

# Transnational Configurations, Conflict and Governance

Political Science

## Programme leader and staff

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## Scope and position of the programme

Since the late 20th century, there has been a growing divergence between the dynamics observable in the social, political and economic organisation of society, and the inherited conceptual framework of the 20th century political sciences. The changing configuration of politics - through 'globalisation' of production networks, the transnationalisation of policy-making, and a decoupling of identity and territory - impel conceptual shifts. In turn, a conceptual reorientation - a *rethinking* of the core axioms in the 'science of politics' as developed under the conditions of the past epoch - implies an 'opening up' of the research field, a broadening of the traditional empirical focus to include a wider range of sites where politics become manifest.

This research programme has two interlinked core research areas: conflict and institutional transformation. Both research areas re-examine established notions of identities, categorizations and boundaries defined by classical political science concepts. They delve into the transformation of concepts like citizenship, representation and legitimacy traditionally associated with a state-centric paradigm. We also have a profound interest in how the state and its institutions have evolved and are again evolving, what this means for politics, and how political science may understand these developments.

The first core research area concerns conflicts at every level: from neighbourhood conflicts to civil war and interstate conflict. It concerns the negotiation or escalation of different forms of objective or subjectively experienced inequality and exclusion. These conflicts are in part a consequence *and* further cause of transnationalisation processes. The distributive consequences of socio-economic, ecological and technological change are challenged. At the same time, these conflicts and associated risks and threat perceptions are themselves defined and constituted in ways that impact on their trajectories.

The second core research area concerns institutional transformation, again as a consequence and further cause of transnationalisation processes. This transformation expresses itself both in the altered character of states and interstate organisations and the emergence of new types of governance institutions. We are concerned with the contested legitimacy of these institutions, the norms they propagate and the outcomes they generate. Our interests include contestation surrounding regional and global intergovernmental organisations; direct engagement of citizens and non-state actors with international institutions; the engagement of a range of western political actors with 'weak' and authoritarian states; and bureaucratic competition between state, interstate and sui generis entities.

The key contributions of our programme lie in:

- the exploration of potential commonalities between superficially very different types and scales of conflict, against the backdrop of transnationalisation;
- the exploration of potential commonalities between battles over legitimacy across a wide range of new or altered political configurations, against the backdrop of transnationalisation;
- the commitment to use empirical and theoretical research to help rethink political science for the 21st century through cross-fertilisation of insights from international relations theory, globalization studies, conflict studies, political economy, political philosophy, social theory, governance and public administration studies, gender studies, anthropology, legal sociology, organizational studies, and science and technology studies
- the commitment to use empirical research and theoretical innovations to feed into important public debates about topical issues

## Groundings

The research programme perceives its interests as shaped by two simultaneous and interrelated processes of transformation, and the emerging configurations associated with these processes. The first concerns frictions between Westphalian constellations and processes of globalisation in economics, law, migration and technology and their interplay which are reconstituting politics (Giddens, 1999; Habermas, 2001; Held and McGrew, 1999; Rosenau, 1997; Scholte, 2000). The second concerns frictions between post-colonial constellations and increasing global multi-polarity. Together, these forces produce significant new inequalities; insecurities and identities (Castells, 2000-2002; Cox, 1987; Falk, 1999; Mamdani, 1996). They also produce and are in turn shaped by new actors, in the form of transnational corporations; transnational advocacy networks; transnational professional networks; diasporic networks; transborder social and religious movements, and criminal networks. We do not regard these processes and actors as pre-given, but enquire into their historical constitution and the formation of their identities in interaction with a changing institutional landscape.

It is against this background that we situate our interests in conflicts and institutions. Conflicts are characterized by the development, affirmation and exploitation of identities, informal and sometimes criminal economies, the experience of institutional limits and forum shopping, and the blurring of boundaries between local and global, public and private actors (Creveld, 1991; Davies and Harre, 1990; Hansen and Stepputat, 2006; Kelman, 1997; Kaldor, 1999; Keen, 2008; von Benda Beckman and Strijbosch, 1986). A range of discourses from threat containment to pragmatic negotiation and direct democracy to human security approaches compete to constitute these conflicts and formulate and implement what are deemed to be appropriate policies (Benhabib, 1996; Bigo, 2005; Commission on Human Security, 2003; Duffield, 2001; Huysmans, 2006)

Institutional transformation is conditioned by the two processes outlined above. It is produced by changes in the deep structures of society and the economy, together with the fact that contemporary policy issues by their nature tend to transcend boundaries between and within classical institutions (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Ruggie, 1998; Beck 1999, 2005). On the one hand, we see states and international organizations transforming themselves and their relations to the other institutional realms of modern societies: the market, civil society and knowledge institutions. Thus, they seek to extend their capacity to adequately address contested issues, and to ensure legitimacy and accountability, often at the interfaces between different spheres and publics (Cohen and Sabel, 1997, Kenny &

Meadowcroft, 1999; Latour & Weibel, 2005; Mansbridge, 1999; Mouffe, 2000). On the other hand, a variety of new configurations have been emerging, located in between these realms and connecting multiple levels (e.g. Healey, 1997; Held & McGrew, 2002; Hajer, 2003; Fischer, 2003).

### **Objectives, research questions and research approach**

Against this background, our first objective is to understand the practices and discourses emerging from contemporary conflicts. We consider path dependencies, learning, and institutional inertia; whether and how legitimacy is achieved by different actors and discourses; and whether and how forms of accountability are organised. We also look at outcomes in terms of distributive effects, changing identities, new forms of citizenship and new qualities of life and environment.

Our second objective is to understand under what conditions, how and with what consequences new institutional settings may emerge, shifting from more or less *ad hoc* or informal problem solving and conflict resolution to more routine-based forms of governance. Novel regimes may emerge from the interplay between ongoing institutional changes and the agency of actors involved in conflicts. Obviously, these processes of institutionalization are as political in nature as the practices and discourses they tend to privilege: alternative regimes will differ in terms of the outcomes they are likely to produce, and the opportunities they offer for achieving legitimacy and accountability.

By interrelating these two core research areas, we aim to elucidate political practices and discourses by analyzing their structural and historical context as well as on-going dynamics of mobilization. We study agency and disempowerment in processes of negotiation, deliberation, mediation and problem solving as well as processes of structural and ideational change. More specifically, our research questions include:

1. How do we understand contemporary conflicts and institutional transformations in the context of transnational forces and developments?
2. How do we understand the relations between the practices and discourses that address conflicts, their dynamic institutional environment, and the outcomes they produce?
3. How are understandings of conflict, threat and risk historically constituted and politically constructed?
4. How, and under what conditions, do governance institutions transform and novel institutions emerge?
5. What norms do these institutions propagate? How are these norms produced and contested?
6. In what ways is the legitimacy of these institutions constructed and contested?
7. How do alternative configurations and the practices and discourses they tend to nurture compare in terms of inclusion/exclusion, dis-/empowering of different actors, legitimization and outcomes produced?

Our methodological emphasis is on diversity. We do not promote a single ontological or epistemological orientation. Epistemologically, we navigate a course between radical

positivism and strict scepticism. We count ourselves as part of the "intellectual community for which it seems worthwhile to try to figure out collectively how best to talk about the empirical world" through inter-subjective knowledge (Kirk and Miller, 1986, 11-12). Ontologically, we seek empirical and theoretical inspiration well beyond the most traditional sites and orientations of political science. Any site where forms of power and governance are manifested, and any theory that helps us understand the structures and processes we find, can in principle be part of our understanding of political science research. We do not make a predetermined choice to see the world as structured by ideational constructs or material interests. Instead, we are particularly interested in the interplay between ideational and material forces. Concretely, our methods include historiography, ethnography, comparative case studies, organisational studies, process-tracing, content and discourse analysis and theoretical studies.

This positions our programme centre stage in debates on conflict, governance, globalization, regionalization, democratization, democratic reform and neo-institutionalism. In addition to contributing to each of these literatures in and of themselves, we intend to produce theoretical innovation by bringing them together, grounded in solid empirical work.

### **Core Research Area (A) Conflicts, civil society and democratization**

*Members:* Paul Aarts, Marlies Glasius, Maarten Hajer, Gerd Junne, Saira Khan, David Laws, Nel Vandekerckhove.

*Vacancy:* new chair in IR; assistant professor

*Associate researchers currently include:* Ivar Halfman; Bertine Kamphuis; Ram Manikkalingam; Mohamed Mojahedi; Maarten Poorter; Sohrab Razzaeghi ; Fatemeh Sadeghi; Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr and coordinators Mara Schoots, Juliette Verhoeven and Lisalette Dijkers.

*PhD researchers:* Saskia Baas; Gep Eissenloeffel; Nanke Verloo.

#### *Conflicts, Identities and Negotiation*

Conflicts vary substantially in depth and scale. From urban neighborhoods through contestations around established and transitional institutions to intra- and inter-state clashes that have global implications, conflicts constitute a ground on which social interaction and political development unfold. We seek to understand the factors that shape the emergence and persistence of conflicts and the ways in which the negotiation of practical (often provisional) responses to specific conflicts (from stemming violence to agreeing on plans for joint action) can come to constitute governance.

Comparisons, facilitated by the programme's embedding in international networks, will emphasize the subjective experience of actors, the way external factors shape material and physical security and the ways identities and legitimacy (of actors, knowledge, authority) are renegotiated. Non-state actors, including transnational social movements, globalized diasporas, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and clandestine networks, have a major impact on human security in conflict and post-conflict settings. Other central concerns include the role transformations and specific vulnerabilities associated with gender under conditions of war and migration and the practices and discourses of mobilization, contestation,

negotiation, and institutionalization through which citizenship is constituted and regulated in the public arena.

The programme will also consider new institutions, such as the international and hybrid criminal tribunals, as well as more ad hoc arrangements, such as novel practices and discourses for urban conflict settlement, which have emerged in response to new types of conflict. The contested legitimacy of such settings, and their long-term effects on conflict societies including their capacity to provide alternative ways of structuring society, forms a fertile ground for research which spans the two main concerns of this cluster.

#### *State-Society Relations, Authoritarianism and Democratization*

Thinking about democratization is at an impasse both in academia and in policy-making, since democratization has retracted in many countries in the 2000s after initial democratic change in the 1990s. An optimistic literature in the early 1990s saw positive linkages between the vibrancy of civil society, economic liberalization and multi-party elections as elements in a process of sustained democratization. Following empirical realities, new studies questioned each of these elements, and their relation to each other.

This research line intends to go beyond the current impasse through ethnographic research, comparative case studies, multi-method analysis, and theory development. Current research questions include whether and how civic action can contribute to various processes of democratization; whether civil society can also be seen as sustaining authoritarian rule; whether and in which ways international actors may contribute to or detract from domestic civil society activities in these processes; whether and how both regimes and civil societies are responding to the opportunities and challenges posed by various forms of globalization.

#### **Core Research Area (B) Configurations of knowledge, power and governance**

*Members:* Marieke de Goede; John Grin, Maarten Hajer, Rob Hagendijk, Otto Holman, Chunglin Kwa, David Laws, Anne Loeber, Mark Rutgers; Amanda Smullen, Rob van Es.

*Vacancy:* Associate professor

*Associate researchers:* Bram Bos, Enza Lissandrello; Wytske Versteeg

*PhD researchers:* Marlous Blankesteyn; Jan Hassink; Freek Janssens; Odile Keulers; Sjef Orbons; Tjerk-Jan Schuitmaker; Erica ter Haar-van Twillert; Victor Toom; Eline van Haastrecht

#### *European External Relations, Capitalist Development and Democratic Conditionality*

The central theme in this research sub-cluster is the transformative power and dependency of the European Union vis-à-vis its international environment and immediate periphery. The capacity of the European Union to project its power externally is targeted at strengthening democratic structures and developing economies also in remote regions and countries, for instance through its development policy.

One key question is whether Europe's role in the world is affected by a distinctly European perspective on security matters, with a bearing on the specific definitions of threat and security deployed, as well as on the prioritisation of political action. In this context, it is

important to investigate existence of a 'European security culture,' and to describe, analyse and appraise such culture.

Another, related research concern is the relationship between capitalist development and democracy. A positive linkage between the two is generally assumed by European policy-makers but theoretically and empirically problematic. Moreover, it is no longer possible, either in the field of security, democracy-promotion or economic policies, to maintain a strict separation between internal and external European relations. A comparative analysis, embedded in collaborative international networks, of capitalist development and democratic transition in different (sub)regions will shed new light on the role of transnational forces (business, civil society, technology) in producing or frustrating stability and security in a world beyond the boundaries of the European Union.

Research will be conducted on the security component of development policy (e.g. the securitisation of migration), on the intersection of democracy promotion and economic development strategies, and on the diffusion of knowledge-based assets to less developed countries. In the literature on security governance a central role is played by the 2004 European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) towards a number of countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa.

Issues at stake include energy security, migration and the intersection of security and development. Great power rivalry is particularly important in these sub-regions, multi-polarity difficult to realise. This comes close to the idea that the poles in the would-be multi-polar world are composed of centres and peripheries, the latter being seen as spheres of influence by the respective cores/centres.

### *Risk, Knowledge and Governance*

A variety of key issues and conflicts in contemporary societies challenge long-standing institutions and practices and discourses. New security problems often manifest themselves through the lens of 'risk'. In the area of health care, pressures on welfare states result from global competition, incumbent practices and discourses are contested, and novel opportunities emerge from socio-technical innovations. In areas such as energy, agriculture, food and water management, demands are made pertaining to global climate change and other ecological concerns. Our work in this core research area aims to analyze, evaluate and compare the institutional arrangements that are designed to accommodate these developments and the efforts of professionals (scientists, civil servants, issue-driven activists, and other actors) to adjust practices and discourses embedded in these institutions. Empirically, the focus is on reflexive arrangements in the polity, participatory innovations, organizational accountability and democratic re-arrangements.

Theoretically and thematically, the focus is on the democratic accountability and legitimization of new institutional arrangements, known under such labels as corporate social responsibility, deliberative / reflexive policy analysis and trans-disciplinary knowledge production. We look at their contribution to the construction of roles and identities of citizens, consumers and experts; and the relations between these and existing governmental bodies, civil society organizations, the corporate sector and knowledge generating institutions. This core research area is embedded in networks with scholars within and outside the Netherlands, offering opportunities for comparative research.

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