CALL FOR PROPOSALS: FEDERALISM AND THE REGULATORY POLICIES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

With the support of the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), the Saint Anselm College Center for Ethics in Business and Governance invites proposals for papers on the regulatory policies of local and regional governments to be presented at a small conference for scholars at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire from Friday October 2, 2020 to Sunday October 4, 2020.

Motivation

Political systems vary tremendously in the degree to which they centralize or decentralize political authority. In federal systems, regional governments are constitutionally entrenched and typically enjoy substantial autonomy to set distinctive policies geared toward their own citizens’ demands.

But while the literature on fiscal decentralization is now vast, regulatory decentralization has been much harder to conceptualize and measure cross-nationally. Like the proverbial economist looking for her keys only under the streetlight, scholars have focused on fiscal rather than regulatory decentralization because the former is what we know how to measure. A Google Scholar search for the phrase “regulatory decentralization” yields 64 hits; for “fiscal decentralization,” 11,100.

This lacuna has real consequences for our understanding of the institutional and political sources of regional autonomy. Recent work by Paolo Dardanelli and collaborators has shown that, in contrast to the oft-noted trend of fiscal decentralization in the developed world, nonfiscal policies have seen growing centralization pressures.¹

Regulatory policies such as price controls, entry restrictions, labor laws, real estate zoning, environmental regulation, and antitrust have often had more economically significant impacts than tax rates, spending, and debt. Burgeoning literatures on “economic freedom” and “market-preserving federalism” theorize that the extent to which regulation supplants market

decision-making could affect investor and worker choice of jurisdiction in federations.

Therefore, this conference aims to explore the regulatory policies of subcentral governments, both as they differ across regions within the same political system, and as responsibilities for them differ vertically between central and subcentral governments. To what extent do central governments constrain the regulatory autonomy of regional governments, or allow them to adopt independent regimes? What are the causes and consequences of these different approaches? Answering these questions is an important step toward developing a complete theory of the optimal design of federalism.

For this conference we particularly welcome descriptive papers on subcentral economic and social regulation in federations other than the United States, but we also invite theoretical and hypothesis-testing contributions, including cross-national work.

Participants are free to do whatever they like with their papers, but conference director Jason Sorens will be organizing a special issue submission for a journal with invited papers from the workshop.

Submission Details

All research papers will receive thorough commentary from two discussants. By submitting a proposal, you are also agreeing to serve as discussant on one other paper.

Authors of selected proposals will receive an honorarium of $750. Meals and lodging will be provided during the conference as well as a stipend to cover travel that has been booked according to travel guidelines.

Please submit a two-paragraph research proposal containing your research question, a sketch of the main thesis or hypothesis to be explored, and a brief description of the methods to be used to conference director Jason Sorens at ethics@anselm.edu by April 1, 2020. Authors of selected proposals will be notified by April 17.