InHouse&Guests Workshop

Rethinking the Westphalian frame: the changing nature of claims to legitimacy and justice in transnational politics

Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research, 7 February 2013

Research unit 4 ‘Paradoxes and Perspectives of Democratisation’ in cooperation with research unit 3 ‘Global Governance Revisited’ hosted a workshop that discussed new theoretical developments and key empirical issues regarding the legitimacy and justice of global politics.

In current political science we are witnessing a paradigm shift which may be called a “rethinking of the Westphalian frame”. For a long time, western political imagination circled around the nation-state as the central political category and viewed politics beyond the state in the cognitive frame of an international order of nation-states. Accordingly, the issues of political legitimacy and justice were mostly reflected as normative concerns between fellow national citizens or nation-states respectively. However, growing fragmentation and pluralisation of politics since the second half of the 20th century, often described with the term ‘globalisation’, has led to a critical reflection of this Westphalian mindset of politics. Not only do we perceive today a variety of relevant actors in global politics besides states (for example, NGOs, international organisations like UN and WTO, private corporations etc.). There also seems to be a change in the basic views and norms by which we understand and evaluate global politics and, related to that, a change in how legitimacy claims are made in global politics.

The contributions to the workshop touched upon several aspects of these changes. After Daniel Gaus (Centre for Global Cooperation Research) and Frank Gadinger (Centre for Global Cooperation Research) introduced into the topic of the workshop, the first session discussed the issue of how to research legitimacy in today's international relations based on a paper presented by Dirk Peters’ (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt). This methodologically oriented debate was followed by a conceptual reflection on how to understand democratic legitimacy...
in terms of procedural performance. In this regard, Daniel Gaus and Christopher Lord (ARENA, Oslo) focused on the usefulness of the distinction between input- and output-legitimacy regarding the idea of transnational democracy. Holger Niemann (University of Duisburg-Essen) presented a hermeneutical empirical analysis of the nature of legitimacy claims in the context of UN Security Council meetings. In the afternoon sessions, Christopher Bickerton (SciencesPo, Paris) elaborated on the changing nature of states in a globalizing world from nation-states to member-states. In his view, growing involvement in transnational relations transforms the character of formerly sovereign nation-states into states as mutually controlling members of inter- and transnational regimes. Finally, David Chandler (University of Westminster and Centre for Global Cooperation Research) reflected upon a changed understanding of responsibility in the context of intervention politics that he described as a new form of paternalism in global governance.