



# NEWSLETTER

February 2024





## EDITORIAL

# Re-amalgamation and the challenges of decentralized local governance: The case of Delhi

How to effectively and efficiently govern a sprawling metropolitan area which has over 30 million inhabitants and thus a population bigger than many countries? In recent decades, this question has been at the heart of debates and reforms concerning Delhi's local government structure. This structure is affected by administrative divisions which reflect the city's historical, geographical, social, and cultural differences. The multiple levels of government and large population size also have a significant bearing on Delhi's municipal governance. In 2012, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) was trifurcated into three parts, North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC).

This division was justified on grounds of administrative efficiency with each smaller local body managing the heterogeneous distribution of the population. But the administrative expenses sky-rocketed after the division of the MCD. There were three mayors elected by the citizens to act as the legislative heads in addition to twelve municipal commissioners who served as administrative heads and reported to the state government. Moreover, the division gave rise to a multiplication of committees in the three municipal corporations. This institutional complexity has increased the expenses manifold and is one of the major contributors to the financial crisis of the MCDs. Moreover, the trifurcation led to the uneven development of the municipal corporations. The EDMC has experienced cuts in funding, and the properties, which it had been allocated control over for tax revenue collection, are severely low in value compared to those allocated to the SDMC and NDMC. This happened due to the differences in the economic activities in these regions which, in turn, affected the overall functioning of the municipal corporations. Ten years later, in 2022, Delhi's three urban local bodies (ULBs) were re-amalgamated into a single entity of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Financial and administrative constraints were cited as the rationale behind the re-amalgamation. With a population of over 35 million people, MCD has become the second largest municipal body in the world, next to Tokyo. The MCD's re-amalgamation has opened the debate on municipal governance regarding decentralization, functions, and finances. With the constant influx of people migrating to the capital city, local governance in Delhi has become a very urgent issue for India as a whole.

Precisely its status as the capital makes Delhi distinct from the rest of urban India in legal terms too. It is the seat of the central government, which plays a significant role in managing the city's affairs. Thus, three levels of government participate in Delhi's governance: the central government, the government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) and the above-mentioned re-amalgamated Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The geographical jurisdiction of the Delhi government and the MCD is largely coterminous, and their civic functions like health care and education largely overlap.

Since the MCD functions under the so-called "Commissioner System", the Commissioner, a central government appointee, is much better

known and more powerful than the mayor, who is elected from among councillors for a one-year term. By contrast, the commissioner of the MCD, who belongs to the Indian Administrative Service, the highest civil service in the country, is appointed for a fixed tenure of five years. Delhi's current administrative status undoubtedly creates jurisdictional conflicts between the central government and the government of the NCTD as well as all other authorities involved in Delhi's administration. However, the federal government's fundamental authority to administer the city remains within the jurisdiction of the Delhi Police, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), and the MCD's obligation to report to the central government rather than to the NCTD.

Although the MCD can adopt rules and bylaws, these are subject to the central government's approval, which also determines the boundaries of the city wards, committee functions and electoral register rules, etc. Thus, the system appears to be highly centralized and would benefit significantly from decentralization in terms of participatory decision-making and efficient governance.

However, the re-amalgamation of the MCD has defeated the very purpose of decentralization and participatory democracy in local governance. Before the re-amalgamation, the NDMC and the SDMC each had 104 ward councillors, and EDMC had 64. After the re-amalgamation, the single entity MCD has 250 ward councillors. A councillor representing a lesser number of people, or a smaller region, must have meant more accessibility and can thus reap the benefits of decentralization. A smaller entity is likely to have better administrative efficiency and service delivery. It might be true that the re-amalgamation has some potential to improve the fiscal health of the MCD. But in a large, merged unit like the MCD, citizens may find it more difficult to access the government machinery and make their voices heard.

**Asha Sarangi**

**Professor at the Centre for Political Studies,  
Jawaharlal Nehru University**



## Our LoGov 2022/2023 in a nutshell

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secondment months



## From Ethiopia to Switzerland

**Sisay Kinfe Gebrewold**

Center for Federalism and Governance Studies, Addis Ababa University  
Secondee at the Institute of Federalism, Fribourg University, Switzerland

My secondment research visit to the Institute of Federalism at Fribourg University (IFF) gave me the opportunity to network with institute staff, guest researchers and many more. During my stay from May to July 2023, I enjoyed running in the quiet streets of Fribourg at the weekends and buying local fruits and vegetables to incorporate into my diet. My research stay was also a time of reflective and comparative learning, gained not just from scholars and books but also from the environment, system of governance, way of life, and communities there.

My LoGov research project can be categorized under 'Structure of Local Government' (Work Package 3). In my research, I have examined the comparative drivers of local boundary reforms and mergers of local governments surrounding cities. Specifically, in the working paper I wrote during my research stay entitled 'Boundary Demarcation and Amalgamation of Local Governments in Oromia Regional State Surrounding the Federal Capital of Ethiopia', I compared the constitutional status of local governments, and local government boundaries and merger projects around the federal capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa/Finfine, to the federal capital of the Swiss Confederation, the City of Bern. I was surprised by the rationale of the founders of the Swiss

Confederation in choosing the seat of the federal government. I was also surprised by the limited attention given to the seat of the federal government by the people of Switzerland. This is due to the greater value they give to equilibrium at cantonal level and local autonomy. These procedures and processes set to protect municipal autonomy during mergers in the non-centralized Swiss federation is one of the areas where I have drawn a comparative lesson on how democracy and the rule of law operate to protect local autonomy, compared to the situation in the Ethiopian federation.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the IFF staff who gave me lots of support and made my stay memorable and productive and also helped me engage with the wider academic and scholarly world by facilitating discussions/interviews with scholars, encouraging me to participate in online conferences and in-house seminars, and who also reviewed my paper and gave feedback during my in-house seminar. I specifically want to thank Delilah for arranging one on one discussions with researchers and scholars. These discussions helped me to better understand the non-centralized federal urban system, municipal governance, and issues surrounding mergers in the Swiss Confederation.





## From Spain to Northern Macedonia

**Jorge Castillo Abella**

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Instituto de Derecho Local

Secondee at NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe) and ZELS (Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of North Macedonia), Skopje, North Macedonia

I recently had the chance to spend two months in Skopje as a secondee at NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe) and ZELS (Association of the Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of Macedonia), and I can certainly say it was a great opportunity both in academic and in personal terms.

NALAS is a network which comprises local government associations from several countries in southeastern Europe. This means that they represent about 9,000 local authorities from several different countries in the region. ZELS is the association that unites the municipalities of North Macedonia, also a member of NALAS. Although a guest of both institutions, I had the chance to collaborate more intensely with NALAS.

As a member of the LoGov project, my research focuses on Work Package 1, 'Local Responsibilities and Public Services'. The goal of my stay in Skopje was to learn about different local transportation services, how these are provided by local governments and which effects this could have from a rural-urban perspective.

It became quickly evident that in order to carry out this research I first

needed to understand the political configuration of the country, as well as its institutional and local government system. I was instantly surprised by the fact that there is no middle tier of government between the central government and its municipalities. This provides a stark contrast to my home country of Spain, which not only has a regional level of government (the comunidades autónomas), but also has a two-tier system for local governments (municipalities and provinces). Other factors, such as North Macedonia's population, its distribution and relatively small area, are also connected with what its municipalities do and how they do it. While Spain is divided in 8,131 municipalities, North Macedonia only has 80.

Leaving aside intermunicipal transport, the best example of local transportation in North Macedonia is the city of Skopje itself, where buses are the main means of public transport. This is, however, the exception. Most cities in North Macedonia do not have a comprehensive public transportation policy and therefore lack an integrated public transport system. This leads naturally to the predominance of cars as the chosen means of transportation for citizens. While this is





true in areas with no public transport, it also applies in heavily populated areas like Skopje itself, where the public transport system is not extensive or reliable enough to cater to its citizens' needs.

From interviews and contacts during my stay, I gleaned that the supremacy of cars as the main means of transportation has a different effect on both rural and urban areas. In cities, parking areas proliferate, and land planning tends to expand outwards, as residents no longer prefer proximity services and what is perceived as close, is now farther away than it once was. The presence of cars discourages public initiatives for different and more sustainable means of transportation. In rural areas, the absence of public transportation leads to a lack of independence of movement for both elderly and physically disabled people. These groups rely on relatives or friends or opt for leaving an area for another one that has better transportation or closer services.

My stay in Skopje also allowed me to share some experiences with regard to local government in Spain. I was invited to deliver a presentation at NALAS in which members of both the Skopje and Tirana office were present. The seminar focused on the Spanish territorial organization, with a special interest on local governments and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. This led to an interesting exchange and provided some useful insights on how local government associations operate and how this is influenced by the structure and degree of centralization of each country.

All in all, I had a very satisfactory and instructive stay in Skopje and can only recommend it as a destination for other LoGov researchers. I am very grateful to NALAS, ZELS and the LoGov project for making my stay possible.





## From Argentina to Germany

### Nayet Kademián

Universidad Nacional de General San Martín, Argentina  
Seconded at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München,  
Institute of Politics and Public Law, Germany

During the months of July and August 2023, I had the privilege of being a secondee at LMU Munich in Germany. As a political science PhD student from Argentina, this marked my first-ever visit to Germany and presented an exciting opportunity to connect with researchers who were delving into subjects similar to my own, promising both personal and academic growth.

Upon my arrival, the fact that I did not speak the local language in a culture so different from my own made me a little nervous. However, my fears dissipated when I had the pleasure of meeting the entire team at LMU's Institute of Politics and Public Law. Their warmth, charm, and hospitality made my experience unforgettable. While my stay at LMU was fantastic, instead of merely describing my experience, I would like to share some of the things I learned in Bavaria.

First and foremost, Germany and Argentina are both federal states. Even though German institutions are stronger and perform better than those in Argentina, federalism seems to have its complexities in every part of the world. Subnational and local governments face numerous challenges. The disparities between subnational states regarding economic growth, access to education, healthcare, living conditions, income, and wealth inequality, among others, are not just present in Argentina but also in Germany. Learning about federalism in other countries is nourishing for academic research as it provides us with new insights and different perspectives. I am truly thankful to Lisa Hagen, a research assistant at LMU, who gave a delightful presentation on local governments in Germany.

Secondly, I learned that as researchers, our theories need to go beyond our case studies; they need to 'fly.' In Argentina, I am part of a research team that studies income inequality in subnational states. Specifically, for my thesis, I am exploring the impact of social movements on subnational income inequality in Argentine provinces. When I introduced my project to my colleagues at LMU, they mostly asked two questions: "What do you mean by 'subnational inequality?'" and "What are social movements?" This made me realize that I needed to work more on the conceptualization and theorization aspects of my projects so that it not only deals with the Argentine cases but can also engage in discussions with studies on inequality in other federal states, beyond my country.

Furthermore, I noticed that in Germany, academic research in the social sciences has a unique relationship with public policy design, something that seemed distinct from my experiences in Argentina. The German system displayed a remarkable connection between research and politics, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application. I believe this matters because, behind research papers and statistics, there are real people with real lives facing real problems. Personally, I believe that research is only useful when connected to policy, when it can help improve the living conditions of our populations.

All in all, I am truly grateful for this experience, which would not have been possible without the support of my advisors and the extraordinary team that welcomed me at LMU. To all of you thinking of doing a secondment, here is my advice: go for it!





## EVENTS

### LoGov Mid-term Conference: Comparing how local governments cope with changing urban-rural relations

The LoGov midterm conference “LoGov – Local Government and the Changing Urban-Rural Interplay” occurred on 13 and 14 October 2022 and was hosted by the LoGov partner LMU, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany. At this event, the project partners presented preliminary comparative findings and exchanged expertise. There was a total of 107 participants, including 43 from beyond the LoGov consortium itself. The conference benefited from the active involvement of participants from as many as 25 countries alongside the 34 experts from non-academic sectors who contributed

their advice as practitioners. Thus, scholars and professionals from diverse backgrounds shared research findings, insights, and experiences, fostering a rich exchange of knowledge.

Beyond its role in scholarly exchange, the conference was pivotal for project stakeholders to collectively assess the LoGov project's progress, and plan future steps. It provided a valuable opportunity for strategic discussions, reinforcing the collaborative spirit of the LoGov network and shaping the trajectory of the project.







## Transferable skills workshop: From research to policy and practice - How to make legal and social science research more effective

The project's third transferable skills workshop focused on how legal and social science research can be made more relevant to policy-making, particularly in local government. Entitled 'From Research to Policy', the virtual event was organized and facilitated by Ximpulse Ltd. With 40 participants from 10 different countries, the topic of the workshop attracted great interest.

Legal and social science research is often designed – and publicly funded – with the expectation that its findings can be used by decision-makers to improve policymaking. However, in reality, scientific analysis is often not the most important aspect decision-makers consider. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the complex relationship between research and policymaking, and to identify ways in which research can be made more effective for policy and practice in local governments.

Dr. Jürg Wichtermann, Director of the Association of Bernese Municipalities in Switzerland, opened the discussion from the perspective of a policymaker, followed by Prof. Zemelak Ayele from Addis Ababa University, who focused on the perspective of a researcher. Political decision-makers may not always align with research findings due to divergent agendas and perceptions of relevance. The challenge lies in translating complex research into practical actions that fit policymakers' expectations for clear answers. The risk of misinterpretation and manipulation of research findings is significant, yet examples, such as Ethiopia's experience, demonstrate the potential for academ-

ic research to enhance political debates and governance reforms. However, bridging the gap between researchers and decision-makers remains a hurdle, as they often operate in different linguistic and conceptual realms, hindering effective communication.

During the panel discussion, the two experts, together with Prof. Jaap de Visser from the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, talked about possible ways to reconcile policy expectations with research concerns. The three main outcomes can be summarized as follows:

- Promoting exchange and communication between researchers and (local) policymakers is key to understanding existing research needs and policy processes to design appropriate research questions, hypotheses, and methodologies.
- Research institutions should build their credibility and reputation in the eyes of policymakers by consistently producing good quality research, focusing besides basic research, on issues that are perceived more immediately as practically useful.
- Research should be conducted following a transparent methodology that is understandable for stakeholders, and findings must be communicated in a language that is simple and appropriate for the target audience.





## Seminars

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





## Publications

### Peer-reviewed Academic Articles

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](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-431-0_13)

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>

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>

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>

### Blog pieces

WP1: Chonco, Thabile, Del Tredici, Romina, & González, Lucas (2023). "The Challenge of Regional Inequalities in Argentina and South Africa", *Eureka! Blog*, 21 March 2023, <https://doi.org/10.57708/B146817616>

WP1: Gutzke, Amanda (2023). "Biking in Bolzano/Bozen, Italy versus London, Ontario", *Eureka! Blog*, 21 November 2023, <https://doi.org/10.57708/bzvtutbo2txkrtaitofy2og>

WP1: Kademián, Nayet (2023). "Income inequality in the Argentine provinces", *Eureka! Blog*, 28 November 2023, [https://doi.org/10.57708/bdwivmr\\_kqlyhasibk8jgsg](https://doi.org/10.57708/bdwivmr_kqlyhasibk8jgsg)

WP1: Möhle, Elisabeth (2022). "Local Government Cooperation against Climate Change in Argentina", *Eureka! Blog*, 24 August 2022, <https://doi.org/10.57708/b123843004>

WP1: Nischwitz, Malin (2023). "Climate Action Funding in Germany and Canada: Same Goal, Different (Financial) Approaches", *Eureka! Blog*, 11 April 2023, <https://doi.org/10.57708/b148031842>

WP2: Calzola, Sofia, & Prorok, Thomas (2023). "Structure of Local Revenues: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Austria", *Eureka! Blog*, 12 September 2023, <https://doi.org/10.57708/b168324669>

WP2: Martínez Sánchez, César (2020). "Regla de gasto, superávit y remanente: nocio, nes básicas", *IDL-UAM Blog*, 23 September 2020, <https://www.idluam.org/blog/regla-de-gasto-superavit-y-remanente-nociones-basicas/>

WP2: Velasco Caballero, Francisco (2019). "The Spanish Local Financing Scheme and the Rural-Urban Interplay: Do State Transfers Produce Balancing Effects?", *IDL-UAM Blog*, 21 May 2019, <https://www.idluam.org/blog/the-spanish-local-financing-scheme-and-the-rural-urban-interplay-do-state-transfers-produce-balancing-effects/>

WP2: Velasco Caballero, Francisco (2019). "Equalizing the income of urban and rural municipalities: a comparison between Spain and Canada (Ontario)", *IDL-UAM Blog*, 31 July 2019, <https://www.idluam.org/blog/equalizing-the-income-of-urban-and-rural-municipalities-a-comparison-between-spain-and-canada-ontario/>

WP3: Chonco, Thabile (2023). "Metropolitan Governments Set Sight for Additional Powers and Functions, but Can They?", *Eureka! Blog*, 18 October 2022, <https://doi.org/10.57708/b123842773>

WP4: Navarro, Carmen (2023). "Cuando la inestabilidad de los gobiernos de de coalición es un problema. La realidad sudafricana", *IDL-UAM Blog*, 30 November 2023, <https://www.idluam.org/blog/cuando-la-inestabilidad-de-los-gobiernos-de-coalicion-es-un-problema-la-realidad-sudafricana/>

WP4: Navarro, Carmen (2023). "The Spanish local government system: A model designed for stability", *Local Government Bulletin*, December 2023, <https://dullahomarinate.org.za/multilevel-govt/local-government-bulletin/archives/volume-18-issue-4-november-december-2023/the-spanish-local-government-system-a-model-designed-for-stability>

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>

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>

WP5: Richardier, Verena (2023). "Environmental Conflicts – policies without means? Studying a local environmental conflict near Nantes, France", *Eureka! Blog*, 19 December 2023, <https://doi.org/10.57708/bYRBuiKIESeCiM2qRByx6IA>

WP5: Schläppi, Erika (2023). "Citizen Participation: Reflecting on Spanish and Swiss Practice", *Eureka! Blog*, 25 October 2022, <https://doi.org/10.57708/b123843693>

WP5: Trettel, Martina (2023). "The Rise and Spread of Participatory Budgeting in European Cities", *Eureka! Blog*, 18 April 2022, <https://doi.org/10.57708/b148236308>



## Consultancy Reports

*WP1*: Kössler, Karl (2020). “Developing Urban-rural Interplay”, consultancy report for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, see: [https://bia.unibz.it/esploro/outputs/report/Developing-Urban-Rural-Interplay/991005969451501241?institution=39UBZ\\_INST](https://bia.unibz.it/esploro/outputs/report/Developing-Urban-Rural-Interplay/991005969451501241?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>

*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](https://bia.unibz.it/esploro/outputs/report/The-Status-of-Capital-Cities/991005969751601241?institution=39UBZ_INST)

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## Partners



Eurac Research  
Institute for Comparative Federalism  
Italy



LMU Munich  
Research Center for Public Procurement  
Law and Administrative Cooperations  
Germany



Autonomous University of Madrid  
Institute of Local Law  
Spain



Institut für Föderalismus  
Institut du Fédéralisme  
Institute of Federalism

University of Fribourg Institute  
of Federalism  
Switzerland



NALAS  
Network of Associations of Local Authorities  
of South East Europe  
France



Ximpulse GmbH  
Switzerland



KDZ  
Center for Public Administration Research  
Austria



Council of Europe  
Congress of Local and Regional  
Authorities France



University of Warsaw Institute  
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ZELS  
Association of the Units of Local  
Self-Government North Macedonia



University of the Western Cape  
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SALGA  
South African Local Government Association  
South Africa



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for Asian Legal Studies  
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Law Singapore



University of Western Ontario  
Centre for Urban Policy and Local Governance  
Canada



## Website

<http://www.logov-rise.eu/>

## X

@LoGov\_RISE

## Email address

[logov@eurac.edu](mailto:logov@eurac.edu)

## Contacts

Local Government and the Changing  
Urban-Rural Interplay  
Eurac Research  
Institute for Comparative Federalism  
Viale Druso/Drususallee 1  
39100 Bolzano/Bozen  
Italy



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