

Call for Papers

Theories of / for Transitional Justice

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The concept transitional justice (TJ) is rapidly gaining in significance as a way of dealing with the past of a violent conflict or dictatorial regimes. It refers to processes and mechanisms of addressing the legacy of past violence in order to promote the transition to peace and security after massive human rights abuses. This may include retributive justice in form of punishment through trials and tribunals as well as restorative justice aiming at restoring community relations through e.g. truth commissions or memory work. Given the global reach of the concept our volume asks how it can be embedded theoretically.

The term transitional justice was first used in the 1990s to describe a time of change which marked the 'transition' from a violent to a peaceful society, thereby establishing ties with the wider debate about democratisation and peace building in post-conflict societies. Its special contribution to the debate is that the phase of change is closely linked with the pursuit of justice. TJ is based on the assumption that the transition to peace after violent conflicts or dictatorship requires a clear break from injustices and the amelioration of human rights abuses and war crimes. Hence, it is not only retrospectively aimed at the past but also towards a future of peace. In concrete, the aims of transitional justice can be summarised as: uncovering the truth about crimes, identifying those responsible and holding them accountable, restoring the dignity of the victims, encouraging reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, as well as preventing future conflicts and criminal offenses.

Against the backdrop of the multiple practical activities as well as vibrant academic discussions since the early 1990s it is surprising that there are few attempts to conceptualise TJ theoretically. The objective of our volume is therefore to explore analytical tools which might contribute to a better understanding of processes of transitional justice. In the contributions, the theoretical dimension might be introduced either by developing a theory of transitional justice itself, or by showing the productivity of complementary theoretical

approaches for this area of research. This might include theoretical approaches to social change and the construction of (individual or collective) identity, critical or feminist theory, discourse or normative theory, democratisation theory, or theories of human rights. Contributions might address questions such as:

- How can processes of social, legal and/or political transition be conceptualised?
- What theories of justice are being invoked?
- How can the working of power relations be analysed?
- How can the process of identity constructions be understood?
- How does transitional justice relate to other concepts such as democratisation?
- How can the construction of international norms be conceptualised?

We invite contributions which address the topic from a purely theoretical as well as from an empirically sustained perspectives.

Please send your abstract (500 words) to transitional-justice@staff.uni-marburg.de.

Deadline is 31st May 2011.

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