



Management Board

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Introduction

Ongoing trends towards transnational integration of markets and economic transactions are giving rise to far-reaching transformations of governance both within and beyond the nation-state. This Research Programme focuses on the drivers, dynamics, and consequences of these epochal developments in political and economic life. It brings together political scientists whose research agendas are rooted in the fields of political economy, public policy and/or international relations, while drawing on diverse theoretical and methodological traditions. What binds us together is an abiding interest in addressing some of the biggest political problems of our time - finding a path to more equitable, democratic and peaceful relations within and between polities - by describing, explaining and evaluating these transnational transformations of political economy and governance.

Political Economy

The Programme's focus on political economy is broad. It involves, in the first instance, descriptive and normative exploration of political-economic practice, policies and governance throughout the world. Active research within the Programme, for instance, characterizes and evaluates the development of varieties of capitalism, welfare reform, economic inequalities, structural adjustment, transnational production networks, as well as financial regulation, labor-market protections, working time, regional development policies, and many other intrinsically important features of political-economic life.

The Programme's focus on political economy, however, also involves study of causal linkages between politics and economics. These linkages can entail how political conflicts and institutions influence economic developments in the world generally, and within and between industrialized and developing nations in particular. Active research, for instance, explores how power-infused struggles among groups, states and international organizations shape financial and investment activity, fiscal and monetary policies, labor relations, welfare state policies, and post-conflict economic development. In turn, linkages between politics and economics can cut in the other direction, where economic relations and interests strongly influence the development of political institutions throughout the world. Active research in the Program, for instance, studies the role of global economic developments and economic struggles that underlie the development (or lack thereof) of national, international and supranational regulatory order, political inequalities, the quality of democracy, and violent political conflict.

Transnational Governance

Equally crucial to the Programme is its focus on transnational governance. Political, social, cultural, and economic integration have eroded the predominance of national states as sites and sources of rule-making authority, giving way to what can be broadly termed transnational governance. Exploring such developments again involves a descriptive and normative agenda: understanding how regulations, policies, and practices affecting social, economic and political life involve collectivities distinct from nation-states and less institutionalized than government.

Such governance includes experiments with networked, multi-level regulation and public problem solving within, above, and between nation-states, and across a wide range of policy fields, from financial stability to environmental sustainability. Active research is taking place, for instance, into the nature and value of: regional governance (e.g. European Union policies, rule-making, and benchmarking practices); international governance (e.g. UN or many other inter-governmental organizations for peacemaking, development, democracy, and financial stability); supranational governance (e.g. non-state regulation via private or NGO initiatives for banking, environmental, food safety, and labor standards); and networks that straddle these levels of governance, making them multi-level in nature.

Transnational integration and governance also involves, however, causal relations connecting national developments to other levels of governance above, below or alongside the nation-state. What happens at one level of governance often strongly affects and is strongly affected by what happens at others. Active research is taking place, for instance, into how regional developments (e.g. EU integration on welfare policy and regulatory standards) reflect and affect national, subnational, and international politics; and into how supranational developments (e.g. private financial regulation) spill over into regional, national, subnational, and international regulatory space. And active research considers how such transnational governance can and does involve political and economic actors pursuing their goals at one level of governance by taking action at another - a process visible on a range of issues (from labor standards to immigration laws) and involving many actors (from unions and companies to bureaucrats and NGOs).