LOGOV

NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Local governments looking forward: Renewing the social contract and building resilience through digitization

Disruptions caused by COVID offer new opportunities to improve governance in order to make it both more responsive and inclusive. Two trends that we have seen as a result of COVID are the push for localization and digitization. While the pandemic has affected every sector of society and every level of government, subnational authorities have been responsible for crucial aspects of pandemic management, such as containment measures, healthcare, and also for relief measures such as provision of social services and maintaining economic activity.

Localization is driven by two separate imperatives. The first is the desire by governments to provide a nuanced and differentiated responses to the social and economic crisis arising from COVID. The second is driven by a desire to minimize disruptions in the supply chain through localization. While the two are related, my focus in this area is primarily focused in the area of good governance. The rise in the importance of local governments during COVID, particularly urban local governments as agents of economic resilience has been a major feature of effective policy making around the world. This is true not just in federal countries but also in countries that are more centralized.

The fact is that for the first time in history the majority (60%) of the world's population resides in cities and this will increase even more. A recent study by McKinsey notes that by 2025, it is expected that just 600 cities will house 25% of world's population and contribute 60% of the global output. In the new global "knowledge-based economy", innovation is the key to prosperity and most innovation occurs in large cities and metropolitan areas: prosperity comes from the ability of large cities to produce new thinking. They also act as magnets for economic migrants, both internal migration as well as trans-border immigration.

Cities and urban regions are also important from a policy perspective because of the negative externalities that they give rise to. Cities in both the developed and developing world are major contributors to environmental damage - from global warming to pollution. Urbanization in many places goes hand in hand with poverty, social polarization, and social exclusion. Shanty towns in the developing world, immigrant ghettos in the developed world are examples of this polarization.

Managing such complex and diverse jurisdictions means that local governments are becoming more important in urban areas. As the level of government closest to the people, local governments have become the most important intermediary in upholding the social contract between the state and its citizens.

Firstly, it requires the mobilization of additional resources for local governments. However, digitization makes it more efficient for local governments to mobilize resources already assigned to them. Secondly, upholding social contract requires the state to provide uninterrupted services in an inclusive manner. The latter was particularly important during COVID, and this is where local authorities, both in urban and rural settings, were so important from the point of last mile services, including the provision of relief measures.

Some of the new resources are likely to come from national and upper tier subnational governments through transfers. In Canada, for example, where historically provinces have jealously guarded their relations with municipalities, the federal government is an increasingly important partner in economic and infrastructure development at the local level.

However, in this respect the digitization of governance offers new opportunities. At a very basic level in jurisdictions with diverse populations, digitization affords governments an opportunity to reach different demographics in a way that is easy to understand. For example, the use of different languages to engage citizens helps build trust. The city of Toronto's digital portal allows residents to access services in 51 languages.

Digitization offers new avenues of resource mobilization. Digital mapping and block-chain technology allow for more efficient survey of property rates, as well as enforcement of municipal codes and rules. For example, the use of easily available tools such as Google maps by local governments facilitates the identification and classification of unregistered real estate. Similarly, transparency brought about by digitization of real estate transactions can also help local governments better assess property values which forms the bedrock of local level taxation in most countries. Such measures can reduce citizens' (ratepayers') perceptions of arbitrary or unfair valuations and is also useful for the purposes of developing public and private infrastructure. Data generated at the local level can also help national governments finetune public policy to meet local aspirations and offer bespoke/differentiated solutions for different communities.

The use of digitized meters and sensors linked to the computer systems can enable more efficient (and increased) collection user fees. Parking apps, which are now increasingly common around the world, have become an effective way of dealing with the parking "free-rider" problem, while bringing great convenience to citizens who no longer have to rummage around for exact change to feed parking meters. Traffic sensors can also facilitate the levying of congestion charges, as is increasingly done in large metropolitan areas, such as London and Singapore.

Where digital service delivery becomes particularly important is by increasing the quality of life for citizens, but particularly for marginalized sections of the population. This includes citizens who can either not take time off work to physically access services, or those lacking the mobility to do so. Their ability to obtain licenses, pay bills, or receive social benefits digitally is truly transformational. Even in poor countries like India where smartphones are ubiquitous, the UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New Age Governance) gives citizens access to 339 government services from all three levels of government.

Many of the examples of this may not be the most cutting-edge uses of technology but they demonstrate that cities can take steps to understand their citizens in new ways, prioritizing initiatives to make the best use of heavily stretched resources and paving the way for more joined-up services.

To be sure the process towards digitization of service delivery is not new, but the COVID pandemic has arguably led cities and local governments to evolve their understanding of community needs and citizen expectations. Not only are many more people working from remotely and increasingly reliant on IT, but city governments have also had to adapt how they deliver services by moving to remote delivery options, originally brought about by pandemic lockdowns. Yet, despite efforts to rapidly digitize processes and systems, a city governance cannot truly become technologically inclusive without considering barriers to access.

These include:

- building resilient and robust digital infrastructure as a matter of national priorities,
- ensuring that government human resources are adequately trained to deliver digital services,
- building trust in the state's digital infrastructure – communications, service delivery, etc. by ensuring ease of access and user-friendly interfaces,
- overcoming social barriers to access – including income driven inequality and, increasingly in most advanced economies, the issue of ageism.

Upper tier governments have an important role to play in providing support to create the physical and technical infrastructure for this transformation and helping local governments surmount barriers. Local governments are uniquely positioned to quickly identify and respond to the needs of their key stakeholders who they interact with on a daily basis in different capacities including residents, taxpayers, patient, students, transit users, businesses, clients, employees and tourists. To this end, digitization is not about putting government at the cutting edge of technology. Rather, digitization should be seen as a tool that allows local governments to provide uninterrupted and easy-to-access services that meet the vastly diverse needs and expectations of their resident populations.

Rupak Chattopadhyay

President and CEO of the Forum of Federations

Our LoGov
Year 2 in a nutshell

16 country reports	**18** partners	**15** countries
6 continents	**1** LoGov Café	**174** local government practices
35 Winter School participants	**45** secondments	**91** secondment months
83 interviews	**38** workshops involving 947 participants	**468** followers on Twitter

From Munich to Singapore

Philip Nedelcu
LMU Munich, Research Center for Public Procurement Law and
Administrative Cooperations, Germany
Secondee at the National University of Singapore Centre for Asian
Legal Studies, Asia Pacific Centre for Environmental Law, Singapore

I am very happy that I had the opportunity to spend three months at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Centre for Asian Legal Studies from February until April 2020 under the auspices of the LoGov project.

The Centre for Asian Legal Studies (CALS) is a LoGov partner institution contributing work on Malaysia. More generally, the Centre engages in a wide variety of research relating to Asian jurisdictions and Asian legal theory.

During my stay there, I mostly worked on the Country Report for Germany, contributing several pieces to different work packages. While this seemed counterintuitive to me at first, it provided me with the opportunity to work on a jurisdiction known to me while being able to achieve a different perspective on the German practices through comparative research and discussions. I did so mainly with regard to 'my' practice for WP 5, which concerned citizens' participation in urban planning. More specifically, I aimed to identify potential similarities and differences between the German planning law and the planning laws of Singapore and Hong Kong (which are interesting from a comparative perspective as both cities are facing similar challenges regarding urban planning in a densely populated, yet limited city space). The idea to compare these three jurisdictions had been suggested by Professor Andrew Harding, my secondment supervisor at NUS, who provided me with very helpful and knowledgeable input during the entirety of my stay. It was indeed really thought-provoking to gain an insight into the different approaches to planning and citizens' participation and to discuss my findings with the colleagues at CALS during my (virtual) in-house seminar.

The stay at CALS broadened my (academic) horizon also on a more general level. I was able to gain good insights into the academic life and scholarship at NUS by attending seminars, talks and workshops covering a wide variety of topics, most of which were more or less

completely new to me. One workshop which I particularly enjoyed was "Constitutional Processes, Constitutional Commitments, and Democratic Change in Asia", jointly organised by CALS and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). During the workshop, I gained a much better understanding of constitutional issues in different countries of the region and – more generally – learned how important the political and historical context can be in the framing and application of legal norms, especially the constitution.

While I did not get the chance travel beyond Singapore's borders and explore the region due to the pandemic-related travel restrictions, I (luckily) still had ample opportunity to explore different parts of the city and its sights, and roam through its abundant nature.
Thereby, I got to know Singapore to be much more than the very modern and clean city state it is typically described as. What struck me right from the start was the visible multiculturalism and coexistence of various religions in Singapore. The fact that Singapore is a place in which different cultures come together is also reflected in the great variety of foods that one can enjoy throughout the city and its hawker centres. Another interesting feature is the city's architecture

that brings together old and new, e.g. colonial buildings preserved as landmarks with 'green' high-rise buildings.
An absolute highlight in terms of nature was the Botanic Gardens (which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Located (conveniently) right next to the NUS law campus, it is the perfect place to relax after work or take extensive walks amidst a rich and diverse floral world.
Overall, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic starting to spread as my stay in Singapore began, I had a very rewarding and inspiring time in Singapore, both on an academic and on a personal level.

Thank you very much to all the colleagues at CALS for the warm welcome and support throughout my stay. Especially their support in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects was remarkable and extremely helpful.

From Warsaw to Bern

Andżelika Mirska
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Secondee at Ximpulse, Bern, Switzerland

After a period of COVID-19 pandemic and carrying out our project during the lockdown, it was with great joy and enthusiasm that I headed to Switzerland for my 3-month secondment. The host organization, Ximpulse, is based in Bern, the capital of the Swiss Confederation and the seat of the Swiss government and parliament, and of large parts of the federal administration. Bern is also the capital of one of Switzerland's 26 cantons and a municipality with an interesting history in terms of urban-rural relations. Bern's admirable medieval old city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, Bern is not only a place with important historical traditions for Switzerland but also a place of experimentation and innovation. Today's Bern is looking to the future and is promoting the work towards modern solutions to contemporary problems associated with ongoing agglomeration processes. In order to effectively address issues arising from the urban and rural interplay, in 2010 Bern contributed to the institutionalization of a cooperation between communes with the establishment of an inter-communal organization called the Regional Conference Bern-Midland (*Regional Konferenz Bern-Mittelland*). The 75 communes that make up the Bern-Midland administrative region have undertaken to work together on such issues as spatial planning, traffic, or regional policy. Bern has also established a non-profit organization called *Capital Region Switzerland*.

Against this background, Bern is an ideal place to conduct research in the framework of our LoGov project. However, without the tremendous support of the host institution, i.e. Ximpulse, this would not be possible. Ximpulse has an extensive knowledge and network of contacts, both in the world of politics and administration at the communal, cantonal, and federal levels, as well as in academic circles. All Ximpulse colleagues, especially Erika Schläppi, guided me through Switzerland's rather intricate political, social, and administrative system. Understanding the peculiarities of Switzerland and the institutional context in the form of the federal system, e.g. direct democracy, the concordance culture, linguistic, cultural or religious diversity, is key to understanding and explaining the processes currently taking place and the operations strategy developed by local governments. In addition, the opportunity to consult and talk with local politicians, decision-makers and consultants is a core value of projects like LoGov.

My secondment in Bern coincided with the third phase of the research process within the research strategy adopted to carry out the LoGov project, namely, the phase in which we compare local government practices. For me, as a researcher who usually conducts comparative research, this is a rather meaningful coincidence. Despite the differences between the political and administrative system of Switzerland and Poland, when conducting research on a local level, certain similarities can be found, e.g. in efforts to clarify the issues related to the management of agglomerations. Both in Poland and Switzerland, this is one of the key issues being addressed today from the academic, political, and public perspectives.

My secondment in Bern was the fortieth secondment completed as part of our LoGov research consortium. During one of the workshops held by Ximpulse, I met people with experience in organizing secondments in Switzerland, Spain, South Africa, and Ethiopia. Together we came to the conclusion that as researchers we cannot lock ourselves in our office and conduct research alone. Knowledge is spread and gained, among other things, in the process of discussion and exchange of ideas. Our previous experiences become coherent and meaningful by confronting them with the experiences of other researchers. Sharing our experience is a key element in extending knowledge and development of science.

My presentation on systemic solutions in Poland was intended to show the specific nature of local government functioning in a different systemic context than the federal system in Switzerland. From the point of view of Poland, a unitary state, the separation of powers can be realized through a deep decentralization of the administrative system.

I hope my secondment will contribute not only to the LoGov project, but also to the research on Switzerland conducted at the University of Warsaw, my home institution. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Ximpulse team for the wonderful welcome and care during my stay in Bern. I am looking forward to future exchanges and I am looking forward to welcoming other secondees of the LoGov consortium in Warsaw.

From Madrid to Cape Town

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Secondee at the University of the Western Cape
Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law,
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I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said that ten weeks in the Mother City, Cape Town, South Africa, in the framework of such an inspiring project as LoGov, was a life-changing experience both from an academic, professional and personal perspective. When deciding last year at my home institution, the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, to do my research stay at the University of the Western Cape from May to July 2022, I could never have imagined the broad challenges that I would encounter in all aspects. One such challenge was conducting a political-legal comparative analysis of Work Package 1 of the project (*Local responsibilities and public services in the urban rural interplay*).

As soon as I arrived in Cape Town and had the opportunity to participate in the first academic activities of the Dullah Omar Institute, I quickly realized that it was almost impossible to proceed with my concrete research object without first trying to understand both the country's local government system and its historical and socio-political background.

Although Cape Town is a very unique, multicultural, diverse, artistic, and vibrating metropolitan city, built at the foot of one of the world's natural wonders, the Table Mountain, it seems to be constantly moving through contrasts and asymmetries when it comes to local responsibilities and the delivery of public services. One part of the city (mainly, the Central Business District, the beachfront neighborhoods, and suburbs) is characterized by fast economic growth combining modernity, wonderful Dutch and Georgian architectural design, good quality of public services and solid infrastructure with a wide diversification of economic activities. However, in the eastern and southern part of the metropolis, the situation is very different. Possibly, the colonialist history and apartheid regime, that was formally abolished not so long ago in South Africa, have left a discernible imprint of social, racial, and spatial segregation on the territorial and political structures. The creation of townships under the apartheid regime that still host millions of people led to a very exclusionary type of land zoning with the greatest impact on social equality and wealth distribution. This state of affairs combined with the appearance of new types of informal human settlements along the urban rural continuum (that, wholly or partially, lack public services) present very diverse – in scale and intensity – challenges to all tiers of government.

Being able to observe all the above *in situ* with the tools and priceless support that the Dullah Omar Institute and its academics (Jaap de Visser, coordinator of the LoGov project at DOI, Nico Steytler, Tinashe Chigwata and Michelle Maziwisa) provided me (guided visits to the

townships, seminars, assistance to conferences of city representatives and university staff with participants from various African cities, bibliography, interviews with academics and practitioners in the field of urban planning and environmental law) has prompted me to delve deeper into the legal design and practical performance of local responsibilities in South Africa and Europe. What particularly interested me was the need to identify legal tools that can be at the same time flexible, efficient, and adjusted to the needs of the different types of territories and communities in the fields of transport, waste management, urban planning, environmental protection, energy sufficiency, public security, and housing.

Furthermore, through the networking offered by the UWC academics, I had the opportunity to explore some aspects of how a very constitutionalized local government regime operates in practice and the limits that it faces in its concrete application. In this aspect, I am happy I had the chance to hold two presentations within the framework of the seminars that the members of my host institution, the Dullah Omar Institute at UWC, had organized. On both occasions, we had the chance to discuss, from a more general perspective, the similarities, and particularities of local government systems in Spain and in South Africa as well as, from a more specific angle, the role of rural and urban municipalities in climate administrative action. The interchange of perceptions and knowledge on this topic with all members of the DOI and, particularly, through an ad hoc interview with Prof. Jaap de Visser, was highly enriching.

During my time in Cape Town, I had the privilege to stay at the multi-cultural neighborhood of Bo-Kaap, near the city center. Formerly known as the Malay Quarter, Bo-Kaap has its origins back in the XVIII century when the slaves who were brought from Malaysia, Indonesia and the rest of Africa leased the houses there. It is the oldest surviving residential neighborhood in Cape Town with a large Muslim population. Although the district is now subject to a high degree of gentrification and private economic intervention, it continues to promote the values and advantages of "communities that are united in diversity". Having been part, although for a short time, of such a community, with all the difficulties that it faces, has shown me the importance of respecting peoples' traditions and cultures at all levels – social, personal, and professional. Being open and receptive to local knowledge is definitely the first condition for conducting any type of comparative analysis.

My overall experience from living in Cape Town and from doing research for two months among true experts in South African local government law at the DOI has made me (re)discover the importance of the concepts of community and resilience. Such concepts place environment and human life in a central position in the design and the performance of local public policies as the only way to assure their social efficacy.

COUNTRY REPORTS

A kaleidoscope of local government practices

In November 2021, LoGov published 16 country reports that present and analyze local government practices to cope with the impact of changing urban-rural relations in the following five key areas: (1) local public services, (2) local finances, (3) local government structure, (4) inter-governmental relations, (5) people's participation. The reports feature 174 local government practices covering all these thematic areas and come from countries on six continents, which ensures a global perspective.

The 16 reports were published on Zenodo, a well-established data repository, in order to be easily findable and accessible. Visitors to our LoGov website can either browse through the single local government practices or download the entire reports. The LoGov H2020 Community that we created on Zenodo enables the free download of additional LoGov materials such as transcripts of interviews and reports about our workshops.

EVENTS

Winter School on Federalism and Governance

COVID-19 may have upset some plans within the project, but the planned Winter School "Federalism and Local Self-Government" was successfully held from 31 January to 13 February 2021. It was the first online Winter School organized by the Institute for Comparative Federalism at Eurac Research, and, on the positive side, exactly this digital format allowed a larger participation than a face-to-face edition. The LoGov Winter School received a high number of applications from around the world, from which 35 participants from 21 countries and five continents were selected, 10 from LoGov partners and 25 from external institutions who got to know the project and have acted as LoGov multipliers within their networks. A total of 28 lecturers,

discussants and moderators guided the participants through the two-week program. These were academics and practitioners, from the LoGov consortium and from external institutions.

The Winter School's participants analyzed, among other things, the status of local governments, both in urban and rural areas, within multilevel systems. They examined the constitutional position and protection of local government and looked at the powers that national and subnational constitutions confer upon local government. Their functioning in local government practice was discussed as well as the changing interplay between urban and rural areas.
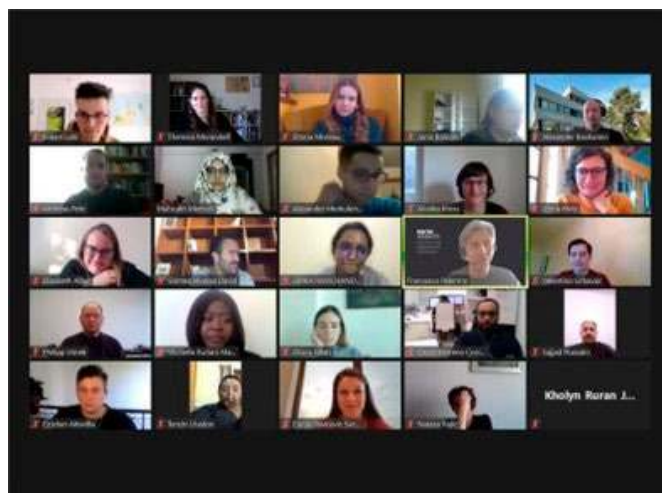
Transferable Skills Workshop

The project's second transferable skills workshop was organized by KDZ as an online event. The two-day training focused on "Open science and research communication" and involved a total of 35 participants from 15 countries.
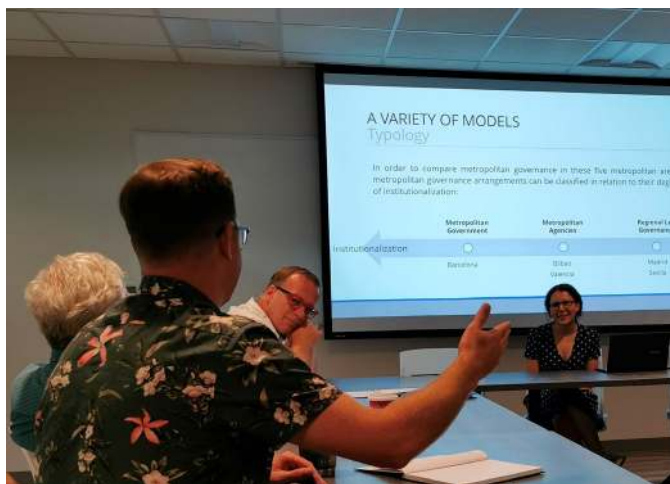

LoGov Café

To reconnect during the pandemic and discuss the further steps of the project, the LoGov Consortium organized a LoGov Café.

Seminars

All LoGov secondees held presentations on local government in their home countries and gained knowledge about their host countries.

Workshops

In workshops, LoGov researchers discussed the local government practices collected in the 16 Country Reports with both academic and non-academic experts who then evaluated the findings.

Publications

Peer-reviewed Academic Articles

WP3: Ayalew, Yilkal (2020). "Trends in Splitting Local Governments in the Ethiopian Federal System: The Case of Amhara National Regional State", *Ethiopian Journal of Federal Studies*, 6(1), 127-149. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7314560

WP1: Kössler, Karl and Kress, Annika (2020). "European Cities between Self-Government and Subordination: Their Role as Policy-Takers and Policy-Makers", *European Yearbook of Constitutional Law 2020: The City in Constitutional Law*, T.M.C. Asser Press, 273-302. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-431-0_13

WP5: Velasco Caballero, Francisco (2020). "Gobiernos locales en Canadá y en España: lejos, pero no tanto", *Revista De Estudios De La Administración Local Y Autonómica*, (13), 22–46. https://doi.org/10.24965/reala.i13.10742

WP2: Velasco Caballero, Francisco (2022). "Despoblación y nivelación financiera municipal en el marco de la Carta Europea de Autonomía Local", *Revista De Estudios De La Administración Local Y Autonómica*, (18), 6–31. https://doi.org/10.24965/reala.11092

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WP4: Wakjira Debela, Ketema (2020). "Local governance in Switzerland: Adequate municipal autonomy cum intergovernmental cooperation?", Cogent Social Sciences, 6:1, 1763889, Taylor&Francis. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1763889

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WP4: Kössler, Karl (2020). "Status of Capital Cities", consultancy report for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, see: https://bia.unibz.it/esploro/outputs/report/The-Status-of-Capital-Cities/991005969751601241?institution=39UBZ_INST

WP1: Kössler, Karl (2021). "Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in major crisis situations", consultancy report for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, see: https://bia.unibz.it/esploro/outputs/report/Ensuring-the-respect-of-the-European/991006160003301241

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Institute of Local Law
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University of Fribourg Institute
of Federalism
Switzerland

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of South East Europe
France

Ximpulse GmbH
Switzerland

KDZ
Center for Public Administration Research
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