

## Laudatio for the Winner

The Jury for the Stein Rokkan Prize for Comparative Social Science Research 2021 has decided to honour Ran Hirschl in recognition of his book *City, State: Constitutionalism and the Megacity*, published by Oxford University Press.

The Jury was unanimous in highlighting “City, State: Constitutionalism and the Megacity” as a field-defining book. Readers will not think about cities and constitutions the same way after reading this book. The author points out the glaring absence of a place for cities on constitutional law thinking, despite their concentration of the world’s population at this point. The book brings together perspectives from political science, law, and sociology to show the economic and political importance of the city, but then shows equally how cities are systematically diminished when they do not have constitutional authority to protect themselves from politicians in the state and to demand things from corporations who use structural power against them.

The book is original, innovative and deeply comparative. It is an example on how a juridical perspective can grasp relevant political and policy dynamics. Empirically sweeping, it runs across the rich world and the developing world, showing that in the rich world, cities have been hemmed in by their constitutional status. In the developing world, for a variety of reasons that he explores, cities have sometimes been given their due.

This beautifully written book engages with big questions and messy realities; it is at the same time both truly global and truly comparative. The analysis utilizes a range of methods and spans several continents, many countries and the 195 national constitutions in effect at the end of 2019. Hirschl’s discussions move easily and seamlessly between precincts, urban areas, agglomerated megacities, provinces, countries and continents.

The book starts from the observation that megacities will be more dominant in the world, especially in the Global South and that this shift marks a major and unprecedented transformation of the organization of our societies. Yet, a “constitutional blind spot” exists because our constitutional institutions have failed to keep up with the new reality. The premise of Hirschl’s book is that “a polity’s constitutional order is more than mere law; in principle, it reflects that polity’s core identity, commitments, priorities and aspirations, and serves as a compass guiding its political and public life” (p. 16). Hirschl notes that cities have remained virtually absent from constitutional law and constitutional thought. As the world is urbanizing at an extraordinary rate, this book argues, new thinking about constitutionalism and urbanization is needed.

Constitutional silence regarding cities has an effect on not only the growth and well-being of cities but also human rights and democracy. This silence gains added relevance because as social and economic vanguards cities are more dense, unequal, progressive and diverse than the rest of the polity and national politics are often not entirely responsive to city residents' values, identity concerns, and priorities.

Constitutional thought and practice display an exceedingly statist understanding of the legal order and is preoccupied with the center–state allocation of powers, harking back to a Westphalian framework where constitutions often were conceived in rural societies. The old constitutional thought rests on the conventional building blocks of democracy – population, territory and government – which is strongly challenged in the “era of the city.” The most important political institution – constitutions – are silent on this issue leading to cities being overlooked and rendered systemically weak and underrepresented.

Broadly, the book addresses two issues. First, the gap between the extensive study of cities and urbanism and the virtual silence on constitutional thought, and the fact that constitutions say virtually nothing about cities. Second, the puzzle that almost all attempts to grant cities constitutional status and standing are in the Global South and not in the Global North.

In six chapters, the book considers the reasons for the "constitutional blind spot" concerning the metropolis, probes the constitutional relationship between states and (mega)cities worldwide, examines patterns of constitutional change and stalemate in city status, and aims to carve a new place for the city in constitutional thought, constitutional law and constitutional practice

In the fight for resources, for example, Hirschl shows how cities have emerged as command points of the world economy. Yet, the cities are fixed in place and are at the mercy of capital which has the opportunity to move its business elsewhere. Cases studies of cities in the old world underscore that cities are “creatures of the state”. Constitutional debates are sophisticated, but a constitutional debate concerning urbanization is absent.

By contrast, there is a “constitutional vibrancy” concerning urban agglomeration and megacity autonomy in large parts of the Global South. Hirschl hypothesizes that “real constitutional empowerment of cities is only likely to happen within constitutional structures that are either recent enough to have taken the megacity phenomenon into account, or flexible enough to be capable of change in response to it” (p.52). He derives the conditions under which cities successfully get more autonomy – when there is a functional need, when there is constitutional capacity, and when there is a political coalition in favour of autonomy.

For its intellectual originality, its global reach, and its identification of a real-world problem of impressive dimensions, the members of the 2021 Stein Rokkan Prize Committee – Giliberto Capano (Chair), Pepper D. Culpepper, Gunnar Grendstad, Marina Costa Lobo, Hanna Schwander – are pleased to recognize *City, State* as the unanimous Prize winner.

### **Honorary Mention**

In addition to this year's winner, the jury would also like to award an honorary mention. Shifting the focus of electoral research from explaining electoral outcomes to the question what elections mean to citizens, *Inside the mind of a voter* by Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison study the psychological bases of voter' behavior, their experience and emotions in the election process, and the sense of democratic resolution electoral participation might entail, and how these three components are interrelated and act dynamically over time in six very different countries that are seldom studied together. We award the honorary mention not only for the unique and innovative set of research approaches (ranging from panel study surveys, election diaries, and in-depth interviews to polling station observations) and the introduction of a psychological perspective and psychological elements such as personality, cognition, emotion, and identity in models of political behaviour pushing the boundaries of the discipline, but also for asking the big question what the process of voting means to citizens in times where political disputes over policy issues often grow bitter.