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Over the last few years, there has been a surge of interest in small states and territories among legal researchers, with several initiatives aimed at raising awareness and fostering research on the specific legal dimensions of ‘small’ jurisdictions (i.e. those with less than 1.5 million residents, in a commonly accepted notion), or even of ‘micro’ ones (even smaller). One reason for this growing interest is the intriguing features of small places, including their unique legal dimensions and their historically successful efforts to survive and stay viable, despite their lacking several elements and resources associated with ‘regular’ states. Another reason for this interest is the perception that they may serve as laboratories or observatories to analyse dynamics and solutions about governance and the law which may be reproducible – or actually work, if covertly – in ‘larger’ jurisdictions worldwide. Thus, small jurisdictions epitomise current issues of interest for all governance/legal systems and jurisdictions, and feature prominently in offering useful elements with which to devise new models of statehood, sovereignty and good governance for the 21st century.

This collection of essays seeks to demonstrate both rationales for studying small states. It also represents the first issue in the Queen Mary University of London (QMUL), Centre for Small States book series *The world of small states* – the editors, Petra Butler and Caroline Morris are the Directors of the Centre – and includes the proceedings of the inaugural conference of the Centre held at QMUL on 7 September 2015.

The book is structured in three parts: Part I consists of one article only, derived from the keynote speech given at the 2015 Conference by Sir Geoffrey Palmer QC, former Prime Minister of New Zealand. This focuses on the existential threat that climate change presents for a number of small island states in the Pacific and Indian oceans. The main value of this paper is to promote awareness in respect to the coming catastrophe and potential solutions.

Part II is quite aptly titled ‘Small states: challenges and adventures in law’. It is a collection of scholarly essays on specific challenges and characteristics of small states and their legal systems: analyses can be found here on the specific challenges of competition law and policy (Briguglio); and on their strategies to ‘punch above their weight’ in international organisations, such as the UN Security Council and the European Union (Thorhallsson). Flinck analyses specifically how Luxembourg and its small size could gain leverage from EU law, considering that small size, even in a legal and constitutional sense, may become a resource, and even a strategy, in a multinational context characterised by a strong supra-national system. Mumford deals with international tax law: a popular arena for small jurisdictions to develop strategies for survival and viability. This essay focuses on how small states belong to a special group in relation to the negotiation of multilateral tax rules and policies, with different expectations and agendas.

Part II also deals with climate change and the associated risks and survivability issues for low-lying small island states (Costi and Ross), thus resonating with the keynote paper presented in Part I. The focus of the Costi & Ross paper is on small low-lying states’ sovereignty and statehood. Finally, two papers dealing with colonial legal legacy, legal pluralism, politics and democracy round up Part II. The first one analyses the relation between colonial legacy and democracy, highlighting how local circumstances may not produce, beyond the forms of the ‘Westminster model’, a healthy democratic environment

(D. O'Brien). The other takes us to a specific experience in Samoa, where normative pluralism affects politics and the electoral process (Suaalii-Sauni).

Part III deals with legal professions and legal education. Three papers are provided here. The first, authored by four scholars from around the world (Donlan, Marrani, Twomey and Zammit), deals with 'mixed jurisdictions' in the most common categorisation of comparative law: Malta, Jersey, Seychelles. The key theme is how small places borrow from larger ones, and the consequences of these choices. The second investigates the legal professions and legal education 'in a (bigish) small state': Cyprus. Dynamics and patterns of diversity are again skillfully exposed by the author (Hatzimihail), with specific emphasis on how the professional élites act as technical and cultural gatekeepers to stymie change. The third and final piece in this section (Bilimoria) dwells on the development of professional ethics in the South Pacific region, and in Fiji in particular.

The book represents an important step forward for legal research on small jurisdictions. A robust theoretical or methodological frame is lacking: aside from a short preface by the editors, there is no introductory chapter or conclusion, thus indicating that the research remains at an initial stage and is yet to produce a coherent set of conclusive findings of general applicability). The structure of the book does, however, provide elements for an initial framework for approaching the topic: these small places are characterised by constant and serious survivability/viability issues; their legal systems are affected by their size and their often complex and plural (legal) history, warranting specific survival strategies, specific features in their legal systems, specific solutions in a number of areas of the law; and legal education and legal professions in those places reflect their often unique set of historic and socio-legal circumstances.

This text is rich in not-easily-available data and the main theme – the surfeit of scholarship on the specificities of small jurisdictions – is evident throughout the different essays. It thus represents an important beginning for a new strand of legal research on small states that is a welcome addition to the field.

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