi:10.1515/cejpp-2016-0035. (*used in chapter 6*)
- HORÁK, Pavel, Markéta HORÁKOVÁ a Tomáš SIROVÁTKA (80/10/10). 2013. The recent trends and changes in Czech social services in the European context: the case of childcare and elderly care. *Czech and Slovak Social Work Journal*, 12(5): 5-19. ISSN 1213-6204. (*used in chapter 7*)
- HORÁK, Pavel. 2014. Role projektů financovaných z Evropského sociálního fondu v české politice zaměstnanosti. In Sirovátka, T., Horáková, M., Horák, P. Česká politika zaměstnanosti v době krize a po krizi [The role of projects financed from European Social Fund in Czech labour market policy. In Sirovátka, T., Horáková, M., Horák, P. Czech employment policy during the crisis and after crisis]. Brno / Boskovice: MUNIpress / Albert, s. 97-142. ISBN 978-80-210-7149-0. (*used in chapter 8*)
- HORÁK, Pavel. 2011. Stabilita a flexibilita organizací zainteresovaných do administrace a realizace aktivních programů a sociálních služeb na lokálních trzích práce. In Winkler, J., Žižlavský, M. (eds.) Institucionální změna a veřejná politika [Stability and flexibility of organisations interested in administration and implementation of active labour market programmes and social services. In Winkler, J., Žižlavský, M. (eds.) Institutional change and public policy]. Analýza politiky zaměstnanosti. Brno: MUNIpress, s. 75-122. ISBN 978-80-210-5601-5. (*used in chapter 9*).

The findings presented in this work show that governance is an ambiguous, difficult to define concept that can be perceived and understood in a variety of ways (such as the "framework" of good governance, desirable "order", "role of government", "public administration principles", system of "management" or "framework" of organizational arrangements, "interaction between actors" or "networks of actors") (*see chapter 2*), because *"the focus of its interest can be actors and their interactions, the institutions in which they operate, or the context in the form of different conditions based on different principles that influence both the behaviour of these actors and the functioning of organizations; at the same time, these actors participate in*

processes associated with the formation and/or implementation of particular public and social policies focused on individual social problems" (p. 28). This fact is also confirmed by our research showing that the concept of governance that we defined as a "way of management, coordination, control and implementation of public and social programs" a few years ago (chapter 4) can also be examined in practice as the following: (1) "a way of coordination, cooperation and division of power" in public administration (chapter 5); (2) "the nature and degree of regulation" of policy affecting cooperation among policy actors at different levels of hierarchy (chapter 6), i.e. "regulation" of services provided by legal standards and state institutions (chapter 7); (3) "the way of formation, administration and implementation of local programs" (chapter 8); (4) the legislative and inter-organizational, financial, personnel, interaction, information and control "conditions and processes" of local implementing organizations (chapter 9).

The chapters where we used our model of governance focused on the mapping of its modes and related circumstances (*chapters 5 to 7*). They show that the actual benefits of this model depend on the specific methods and techniques used to explore its individual dimensions and sub-dimensions (specifically, whether we collect quantitative and/or qualitative data, and whether we focus on all its dimensions and sub-dimensions, or only on a selected one). *When we use this model in its entirety, it provides a comprehensive view on the policy or policies examined (see chapter 5). On the other hand, the information obtained may be of a relatively general nature, especially when using predominantly quantitative data (see chapter 6 and 7). The use of qualitative data or a combination of quantitative and qualitative data and the focus on only one selected dimension or sub-dimension (topic) of the model of governance allow a deeper understanding of the modes of governance and the circumstances related to it, or to particular themes associated with governance in the field of public policy and administration (cf. chapter 8 and 9).* Limits can be seen, for example, in the contribution presented in chapter 8, where we do not address the specific relationships between the policy-makers and/or the implementing actors who deliver childcare policy for preschool children. Furthermore, none of our studies were targeted at policy-making processes at national or supra-national levels, where politicians and their specific strategies predominate. This area can be considered extremely important, because our experience so far has shown that processes involving government, politicians, and civil servants at the national level can have a greater impact on the governance of policies at the implementation stage at regional and local levels. From this reason, we would like to address this topic in the years to come. To explore it we could use one of the individual

concepts of governance and related theories that we have dealt with in the second and third chapters of this work.

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Brno 19.3.2018