

Master Thesis Review

Title: "Comparison of the Possible Forms of Territorial Administration in the Countries of the European Union" by Bc. Denisa Řihošková

Reviewer: Mgr. et Mgr. Ondřej Filipec, Ph.D.

Review:

Author of the thesis has chosen interesting topic with good potential for analysis as there is possibility to discover something "new" especially in the terms of effectiveness evaluation and proposals for administrative reforms. From the whole text it is evident, that author understand the issue and has relatively good standard of academic writing. However, despite first minute positive impression, there are several weaknesses of the work which are summarized as below.

The thesis is entitled "Comparison of the Possible Forms of Territorial Administration in the Countries of the European Union" so it is little bit disappointing that the analysis is not dealing with all 28 EU Member States (for example in quantitative terms) but is focusing only on three countries. This itself is not wrong but the title may better match real content.

Introduction contains all necessary information including short introduction to the topic, structure of the work, hypotheses, methods used or literature overview. On the other side presentation could have been more clearly structured and "hypotheses" developed in the terms of variables identification and operationalization. Also, some terms, such as "efficiency" may have been better specified about how it will be measured. I like confidently presented ambitions in the introduction.

First chapter is dealing with historical background and is very straightforward. It maps approx. 150 years of development of the self-government within three states on just three pages and opens the issue of territorial administration on another five pages. Author approaches in a very general and descriptive way. It would have been much more interesting to go deeper in detail in both sub-chapters and develop theoretical concepts and properly classify systems in all three countries. Author is dealing with the issue (p. 20) but this part with relatively good value could have been developed in more details and for example presented in a table.

Prevailing description is weakness also in other parts of the thesis. In the second chapter author describes European Charter of Local Government, then opens the issue of public administration and territorial self-government of Central European States and subsequently deals with territorial public administration in the selected countries. Almost in whole chapter author proceeds with "paragraph-reference-paragraph-reference" style without own significant contribution. On the other side positive is structure of the subchapters dealing with individual states, which are equally divided to sections dealing with legal personality and territorial basis of municipalities and part dealing with separate and delegated powers of the community. This allow easy comparison, however leaves impression of too general description as the place dedicated to individual issues is relatively small. For example, it would be very interesting to evaluate scope of separate and delegated powers, and how much are used.

Competences are dealt in individual chapter, however again in a descriptive way. Nonetheless, I found this chapter very interesting as it describes similarities and differences in between countries. This chapter is followed by last chapter, comparing three regional units from the structural point of view. Despite differences are mentioned, there is no link to effectiveness. As a result, there are in conclusions statements which lacks empirical backing. For example, author claims, that "Austria was well aware that only the gift of municipalities with the necessary agenda for the proper and personal administration of their territory could approach the citizen. This is the reason why high efficiency and satisfaction of citizens is achieved..." Well, this is probable, but there is lack of evidence about citizen satisfaction and causal link to effectiveness of the self-government. Also link of financing regions is much more complex issue and there was no analysis presented concerning scope of competences and fiscal capacity.

There are some parts of the work which might have been written in a better way. For example, on page 19 author leaves impression that everything in Austro-Hungarian Empire was controlled from one central authority. However, in fact, Habsburg monarchy was over centuries increasingly decentralized, which was reflected also within dualism, language rights and various administrative reforms.

There are also some small formal mistakes. For example author did not distinguish between hyphen and dash which leaves impression of low skills with written text. This is for example evident on p. 9. or p. 14. In the list of resources used there is number before each reference and small mistakes are in references itself. For example, some refer to pages (pg.) other to s. (Czech "strana"). When two authors are present, sometimes are connected with "and" sometimes is "and" missing. When controlling selected references, I did not find mistake and it is obvious that author tried to fit into academic standard. The scope of sources used is excellent and I appreciate references to historical resources.

Despite above mentioned weaknesses the thesis written by Bc. Denisa Říhošková may be evaluated as average standard because the potential of the topic could have been better used and analysis more empirically conducted in detail and research design required better operationalization. The thesis match requirements for such type of works and that is why I recommend the thesis for final defence with proposed grading "better D".



Mgr. et Mgr. Ondřej Filipec, Ph.D.

Opponent