

Call for Papers

[VRÜ / Law and Politics in Africa, Asia and Latin America](#) welcomes submissions for the forthcoming special issue:

Between Centralized Federalism and Regionalized Centralism: Varieties of Territorial Organization in Latin America

Since the last decades of the 20th century we observe a steady trend towards decentralization and regionalization in Latin-American countries. Central governments delegate power to territorial entities. Elections are held to designate local authorities. New or drastically modified entities arise, such as autonomous indigenous territories or metropolises holding a special status within the state.

Tendencies to systemic decentralization are often appreciated and seen as measures to promote democratic participation. On the other hand, we can also observe federations cutting down on the competencies of their constituent states, like for example in the Venezuelan case.

Debates about decentralization, federalism, and centralization have a long tradition within the Latin American context. Even the Inca-Empire was known for its sophisticated territorial structure. It consisted of four regions (*suyos*) as well as numerous subdivisions (*wamani* and *saya*) and might therefore be considered an early federalist system. Also, the dispute between the *Libertador Simón Bolívar* and *Francisco de Paula Santander* about federalizing or centralizing postcolonial Colombia is not only of historical interest. Discussions continue till today.

VRÜ wants to take a closer look at one central aspect of the “Engine Room of the Constitution” (*Gargarella*) demarcated by the organization of powers. Territorial organization of Latin-American countries will, therefore, be the analytical focus of this special issue, comprising the following three dimensions:

1. *Regionalization and Decentralization in Centralized States*

Local authorities such as *regiones*, *provincias*, *departamentos*, *distritos*, and *municipios* are gaining importance even within highly centralized states. Several reforms are under way. Colombia, for instance, still lacks the *regiones* and *provincias* which could have been created according to the 1991 constitution. In Peru, the formation of *regiones* and thereby implementation of some federal elements, failed at a first try. However, several countries grant autonomy to *indigenous* local authorities, recognizing them as territorial entities *sui*

generis. Submissions covering this dimension might address (a) the role and operation of sub-state territorial authorities, (b) the range of autonomy in the local and indigenous context, (c) the meaning of regionalization and decentralization for democracy, or (d), most generally, the possible advantages and drawbacks of sub-state autonomy.

2. *Varieties of Federalism in Latin America*

Federal systems are rare in Latin America. Where they occur, federalism takes quite diverse forms. While the Venezuelan federalism suffers serious throwbacks, Argentinean states gain more and more self-confidence and have become important players even on an international level. Mexican federalism is highly centralized, whereas Brazilian states and municipalities seem to be more influential. We are looking forward to submissions dealing with (a) the particularities of Latin-American federalisms in general, (b) the division of (fiscal) powers entailed by federalism, and (c) the role of municipalities within federalist structures. Contributions to comparative constitutionalism can focus on differences or look for similarities.

3. *Special Status of Cities and Metropolitan Regions*

Mega-cities and multi-city regions are becoming more and more important and influential within a globalized world. Latin American countries have developed a trend towards socio-economic concentration in one or more metropolises. This trend is most evident in the concentration of population, economic power, and culture within the respective capitals. To some of those metropolises a special legal status has been granted, most recently to Mexico-City, which has become *distrito federal* in 2016. We are interested in submissions addressing fundamental questions, such as (a) the constitutional status granted to these entities, (b) the civil participation within metropolises, (c) the relations between city government and state government, (d) the cooperation or competition between metropolises and other sub-state entities, and (e), more generally, the constitutional effects of socio-economic concentration in cities.

Submission Procedure

We are interested in articles analysing these and related issues under different approaches (theoretical, comparative, historical), and disciplines (law, political theory, anthropology, cultural studies). Papers considering multiple countries are of special interest. Submissions might focus on one country and take others as a reference or background. Interested scholars should send a CV and abstract (up to 750 words) by August 1, 2018 to:

andreas.gutmann@oefre.unibe.ch.

The abstract will form the basis of an original article (8,000 to 10,000 words) to be submitted by November 1, 2018 (invitations to submit an article will be sent no later than September 1, 2018). Articles are to be submitted according to the journal's technical and stylistic requirements, its style guide and citation format (available [here](#)). Final articles are subject to peer-review.