INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION IN MULTILEVEL SYSTEMS

A WEBINAR REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

On July 6th and 7th, 2021, the Forum of Federations, in collaboration with the Brazilian Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), hosted a webinar series that examined federalism and intergovernmental cooperation in multilevel systems. The series aimed to enhance understanding among Brazilian practitioners and researchers of intergovernmental collaboration in other jurisdictions, to help inform the development of Brazil's own processes. The event was moderated by Enid Slack, Director of the Institute on Municipal Finance and Governance at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto in Canada. The webinar was facilitated by Diana Chebenova, Senior Director at the Forum of Federations, and Liam Whittington, Program Manager at the Forum of Federations.

The program commenced with presentations on the context of intergovernmental relations in Brazil from Professor of Public Finance and Fiscal Policy, Fernando Rezende, who provided an overview of fiscal federalism in Brazil; accompanied by the Director of the Forum of Federations' Brazil office, Constantino Cronemberger Mendes, who provided a synopsis of the Brazilian intergovernmental cooperation instrument Public Consortia. The webinar continued with contributions by international experts who provided insights into the dynamics of the intergovernmental cooperation regimes in their respective countries:

- **Andrea Chávez**, Director of International Affairs, INAFED, Mexico
- **Jennifer Wallner**, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Ottawa, Canada
- **Johanna Schnabel**, Lecturer at the Chair of German Politics at the Otto Sur Institute for Political Science, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
- **Miguel Angel Asensio**, Professor of Public Finance, Fiscal Policy and Public Administration Paradigms, Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Argentina
- **Nico Steytler**, Professor and Research Chair in Multilevel Government, Law and Policy, Dullah Omar Institute of Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- **Pablo Sanabria-Pulido**, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Programs, School of Government, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia. Affiliate Professor Public Administration Division, CIDE Mexico
- **Rekha Saxena**, Professor of Political Science, University of Delhi, India
- **Sean Müller**, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

The speakers were asked to reflect and provide country-specific insights on the following questions:

1. What are the key aspects that affect (positively or negatively) the working of the intergovernmental cooperation regime in your country?
2. What are the roles played by the central and provincial/state governments in your country's intergovernmental cooperation regime?
3. What recommendations or initiatives exist for a periodical evaluation of the results of intergovernmental cooperation in your country? Is there a reliable intergovernmental cooperation dataset available for the evaluation of intergovernmental cooperation? If not, what sources of data are available?

This webinar aimed to support increased understanding among Brazilian practitioners and researchers of intergovernmental collaboration in other jurisdictions, to help inform the development of Brazil's federal governance processes.

MODERATED DISCUSSION: SESSION 1 (JULY 6, 2021)

Question 1: What are the key aspects that affect (positively or negatively) the working of the intergovernmental cooperation regime in your country?

Sean Müller, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

- Fiscal policy autonomy at the subnational level can facilitate and obstruct cooperation;
- Varying degrees and intensities of cooperation, wealth inequalities, and fiscal distributions throughout the country will undoubtedly continue to cause expenditure gaps between cantons;
- Autonomy affects cooperation. Impoverished cantons want and need more help and cooperation from their wealthier counterparts, but these wealthier cantons are fully capable of thriving on their own. Thus, the latter need to want to help.

When one thinks of Switzerland, one tends to think of spending occurring from the central government. In reality, two-thirds of all public spending occurs at the subnational level, and this is a key aspect that facilitates, but at the same time obstructs, intergovernmental cooperation. Intergovernmental cooperation is positively affected by this dynamic, because each subnational unit, or canton, is responsible for managing its affairs in its most efficient and legitimate way. As such, each canton must seek the kind of cooperation that it thinks will help deliver services to its citizens, thus acting as an encouragement to seek efficient collaboration. At the same time, however, the wealth is not distributed equally across the entire territory; this means that more prosperous regions can take a chance on cooperation, and if it doesn't work out, they will figure it out on their own. In contrast, more impoverished regions do not have that luxury and may not cooperate with neighbouring cantons similarly because they may be left trying to support the necessities, such as monitoring clean water provisions, managing the electrical grid, and the local roads. Thus, the fiscal policy autonomy that the subnational level possesses, helps foster cooperation but also acts as a crucial obstacle due to the varying degrees of cooperation that are prominent in different parts of the country.

Rekha Saxena, Professor of Political Science, University of Delhi, India

- Strong historical and cultural linkages;
- The context of intergovernmental cooperation in India surrounds the cooperation of many different facets of the Indian federal system.

In India, certain aspects of the intergovernmental cooperation regime are rooted firmly in historical or cultural contexts, and as such there are positives and negatives to this effect. The nature of the constitution is very important, and if separation of power is written in the constitution with some kind of checks and balances, there would be no centralization or decentralization; rather, there would be constitutional balance in the context of intergovernmental relations (IGR). When constitutional norms and values are followed, positive results and balance in intergovernmental relations will follow suit. Similarly, if they are undermined, there would be negative impacts. In India, the distribution of power is given through seven schedules in the constitution, and there is an independent judiciary that can look into the context of the two tiers of government.

Another factor to consider is the nature of the government. This plays an important role in the parliamentary federations, which typically have stronger executive and weaker legislative bodies. The upper house is weak in India because the government remains in office as long as it holds the majority in the house. The typical pattern of intergovernmental relations is executive federalism, and this is the case in India; though the upper house is a federal house, legislative federalism is a weak link in India.

Miguel Angel Asensio, Professor of Public Finance, Fiscal Policy and Public Administration Paradigms, Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Argentina

- Positive intergovernmental relations are affected by the political divide in the country;
- The revenue sharing system is central to multi-level relationships within the federation.

In Argentina, the federation includes 23 provinces, the autonomous city of Buenos Aires, 2,200 municipalities, and the national government. Its scheme rests in the national constitution. One key aspect that affects multi-level cooperation in the country is the present political divide, challenging positive cooperation. In general, the cooperation continues despite some pitfalls - i.e. COVID-19. In terms of the federal government, the revenue sharing system is a central point in the relationships among the federal government and provinces. A requirement of the last constitutional reform (1994) is the levelling of the major horizontal inequalities between provinces. However, recently, there has been some conflict in the fiscal arena between competing regions. The supreme court continues to intervene in these conflicts, a less than ideal scenario. In relation to intergovernmental cooperation, the constitutional reform of 1994 introduced three main reforms:

1. Creation of the autonomous city of Buenos Aires, with its own constitutional personality;
2. Constitutional autonomy to the municipalities (giving them as much importance and power as provinces), and;
3. Creation of regions, among provinces or between provinces. This new scenario demands developed cooperation. Some regions have interesting economic development powers, not imagined years ago.

Jennifer Wallner, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Ottawa, Canada

- Canadian IGR are more reactive than proactive;
- Executive dominant system with a high influence of regionalism pertaining to resources and the economy;
- Multi-level IGR see changes in their dynamics, depending on the priorities of the Prime Minister.

According to Professor Wallner, intergovernmental relations in Canada share the consistent feature of secrecy and are largely more reactive than proactive. They are dominated as a parliamentary federation, by political executives and senior officials (i.e., deputy ministers and increasingly, political staffers) which translates to an executive dominant system.

The political parties in Canada are weakly integrated which can both help or hinder intergovernmental relations depending on the situation. There is also a high influence of regionalism and significant variations in the economic profiles of the provinces and territories, compounded by the fact that natural resources are controlled at the subnational level which can lead to fluctuations in the economic clout of specific provinces and territories.

Another aspect of intergovernmental affairs in Canada is its status as a multinational federation, with the francophone population of Quebec being identified as an internal nation within Canada, operating alongside “the rest of Canada”. Collaboration between the Prime Minister, seniors staffers, and various other members of parliament is important as constant communication and changing roles play an important part in shaping the dynamic between the provinces and territories and the federal government. This dynamic changes over the course of various election cycles. We see contrasting dynamics and communication patterns when comparing Prime Minister Harper to Prime Minister Trudeau’s time in office - for example, the number of First Ministers meetings called - and will undoubtedly see a new dynamic emerge after the next election period as well. The workforce of intergovernmental relations in Canada are the permanent sector level intergovernmental tables (i.e. Minister of Health, Minister of Environment, Minister of Labour) that implement regular activity to align practices and manage interdependencies. While these are important tables, there is little public engagement in these, with closed-door ad-hoc meetings that have become more frequent over the last year and a half during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Question 2: What are the roles played by the central and provincial/state governments in the intergovernmental cooperation regime?

Sean Müller, Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

- Just bottom, not bottom-up, not top-down. Cantons do not cooperate unless it is absolutely necessary, and instead prefer to act autonomously;
- Switzerland’s homogeneous society fosters trust and tolerance.

In Switzerland, the cooperation regime remains at the bottom. This does not mean it’s bottom-up but instead means nothing goes up, and everything stays at the bottom. Meaning, the municipalities cooperate if they have to, but if they can avoid it, they will. This is because cooperation is seen as much a bad thing as it is a good thing in cantonal autonomy. After all, once you engage in a cooperation agreement, you are bound by somebody else's decisions, making things that much more complex. While the municipalities and cantons can do it on their own, the central government would not want to become involved if the constituent units decided to cooperate. The only time the central government would get involved in the affairs of the constituent government is when the constituent units can no longer act autonomously, as per the notion of subsidiarity. Lastly, despite the many languages, Switzerland is a fairly homogenous society. This facilitates cooperation as it augments a certain level of trust, and highlights a certain level of overall tolerance between the federal and constituent units. For instance, if cantons in eastern Switzerland want to cooperate they can, as long as they pay their bill.

Rekha Saxena, Professor of Political Science, University of Delhi, India

- IGR in India have evolved over the years from top-down approaches to more joint decision-making and consultation between the centre and the states;
- IGR in India have been focused on more informal processes and are largely more vertical than horizontal.

The IGR system in India has experienced shifts over time from a predominantly top-down cooperation regime to the inclusion of more bottom-up approaches, with the party system playing a crucial role in this transformation. IGR processes in India have been largely top-down and controlled by the centre, with different phases of cooperation and confrontation between the centre and the states. When there is one party dominance with the same party ruling at the centre and in the majority of the states, IGR are highly centralized and formal. This changed with the introduction of the multi-party system in 1989, where the focus has shifted from centre to the states and the 1980s marked a change in the government's interest in IGR mechanisms with the creation of a number of commissions focused on centre-state relations.

Since 2014 India has had a one-party majority government, and important structural reforms have taken place including the movement away from a centralized Planning Commission to a jointly-appointed Planning Commission between the centre and state, as well as structural reforms to the taxation system in the country. Recently there has been more joint cooperation between the centre and the states, with the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrating the close cooperation and coordination between the two levels of government and also showcasing the challenges such as conflicts around the implementation of central law and lockdown measures. Overall, IGR in India have been focused on more informal processes and are largely more vertical than horizontal, though IGR processes continue to evolve in the country.

Miguel Angel Asensio, Professor of Public Finance, Fiscal Policy and Public Administration Paradigms, Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Argentina

- Top-down federal system with central federal government;
- Intergovernmental relations are largely informal.

In Argentina, federalism is largely top-down with the federal government as the primary and central actor. IGR are dominated by informal relationships and meetings are irregular. There are no formal IGR meetings between the main authorities in the provinces. The informal relationships, along with the formal relationships that do exist, are very important for connecting and cooperating for positive IGR. For example, federal councils meet on the topics of education, health, and environment, to collect data and coordinate roles between the federal ministers. Party regime is also very important, as national parties connect with regional representatives of the same party to come to agreements, and then discuss potential agreements between parties. Another important aspect of IGR in terms of fiscal federalism and fiscal equality is the particular system of transfers called the Aportes del Tesoro Nacional (ATN) which is responsible for monetary transfers from the national treasury to provinces.

Jennifer Wallner, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Ottawa, Canada

- Federal and provincial government policy and constitutional mechanisms both play a part in determining the baseline delegations of responsibilities;
- Horizontal cooperation between provinces is particularly challenging in Canada because of its geographic size and mapping;
- Several issues, such as the inclusion of the territories and representation of Indigenous peoples, remain.

In Canada, while the federal government is the main driver of intergovernmental cooperation, there is a certain level of top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal cooperation within the federation. Its breadth and depth are determined in part by federal and provincial government policy, though constitutional mechanisms provide a baseline for the delegation of specific responsibilities. Horizontal cooperation between provinces has forever been dependent on a combination of factors, including but not limited to economic interdependencies and political will.

Though constitutional mechanisms provide a baseline for the delegation of specific responsibilities, there remain a number of issues. First, devolution in the 1990s meant more autonomy for territories. As they do not have provincial status, some believe they do not deserve to have a seat at the IGR table, which is similar in some respects to municipalities. Another point of contention, though one that is currently evolving, is the lack of representation of Indigenous peoples in the intergovernmental cooperation regime. This is an issue that needs to be addressed and continues to evolve as time goes on.

MODERATED DISCUSSION: SESSION 2 (JULY 7, 2021)

Question 1: What are the key aspects that affect (positively or negatively) the working of the intergovernmental cooperation regime in your country?

Nico Steytler, Professor and Research Chair in Multilevel Government, Law and Policy, Dullah Omar Institute of Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

- Local government is entrenched in the constitution. Cooperation between levels of government has become a constitutional mandate; it is non-negotiable;
- The nine provincial premiers and eight mayors of the Metropolitan municipalities (metros) are awarded the same standing in order to ensure that growth and development occurs equally at all levels;
- One of the biggest challenges that remain is the continuation of political competition between municipalities, but also between provinces and municipalities.

The main positives associated with the intergovernmental cooperation regime in South Africa are threefold. First, the entrenchment of local government in the constitution means that cooperation is non-negotiable. There is a clear, constitutional mandate that makes cooperation a necessity between

and for all. This is the prime reason why there was a decentralization. Second, partially due to its history, intergovernmental cooperation in South Africa is perhaps one of the most formal in the world, with a statute setting out all its structures. These formal structures work, partially because there is a single-party dominance. Eight of the nine provinces are ruled by the African National Congress, and cooperation between the central and provincial levels is key to this success. As such, a third reason that intergovernmental cooperation is successful here is that local governments are very well organized, especially in terms of having their own voice. They are not overshadowed or overpowered to any degree. The President's Infrastructure Development Council is composed of the president, the nine provincial premiers, and the eight executive mayors of the metros. As such, the statute states that the metro mayors have equal standing as the provincial premiers. This equal recognition means that infrastructure can continue to grow within the cities, and every region gets an equal voice.

Unfortunately, while the constitutional mandate has made some drastic advancements, it has not solved all issues. The overarching dominance and facilitation of the African National Congress remains an issue at times, and the facilitation of infrastructure and funding can sometimes be impeded on a top-down scale because of their widespread party dominance. Since provinces and local government authorities are awarded the same level of power, they are viewed by many as being a single entity, and as such are not treated with the separate respect they deserve. Further, when one province or local government under an IGR system is unable to provide the same quality of governance as another, uneven capacities result. There cannot be a thorough intergovernmental success if one party is weaker or has fewer resources than the others that surround it. There is still a lack of the trust necessary to make horizontal IGR and cooperation possible, especially because of continued political competition between municipalities, and between provinces and municipalities. Although municipalities are already so big that they can operate on their own, they would be better off working together. For intergovernmental cooperation to function to its full potential, political competition needs to be eliminated as much as possible. Yet this will not be possible if there is no progression towards municipalities working collectively with others.

"Both national and provincial governments play an important role, but is it a dominating role, or is it one of initiative? The difference is, one, we tell you what to do, the other one, we may take the initiative, but the aim is to listen to one another and try to come to some agreements."

— NICO STEYTLER

South African Research Chair in Multilevel Government, Law and Policy, Dullah Omar Institute of Constitutional Law, Governance, and Human Rights, University of Western Cape

Andrea Chávez, Director of International Affairs at INAFED, Mexico

- The coordination between three levels of government depends on two defining factors: political will and constitutional laws;
- A good constitutional agreement is essential for continued cooperation and to promote cooperation in the provision of services.

Mexico is a representative and democratic republic comprised of a federal government, 32 federal entities, and 2,455 local governments. Two defining factors that determine coordination between government agencies are political will and constitutional law. Political will is commonly defined as a process taken on by political parties to act and produce the desired outcome. The complexity of intergovernmental cooperation lies in the established bureaucracy of a country and the innate ability that country has to communicate and act upon mandates. A mandate is a guiding map for a country that is only useful when political will is present and apparent. Once the political will is apparent and widespread, the need to understand the political processes and policies of a country will become significant. This means that government agencies will be studied, and communication between departments will increase. Some items from the mandate will take priority and will need more cooperation than other areas. A good institutional agreement is essential to promote cooperation in the provision of services, including water, health services, and more.

Pablo Sanabria-Pulido, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Programs, School of Government, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

- Before any real change can happen, key elements and considerations need to be acknowledged. This includes the constitutional acknowledgment of existing power dynamics, centralization, and the importance and development of local autonomy.
- Municipalities remain the most powerful, but fiscal capacity and autonomy at the local level remain a central issue.

While there is a great desire for intergovernmental cooperation to take root in Colombia, it is impossible without first taking into consideration certain key elements and the establishment of key principles. Centralization remains an issue at this point, and without these considerations being taken into account, no further progress will be made. At this point, municipalities remain the most powerful. While this local autonomy has become increasingly important, their capacities and existing power dynamics can still present issues. The power dynamic that exists between the different levels needs to be figured out constitutionally before any real change can take shape.

"Coordination means the synchronization and unification of actions to provide adequate opportunity and direction in such a way that there is harmony and cooperation to achieve a common goal"

—ANDREA CHÁVEZ
Director of International Affairs at INAFED, Mexico

Johanna Schnabel, Lecturer at the Chair of German Politics at the Otto Sur Institute for Political Science at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

- Many contextual factors in Germany like social and cultural characteristics positively impact intergovernmental cooperation and provide strong incentives to cooperate;
- Cooperation between governments is institutionalized in Germany with regular meetings strengthening horizontal and vertical relations;
- Challenges faced in Germany include the need for consensus, which can result in gridlocking and lead to suboptimal outcomes, as well as different financial capacities across Länder, which can be a source of conflict;
- Many conversations between governments take place behind closed doors and this lack of transparency is a concern as there is limited public scrutiny.

It is important to note the context of Germany as a homogenous nation with no distinct regions, a factor that reduces the potential for conflict between governments. Additionally, the broader German population shares a strong desire for uniformity and harmonization and therefore a dislike of policy diversity. Germany also has a fiscal equalization system and a constitutional mandate to promote equal living conditions which results in the equalization of the fiscal capacity of the Länder to a considerable degree. Germany's membership in the European Union acts as another incentive for cooperation and while the federal government communicates with the European Union, the Länder must share information with the federal government in a process that requires strong coordination between governments. Finally, the economic success of Germany over recent years is another contextual factor that benefits cooperation, as strong economic capacity reduces the number of potential conflicts horizontally between Länder and vertically with the federal government. Alongside contextual factors, the design of the federal system in Germany offers additional incentives to cooperate. Cooperation between governments is institutionalized in the federal system in Germany, with joint decision-making between the federal government and the Länder being a significant component of this system. Further, Germany has a highly institutionalized system of intergovernmental councils where cooperation is ongoing, dense, and regular. This cooperation is both horizontal and vertical, and even in horizontal councils where the federal government is not required, it is invited to attend to facilitate information exchange. In addition to these councils, informal relations between bureaucrats are also important to IGR in Germany.

Regarding aspects that can negatively impact the working of intergovernmental cooperation in Germany, the need for consensus can slow decision making through gridlocking, and consequently can result in suboptimal outcomes. An example of this was seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, where the requirement of consensus meant that quick and decisive decisions about health and safety measures were not possible. Additionally, despite the fiscal equalization system that is in place, some Länder are more affluent than others, which can lead to financial conflicts between the Länder and the federal government concerning financial support. Further, while the desire for uniformity and harmonization within Germany can act as a driver of intergovernmental cooperation, it is also a potential constraint to innovation as there is little tolerance for policy experimentation. Finally, intergovernmental cooperation is challenged in Germany due to negotiations and conversations between different levels of government taking place behind closed doors, resulting in a lack of transparency and leaving little room for public scrutiny.

Question 2: What are the roles played by the central and provincial/state governments in the intergovernmental cooperation regime?

Nico Steytler, Professor and Research Chair in Multilevel Government, Law and Policy, Dullah Omar Institute of Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

- The top-down approach of the central government is facilitative, not dominating;
- The central government must have the capacity to remain authoritative and take charge when necessary in a well-functioning system, without contention, but needs to allow a certain degree of autonomy to provincial and municipal governments.

In South Africa, the interaction between the central and the provincial governments can be detrimental to the success of intergovernmental cooperation. From a national level, it's the president that organizes the council that covers all three levels in a very top-down system. This is the structure that had to deal with matters concurrent to COVID-19, and as such, we saw the nationalization of the response through the creation of the 'National Coordinating Command Council'. While the top-down approach of the national government is important, it doesn't mean that provinces and municipalities do not share in the responsibility. The central government remains authoritative in certain situations when it is necessary for them to make a change in a well-functioning system, without contention. The same structure is present between provincial and municipal levels. The premier has the responsibility of facilitating with the mayors of the municipalities to discuss changes and issues, but as they have the same amount of power, it is much more equal.

All levels of government play an important role, but one must ask if the role played by the central government is a *dominating* or one of *initiative*, as the difference is important. Some levels of leadership can help cause coordination of cooperation between the metros, but a dominating role will cause challenges and problems in the facilitation of relationships and implementation of agendas. Local governments are very important in South Africa and must remain involved in the structure. They have a voice, they have equal authority and power as provincial actors, and as such, they cannot be dominated by the provinces or by the central government.

Johanna Schnabel, Lecturer at the Chair of German Politics at the Otto Sur Institute for Political Science, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

- Germany has a functional distribution of power where the federal government passes legislation and the Länder implement it;
- The federal government and the Länder are partners and share many responsibilities;
- Conflicts may arise between the Länder and the federal government about financial support.

Germany has a functional distribution of power where the federal government passes legislation and the Länder implement it. The federal government and the Länder are partners that share major taxes, are engaged in joint monitoring of budgets, and share responsibility in many other policy areas (eg. healthcare). There are some policy areas where the Länder are primarily responsible, mainly

education, culture, and police. Overall, the structure is that the federal government makes strategic decisions and the Länder make operational decisions, focusing more on details. If there is a conflict between the federal government and the Länder it is often about financial support which, due to the superior fiscal capacity of the federal government, results in the federal government having the final say on how much financial support it provides.

Andrea Chávez, Director of International Affairs, INAFED, Mexico

- All levels of governments can work towards achieving a common goal with the proper cooperation, synchronization, and communication;
- The essential role of the government entails responsibility, political will, and coordination to assume development.

In the Mexican context, the cooperation between the three levels of government is an essential component to ensuring success at federal, state and municipal levels. Coordination is also essential as it refers to the synchronization of federal, provincial, and municipal governments aiming for a united goal. Working towards a common goal can be achieved through cooperation and uniformity between the political and administrative departments within the government. Mexico was able to develop the 14th largest economy in the world thanks to such coordination between governments. It is also important to consider the essential role of the government — responsibility, political will, and coordination to assume development. Governments are made up of municipal and state public leaders. These leaders need to be frequently and adequately trained with a well-rounded understanding of constitutional laws in order for them to be ready to develop their government. Each government must be ready to assume its responsibilities, have communal objectives and increase the quality of life of its population. Intergovernmental cooperation plays an integral role in the development of local governments. Local governments must display patience, commitment, and the responsibility to assume their responsibilities and development.

Pablo Sanabria-Pulido, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Programs, School of Government, Universidad de los Andes, Colombia

- The national government sets policies as a guide for subnational governments. The former is also responsible for the division of funds;
- Cooperation between districts is essential for collective political power and political will.

Colombia's decentralized governance system utilizes a combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. The national government sets policies and legislation as a guide for subnational governments, and the former is also in charge of the division of funds between national and subnational governments. Subnational governments, known as departments, are in charge of the social policies, including defining their limits. These departments possess a low institutional capacity. Thus, cooperation between districts and municipalities is essential to boost their collective political power. The constitution has also granted more power to cities, giving them the option to bypass departments and reach the national government directly.

MODERATED DISCUSSION: SESSION 1 (JULY 6, 2021) & 2 (JULY 7, 2021)

Question 3: What recommendations or initiatives exist for a periodical evaluation of the results of intergovernmental cooperation in your country? Is there a reliable intergovernmental cooperation dataset available for the evaluation of intergovernmental cooperation? If not, what sources of data are available?

Over the course of the two-day event, the question of how the results of intergovernmental cooperation are evaluated in different federations was discussed. While the majority of panellists note a lack of formal measurement and evaluation processes in their countries, India emerged as an exception with cooperation mechanisms under constant review creating a rich data set that is complemented by two different centres for federal studies in the country. The lack of formal databases and mechanisms to evaluate intergovernmental cooperation across the other countries represented in this event presents the enduring question of which data must be captured to adequately measure the success of different cooperation systems and how results of cooperation can be appropriately evaluated.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TWO-DAY WEBINAR SERIES:

Day 1:

Discussions on the first day of this webinar series covered a range of topics but largely focused on informal top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal cooperation. The panelists discussed the importance of taking into account the individual factors that vary from country to country over time, such as personalities, policy, and party systems, as well as the need to understand the context of each country when discussing intergovernmental cooperation. In Switzerland, for example, the discussion focused on the importance of local autonomy. In Canada, the discussion instead centered around the importance of the constitution. Factors of greater importance vary from one country to another, and even within a country over time. Contributors segued into a discussion of how there is little to no capacity for systemic evaluation of cooperation in areas such as data reporting. The speakers also commented on how this will need to evolve as time progresses. All in all, as important as it is to remember that the context of each country pursuing intergovernmental cooperation varies, one must keep in mind that federalism itself is an experiment and the evaluation of what works and what does not must continue to evolve.

"Brazil adopted uniformity in diversity."

— FERNANDO REZENDE

Former President of the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and professor of Public Finance and Fiscal Policy at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia

Day 2:

The discussions of day two focused largely on local government, their roles, and their levels of autonomy. Similar themes from day one were explored, including the importance of local autonomy; the constitution, not only in the way of the division of powers but also in terms of the original powers of municipalities in the constitution; and the role of political parties, particularly in South Africa. Among the new themes explored were political will, notably in Mexico, as well as the desire for uniformity and its impact on IGR, notably in Germany. The panelists of day two had a more fulsome discussion of the evaluation of IGR, focusing more so on specific transfers between central and constituent-unit governments, rather than on possible cooperation mechanisms and systemic evaluations. Panelists also evaluated what did not work in their respective IGR regimes and the costs of not having cooperation. An overarching sentiment during the course of the webinar was the notion that there is no single model to fit all regimes, however, there are some common aspects that interfere in the work of effective IGR, such as political interference and national ideologies. IGR and federalism are evolving issues with economic and social aspects that change in response to different contexts.

"Intergovernmental relations and fiscal federalism is an evolving issue that moves along with time. It remains a very important case in our days. I call it a great revolution of our days."

— FERNANDO REZENDE

Former President of the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and former professor of Public Finance and Fiscal Policy at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia

CONCLUSION

Overall, there is no singular IGR model that fits all federal countries, as each country is a unique composition of its history, culture, and people. While there is no prescriptive method for improving IGR mechanisms in Brazil, there are important lessons to be learned from the experiences of other federations, which were shared over the course of this two-day webinar series. Some of the key points addressed by the panelists include the influence of the political parties in federal arrangements, the conflicts between national priorities and local interests, the evolving nature of federal intergovernmental relations within the context of current events, and the adoption of new technologies in the economic production of goods and services, among others. It would not be ideal for each federation to adopt the same model as another to deal with the issues. Instead, governance practitioners should collect aspects of each country's case and reflect on the methods governance practitioners used to resolve said issues with the goal of improving IGR in Brazil.

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