

Summary

Republicization of public tasks

This monograph deals with the republicization of public tasks. It attempts to construct a conceptual framework and determine what is driving this growing phenomenon, and also in which sectors it is most common. This phenomenon is visible in Poland and Germany. The articles in this monograph discuss republicization as a response to unsuccessful privatisation.

The aim of privatization of public tasks was to relieve the burden on state and local authority budgets, attract private investors, improve the quality and innovativeness of what had hitherto been public services, and to minimize the costs of implementing these services. With time, it has become clear that the effects of privatization have been severe for citizens in both Poland and Germany, and that complete privatization of public tasks has not proved successful.

This is why the current trend is to reverse the trend of privatization, which follows the wave of privatizations in the early 1990s in Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany. It is increasingly the case that public administration takes on implementation of tasks previously privatized, and this is not only happening at the local but also the national level of administration. The concept of 'republicization' also encompasses activities connected with a return to what is public. The activity of today's administration in terms of rendering services has not diminished, but is growing. Forecasts proclaiming that due to the necessity of improving the quality of services rendered and the possibility of transferring the costs implementing services onto a private entity, the scope of tasks performed by public administration have also proved incorrect. Public administration is necessary in present times and has wide scope of operations, including those as a service provider. Republicization and re-communalization processes are particularly evident in Poland in the energy, transport and road management sectors. In Germany, the trend of moving towards the public sector is extremely wide-ranging and is not limited to single cases. One example would be the whole host of pro-publicization legislative changes in municipal legislation which make particular use of legal mechanisms regulating subsidiarity clauses in municipal economy with the aim of effecting a change in the direction of the 'public sector'. In 2013 the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen introduced a 'privatization brake' into its Land constitution. This amendment referred to transport services, waste and sewage management, energy and water supply, and to the economic, road and cultural infrastructure, housing provision and hospital access for citizens. Not only does praxis indicate a return to what is public, but also legislation helps return into public hands those tasks of a public nature and public significance in general.

The cause of bringing public tasks back into public hands can be sought in the possibility of influencing the price and quality of services rendered for society, and also in creating better quality services provided by public bodies that are monitored more effectively. Republicization also proves effective by changing the model of administering services, with public administration taking ever wider approach in performing its tasks as New Public Management.

The examples of republicization analyzed in this monograph allow us to conclude that this process is ongoing all over the world. Moreover, republicization requires a broad understanding, as publicization processes do not necessarily entail a simple reversal of privatization carried out earlier, and do not necessarily lead to the reinstatement of the status quo ante, but rather create new space for new constructions directed 'towards the public sector'.

Translated by Rob Pagett