Good local governance reflects the dual functions of local government. On the one hand, democratic regimes gain input legitimacy by responsiveness and by being inclusive towards the preferences of their citizens. On the other hand, they achieve output legitimacy by effectively delivering public goods and services. Their governance strategies follow three major paths – decentralisation, political administrative reforms and participatory reforms. But national contexts, actors, political culture and path dependency matter a lot. In this book continent-wide developments are compared by using relevant country studies. This comparative approach focuses on developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, comparing and contrasting their experience with that of European countries.

Local independent lists are a general phenomenon on the local level in many European countries - in established Western countries as well as in new democracies in Middle and Eastern Europe. The research is linked to the much-discussed phenomenon of the growing disenchantment with political parties and the sceptical evaluation of political parties on the local level. Typically, these lists understand themselves as non-parties or anti-parties and therefore assume a contra position in the local party system. The edited book aims first at developing a theoretical and conceptual framework for these non-partisan lists. Second, the contributions describe and analyse for the first time comparatively presence, success, organisational structure, behaviour and performance of these local actors in twelve West and East European countries.

With this book we aim at describing and analysing the selection, daily life, networks and values of local top political leaders in seventeen European countries. The empirical nourishment to the investigation into town halls across Europe is a survey conducted in 2003 with mayors and corresponding top local political leaders. The data covering responses from 2700 leaders is a unique and rich material allowing descriptions and analyses pursuing a number of lines of inquiry.

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