



CENTRO STUDI SUL FEDERALISMO

PERSPECTIVES ON FEDERALISM



ISSN: 2036-5438

## Amid Challenging Times

by

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Perspectives on Federalism, Vol. 12, issue 1, 2020



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Ed - I



## 1. A tumultuous year

I am writing these lines amid challenging times. The last few months have been dominated by the Covid-19 crisis. Sadly, the further evolution of this crisis is impossible to predict. As things stand, Covid-19 has deeply affected the world in which we live. This has already led scholars in law, economics and political science to enquire into the impact of the health crisis. In many jurisdictions, the handling of Covid-19 has revived the age-old discussion about states of emergency and the ability of constitutional law to provide appropriate instruments for addressing existential threats. In federal and regional jurisdictions like Italy and Germany, the distribution of competences has often come to the spotlight of public attention. In some cases, the need for a unitary crisis leadership has been highlighted, and the existence of multiple centres of decision-making has been accused of producing inefficiency and of diluting political responsibility. Entirely different viewpoints have argued that federalism and regionalism allow for differentiation and experimentation with innovative policies. This should be particularly welcomed due to the largely unknown nature of the Covid-19 threat, which hardly lends itself to rigidly unitary reactions. Moreover, so serious a crisis quite often leads to strong centralisation of power to the advantage of the central executive. Against this backdrop, the distinct centres of decision-making may serve as counterpowers, much in line with classical political thought.

Of course, the Covid-19 crisis has also affected the European Union. However, it does not seem correct to describe it as just another crisis in the difficult ten years or so that have followed the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. It is a symmetric shock that affects, although to a different extent, all the Member States. The recovery plan for Europe, on which the heads of state and government reached an agreement in July 2020, was only a few weeks after the German Federal Constitutional Court rendered a landmark judgment on the Public Sector Purchase Programme of the European Central Bank. In sum, the issue of transnational solidarity has become more topical than ever.

Finally, the result of the presidential election in the United States will also have tremendous impact on the future of interregional cooperation in the next few years.

Meanwhile, *Perspectives on Federalism* has also experienced some change. At the beginning of the year, Giuseppe Martinico left his position as editor and I took over. Also on behalf of the other editor, Roberto Castaldi, I would like to thank Giuseppe wholeheartedly for



his invaluable contribution to the growth of *Perspectives on Federalism* and its increased international visibility. Meanwhile, new colleagues have joined Salvatore Aloisio and Fabio Masini in the Editorial Board of *Perspectives*: Susanna Cafaro, Andrea Cofelice, Francesco Costamagna, Olimpia Fontana, Claudia Morini, and Annamaria Viterbo. In its diversity, the Editorial Board reflects the commitment to interdisciplinarity that has characterised *Perspectives* since it was launched in 2009. I would also like to thank the Centre for Studies on Federalism and its director, Flavio Brugnoli, for their precious support. In the next issues, we will present some new initiatives connected with *Perspectives on Federalism*.

As usual, we encourage our readers to submit articles, review essays and notes, or to submit proposals for fully-fledged special issues.

## 2. The contents of this issue

In this issue, a number of topics are covered. Two articles delve into comparative federalism topics. [Maja Sahadžić](#) focuses on the peace process in the Middle East and the faltering consensus around the one-state and two-state solutions, and argues that this issue could be addressed in terms of ‘multi-tiered multinational systems’ with asymmetrical features. Building on comparative research, she offers an alternative point of view with regard to the Middle East. [Yonatan Tesfaye Fessha](#) analyses a trend of increasing relevance in contemporary federations, that is, horizontal intergovernmental forums that bring together the constituent units of a federation to the exclusion of the national government. His comparative research examines the rise of horizontal intergovernmental forums in three federal jurisdictions: Kenya, Spain and Canada. Two essays focus on the multiple challenges raised by climate change. First, [Roberto Talenti](#) considers how the international legal framework, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, addresses the relation between climate change, food security, and the rights of peasants. Second, [Andrea Saba](#) analyses the recent communications of the European Commission deal with the issue of sustainable farming and food system against climate vulnerability. [Michal Strnad](#) surveys past and present literature focusing the relationship between the European integration process and minority nationalism in the Member States of the European Union. As the current state of knowledge in this field is quite limited, he delineates areas of tension and a framework of



analysis for filling the gap. Finally, two pieces consider topics related to comparative regionalism. [Maria Papageorgiou and Daniella Silva Nogueira Melo](#) examine the reaction of the EU and ASEAN to the first outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis. The findings of their research show that both the EU and ASEAN should acquire a more proactive role in health and crisis management. In his essay, Giovanni Finizio, provides a historical reconstruction of the normative dimension of EU-ASEAN relations, whose ultimate goal is to assess the EU's ability to make interregionalism an instrument for the diffusion of regionalism, democracy and human rights within the partner organization.

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