



LOCAL POLITICS & CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION

09 – 22 October 2021

Online Version

Abstract

“All politics is local” is a well-known phrase and with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen how important it is that citizens are active in order to protect and promote their community's interests. How we participate in local decision-making may be changing but our participation as active citizens' is key for liberals. Stressing the importance of local politics is a key part of liberal values, starting off from the individual, who should be instrumental in all decisions that affect their life. Looking for solutions at the local level, involving responsible individuals and making use of decentralised local competences and knowledge are important principles to get local government politics close to citizens, encourage their participation, communicate with them more effectively and make government more efficient.

However, we know that local politicians around the world are facing many challenges to implement such principles due to administrative, legal, financial, political and practical problems. The world is changing rapidly and how we govern at local level needs to consider topics such as building the resilience of communities and our environment, digitisation and smart cities, enhancing our local market economies and finding liberal local solutions to social and welfare needs of our citizens in our communities.

Communication methods have also become diverse, and the digital space is now an important platform for citizens to actively communicate with each other and their local authorities. Digital communication methods such as the cellphone have made communication much easier across the world, but at times more challenging for effective engagement.

The seminar will cover ideas on a necessary framework for an effective local government sector. We will also discuss practical concepts on how to work successfully at a local level in given situations with numerous limitations beyond the decision-making power of councillors and mayors.

The seminar will focus on:

Local government politics and liberalism

- Why are local self-administration, subsidiarity, decentralisation and participation key liberal concepts? Why is local government such an important sphere of government, particularly to liberals?
- How can we implement these concepts? Which frameworks are necessary? (legal, financial etc.)

- Analysis of our own countries: the legal environment and the autonomy of local government to make its own decisions.
- How do we develop, protect and grow local government autonomy?
- Is local government politics 'non-ideological'? Is there a specific liberal approach?
- Where are achievements / best practice examples and deficits / needs in our countries?

Reform ideas for local government

- How to create a citizen oriented, efficient, democratic and responsible (non-corrupt) local administration? What are our priorities as liberal politicians?
- How do we build resilience into all of our decision-making?
- How do we use technology (such as e-government and smart cities) to improve the environment for our citizens and reduce inequalities?

Participation as an element of good governance on local level

- Formal and informal means of citizens' participation; participation in the digital age
- Information rights, initiative rights and decision rights
- How can we enhance citizens' engagement in local politics?
- Where are achievements / best practice examples and deficits / needs in our countries?
- What should be the role of civil society and their institutions such as NGOs and citizens groups?

The importance of effective communication – listening, engaging and communicating

- How do we use media to communicate with our residents – what are the most effective ways of communicating with our residents as a local government but also as individual liberal politicians, activists and NGOs?
- The importance of listening and understanding in effective communication

Local politics, political parties and civil society

- How can we use participation and citizen orientation as instruments to increase political success? What does this mean for structures and strategies of political parties? Local government level as a particular chance for opposition parties to change voting patterns
- How can we make a difference for our residents? Creating 'centres of excellence' despite difficult framework conditions and building momentum in voters' minds about what we can do for their daily well-being.
- Where are achievements / best practice examples and deficits / needs in our countries.

During this seminar, we will:

- Gather a group of like-minded peers who will actively build relationships with one another, and share experiences of local government and how we can encourage active citizenry and strong local governments in our own contexts;
- Engage with other leaders with experiences that we can learn from;
- Explore ways that you can build communities of support around yourself and expand your influence;
- Develop the skills needed to be an impactful leader;
- Reflect on the state of local politics in the world, and ways you would like to contribute after the seminar through some agreed personalised steps.

Methodologies and Format

In this online seminar, we are going to focus on the above-mentioned issues and look for answers involving the views and experiences of all our participants as well as external contributors. This seminar is a highly interactive experience, and not a series of online lectures. Participants will be required to engage actively,

utilising digital platforms. We will use participant-oriented methods to cover the subjects of the seminar. This will include working groups, simulation exercises and practical individual work.

Some sessions will have the entire group of participants gather, while at other times we will break into smaller groups. There will also be readings, 1-on-1 meetings with the facilitators and support team.

We would like to encourage you to find a quiet place where you can meet us online via laptop/desktop as you will experience many of the exercises better on a desktop/laptop. Meaningful participation is only possible if you have a good screen and keyboard. Full participation is respectful to your fellow participants.

Target Audience

- Active liberal local government politicians like councillors, mayors or representatives of local party branches
- Representatives of liberal NGOs and citizen groups who focus in particular on the local level
- Politicians or individuals involved with issues of local government
- Functionaries of liberal political parties who are involved in training of local politicians or consolidating party structures at the local level

The online seminar will be conducted in English. Full participation is required in order to receive a certificate of participation.

Structure

This programme is a live, online workshop on Zoom. We will also use some other online platforms but this will be communicated during the introductory meeting.

There will be an introductory meeting a few days before the start of the seminar to familiarise everyone with the various platforms, details will be provided.

We will provide programme details for the seminar to registered participants.

Participants will be required to allocate approximately 2,5 hours every day of the seminar at an agreed time to meeting and some additional time for self-work and working group tasks.

Facilitators



Petra Franke

Petra Franke became involved with politics at the early age of 15. Over twenty years of political commitment in different positions at the local and regional level give her a profound practical experience. By profession, she is a political scientist and facilitator; her areas of work are liberal values, policy development, strategic planning and campaigning. She currently works for the parliamentary group of the FDP in the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia as a Strategic Consultant.



Kylie Hatton

Kylie Hatton is Director for Communication & Marketing at the University of Cape Town, the top university in Africa. She has deep experience in all forms of communication, especially online communication platforms. Due to the environments that she has worked in she has particular experience in crisis communication. Prior to joining UCT she worked for the City of Cape Town, one of South Africa's largest and leading municipalities, as the Manager: Media. Kylie was responsible for the oversight of all of the City's media engagement and relationships. She served 6 Mayors during her time at the City. She has also worked for the international non-government sector as well as South Africa's Parliament. She facilitates seminars and workshops on topics such as media and social media, communication, local government, strategic planning and public transport.

The Foundation

We, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, promote individual liberty, free and open societies and free markets in Germany and throughout the world. To us freedom is the guiding principle in policy making. We believe that free and open societies are the only societies that allow human beings to decide for themselves what is best, to develop their full potential and to pursue their dreams. This is what we mean when we claim to value human dignity. And it is freedom that produces prosperity. Together with our counterparts – who all share a similar set of values – we support initiatives in Germany and abroad that serve to enhance respect for the rule of law, private property and human rights, that foster tolerance and that strengthen economic freedom rights and democracy.

The programmes of the Foundation's International Academy for Leadership (IAF) form an integral part of our international work and offer Liberals from all parts of the world opportunities to engage in dialogue, an exchange of ideas, networking and mutual cooperation. We aim to inspire.

Venue: Online

Language: English

Registration: 10 September 2021

Registration fee: 0,00 €

