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## **Austria: Joined-up Government on the Municipal Level as a Coordination Problem – Steering of Decentralised Units and Cross-cutting Policy Issues**

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### **1. Introduction**

Concerns of how to best coordinate activities between different administrative units and how to maintain cohesion of the public sector are nothing new (Hood 2005, Lægreid et al. 2014, Mulgan 2005, Peters 2015). Nevertheless, organisational ‘fragmentation’ is perceived as a relatively new ‘threat’ to the coordination and cohesion of the public sector. Recent scholars have portrayed it as a dysfunctional consequence of ‘New Public Management’ (NPM) reforms, with their emphasis on decentralisation, and the break-up of an inward-looking and monolithic public sector into (widely) independent organisational units focused on the users of public services (Hood 1991, Lægreid et al. 2014). Recent public governance debates increasingly centre on the issue of coordination while emphasising that fragmentation hinders the achievement of public policy targets (Ling 2002, Meyer and Leixnering 2015).

‘Joined-up government’ (JUG; Bogdanor 2005, Hood 2005) – the term originated in the UK in connection with the election of the *New Labour* government in 1997 – has been discussed as one possible type of post-NPM reform (Christensen 2012, Lodge and Gill 2011) to address the problem of fragmentation and foster cohesion in the public sector. While the Oxford English Dictionary defines JUG as

“relating to, or designating a political strategy which seeks to coordinate the development and implementation of policies across government departments and agencies, esp. with the aim of addressing complex social problems, such as social exclusion and poverty, in a comprehensive, integrated way,”

the notion of JUG has departed over time from its original emphasis on complex social problems to become increasingly broad and, arguably, blurred (Ling 2002). Ling finds that JUG has even developed into an “umbrella term describing various ways of aligning formally distinct organisations in pursuit of the objectives of the government of the day” (ibid.:616). What is more, JUG conceptualisations can take a normative or an analytical stance (see below for a differentiation).

In our chapter and in line with Hood (2005), we therefore understand JUG as an inclusive term to describe how governments and administrations tackle coordination problems that result from the plethora of different (semi-)autonomous organisational entities currently forming the public sector. More specifically, we are interested in attempts to maintain and enhance capacities for the steering and control of decentralised units at the politico-administrative centre of a territorial entity for the sake of cohesion (Lægreid et al. 2014, Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011). In addition, we aim to shed light on the necessity of coordinating cross-cutting policy issues and themes within an increasingly decentralised and fragmented public sector. Unlike other post-NPM approaches that focus on a stronger integration of the public sector, private sector and civil society (see, e.g., Christensen 2012, Klijn and Koppenjan 2016), our primary interest lies in the public sphere and the coordination of its different organisational units.

To illustrate this broad concern with fragmentation observable throughout the local government level in Austria, we use the case of the City of Vienna. Apart from the city’s core administration, several (semi-)autonomous organisational units with highly varied mandates have been founded over the past two decades. Decentralisation has led to a vastly fragmented ‘public organisational landscape’ populated by a great variety of organisational forms (Meyer and Leixnering 2015), and this diversity and disjointedness makes Vienna the ideal setting for JUG initiatives. Although the city has initiated several measures in this direction, it is not (and has not been) pursuing any strategy with an explicit JUG label. In this chapter, we use JUG as an analytical lens and present the formal and informal governance structures and processes of these units as an example of JUG in practice. Furthermore, we are interested in how the city deals with cross-cutting tasks involving units from both the core administration and more peripheral, (semi-)autonomous units, such as the development of a joint real estate strategy or a joint information and communication technology (ICT) strategy. We address two research questions in our contribution: *First*, we

aim to provide an *empirical account* on how decentralisation was implemented in Vienna as a result of NPM reforms, and which organisational structures and processes have since been put in place to join up city units for cohesion and coherence. *Second*, on a *conceptual level*, we are interested in whether such JUG-style activities that try to counteract fragmentation can correctly be described as attempts to reverse NPM-inspired decentralisation (Dunleavy et al. 2006, MacCarthaigh and Boyle 2011), or whether such initiatives rather represent yet another layer of managerialist reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 2011, Fleischer and Jann 2011).

In a nutshell, we find that, in our case, Vienna's officials do not regard fragmentation as a pressing dysfunctional effect of decentralisation reforms, as the literature generally assumes, and, consequently, they have introduced few explicit reforms to address fragmentation. Applying an analytical JUG perspective, we rather find that fragmentation is broadly balanced by simultaneously and gradually evolving informal (we call them 'soft') and formal modes of coordination that facilitate cohesion and the joining-up of independent city units. Hence, similar to the claims made by Hood (2005), soft mechanisms provide the organisational 'glue' that prevents fragmentation from ending in entropy and chaos. The City of Vienna therefore represents a case of predominantly 'soft' JUG which builds on shared values and political objectives, a common understanding of the city's strategic orientation, and relational ties between the main actors, rather than 'hard' tools and instruments (Merchant and Van der Stede 2012). However, there are also tendencies to strengthen formal JUG mechanisms in strategically important areas (e.g., joint strategies in cross-cutting policy fields and considerations of how to implement comprehensive measures of management control). With our findings, we provide an empirical contribution on the topic of coordination in a post-NPM era, which has been described as an "empirical desert" (Van de Walle and Hammerschmid 2011:199) and so far only been researched on a central government level.<sup>1</sup> In addition, we supply evidence to support the special role of informal coordination in a fragmented public sector.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: The next section elaborates the conceptual background, followed by a description of the empirical context, data, method

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, within the EU funded COCOPS project (Lægreid et al. 2014, Lægreid et al. 2016).

(Section 3) and results (Section 4). We then analyse and discuss our findings (Section 5) and conclude with our contribution to the book's overall research goals (Section 6).

## **2. Conceptual Background**

Similar to other concepts and ideas for administrative reforms, JUG can either be seen as a normative or an analytical 'vehicle' (see e.g., Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006 for a differentiating analysis of the 'governance' concept). The normative perspective of JUG centres upon the question of which programs governments should adopt in order to maintain or enhance administrative coordination for the ultimate goal of (social) cohesion. In contrast, the analytical perspective maintains that JUG can be used as a conceptual tool to structure and compare similar reform initiatives among or within countries. We adopt the latter perspective: Instead of focusing on how JUG initiatives should be designed and carried out, we are interested in how the JUG concept can be applied to describe, structure and analyse coordination efforts as empirical phenomena. Both perspectives face the basic issue that administrative practitioners may not explicitly use the JUG label when referring to relevant initiatives.

In the literature, there are different opinions concerning if (and to what extent) post-NPM reforms have replaced previous NPM-inspired changes or rather present just another reform layer on top of previous NPM reforms. On the one hand, authors such as Dunleavy et al. contend that "key parts of the NPM reform message have been reversed because they led to policy disasters, and other large parts are stalled" (2006:468). In a similar way, Osborne argues that "NPM has actually been a transitory stage in the evolution from traditional Public Administration to what is here called the *New Public Governance*" (2010:1, italics in original), and MacCarthaigh and Boyle observe a "shift back towards recentralisation, retrenchment, and de-agencification" (2011:213). Other authors, in contrast, argue that post-NPM reforms did not 'sweep away' and undo NPM reforms, but rather sedimented upon previous reforms (Fleischer and Jann 2011, Hyndman et al. 2014, Polzer et al. forthc., Streeck and Thelen 2005). Promoting such an understanding, Christensen reasons that "reforms do not normally replace each other, but instead, new reforms are often added to old ones producing hybrid administrative systems" (2012:2).

### *An Analytical Approach to JUG*

As a subset of post-NPM reforms, JUG initiatives have been categorised along various dimensions for analytical purposes. Ling differentiates between four “main dimensions of joined-up working” (2002:626): 1) new ways of delivering services (e.g., one-stop shops, where government units are involved in delivering services), 2) new accountabilities and incentives (e.g., shared outcome targets), 3) new types of organisation (e.g., common culture and values, information and training), and 4) new ways of working across organisations (e.g., joint teams, pooled budgets or merged structures). JUG has also sometimes been equated with the ‘Whole-of-Government’ (WOG) approach<sup>2</sup> (Christensen and Læg Reid 2007). Based on Ling’s categorisation, we can see that JUG reforms may focus on processes external to the public sector (e.g., in cases of outsourced services to citizens, which nevertheless necessitate coordinating activities) or on a solely intra-governmental perspective as in the second half of the categorisation above. It is precisely those two aspects that we consider most helpful in structuring and analysing our own case.

Several accounts of the success and failure of JUG initiatives have accumulated over the past decade (see e.g., 6 2004, Askim et al. 2009, MacCarthaigh and Boyle 2011, O’Flynn et al. 2011, Talbot 2011). What many of these accounts have in common is that they focus on formal mechanisms (e.g., hierarchies, architectures, or incentivising mechanisms) rather than on informal means of coordination. Drawing on several historical examples, the contribution of Hood (2005) presents an exception and discusses four different ‘mechanisms for coordination’ in the context of JUG, both formal and informal. These mechanisms overlap to a great extent with several previously identified mechanisms in the area of organisational design and control (e.g., Malmi and Brown 2008, Ouchi 1979, Van der Meer-Kooistra and Vosselmann 2000):

- First, joining-up can be achieved by *authority*, e.g., by general commanders or coordinators (e.g., a certain administrative unit like the Ministry of Finance). This mechanism has clear ties to the idea of coordination through *bureaucracy* or *hierarchy* in (management) control theory (Ditillo et al. 2015, Ouchi 1979, Van der Meer-Kooistra and Vosselmann 2000).

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<sup>2</sup> The WOG approach has gained particular prominence in public sector accounting, with an emphasis on how to consolidate the financial statements of widely independent units (Grossi and Newberry 2009, Heald and Georgiou 2009).

- Second, the joining-up of units can be achieved by *market* and *incentive structures*. Hood (2005) claims that, for example, coordination through market-type arrangements has been pushed back in case of the National Health Service due to the unpopularity of ‘quasi-markets’ within the healthcare regime established by New Labour in the UK. In (management) control theory, market-based coordination is often a common reference point in make-or-buy decisions (Ditillo et al. 2015, Ouchi 1979, Van der Meer-Kooistra and Vosselmann 2000).
- Third, *architecture* may provide another way to join up entities: In addition to inscribing the physical proximity of closely collaborating units in blueprints and concrete, architecture can also be virtual and refer to joint ICT systems and procedures for services (see also Dunleavy 2010 and Lægreid et al. 2014). In this case, the ICT system joins units or departments in their service delivery. While this coordination mechanism has no equivalent in (management) control theory, aspects of ICT can be linked to the digital era governance model suggested by Dunleavy et al. (2006) as a potential new direction for public management reform.
- Last, in addition to the mechanisms of coordination described above, joining-up initiatives can also take on ‘softer’ forms, i.e., *social bonds* and *group interaction*, an observation which has also been described as steering by means of *social controls* (Ditillo et al. 2015, Ouchi 1979, Van Thiel and Yesilkagit 2011). Informal collaboration and coordination are not always visible from the outside (Finer 1950) and even members of an organisation “may not even think of the shared norms or ‘the way we do things here’ as being part of the ‘control’ system” (Merchant and Van der Stede 2012:95). Examples of efforts to establish a certain set of values among civil servants include common education in the *École Nationale d’Administration* in France or the gradual acquisition of the *Beamtenethos* (the principle-based ethic of the German ‘bureaucratic class’ described most pointedly by Max Weber) in German-speaking countries (Hood 2005). These common sets of values can provide the ‘glue’ that bonds formally separated units from the same territorial entity.

### *Steering ‘Organisational Landscapes’ and Coordinating Cross-cutting Themes*

Breaking up administrative ‘silos’ by decentralising administrative units was one of the key doctrines of NPM reforms (Hood 1991) and has included the creation of agencies and corporatisations (i.e., separate entities on a public or private law basis) in public sectors worldwide (Pollitt et al. 2001, Meyer and Leixnering 2015; for Austria on the federal level: Hammerschmid et al. 2012, Meyer et al. forthc.). As a consequence, the public ‘organisational landscape’ has become much more diverse, which has led to (at least) two new challenges:

*First*, decentralisation and corporatisation activities have resulted to some extent in a “‘pillarization’ of the public sector” (Christensen and Lægreid 2007:1060) as each newly decentralised unit tends to develop ‘a life of its own’ (Verhoest et al. 2012) and initiatives to “let the managers manage” (Kettl 1997:447) have led to changed organisational and managerial identities (Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006). Cohesion among, coordination between and across different units of the public sector, and the unity of the public sector as a whole were the central ideas guiding JUG reforms. Ling (2002:616) contends that “[t]o join up, initiatives must align organisations with different cultures, incentives, management systems and aims”. In the German-speaking countries, various different reform approaches are discussed under the heading of ‘public corporate governance,’ a perspective that aims to integrate the intra-organisational management of the politico-administrative corpus as well as of single public sector entities on the one hand and the inter-organisational governance of the public organisational landscape as a whole on the other (Schedler et al. 2011; see also Leixnering and Bramböck 2013). Quite often, on the local level, the image of territorial entities as ‘conglomerates’ or ‘houses’ are used to illustrate the challenges of coordination and cohesion (Reichard 2006).

*Second*, the need for coordination has increased and diversified, as the implementation of public policies now often reaches beyond the boundaries of the core administration and threads across different administrative units (Christensen and Lægreid 2006, Davies 2009). Brandtner et al. (forthc.) argue that recent reforms brought about changes in urban governance structures and have led to “governance gaps, uncertain configurations in governance and a limited capacity to act” and find that the strategies which cities issue may be one way to formally address these challenges.

Both challenges can potentially be addressed by all four of the mechanisms outlined by Hood (2005). In the empirical part of this chapter that makes up the next section, we will shed light on both of these challenges in our specific case.

### **3. Empirical Context, Data and Method**

Due to its federal character, public management reform activities at the different administrative levels in Austria (which include the federal level, nine states, 80 administrative districts, and 15 municipalities not assigned to a district, e.g., Linz and Salzburg) occur largely independently, with only a moderate amount of coordination or connections among different reforms. Austrian municipalities can be described as highly compartmentalised in their structure (with 2,100 municipalities as of 2015, Statistics Austria 2015). As most municipalities are very small, with between 1,000 and 1,500 inhabitants, decentralisation and corporatisation (and corresponding JUG) initiatives are topics that affect only a minority of municipalities.

Employing a case study approach, we use the City of Vienna, the Austrian capital, as the empirical site to address typical JUG-related concerns in larger municipalities. Yin (2013) maintains that case studies can be either *exploratory* (i.e. aiming to develop questions and hypotheses for subsequent studies, or to test the appropriateness of applying a certain theory in a certain context), *descriptive* (providing an encompassing description of a phenomenon in its context), or *explanatory* (endeavouring to identify causal relationships). This chapter draws on the first two case study types in order to elaborate JUG-type measures that have been implemented in the City of Vienna, and to apply JUG-related conceptual frameworks for analytical purposes. Case studies have been described as useful when researching reform developments over time (Liguori and Steccolini 2012, Pettigrew 1990). We therefore argue that such an approach is especially suitable for the study of longer-term decentralisation activities where both oscillating and iterative reform forces are at work.

As is the case in most administrations in German-speaking Europe (Hammerschmid et al. 2012), organisational disaggregation (instead of privatisation) was a core element of public sector reforms in Vienna. The main rationale was to create some latitude for the state to operate beyond formal constraints associated with the Weberian *Rechtsstaat* logic



(Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006). In terms of size, the city directly and indirectly employs about 90,000 people. The distribution of political power within the city government ('Vienna City Senate') follows the proportional representation of seats in the city parliament ('Vienna City Council'). Since World War II, the city government has been dominated by the centre-left Social Democratic Party, although coalition governments did emerge with the conservative Austrian People's Party (1996-2001) and the Green Party (since 2010). This political situation is mirrored by a corresponding strategic political agenda and a city identity that is significantly infused with social democratic values and principles, but one that also integrates such relevant economic issues as standard of living, tourism, ICT, and the city's strong position as centre of research (i.e., 'Red Vienna': Novy et al. 2001).

The legal structure of the city administration basically takes the form of a matrix organisation (City of Vienna 2016b, see top half of Figure 3.1 in Section 4). Vertically, the administration is divided into seven administrative groups; only a few units do not follow that vertical structure (e.g., the Chief Executive Office and the City of Vienna Court of Audit). Each administrative group follows a monocratic structure and is headed by a city councillor. Together with and headed by the mayor, the city councillors constitute the political body of the Vienna City Senate. Each administrative group is subdivided into departments. In sum, there are 60 municipal departments plus three further units, the latter featuring a higher degree of autonomy. All of these units follow a monocratic structure, whereas the respective heads enjoy a basic right to self-organisation, e.g., in terms of the internal organisational structure of their departments. Horizontally, the administration is divided into five executive groups of the Chief Executive Office which is led by the chief executive director as the highest-ranking public official of the city. As a result of the matrix organisation, all department heads report to their respective city councillor as well as to the chief executive director; the directors of the executive groups have the right to issue directives to the department heads whose departments are concerned with tasks falling within a director's scope of responsibility. The city councillors and the chief executive director are, in turn, legally bound to directives issued by the mayor. While the rights and duties of all department heads are laid out in the administrative rules of procedure of the city (GOM), the tasks to be performed by the respective units are set up in an official statute (GEM) that is authored by the chief executive director. Both documents are approved by the city council and issued by the mayor.

We used a twofold strategy for data collection: First, we consulted various sources related to the 'architecture' of the city's organisational landscape that provided insights into the formal design of structures and relations. Here, we analysed numerous governance-related city documents (such as directives, statutory reports, legal statements) and explored the governance structures of single independent entities and the public organisational landscape as a whole (commercial register, organisations' websites and other publicly available sources). Second, we supplemented these materials with primary data collected in 22 interviews with several top officials and executives who performed key tasks in the coordination and management of the city's autonomous units. Among the interviewees were nine people who held a central position in an administrative group, a department, or the Chief Executive Office. Another eleven interview partners held a management position in a (semi-)autonomous organisation. To account for the plurality of organisational forms on the one hand while reducing complexity on the other, we only included managers from corporatisations that were either entirely owned by the city, legally independent public agencies and funds, or semi-autonomous administrative units ('enterprises'). We also interviewed representatives from the city's two major holding companies. In addition, one interviewee came from the city's court of audit and from the city employees' labour union, which both exert a strong influence over decisions (i.e., accelerating or blocking discussion) concerning the formal architecture of the city. Almost all managers interviewed have gained significant experience in the administrative and/or political field before being appointed to their present position. The aim of the interviews was to gain insight into both the formal and the widely invisible informal structures and processes of organising in the City of Vienna as a whole. Therefore, interviewees were asked to answer questions about contact intensity and frequency between governmental and (semi-)autonomous units, their respective counterparts, strategy development, steering and reporting activities, as well as individual socialisation experiences and particular organisational cultures. Mirroring our research objectives, we sought to identify practices and types of control that aid in the coordination of these units and, in particular, of tasks involving cooperation across these units.

Because the JUG-related measures in our case predominantly aim at the coordination and cohesion of the city as an overall entity, we focus on Vienna's 'organisational landscape' and on how the various (semi-)autonomous units are held together. In the next section, we

briefly describe this landscape and its organisations, and subsequently discuss our findings with regards to varieties of JUG measures (Section 5).

#### **4. Results: Matrix Reloaded**

Organisational decentralisation has been a major reform trend in Vienna in recent decades. This tendency is manifested in the high degree of managerial and financial freedom of the city's administrative groups: In 2002, unit-level lump sum budgets and department-level performance contracts were introduced to increase managerial autonomy. In addition to the decentralisation measures that changed the structure of the core administration, the last two decades have seen the establishment of dozens of new (semi-)autonomous entities. Numerous units were 'cut off' the administrative body and transformed into separate entities organised under public or private law; moreover, the city holds major shares in several state-owned enterprises (e.g., Vienna International Airport). Among those are independent legal entities organised on a public law basis (e.g., the majority of the city's museums), public funds (e.g., Vienna Science and Technology Fund), and corporatised units (e.g., the city's port). In sum, the city acts as a legal principal for more than 180 different (semi-)autonomous organisations in the first and second 'generation' of subsidiaries – as a direct or indirect full owner, shareholder (for corporate entities: 160 organisations) or regulating authority (for public law-based entities: 20 organisations). For approximately 100 organisations, the city is the sole principal; 50 companies are public-private partnerships (PPPs); another dozen comprise partnerships with other public bodies, and two are listed companies.

The bottom portion of Figure 3.1 shows a simplified version of the city's 'organisational landscape': In addition to the matrix structure of the core administration, we have added a layer illustrating the organisations outlined above which also increases the overall governance complexity. Interestingly, the city provides no official chart with a comprehensive overview of both core administration and (semi-)autonomous units, e.g., all organisational entities along with their governance structures, employees, and financial transfers. Even though organisational decentralisation has been an explicit reform principle, especially in the late 1990s, there was never a central 'blueprint' designed to guide this process. Instead the current organisational landscape embodies the core quality of a

discrete evolvement, i.e. as a ‘historically grown’ terrain, rather than in a sweeping change programme. The main reason seems to be that although the Chief Executive Office initially advocated for a centrally coordinated disaggregation, a more piecemeal process ultimately ensued, thus empowering the newly decentralised units to introduce measures for even greater autonomy.

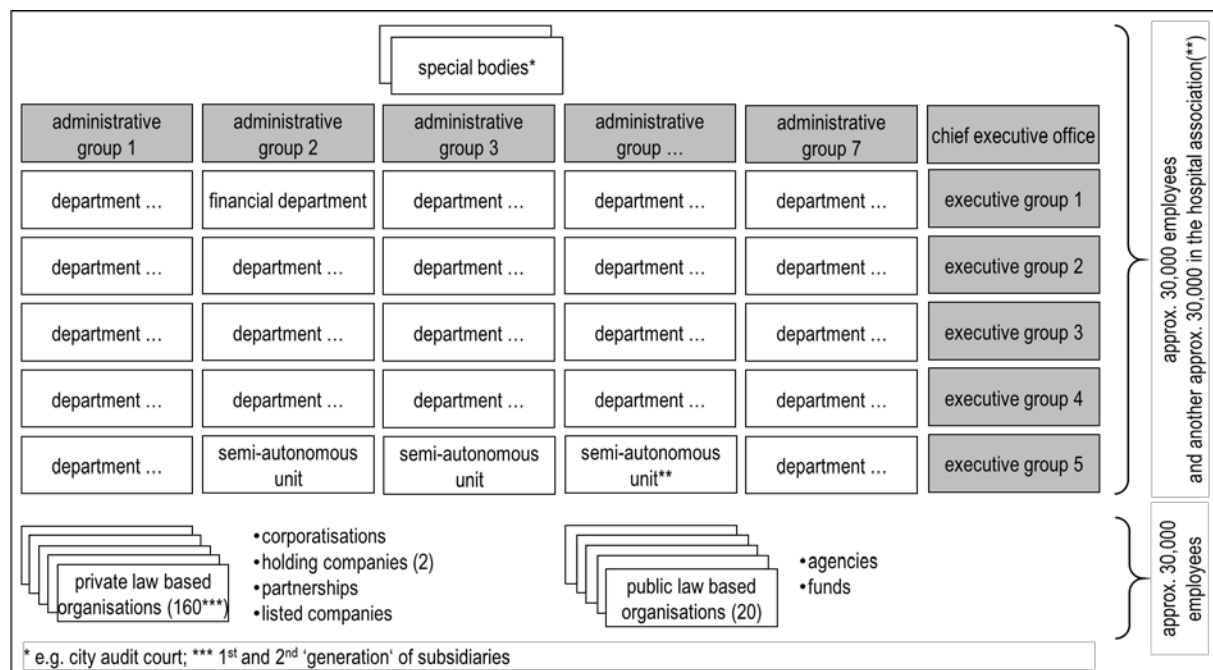


Figure 3.1: ‘Organisational landscape’ of the City of Vienna (simplified version)  
(source: authors’ own compilation based on official data)

Overall, the organisational landscape of the city comprises a broad variety of public organisations that differ not only in form but also in function and size: For instance, the semi-autonomous (i.e., legally dependent but with far-reaching managerial autonomy) Vienna Hospital Association receives annual financial transfers amounting to more than 1 billion euros and employs about 30,000 people. The fully independent Vienna Social Fund (responsible for services for disabled or elderly populations, among others) receives more than 700 million euros per year. The public transportation company, owned entirely by the city via a holding company (see below), receives roughly 300 million euros in city funding for operational purposes each year. Taken together, all (semi-)autonomous organisations employ 60,000 people (which means that only one third of the city’s employees work in the central administration) and account for an estimated annual turnover of more than 6 billion

euros (City of Vienna 2015). As two thirds of city employees work outside the core administration, and a substantial amount of budgetary spending also occurs elsewhere, the need for effective joined-up coordination is clear and unequivocal.

According to the GEM, the coordination of ownership relations between the central administration and the city's corporatised units (including full or partial as well as direct or indirect ownership) is, in general, a task to be centrally performed by the financial department of the city. This also includes the nomination of supervisory board members. Tasks covered by central steering activities are the formulation of strategy, the allocation of short-term performance contracts with lump sum budgets, and recruitment at the management level. These tasks often require professional know-how regarding an organisation's industry and context that goes beyond financial expertise. As a consequence, in approximately half of all cases, a different body than the financial department is in charge: For public law-based entities (including their subsidiaries), the GEM assigns the above-mentioned duties to a particular administrative group. As regards representation in supervisory boards, the chief executive director and the head of the financial department each hold a seat in the two major holding companies (one holding public service utility organisations such as public transport and energy, the other acting as the city's main hub for a great variety of organisations and for public-private partnerships).

## **5. Discussion: Organisational Fragmentation and Cross-cutting Tasks as Areas for JUG**

Documents and interviews provided deeper insights into the city's factual organisation: Mirroring previous research on informal coordination mechanisms from a JUG angle (Hood 2005), we find that formal structures (e.g., organisational charts, administrative rules of procedure, and official statutes) and processes reflect the city's actual organisation only to a limited degree. Informal structures and processes deviate often considerably from the written standards and rules described above. These informal structures and processes complement, but in some cases also contradict, the formal arrangements. In the first subsection, we focus on (formally) 'invisible' techniques for joining up and steering that crystallised through our interviews; more formal measures are described in the subsection below.

### *'Soft' JUG: Implications of Organisational Decentralisation for Steering*

Although the city's official statute gives the impression that the coordination and alignment of steering activities (at least for all corporatised units) is a centrally performed task, this is rather the exception than the rule. Overall, no single central entity within the politico-administrative apparatus exists that ultimately aligns the various organisations or coordinates all steering activities. Instead, there are different 'power centres' at play whose importance varies depending on a respective organisation's needs and interests: Organisations that perform tasks of extraordinary strategic importance (e.g., services such as public transportation) or that deliver highly visible public services (e.g., public housing or waste management and street cleaning) rely on good relations with their administrative group and designated city councillor (*"you couldn't slip a sheet of paper between us"*). Especially organisations that do not generate own income and therefore depend solely on public funding seek to have reliable relations with the financial department; moreover, all organisations have an interest in keeping tabs on potentially sensitive issues by maintaining good relations with the Chief Executive Office.

All independent units tend to compartmentalise their communication according to subject: Political, financial or administrative issues are negotiated with the relevant counterpart in the core administration and various received signals decentrally aligned. Compliance is a state that these units indicate by communicating in the proper 'currency' (e.g., service quality, public visibility, good press, a stable financial position, or compliance with administrative guidelines). Depending on their financial situation (e.g., profitable state-owned enterprises) and the task performed (e.g., public services of high strategic relevance), management tends to calibrate the assertiveness with which they act towards the city administration. In case of financially sound and strategically relevant organisations, this creates a certain balance of power and makes imposing strategies rather difficult for central units. However, in some instances, there is significant tension between the financial perspective and the political rationale (*"for example, when a public childcare site is closed"*): In such cases, management has to carefully balance the divergent interests (*"the political and financial dimensions are equally important"*) and signal compliance in all directions in order to prevent a veto against certain actions.

Formally legitimated structures of the central administration (e.g., by public law, administrative rules of procedure, official statutes) as well as of independent entities (e.g.,

by corporate law, statutes) – in short, bureaucratic controls – play an important role in structuring collective action in the city. Yet, they only represent one part of the overall picture, as most interactions between public managers and public officials (and even among public officials) happen in an informal manner (Hood 2005). Indeed, nearly all organisations have installed the formally required bodies (such as supervisory bodies) and give proper account to their respective superior – but in many cases these instruments play a relatively minor role compared to informal contacts between actors. Supervisory board nominees, for example, largely belong to the central administration or in some cases to another public entity of the city: Depending on an organisation’s strategic importance and size, seats are mostly divided among the respective administrative group, the financial department, and the chief executive office, an arrangement which also mirrors the factual informal flow of information within the formal structure. Most organisations have *jours fixes* or at least informal ad-hoc meetings with their respective administrative groups and also maintain contact with the financial department and the Chief Executive Office in the same way (“*whenever someone requests it, we’re happy to give out relevant information*”). Both counterparts perceive such informal exchange (often ‘bypassing’ the chain of formal responsibilities) less as a means of control by both counterparts and more as an expression of mutual proximity and trust (“*but you have to know when to talk to the city councillor and when to decide on your own*”; see also Van Thiel and Yesilkagit 2011). Visible means of control (such as direct orders via delegated representatives in the organisations’ general assemblies or indirect involvement in the formulation of strategic objectives) are less frequent: Nevertheless, all unit members appear to know that they require informal approval of their actions and whom to consult and when.

Moreover, one main instrument used for steering and controlling organisations in this context is the recruitment of management. According to the factual distribution of rights, it is the respective administrative group that performs this task. One of the core features in the required skill profile for managerial staff is having been socialised within the city system (“*you have to know the city and whom to call*”). Such a background would have afforded the opportunity to participate in the rich implicit knowledge and culture of the city, to establish personal networks and alliances (“*we once had a manager from the outside, an outstanding professional – big mistake, it was as if he spoke another language*”). This social embeddedness, especially of the top officials, is a crucial factor for the overall organisation

*“the city’s operations run smoothly because there is a number of key players who like working with each other”*). A city manager needs to be able to understand the different rationalities at work in the respective unit’s professional field, along with managerial rationality, political rationality (*“of course, I see what the city councillor has in mind, and of course, I am available to talk to him if he calls at 10 p.m.”*) and administrative features (*“after 30 years in the city, you simply know certain things,” “if you call the wrong person three times in a certain situation, you will remember that and learn”*). And, finally, city managers have to share a modernised version of the ideal of ‘Red Vienna’ (see above), the success story of a strategic and political agenda as well as a city identity that is significantly infused by social democratic values and principles, but one that also integrates such relevant economic issues as the standard of living, tourism, ICT, and the city’s strong position as a centre of research (Brandtner et al. forthc., Meyer et al. 2012). This shared, yet largely unstated, conception also explains why none of the city’s power centres favours steering via explicit strategies or formal objectives: They rely instead largely on social controls, one of which being the appointment of the ‘right’ people that share the mentioned characteristics and actively participate in the city leaders’ *esprit de corps* (Hood 2005). Thus, steering is mainly accomplished by means of soft factors such as shared values and ideas that form the key quality indicators for managerial staff selection (Merchant and Van der Stede 2012). As a consequence, when central units identify compliance gaps, they do not double down on steering, but instead impose sanctions through a change in management (*“if a partnership does not work out, it will not be continued”*). However, finding the ‘right people’ for the job has become increasingly difficult: Specialised professional know-how within the city administration has grown scarce (as another consequence of decentralisation initiatives), making it more difficult to appoint managers that come from the centre and therefore possess the desired socialisation. In addition, inter-sectorial mobility has led to a situation where career staffers have become the exception rather than the rule (*“the system works because we all have known the city and each other for decades, but that is now changing”*). These developments are currently reinforcing considerations to revisit the significance of alternative (more formal) managerial instruments, such as an integrated internal control system that also covers agencies and corporatised units.

*‘Hard’ JUG via Authority and Architecture: Coordinating Cross-cutting Themes*



The decentralisation of administrative units in the NPM era also entailed new challenges for the formal coordination of cross-cutting issues: The implementation of many public policies now spans across departments and often has to go beyond the boundaries of the core administration, requiring coordination among relevant departments and decentralised units. For example, decentralisation has led to the establishment of multiple data processing centres, each with different standards, which resulted in expensive parallel developments of software applications. Obviously, this makes an overall assessment of ICT risks difficult. As a consequence, the Chief Executive Office recently initiated a joint ICT strategy process and issued multiple guidelines. The city's 'eHealth strategy' – which aims at providing access to social and health services for citizens and patients via *e-government* – provides an example of such coordinating efforts: The 'eHealth strategy' board – set up within the city's joint ICT strategy – consists of representatives from the Chief Executive Office, three departments, the Vienna Hospital Association (KAV), the Vienna Social Fund (FSW), and several corporatised organisations of the city as well as other public entities from the federal level (City of Vienna 2016a).<sup>3</sup> The joint ICT strategy would be an example of joining up units by *architecture* (Hood 2005).

The city's joint real estate strategy manifests an example of a joining-up activity that relies on the mechanism of *authority* (Hood 2005). As about one third of the city's total area is publically owned (for example schools, hospitals, parks, streets, forests, or social housing), real estate can be regarded as highly relevant – for residents and JUG-related considerations alike. Before 2014, around 50 different units from the core administration and corporatised units were responsible for administrating, renting, selling or building on public properties, which led to conflicts and expensive and uncoordinated activities. This situation was found to be unsatisfactory and changed with the appointment of the real estate management department to act as the general coordinator. Now, if one of the city's administrative units aims to change the status of one of its properties, this coordinating department checks if the change fits with the city's overall planning strategy.

## 6. Implications and Conclusion

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<sup>3</sup> This case presents an example for the coordination of federal and municipal organisations: In addition to organisations from the City of Vienna, it involves representatives from the federal government and its corporatised organisations, self-government bodies and non-profit organisations.

Our point of departure was the phenomenon of fragmentation, a problem for which public sector managers and normatively-oriented scholars are both currently seeking solutions. In this chapter, we used the JUG concept as an analytical lens to describe, structure, and analyse coordination efforts on the local level in Austria; the City of Vienna being our example. Drawing on Hood's (2005) 'mechanisms for coordination' – both formal (*authority, architecture, markets*) and informal (*social bonds and group interaction*) –, we found a mixture of mechanisms at work for steering corporatised units and dealing with cross-cutting policy issues – with informal mechanisms being of significant prominence.<sup>4</sup> We therefore conceive of “governance as a culturally embedded set of institutions that transcend particular coordinating and steering activities” (Brandtner et al. forthc.).

Our *first* aim of the chapter was to provide an account on how decentralisation within the scope of NPM reforms was implemented in the City of Vienna. As past decentralisation initiatives already imply the need for subsequent JUG initiatives in order to join up decentralised units for cohesion and coherence, we asked *which* measures were present and *what* effects have been. In our case,<sup>5</sup> we found an overall organisational entity with not one, but several different power centres at play whose importance varies depending on a respective organisation's needs and interests. Contrary to observations in current public management literature (Lægreid et al. 2014, Ling 2002), we additionally found that fragmentation brought about by NPM is not necessarily perceived as a dysfunctional effect of decentralisation reforms by senior city officials and staffers, as units seem to be strongly bound together by shared values and beliefs, socialisation of participating actors, informal social ties between top officials, and implicit overall purposes (Hood 2005). These 'soft' elements grew and developed hand in hand with decentralisation efforts, and their underlying integrative mechanisms counteracted the entropic character of fragmentation. Yet, the overall 'organisational configuration' was not deliberately nor centrally designed, but evolved over time through various local decisions. The increasing complexity of this

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<sup>4</sup> Only market elements appear to be negligible for the case of Vienna, as virtually all public services are provided by city entities.

<sup>5</sup> Coping with the effects of fragmentation is rather an issue for larger municipalities that in turn have a larger number of decentralised units. As the Austrian municipalities are compartmentalised in terms of size, a limitation of the study at hand is that the results cannot necessarily be transferred to the smaller municipalities.

landscape, together with the decline in life-long employment will pose future challenges and require additional efforts.

The government's (and administration's) capacity to ensure the achievement of political goals within an ever-growing 'organisational landscape' remains the ultimate measure of success of joining-up attempts. Consequently, besides 'soft' JUG, strengthening formal JUG elements was a visible tendency in strategically important areas in the city, e.g., joint strategies in cross-cutting policy fields and attempts to implement an integrated internal control system that also spans across (semi-)autonomous units. Regarding these policy issues, we found that the implementation of many policies often went beyond the boundaries of the core administration, requiring coordination among relevant departments and decentralised units. The joint ICT and real estate strategies are examples of how the city has tried to reconcile the interests of a plethora of organisational actors. Yet, such activities were not at all explicitly labelled as 'JUG'-initiatives.

In the city, there is no single centre and *hierarchy* was definitively not found to be the guiding principal of organisation on the whole. Instead, we found *trust* between key actors to be a key mechanism of coordination – mirroring Finer's classic finding about informal collaboration which he argued to be “[l]east visibly public, it is the most powerful cement in the whole executive structure” (1950:68). *Social controls* were additional dominant steering mechanisms (Ditillo et al. 2015, Merchant and Van der Stede 2012, Ouchi 1979, Van Thiel and Yesilkagit 2011). Nevertheless, we also observed the “shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf 1997:202) in the form of latent *authority* (e.g., in terms of ownership or financial support): Such power, albeit not manifested in observable actions most of the time, entitles actors located in one of the power centres to make certain decisions (e.g., management selection). In order to preserve it, it was rarely executed, though (i.e., “fleet in being” [Scharpf 1997:200], see also Mayntz 2003).

After identifying mechanisms and effects of JUG, we went on to ask, *secondly*, whether JUG-style initiatives to address fragmentation are attempts to 'undo' decentralisation, or if such initiatives represent yet another layer of public management reform. Rather than a replacement – returning to the *status quo ante* was seen as neither desirable nor viable by the interviewees –, we found that attempts to deal with the new 'organisational complexity' are added on top of existing measures. Many scholars (e.g., Davies 2009, Ling 2002, Talbot 2011) have suggested that such attempts manifest, for

example, in approaches to join up multiple units in unified strategies. Yet, in the Vienna case we also find many implicitly performed JUG practices that do not aim at re-centralisation: Although there are some recent initiatives that designate certain units as 'centres' in order to bundle and align activities (e.g., by the joint strategies), most JUG-related practices are neither new nor imposed by a 'reasserted' (administrative) city centre.

As a lesson learnt, and also as a point for practitioners, we found a great deal of 'glue' when we looked beyond the means of formal organisation that solidified the 'conglomerate' of units as a whole. Fragmentation turned out not to be an obstacle to unity and coherence; instead, the integrative mechanisms (cultural controls like informal meetings and networking activities, shared socialisation in the city administration, selection of personnel) seemed to preserve the advantages of decentralisation. Central control was impossible not because its enactment failed but due to the lack of one single centre and the existence of countervailing power. The described method of indirect and 'soft' steering has been theorised as "contextual steering" (Willke 2006:16) and has been recommended for situations characterised by high intra- and inter-system complexity, like those found in large cities. Nevertheless, such polycentric governance regimes may well give rise to accountability concerns, since the 'chains' of democratic legitimacy are not always easy to grasp at first sight (Black 2008; Hodges 2012) and the adherence to a particular network makes it difficult for outsiders to gain access to the inner circle. Similarly, 'revolving doors' for employees may become an issue, as invisible barriers hamper successful entry.

In Austria, JUG has not been explicitly pursued in municipal-level political agendas to date. Nor did Viennese officials frame their attempts to maintain and enhance capacities for the steering and control of decentralised units for the sake of cohesion as JUG. Nevertheless, we found the JUG concept and Hood's categorisation of JUG mechanisms (2005) particularly helpful in structuring and analysing our case, especially as this frame is open to both formal and informal governance elements. Building on this categorisation, we conclude that Vienna embodies an excellent example of 'mixed' JUG featuring particular *soft* or *social*, but also *authoritative* and *architectural* control elements.

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