



Local Government in Argentina

Responses to Urban-Rural Challenges

edited by

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The H2020-MSCA-RISE-2018 project aims to provide solutions for local governments that address the fundamental challenges resulting from urbanisation. To address these complex issues, 18 partners from 17 countries and six continents share their expertise and knowledge in the realms of public law, political science, and public administration. LoGov identifies, evaluates, compares, and shares innovative practices that cope with the impact of changing urban-rural relations in major local government areas (WP 1-5).

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Intergovernmental Relations of Local Governments



5.1. Intergovernmental Relations of Local Governments in Argentina: An Introduction

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While the federal government in Argentina has exclusive responsibility for foreign policy, economic regulations, and defense, there are shared powers with the province in the areas of justice, health, education, and social security. Each provincial constitution defines the scope and contents of the responsibilities shared with the federal government, as well as the organization and powers of its local governments.

This legal framework balances the autonomy of subnational units and self-rule of these units with the principles of shared government between them and the central state. In other words, both levels share the capacity for decision-making without consultation with the other level, in an attempt to combine the self-government of regional and/or minority interests, with the government of common national interests. The same dynamic occurs, although with a lower degree of autonomy, between provincial and local governments.

The specific processes, mechanisms, and institutions through which the constitution is put into practice in the interaction between levels of government depend on a multiplicity of political and socioeconomic conditions, including historical tensions and informal traditions. Both formal and informal dynamics regulate federal supervision and intergovernmental cooperation. Communication and coordination among the different levels of government take place in some formal arenas (such as the federal councils for fiscal, education, health issues), and through the federation of municipal authorities, but in many instances they depend on partisan as well as personal or informal relationships.

The decentralization processes and the growing relevance of local identities and interests have placed local politics at the center of federal politics in Argentina, demanding better intergovernmental coordination.

Specifically, in relation to the management of natural resources, the national Constitution in Argentina establishes that the provinces are sovereign over the resources found in their territory. Thus, although the federal government has competence in environmental matters, for example, in relation to the protection of forests and glaciers, decisions about the exploitation of mineral resources depend on the provincial level of government.

In this scenario, local governments have traditionally been little more than recipients and executors of provincial level policies. However, the tendency of recent decades to promote large-scale mining has turned their role into a more complex one. Citizens under their jurisdiction are the ones that will be affected by the potential negative impacts of the activity. Hence, the political alignment or opposition between local and provincial governments is an



important factor affecting the degree of organization and mobilization of populations that resist or oppose mining and the implementation of provincial policy in that matter.



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