

# GOVERNANCE QUALITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL MEANING & MEASUREMENT

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# GOVERNANCE QUALITY

MEANING

MEASUREMENT

# What is 'good' governance?

Is it about  
**PROCESS?**

Decision-making and  
policy implementation

Is it about  
**OUTPUTS?**

Policy enactments: rules,  
regulations, and institutions

Is it about  
**OUTCOMES?**

Substantive social, economic,  
and environmental impacts

## Dimensions of governance quality:

Inclusivity / participation  
Accountability  
Impartiality  
Competence  
Learning capacity  
Timeliness

Productivity / efficiency  
Proportionality  
Coherence  
Adaptability

Socio-economic inequality  
Economic growth  
Pollution  
Public health outcomes  
Quality of life

## Home domain and scale:

Planning, Public Admin  
(Government institutions)

Public Admin, Public Policy  
(Bureaucracy)

International Development  
(Nation-state)

# What is 'good' governance?

## PROCESS

Decision-making and policy implementation

## OUTPUTS

Policy enactments: rules, regulations, and institutions

## OUTCOMES

Substantive social, economic, and environmental impacts

### Causal arguments:

'Good' processes *necessarily* produce 'good' outputs and outcomes

'Good' outputs *necessarily* produce 'good' outcomes

'Good' outcomes are an *indicator* of 'good' governance

### Questions:

What determines 'good' process: **institutions** or **norms**?

Is there a tradeoff between inclusivity & accountability *and* innovation & timeliness?

Is **democracy** at odds with **efficiency** and policy **coherence**?

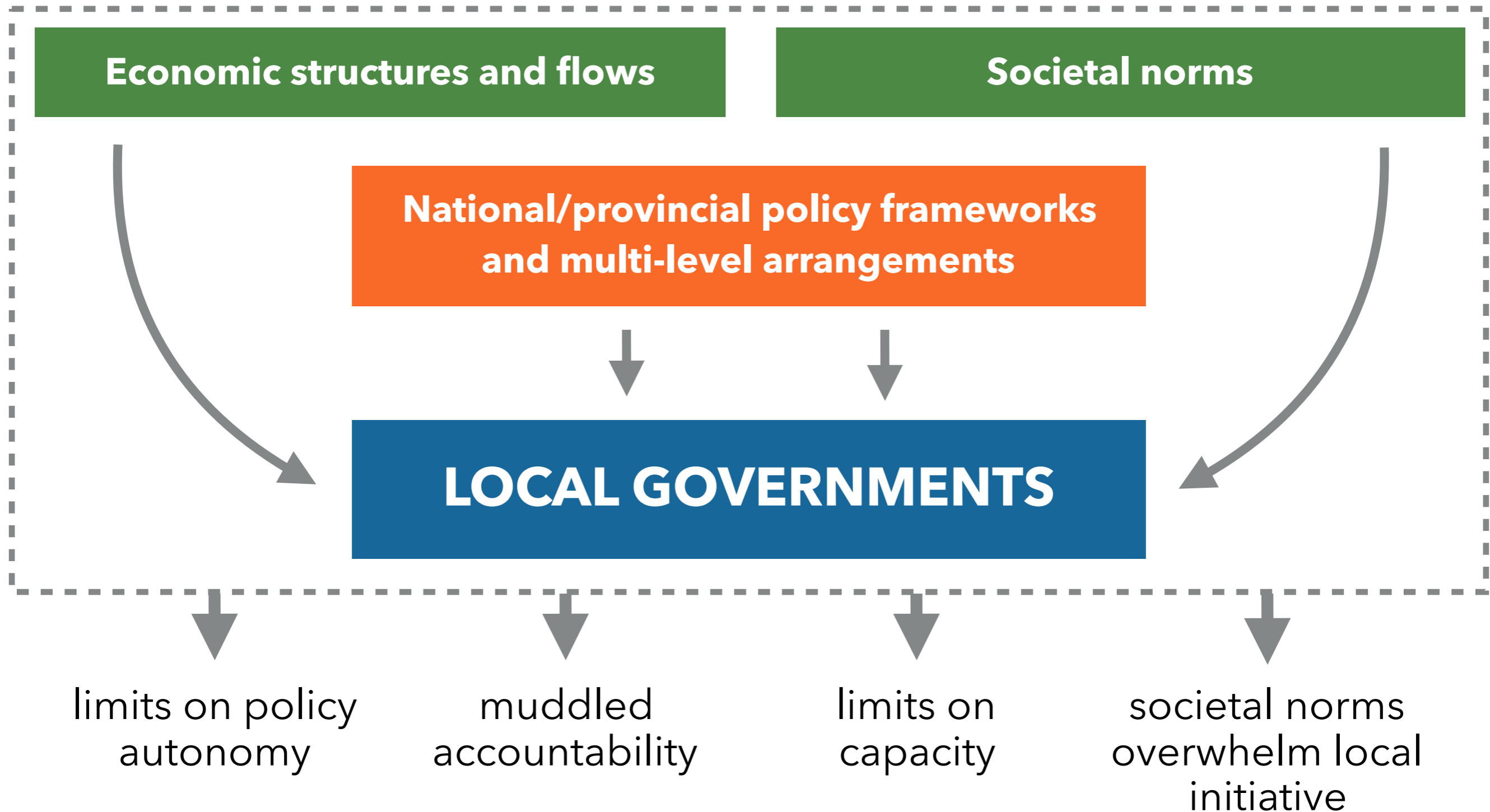
How can we **prioritize** outcomes of interest?

Can outcomes be **credited** to governance regimes?

Can complex outcomes be **measured**?

# How is local governance different?

Local governance systems are highly **embedded**



# How is local governance different?

Local government **institutions** are organized differently than national ones, posing challenges for assessing governance quality

## **Dispersed authority**

Weak-mayor system

Special-purpose bodies

## **Open process**

Open deliberation

Consultation, reporting requirements

Mandated policy review

## **Scale and responsiveness**

Closer to people

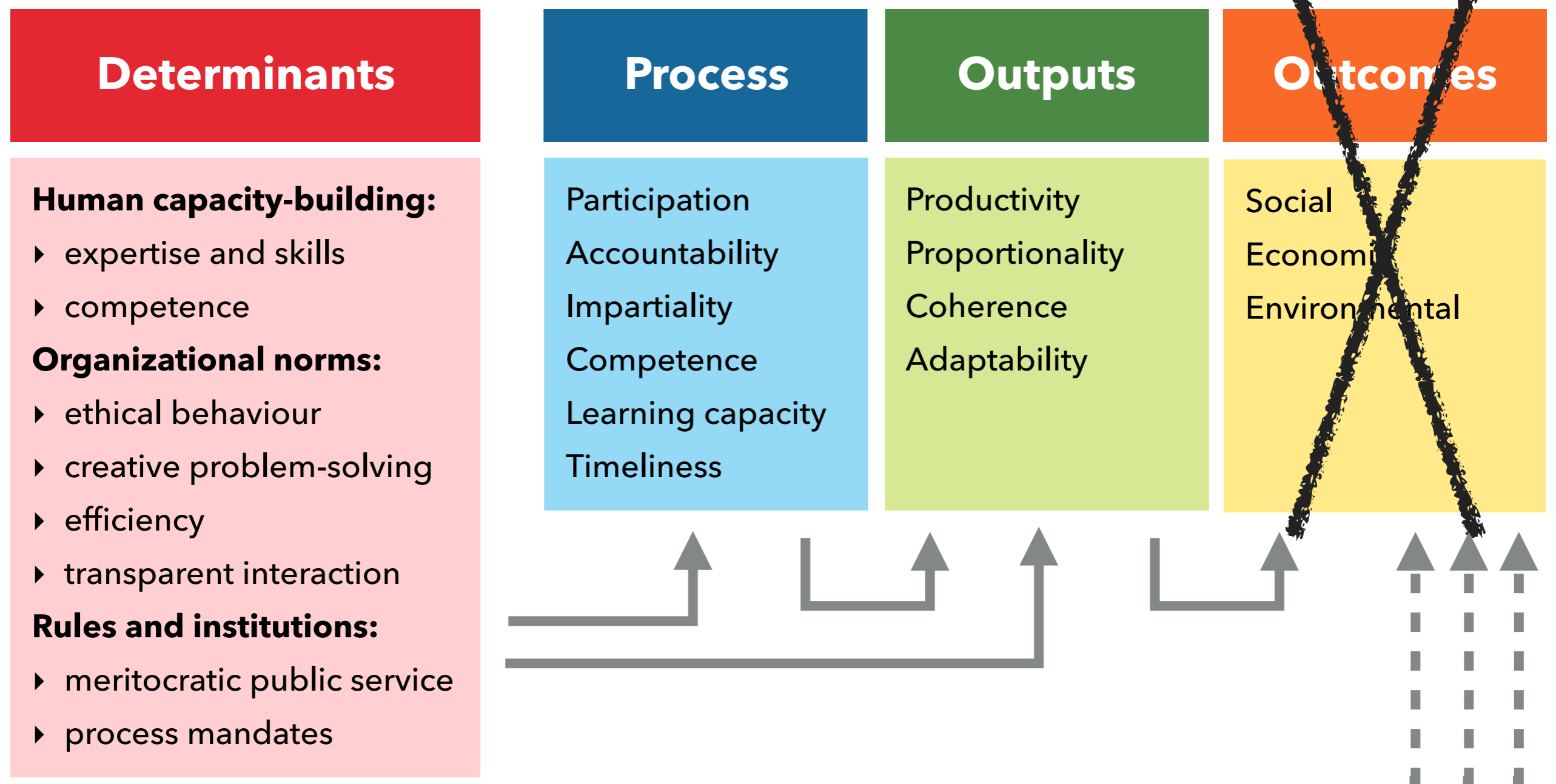
Greater potential for partiality and corruption

## **Scale and capacity**

Limited bureaucratic capacity may inhibit policy learning and innovation

# Assessing local governance quality

Forget about outcomes; focus assessment on processes and outputs within local government control



# Assessing local governance quality

## Types of assessment

	Qualitative	Quantitative
<b>Single-case</b>	<b>Case study</b> e.g., program evaluation, audit, investigation on complaint or appeal	<b>Longitudinal performance measurement</b> e.g., for single unit over time: monitor productivity or user satisfaction
<b>Multi-case</b>	<b>Structured case comparison</b> e.g., comparison of same program implementation in different places	<b>Performance benchmarking</b> e.g., comparative municipal benchmarking programs
<b>Methods</b>	Document review, interviews, perception surveys to identify process successes and failures	Compare indicators to assess change in efficiency, value for money, or other measures of performance
<b>Pro</b>	Gain in-depth knowledge of processes	Inexpensive, standardized, repeatable
<b>Con</b>	Expensive, not easily scaled up, not easily repeated, non-comparability	Construct invalidity, provides little insight into causal processes



# Why assess governance quality?

What we know about **performance benchmarking**:

- Analysis of data in Ontario and Québec indicates **little change in relative position of municipalities** over time
- Interviews with municipal public servants indicate that they are primarily used to **defend or mobilize political support for bureaucratic projects**
- Provincial governments have not tied **rewards or penalties** to change in municipal performance (as in the UK)
- Provincial governments put **minimal effort into making data available** to the public or watchdog groups

# Toward a research agenda

We need to know more about:

- The impact of **variation in municipal institutional structures** on process and output quality
- The relative importance of **institutions versus organizational culture** as determinants of ethical behaviour
- The quality of **public engagement** practices
- **Accountability gaps** in alternative service delivery and multi-level governance arrangements
- The potential benefits of **carrots and sticks**

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No. 26 • 2016

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