

Call for Papers

Diasporas and Homeland Governance: Decentering the state as an analytical category

International Workshop, 3./4. November 2017, organized by the SFB 700 - Collaborative Research Centre on "Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood" at the Free University of Berlin.

Deadline for abstract submission: 7. August, 2017

Contrary to an increasingly popular policy discourse, the transnational mobilization of diaspora communities and individuals contributing to the governance of their homelands (in the form of, for example, remittances, development initiatives or human rights promotion) has not always been unequivocally welcomed, and has led to conflict between diaspora actors, international stakeholders, sending states and local populations. This echoes the wider research on governance provision by external actors to areas of limited statehood (ALS), which has found that governance by actors considered external to the state, such as International Organisations, Regional Organisations, INGOs, MNCs and third countries, is often met with significant contestation. This contestation takes various forms, from the questioning of representation and local ownership, all the way to accusations of neo-imperialism and violence. In turn, it can lead to unintended changes, ineffectiveness and even the failure of the intervention in question. From a social science-perspective, a central concern in this field has thus been to assess the conditions for legitimate and effective governance provision by external actors to ALS.

Research on governance starts from the premise that, contrary to popular modernist theorising, the majority of the world's population lives in areas where the state is not the sole setter of rules, or provider of common goods and services. While, both from an historical and regional perspective such limited statehood can be considered the norm rather than the exception, globalisation has further accelerated the diversification of actors who partake in such governance. Governance is thus conceptualized as the setting of collectively binding rules and provision of goods and services to domestic populations. While governance research has attempted to shift its focus away from the state, the analytical distinction between actors that are either external or internal to the state is still built in to the research paradigm. And it is along this spatial boundary that explanations for governance effectiveness and legitimacy are most often sought. Through this analytical lens diasporas do engage in homeland governance. However, they do so in complex and contested ways. They may provide common goods and services to domestic populations from abroad, thus qualifying as external actors, but they also often retain citizenship or a connection to the homeland that would qualify them as internal. Meanwhile, states themselves increasingly harness their own diaspora populations, thus extending conceptualizations of citizenship and governance beyond traditional spatial boundaries. Ultimately, existing state-centric research categories do not capture this (spatial) ambiguity of diaspora governance.

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This workshop seeks to address these issues by cross-pollinating research on the transnational mobilization of diaspora communities towards their homelands with research on global governance and external governance provision to ALS (for further information please see www.sfb-governance.de). We welcome contributions that address the following questions:

Areas and Modes of Diaspora Governance: What kind of governance do diasporas engage in in their homelands, and with what intentions? Where does this governance take place and how does it unfold? What kind of governance constellations do diasporas enter into and how do they interact with and relate to the state and other governance actors? What kind of meta-governance strategies exist to coordinate diaspora governance?

What value does the internal/external distinction hold in relation to the state? And what alternative categories might we come up with to think about diaspora governance?

Effectiveness and Legitimacy of Diaspora Governance: Under what conditions do diasporas provide effective and legitimate governance to their homelands? How do diaspora-state relations impact on the legitimacy and effectiveness of diaspora governance? What are the sources of legitimacy that diasporas draw upon when they engage in governance? Is there a trade-off between local and international legitimacy?

How do we capture the effectiveness and legitimacy of diaspora governance if spaces of governance are no longer equivalent to the state?

Implications of Diaspora Governance: What conflicts arise when diasporas provide governance to areas of limited statehood, both at the local and the global level? What kind of institutions and norms form around diaspora governance? What alternative geographies arise through diaspora governance? How does diaspora mobilization challenge the binaries of external and internal governance provision?

How can we decenter the state as an analytical category to make sense of transnational spaces and actors of governance?

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Please send abstracts (max. 300 words) to catherine.craven@fu-berlin.de.

Deadline for abstract submission: 7. August, 2017

The workshop will be held at the Free University of Berlin on 3./4. November, 2017. Expenses for travel and accommodation will be covered. Selected contributors will be notified by mid-August 2017 and full papers will be due in mid October.

For any queries please contact:

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