

IACFS Conference 2024

Antwerp, 17 and 18 September 2024

CALL FOR PAPERS

Federal Dynamics in Multi-Level Governance Systems

The International Association of Centers for Federal Studies (IACFS) and the Government & Law Research Group at the University of Antwerp invite submissions for the 2024 IACFS conference focusing on *Federal Dynamics in Multi-Level Governance Systems*.

Scope:

Federal dynamics have been a central theme for federal scholars interested in processes of centralisation and decentralisation between the federal and the federated level. This approach, however, seems too narrow to fully grasp shifting relationships between the different levels of authority in a multi-tiered system. For the upcoming IACFS conference, **we wish to extend the examination of federal dynamics in terms of the levels of authority concerned, as well as the processes that are studied.**

The levels of authority. In the South African Constitution, the principle of ‘co-operative government’ refers to all spheres of authority, including the national, the provincial, and the local. But also in so-called ‘model federations’, the balance between the federal and federated level can impact, or be impacted by, the position of the local level. This is reflected in recent scholarship that uses notions such as “hourglass federalism” aimed at increasing involvement and participation in a diverse federal polity. In turn, scholars have called for a distinctive position of metropolitan cities in a federal context. At the same time, both old and new forms of states with federal arrangements have been embedded within broader supranational organisations with independent claims of supremacy further complexifying the political and constitutional structure. Political scientists proposed the notion of “multi-level governance” to describe the allocation of powers within these relatively new types of governmental structures. Although theorised to describe the European Union specifically, the notion of “multi-level governance” has already been aptly used by legal and political scholars to describe other forms of supranational integration worldwide. All this means that the binary approach, focused on the federal and federated levels only, is no longer warranted.

Dynamic processes. Scholarship examining federal dynamics is usually focused on processes of centralisation and decentralisation. This way, focus is on autonomy shifts, where more power for the federal government means a proportionate loss of power for the regional units, and vice versa. The federal balance, however, can also be seen as a balance of autonomy and cohesion. Pictured on two axes, this may lead to processes of de/centralisation (less or more regional autonomy) as well as processes of dis/integration (less or more cohesion). Processes of integration have been observed especially during the recent pandemic, where centralised intervention tended to be based on interactions with the various levels of government. In turn, processes of disintegration have proven an important challenge of contemporary multinational systems.

Themes:

This conference thus aims to provide a platform to discuss and explore the “federal dynamics” created by the interplay among institutional actors at all levels of authority, and to address the challenges and evolving dynamics of conflict and cooperation in such systems.

We welcome scholarly contributions in the form of theory development, individual case-studies, or comparative enquiries addressing, but not limited to, the following themes:

1. *The operation of “federal dynamics”*: Examining conditions that drive processes of de/centralisation and/or dis/integration as well as defining the legal and political challenges encountered in the operation of federal systems broadly understood;
2. *Institutional dynamics between two or more levels of authority (local-regional/state-federal-supranational)*: Concentrating on individual cases, or taking a comparative perspective;
3. *Institutional hubs for change*: Analysing the role of institutional mechanisms in shaping and shifting the allocation of powers between two or more levels of authority, with specific focus on the role of courts; and/or
4. *Thematic approaches*: Discussing federal dynamics with regard to specific topics or policy domains, such as constitutional identity, sustainable development, or crisis management.

Submission Guidelines:

- Abstracts: Please submit a 300-500-word abstract outlining the paper's objectives, methodology, and key findings. Please include your full name and academic affiliation.
- Deadline: Abstracts must be submitted no later than 29 April 2024.

Important Dates:

- Abstract Submission Deadline: 29 April 2024
- Notification of Acceptance: by 20 May 2024
- Conference Dates: 17 and 18 September 2024

Submission Process:

Abstracts and inquiries should be sent to iacfs2024@uantwerpen.be .

Accepted papers will be considered for publication in an edited volume following a rigorous peer-review process.

Conference Venue:

The conference will be held exclusively in person at the University of Antwerp, City Campus.

We look forward to receiving your contributions and to host insightful discussions on these topics.

The Organising Committee
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