

Norms in Conflict

2nd Annual Graduate Conference by the Cluster of Excellence ‘The Formation of Normative Orders’, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main

3-5 December 2010

Call for Papers

Disputes over culture, collective identity, moral concepts, or political convictions are only some examples of how conflicts arise in the course of social transformation. In these conflicts norms are implicitly or explicitly renegotiated and reshaped, while the time, place, course, and extent of these conflicts are themselves shaped by norms. This fundamental interplay between norms and conflicts is the focus of this year’s interdisciplinary graduate conference initiated by the Cluster of Excellence ‘The Formation of Normative Orders’.

The aim of the conference is to examine from both theoretical and empirical perspectives the relationship between norms and conflicts as well their manifold forms of expression. Graduate students and junior researchers in disciplines such as philosophy, jurisprudence, political science, history, anthropology, economics, sociology, and religious studies are invited to submit paper proposals. Because our aim is to encourage fruitful exchange between disciplines, we particularly welcome papers that invite interdisciplinary dialogue.

The interrelationship between norms and conflicts may be examined in any number of fields, among these are:

Particularism / Universalism – Norms are often claimed to have universal validity, though these claims tend to be simultaneously dependent on membership in a specific community. How are such universal claims to validity legitimised? Must these justifications refer to qualities of impartiality, neutrality or secularity? What counter-reactions do they evoke? How do actors manage to create meaningful and appropriate cultural, political, legal or economic orders from the interplay of different rule systems?

The Numinous / The Nomothetic – The contingent boundaries delineating ‘real knowledge’ from ‘mere belief’ necessarily affect how normative claims can legitimately be justified. In this regard social actors make different assumptions. Thus, scientific worldviews collide with religious ones, scholarly interpretations of religious texts with orthodox readings, traditional methods of knowledge production with ‘scientific’ methods. How do these various forms of knowledge differ in their accounts of normativity? Need these accounts be mutually exclusive, or might they even complement each

other? And does this apparently epistemological problem not in fact lie at the heart of debates over such issues as the use of new technologies, climate change forecasts or intercultural conflicts? Moreover, is it even possible to understand normative conflicts apart from this epistemic dimension?

War / Peace – The search for terms of peaceful coexistence brings the complex interrelationship between norms and conflicts into particularly sharp focus. While norms serve to prevent or manage violent conflicts, they may also become contentious issues themselves. How do norms shape the course of violent conflicts, pacification strategies, or their ultimate resolution? How do forms of conflict resolution, whether these be ritualised, imposed or institutionalised, influence subsequent normative transformations?

Law / Culture – Social orders are regulated by a variety of different systems of norms: besides legal norms at the international and state levels, there are moral, traditional, and religious norms. As a result, conflicts between norms often manifest themselves as conflicts between law and morality, law and religion, or law and culture. But might this perspective not also misconstrue existing interdependencies? Are traditional ideas about the hierarchy of norms adequate for the resolution of such norm conflicts? Would it not be more constructive to focus attention on the substantive issues and interests underlying these disputes?

Autonomy / Development – The declared aim of development policy is the promotion of development processes that are sustained by local actors. However, the norms and aims towards which such policies are oriented are largely shaped by donor states. How does this fundamental conflict of interests play out in practice? Do these norms conflict with local ideas of development, or can they be creatively appropriated into the local context? Given the structural power asymmetries between donor states and recipients, how much influence can the idea of autonomous development exert?

Abstracts in English or German of no more than 500 words, dealing with any of the above or related themes, should be sent by **16 July 2010** to the following email address: nachwuchskonferenz2010@normativeorders.net

We are looking into possibilities to provide a limited number of travel grants to participants but are currently unable to make any definitive commitments.