

## Track 6 - GOVERNANCE (A) - 6.2 Democratic participation and political institutions

14:00 - 15:30 Thursday, 18th June, 2026

Venue Cotonificio

Available session tracks TRACK 06 – GOVERNANCE

Chairs Valeria Fedeli, Francesca Gelli, Karsten Zimmermann

### 6.2 Democratic participation and political institutions

Room A1

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## 18 Pragmatism versus principle: central-local relations in the governance of Australian urban planning

Paul Burton

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### Category

Paper Abstract

### Abstract

For almost a century, community engagement and public participation have been seen as essential features of good planning (Rydin, 1999). In contrast to top-down, technocratic approaches, more bottom-up and participatory approaches are believed to maximise the chances that new developments more accurately reflect the needs and preferences of local residents and command a greater degree of legitimacy or social licence. However, the housing crisis affecting so many contemporary cities is exposing increasing concerns about the ability of long-standing residents to resist any change in their neighbourhood or suburb. The growing inter-generational dimension to these concerns is manifest at both local and national levels and influences urban and planning policy debates at these levels.

This presentation draws on long-running research on planning and urban governance in Australia to analyse a variety of current policy initiatives, introduced predominantly by State governments, to limit the capacity of local governments to resist the imposition of housing targets and associated changes to the built environment. While these are typically presented as necessary and pragmatic responses to a significant housing crisis, they often run counter to more ideological commitments to the devolution of power to local governments and support for greater public participation in planning (Lane, 2005).

Case studies of planning for Brisbane to host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Foth and Burton, forthcoming), the use of Ministerial Call-In powers, and the designation of Priority Development Areas are used to explore how the state (in this case also the State) attempts to manage the contradictory expectations of developing positive practical interventions while espousing democratic principles and commitment to localism.

### Keywords

Pragmatism Principles Planning

### Track

TRACK 06 – GOVERNANCE

## 178 Collaborative governance at the local level: How politicians engage in wicked problems of constructing local agenda

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## Category

Paper Abstract

## Abstract

Our paper deals with Collaborative Governance (CG) and several of its potential drivers in the context of Lithuanian local governance. We argue that CG may contribute to solving wicked problems in local governance and that it may be better explained by variables such as local actors' involvement and the better setting of local agenda goals. Our study examines the relationship between paper argues that collaborative governance could be a useful tool for transforming the approach to public service delivery from a government-centric model to a multi-actor/ multi-stakeholder and community-centric model. We develop the idea that collaborative governance may serve as a useful vehicle for addressing such problems and use the Lithuanian case, with original survey data, to explain the difficulties and challenges on the road to such progress. We use the Lithuanian case to explain difficulties and challenges on the road to such progress. We test our hypotheses using quantitative data from the online "Lithuanian Councilors" survey implemented in February-March 2024. The survey is a part of the comparative European project on "Local Councilors: in Europe II". Based on a thorough theoretical review, we develop a model and a set of testable hypotheses highlighting local councils' role in this process. The model is tested using the SEM (structural equation modeling) approach. The findings generally support the model and imply that (1) local agenda goal-setting by politicians leads to more substantial collaborative governance and increased reliance on local actors' contributions, and (2) their involvement is also crucial for such collaboration activities. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed, and suggestions are made for further examination of politicians' roles in local governance in wicked problem-solving. The findings generally support the model on collaborative governance capacities by local councilors and imply that (1) local agenda goal setting by local politicians leads to more substantial collaborative governance in wicked problem solving and increased reliance on local actors' contributions, and (2) their involvement is also crucial for such collaboration activities. Collaborative governance can help align interests and foster solutions that resonate with the broader community and reflect the institutional self-governance arrangements.

## Keywords

Collaborative governance, municipalities, local councilors

## Track

TRACK 06 – GOVERNANCE

## 41 Council Scrutiny and its Personal Rewards. A Structural Analysis of Councillors' Institutional Influence and Role Satisfaction in 28 European Countries

Tom Verhelst<sup>1</sup>, Jakub Lysek<sup>2</sup>

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## Category

Paper Abstract

## Abstract

Council scrutiny is a key function of the local government's legislative branch. It acts as a conduit for accountability at the systemic level, ensuring local government operates constitutionally and democratically, and improving its ability to learn (Bovens et al., 2008). To achieve this, councillors must be willing and able to dedicate their attention to this legislature's vital task. While ability mainly relates to personal skills and institutional support, councillors' willingness is often influenced by the impact of previous scrutiny efforts and the personal rewards they obtain. Indeed, these factors may create a feedback loop, which strengthens future incentives to oversee the government (Rockman, 1984). However, theoretical views on the rewards of council scrutiny vary, and empirical

Conversely, others suggest that scrutiny can have positive effects on the councillors' institutional influence, reputation, and personal gratification (Verhelst & Peters, 2024).

This paper examines whether council scrutiny genuinely fosters institutional influence and role satisfaction, identifies the factors that mediate this effect, and asserts whether the model varies across different types of scrutiny. To achieve this, we utilise a dataset comprising survey responses from approximately 30,000 councillors across 28 European countries, collected by a comparative European research project (Heinelt et al., forthcoming). We define council scrutiny as councillors' self-reported contributions to overseeing the executive, municipal policies, budgets, service delivery, inter-municipal cooperation, and services provided by municipal agencies and external actors. The mediating factors reflect the political contexts in which councillors operate, including political positions (majority or opposition; party group leader or backbencher), the government's political culture (trust in the government, information received), the council's institutional strength (both formal and informal), and the municipal context (local government type, population size, council size). We will employ a structural modelling approach to analyse the direct, moderated, and mediated relationships among these variables. The findings will offer new insights into how the scrutiny function affects key actors in local democracy and reveal how the system's formal and informal practices shape this process.

## Keywords

Council scrutiny – Institutional influence – Role satisfaction – Local councillors – Europe

## Track

TRACK 06 – GOVERNANCE

TRACK 07 – KNOWLEDGE INTERSECTIONS

## 332 Balancing input and output: Democratic participation in radical urban development projects

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Nord University

## Category

Paper Abstract

## Abstract

In many European countries, urban planning has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, shifting from a hierarchical mode of governance toward more hybrid forms that combine market-oriented and network-driven approaches. This shift has elevated the role of private actors, whose financial resources have become essential for implementing urban development projects. While market-oriented governance does not necessarily produce negative outcomes, it introduces challenges for municipalities seeking to maintain long-term strategic coherence, as market actors often prioritize micro- and meso-level developments over the macro-level perspective which is required for sustainable urban growth.

Input-based participation is important in urban development to ensure knowledge, engagement and ownership of citizens. However, too much input could threaten local governments' ability to ensure long-term perspectives. In this paper, my aim is to explore the balance between input- and output-based arenas for participation, asking *what kinds of democratic arrangements are in play in radical urban development projects, and how do these arrangements impact the legitimacy of planning decisions?* I analyze three cases of urban development catalyzed by a critical juncture. These led to various participation arrangements, examined through a theoretical lens comprised of interactive governance/representative democracy and input/output-based participation. The analysis demonstrates that the theoretical suggestion of stakeholder participation at both the input and output ends of a policy process can also be found in the empirical world. Moreover, there is a trade-off between legitimacy generated at the input-side (through democratic participation), and legitimacy from the output-side (generated from successful problem-solving or effective service delivery).

## Keywords

Co-creation; Co-production, Participation, Representative democracy, Urban governance

## 91 Empowering the Silent: Institutional Designs for Translating Latent Political Preferences

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### Category

Paper Abstract

### Abstract

This paper emphasises the overlooked role of *loners*, individuals who oppose government positions but refrain from public participation due to social pressures, political risks, or personal constraints. Derived from game theory, an institution design is proposed to enable silent or risk-averse individuals to translate latent preferences into concrete political effects.

Drawing on a comparative study of the 2019–2020 Hong Kong Anti-Extradition Bill Movement and Taiwan’s 2025 Anti-Recall Campaign, although surveys show that in both Hong Kong and Taiwan over 60% of the public opposed the government’s position (Lai and Sing, 2020; TPOF, 2025), the outcomes diverged sharply: Hong Kong’s Anti-Extradition movement failed whereas Taiwan’s Anti-Recall campaign succeeded. The key distinction lies in the institutional structures that govern political decision-making. First, Hong Kong lacks a tradition of referendums for resolving major social controversies whereas Taiwan has institutionalised mechanisms for issue-based voting, meaning that opposites in Hong Kong can only be expressed by demonstrations or protests which require visible participation and thus tended to be avoided by loners; while voting in Taiwan is anonymous and demands minimal effort from loners. Second, Hong Kong has no turnout or vote-share thresholds for all elections, i.e., the electoral invalidation thresholds, while Taiwan imposes clear legal requirements: a 25% participation threshold for referendums to be deemed valid (MOJ, 2025). In this case, loners’ preferences can be expressed through abstention, thereby effectively influencing outcomes by rendering elections invalid.

This paper proposes a reconfiguration of political institutions to enhance the influence of politically passive individuals. Given that loners exhibit low intrinsic motivation for public political expression, institutional mechanisms, such as electoral invalidation thresholds, can ensure that their latent preferences are effectively translated into collective outcomes. Through case studies and a proposed quantification model, the paper analyses electoral outcomes and the proportion of loners in selected regions’ polities; and devises an optimal invalidation thresholds tailored to the prevalence of political disengagement.

Beyond politics, this logic can extend to various social contexts where individuals hesitate to voice dissent publicly. Such institutional design can allow their views to be captured and generate more accurate representations of collective preference.

### Keywords

Electoral Thresholds, Institutional Design, Latent Preferences

### Track

TRACK 01 – INEQUALITIES  
TRACK 06 – GOVERNANCE