

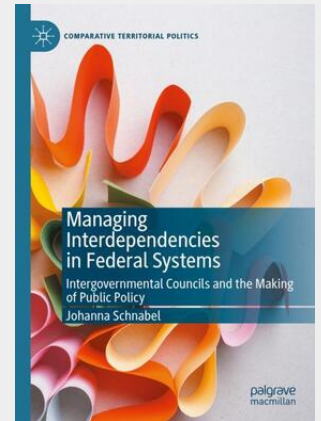
Schnabel

Managing Interdependencies in Federal Systems

Intergovernmental Councils and the Making of Public Policy

Intergovernmental councils have emerged as the main structures through which the governments of a federation coordinate public policy making. In a globalized and complex world, federal actors are increasingly interdependent. This mutual dependence in the delivery of public services has important implications for the stability of a federal system: policy problems concerning more than one government can destabilize a federation, unless governments coordinate their policies. This book argues that intergovernmental councils enhance federal stability by incentivizing governments to coordinate, which makes them a federal safeguard. By comparing reforms of fiscal and education policy in Australia, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland, this book shows that councils' effectiveness as one of federalism's safeguards depends on their institutional design and the interplay with other political institutions and mechanisms. Federal stability is maintained if councils process contentious policy problems, are highly institutionalized, are not dominated by the federal government, and are embedded in a political system that facilitates intergovernmental compromising and consensus-building.

'Intergovernmental councils have evolved as an institution designed to manage interdependence in federal systems. Based on an elaborate theoretical framework and impressive empirical research covering two policy fields in four federations, Johanna Schnabel reveals how these councils can also contribute to balance power in a federation. By providing new insights into the varieties, operation and dynamics of federalism, her book advances comparative research in this field.' –Arthur Benz, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany 'This book tackles the important question of countering unilateralism in the making of public policy in federal systems. Schnabel convincingly argues that intergovernmental councils play a crucial role in maintaining balance between central and constituent governments in federations. The book displays an impressive mastery of the cases and makes a major contribution to our understanding of the workings and impact of intergovernmental relations in federal systems.' –André Lecours, School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, Canada Intergovernmental councils have emerged as the main structures through which the governments of a federation coordinate public policy making. In a globalized and complex world, federal actors are increasingly interdependent. This mutual dependence in the delivery of public services has important implications for the stability of a federal system: policy problems concerning more than one government can destabilize a federation, unless governments coordinate their policies. This book argues that intergovernmental councils enhance federal stability by incentivizing governments to coordinate, which makes them a federal safeguard. By comparing reforms of fiscal and education policy in Australia, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland, this book shows that councils' effectiveness as one of federalism's safeguards depends on their institutional design and the interplay with other political institutions and mechanisms. Federal stability is maintained if councils process contentious policy problems, are highly institutionalized, are not dominated by the federal government, and are embedded in a political system that facilitates intergovernmental compromising and consensus-building. Johanna Schnabel is Newton International Fellow at the University of Kent, UK.



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