

Letter from the SICA Chair

Dear readers, I am excited to bring you our first special issue on Latin America! When we sent the call out, we received an overwhelming response resulting in volume 4 with eleven papers comprising two reflections, six research ideas, two policy briefs, and a paper on practitioner perspective.

The reflection article by Ricardo A. Bello-Gomez provides an excellent review of the rise of neoliberalism in Latin America. It makes a case for studying sub-national governments in Latin America. Most of the articles in this issue focus on COVID and its response in the region. The second reflection piece by Gabriel S. Rojas Salazar emphasizes the importance of transparency in policymaking and its impact on trust among citizens. The author uses examples from Mexico and Brazil to shed light on the challenges of crisis management during the pandemic.

The pandemic revealed major cleavages and inequities that exist across societies. Felipe Blanco provides excellent ideas to address the ethno-racial inequities in Latin American countries. In keeping with this theme, José César Romero Galván examined the vaccine distribution by the Armed forces in Mexico and Argentina, raising questions about the militarization of public administration. Sanchez and Medina utilized the tragedy of the commons argument to compare public policies adopted by different countries in combatting the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, remote work was widely used across the globe. Using the Peruvian National Civil Service Authority (SERVIR) data, Braga focused on Peru's efforts to address the new reality in the workplace. To address the wicked nature of the problems that arose due to the pandemic, authors Heidi Jane M. Smith and José Armando Perusquia Lara argue for

employing methodological localism as a framework to study how local governments responded to the crisis. Given the challenges with federalism in Mexico, the authors suggest ways to improve administrative capacity at the local level. Samanta Varela Castro offers similar arguments to strengthen the governance capacity in her article titled: Soft Regulation and Meta-Organizations Research are Needed to Understand Global Governance. The author attempts to identify a list of variables and mechanisms for better governance during a crisis of this magnitude. The ideas presented in this section serve as excellent avenues for future researchers.

The two policy briefs by Guillermo M. Cejudo & Pablo de los Cobos Alcala and Everardo Chiapa Aguillón provide examples of social protections like the cash transfer programs (CTPs) that temporarily compensated for the loss of income in Latin America and the Caribbean and the implementation of No Driving Day during the pandemic. The practitioner's perspective co-authored by Alejandra Rodas-Gaiter, Daniela Reina, and Óscar Escobar provides the readers with an example of how a medium-sized city in Colombia successfully responded to the pandemic.

I welcome you all to read this excellent collection of research articles on Latin America that will help expand our understanding of comparative public administration. We are so excited to bring this issue to you! This would not be possible without the leadership of Dr. Cristina Stanica, Editor of the *Occasional Paper Series* (OPS), and the guest editor, Manlio Castillo. We thank the reviewers for their thoughtful feedback that helped improve the papers. For the benefit of our readers, this issue is also translated into Spanish.

Thanks to the hard work of Manlio and Shahrin Upoma, SICA Secretary. We hope you will share this research widely across your networks.

Finally, I would like to mention that the *Series* is being released regularly and not *occasionally*, and we'd like this to be reflected in the name. We thank all the members who voted and provided suggestions for a new name we will announce before the next issue's release.

I hope everyone is staying safe and healthy!

--Meghna Sabharwal, Ph.D., SICA Chair and Professor, The University of Texas at Dallas