

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE (LG-SIG):

IS LOCAL ALWAYS BETTER? – IN SEARCH OF ADEQUATE TERRITORIAL STRUCTURES FOR DECISION MAKING AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Panel Chairs

- Reto Steiner, ZHAW School of Management and Law, CH
- Denita Cepiku, University of Rome Tor Vergata, IT
- Sabine Kuhlmann, University of Potsdam, DE
- Carmen Navarro, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, ES
- Enrico Guarini, University of Milano-Bicocca, IT
- Filippo Giordano, LUMSA, Rome and Bocconi University, IT
- Christopher Tapscott, University of Western Cape - School of Government, ZA

Globally, local authorities are significant players in the provision of public services. In recent decades, decentralization has become an important reform strategy in many countries, usually with the support of international organizations. Traditional arguments suggest that efficiency and quality gains in the provision of public services are achieved through decentralization along with greater expectations for accountability and responsiveness. However, some scholars warn that there are also dangers involved in decentralization. For example, local administrations could be understaffed, financially weak, or might be captured by local political elites, which can potentially lead to poorer public service provision. There is also a risk of differentiation between poorer and richer municipalities.

The aim of this panel is to discuss the extent to which local government might be considered the most suitable tier of government for public service delivery and where the limitations are. Potential topics might include the following:

- What functions should be performed at the local tier of government?
- Do managerial and territorial reforms improve service delivery at the local level?
- How might local governments be better organized in order to provide effective and efficient public services?
- What role should a per capita system play in order to decrease unequal capacities between local governments?
- What are the key elements for effective inter-governmental relations between national, state/provincial, and local governments in order to improve service delivery at the local level?
- Does decentralization lead to a better input legitimacy?
- How can we measure local autonomy?
-

This call for papers invites scholars studying public services provision at the local tier of government to reflect theoretically and share empirical research. We especially welcome papers presenting comparative studies that for example compare local service delivery across different policy fields or tiers of government, organizational contexts or countries.