SPECIAL ISSUE INFORMATION

by Jean-Philippe Gauvin, Johanna Schnabel and Walkiria Zambrzycki Dutra
About Federal Governance

Federal Governance is an online graduate journal on theory and politics of federalism and multi-level governance. Its mandate is to engage the global federalism community and reach out to outstanding graduate students interested in federalism and multi-level governance. By providing a platform for graduate students to have early success in their careers, Federal Governance seeks to promote and sustain interest in federalism and multi-level governance research among graduate students. Allied with the Forum of Federations and founding partner, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen’s University; Federal Governance aims to contribute to a global dialogue on federalism.

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(Rupak Chattopadhyay and Philip Gonzalez)
Editorial team: Jean-Philippe Gauvin, Johanna Schnabel, Walkiria Zambrycki Dutra

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Since its beginnings, Federal Governance has helped young scholars disseminate their research on the theory and politics of federalism and multi-level governance. Graduate students have tackled these issues brilliantly and have contributed to the body of knowledge on federalism through articles that are fully available online in open-access. To pursue this mission, the Federal Governance team has counted on the support of its founding partner, the Forum of Federations, as well as the Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen’s University. Moreover, the journal has relied on its advisory board, comprised of several federalism scholars in universities around the world.

In an effort to highlight the contributions of the board to the field, the Editorial Team has asked several members to provide us with short pieces detailing the state of the literature on federalism as well as the next challenges they see in the field. These short ‘briefs’ are published in this Special Issue on the state of the field. The team is proud to publish four such papers, written by Francesco Palermo (Institute for Comparative Federalism, Italy), Anna Gamper (University of Innsbruck, Austria), Kristin Good (Dalhousie University, Canada) and José Angelo Machado (University of Minas Gerais, Brazil).

First, Francesco Palermo tells us why studies in federalism matter, as studying the complex nature of this machinery may help find potential solutions to societal problems. He identifies four challenges that should be prioritized by scholars. These include a more careful analysis of policies in various domains, a better understanding of new forms of participation, a new approach to the objectives of federalism in regards to ethno-cultural pluralism, and a bigger emphasis on local governments.

Second, Anna Gamper argues that the topic of constitutional law needs better examination. While research on formal amendments has been explored in the past, she believes scholars should now turn to the role and nature of the Courts decisions in relation to the federal principle. For example, is there a dialogue between courts and federal governments? Or does constitutional reasoning rely on federalism, or solely on the constitutional text on which the system is based?

Third, Kristin Good restates the necessity of focusing on issues and local governments. Specifically, she highlights the importance of looking at the area of immigration and the role of cities. For instance, how do cities influence how federations manage diversity? She argues that more comparative research is needed on the variations in municipal immigration policies in Canada and elsewhere.

Finally, José Angelo Machado turns to the link between policymaking and federalism. More attention should be paid, he believes, to the specific mechanisms of policy coordination in federations, as it would help illustrate the patterns in which actors negotiate and bargain to develop policies. He also points to local governments as an area that needs to be further explored in research.
In the next few months, more contributions from the board will be published in the journal. Together, these papers will set a great research agenda for graduate students and established scholars alike. We hope it will encourage everyone to investigate different aspects and further our understanding of federalism and multi-level governance across the world. Federal Governance will be pleased to publish these contributions.

The Editorial Team

Jean-Philippe Gauvin (Concordia University)
Johanna Schnabel (University of Kent)
Walkiria Zambrzycki Dutra (State University of Rio de Janeiro)