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Tiziana Caponio, Maren Borkert (eds.), The Local Dimension of Migration Policymaking. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 195 pp.

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Book reviews

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This edited book is embedded in the research activities of IMISCOE, a research network on international migration, integration, and social cohesion. In particular, this book is one of the outcomes of a research strain on the multilevel governance of immigrant and immigration policies, and includes papers on locale-centred policymaking.

The introduction by the editors sets the stage, noting how local integration is becoming more and more a research and policy concern, also at European level, though with an ambivalent relationship with State-centred approaches. As for policy, the authors use as an example how the EC supports local level mobilization, networking and coordination to promote integration as a local process (also due to lobbying movements by some European cities), though with limitations due to the State-centred implementation of the European Integration Fund. This issue shows that Europeanization has gone further in border control (Frontex) and border-related policies (visa, asylum), while integration is mainly considered a national responsibility, so that national traditions and their “imaged communities” still play a pivotal role.

On the other hand, investigations on actual practices show some converging trends overcoming national “fixes”: challenges are more and more similar (and effects of failures in integration policies more and more visible at local level), so that local and regional authorities are trying to find a common way of action, even though national opportunity windows can be rather diversified. From this point of view, the literature concerning national integration models which emerged in the 1990s has been integrated and challenged by local-level comparative studies, showing a huge intra-national variation and an increasing interest for the local dimension of immigration policy making. Then, the authors properly underline that national models can still play a role in migration policy analysis: they are useful to frame national discourses, and to understand how actual local practices are rooted in national ideologies, how they permeate action, which windows of opportunity they give (according to the national policy culture, State structuring, vertical networking).

It is possible to identify two main research trends concerning the local dimension of immigration and immigrant policy-making, and in both of them we can find contributions aware of the need to disentangle the centre-periphery nexus. These help understanding how different frames (including national ones) find room at local level, with locally differentiated outcomes:

- 1) top-down implementation analysis, with a more “passive” outlook on grass-root level, but nevertheless important because allows to see variation also in policy areas perceived as strictly regulated at national level (e.g. permits release, regularizations...);
- 2) bottom-up policy-making process analysis (focused on the horizontal and/or vertical networking), paying more attention on the “active” role of local actors.

The authors seem also well aware of negative and unexplored aspects of local policy making analysis in the present-day literature: the risk of localism and exceptionalism, without proper analyses on relevant factors that deeper comparative researches can provide (are there common pressures? Which common pressures do create converging answers? Under which conditions?); the dilemma between depth and representativity of sampled case(s); the flattening down of governance, without a proper account of vertical aspects of governance.

Still, the articles included in the book seem not so coherent with the research program outlined in the introduction. Clearly, there is a “distributive” idea of covering different policy areas, countries, methods – but the consistency of approach and method as well as the awareness of critical issues are weakened. Nonetheless, we can find relevant hints in some articles, that deserve a deeper analysis. For instance, Marc Helbling on naturalization in Switzerland shows how the usual difference between state-centred immigration policies and locally-centred immigrant policies should be nuanced in order to better understand scalar relationships. In the case of naturalization in Switzerland, granting citizenship is up to municipalities, with different practices (including popular secret ballot in a few cases); notwithstanding standardizing effects of the Swiss Federal Court, this research shows the effects of different regulations on rejection rates, explaining that immigration features (number, composition) are less important than place-bounded political and organizational issues (e.g. the decision-making mechanisms and the party politics).

Besides the specificity of the Swiss case, we can find a local catch on immigration policies in many countries, either with the role of decentralized State bodies (e.g. Prefectures in France and Italy) or with local authorities (e.g. Länder in Germany). As a result, practices and outcomes can be different, and the issue can be visible not only for naturalization, but also for visa, permits of stay, police controls: even though it is considered an issue under the State rule of law (since it refers to the polity boundaries), relevant literature underlines distorting and creative effects in local practices and omissions – both in implementation studies (e.g. on permits of stay in Lombardy, Italy, see Polizzi, Vitale and Nardo, 2004) and in local policy-making process (e.g. on deflection strategies in Los Angeles area, see Light, 2006).

Hence, we have empirical evidence that national models can be just a background, and locally-nested trajectories with an interplay of actors in the vertical and horizontal dimension can create intranational differences in the understanding of citizenship, rights and duties.

Also Fourot on religious pluralism in Canadian cities pertains an area where State-level responsibilities are often considered relevant (since it can concern constitutionally protected rights). Anyway, Canada is living a new wave of municipal decentralization going further than the usual provincial autonomy in a Federal country, and this process is affecting also multicultural policies (Good, 2009). As Fourot shows in the case of mosque-building, local multiculturalism can be affected implicitly (e.g. through town planning tools) or explicitly (e.g. through debates and policies related to ethno-cultural diversity). The Author identifies local features that affect mosque-building cases – potentially conflicting situations where administrative and political issues do intersect: inter-government relations, intra-institutional relations, local public discourses and ma-

majority-minority relations are considered in a way that positively keeps together vertical and horizontal dimensions, public institutions and civil society.

Caponio's essay on grassroots multiculturalism in Italy goes somehow in the same direction, though more focused on immigrant policies: in the framework of weak national guidelines on integration, we can find local models grounded in place-based constellations of actors. From this point of view, multiculturalism is not seen as a national model of integration, but as a set of practices built up by decision-makers and stakeholders' localized network in agenda-setting processes, further modified in implementation networks.

On the other hand, two articles are oriented on strictly local social policy arenas. Aybek on young immigrants' participation in German vocational training analyzes another interesting dimension, i.e. how the organization of a mainstream policy at local level can affect migrants, according to the institutional sensitivity to include integration issues into mainstream actions and to the institutional structure and its flexibility and capacity to innovate. Finally, Vermeulen and Stotijn on local employment policies and immigrants in Amsterdam and Berlin show how local arenas are important in addressing actual, fundamental policy directions and dilemmas in the integration of migrants – such as the choice between general and targeted policies.

The conclusion, written by Caponio, partly reflects on the articles included in the volume to identify some lowest common denominators, i.e. the focus on local policy arenas and the resulting policy-making process, to be declined according to area-specific, country-specific and place-specific issues; the interplay between implementation and local policy-making, including power issues and policy/politics relations. She also identifies the need for more theoretically-driven research and a focus on centre-periphery relations, that can trace a fruitful research field. Though, it is important that sociologists and political scientists studying migration policies find a proper integration with general literature on State rescaling, decentralization/recentralization and multilevel governance, also pursuing research programs aimed at comparing effects and transformations in immigration-related and non immigration-related policies – in order to identify specific area features and general trends.

How does the State regulate its local tiers affects local autonomy in immigrant and immigration policies differently from, say, elderly care, labour market policy, public service management? Do hierarchical, polarized and polycentric networks work differently for different policies and why? How much can different policy areas be considered as separate, and how much do they interact (because of overlapping networks or isomorphism)? What is specific about migration policy? Its relation with the nation-state making and the boundaries of welfare, the politicization of the issue, the organization of institutions, the features of networks involved, the novelty of the pertinent policies? Furthermore, also a methodological enhancement is needed, in order to achieve a better control over validity issues in the national and international comparison of subnational units.

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