

Ordering and Responsibility in the Shadow of Hierarchies



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Ordering and Responsibility in the Shadow of Hierarchies

INEF's research activities concentrate on the interface of the three fields of peace and conflict research, development research and global governance research. The unifying empirical focus is on structures of violence, poverty and lack of rights, which particularly affect fragmented societies in the Global South. An emphasis is placed on problems arising from the efforts of the Global Northwest to control or even influence these structures internationally.

From October 2018 onwards, the new research programme will build on the work of the previous research programme but will develop it further in a more focussed way. It is largely geared to the situation of precarious or insecure poor and vulnerable groups in the Global South and to the crisis and transformation of fragile states. INEF's leitmotif, "Ordering and Responsibility in the Shadow of Hierarchies", places special emphasis on unequal power and power structures by examining how under these conditions existing orders are questioned, further developed and newly formed through social practices. At the same time, it takes the power of actors seriously and focuses on relational approaches for conceptualizing moral agency. Empirically, it deals with (neo-)liberal paradigms of intervention from a critical perspective. From these complementary approaches, INEF works on three thematic areas:

- 1. Transnational governance and the responsibility of private actors
(Focus: Implementation of human rights; digitalization)**
- 2. Development partnerships in times of SDGs (Focus: Poverty reduction and political participation)**
- 3. Resistance and Political Ordering
(Focus: Causes, dynamics and consequences of social mobilization)**

The transfer of research findings into practice is also an important characteristic of INEF and comprises a broad portfolio (policy advice, scientific support of policy advice, networking and multi-stakeholder exchange; information transfer and commenting on developments in the media and via formats aimed at a broader public such as the publications "[Global Trends. Analysis](#)" and "[Friedensgutachten](#)" (Peace Report) – a collaborative project of the four leading German research institutes. A significant proportion of these transfer activities takes place within the framework of institutionalized cooperation with actors active in the policy-related or policy-advisory field ([Development and Peace Foundation](#) (sef:), [Working Group on Peace and Development](#) (FriEnt)).

The Leitmotif „Ordering and Responsibility in the Shadow of Hierarchies“

Between 2018 and 2021, INEF research will be guided by the leitmotif "Ordering and responsibility in the shadow of hierarchies". The starting point is the recognition that both the formation and justification as well as the controversy and deconstruction of normative and political-institutional orders are shaped by formal and informal hierarchies in which the rules of the game are defined along power asymmetries. Regulatory authority in numerous policy areas has become increasingly fragmented and blurred in the face of processes of ordering which are very often disruptive. Moreover, the spheres claimed overlap regularly. Hence, conceptually, order can no longer be understood within the framework of a multi-level architecture following the principle of subsidiarity or as hegemonic product. In many cases, transnational polycentrism has developed, which is expressed not least in overlapping legal systems. These structures are permeated by complex hierarchies. In close connection with the Chair of International Relations and Development Policy (Prof. Dr. Tobias Debiel) at the Institute of Political Science and its leitmotif "Inequality and Hierarchies in World Society", two questions are of particular importance:

- a) To what extent are hierarchies maintained or altered by dominating, but also subordinate, actors referring to prevailing norms or discourses on normative orders by confirmation or dissent?
- b) How are unequally distributed power relations reflected in forms of global and transnational governance over fields with controversial regulatory control?

Another issue related to this is the development of moral agency, i.e. the ability of actors to act responsibly autonomously and be accountable accordingly. Time and again, the more powerful are forced into justifications and negotiation processes, the powerless are not at the mercy of hierarchies as passive subjects but know how to use existing leeway. Here, too, two questions are at the forefront:

- a) How do different actors justify, negotiate, share and delegate responsibility in a globally interdependent world?
- b) How can power asymmetries and deficits in accountability be countered with increasingly polycentrically structured forms of governance?

Implementation of the Leitmotif in the Three Thematic Areas

Research Area 1

Transnational Governance and the Responsibility of Private Actors (Focus: Implementation of Human Rights, Digitalization)

Even before the current crisis of multilateralism, global ordering increasingly took place outside international organizations and far from state authority. From defining problems to designing concrete policies, in many fields global governance takes the form of "polycentric" and fragmented governance networks, in which not only private but also state actors are in search of new roles that are negotiated and established. INEF's empirical work in this area focuses on the implementation of labour, social and environmental standards in global value chains (e. g. in the textile sector), the implementation of the right to health in global health policy. As our previous work has shown, private actors are increasingly gaining political authority through transnational governance arrangements by using these processes of self- and external attribution of responsibility in terms of power and legitimacy politics, creating generally binding transnational regulations. The example of global value chains, which are increasingly characterized by digitalized management and governance technologies, also shows how strongly governance practices are based on the development of (transnational) epistemic networks. The specific forms of "knowledge politics" that become recognizable also reflect underlying power relations.

In this polycentric governance architecture, meta-governance (the governance of governance), plays an essential role in the institutional design of governance and its practice. Meta-governance has long ceased to be the domain of state actors but has developed in the interaction between state and private actors as well as inter- and transnational institutions. Meta-governance encompasses values, norms and principles that guide problem-solving and serve as a benchmark for evaluating governance performance. INEF work in this field focuses strongly on the implementation of human rights such as the right to health.

Despite the increasingly important role of private governance initiatives, the role of the state in global governance remains central in many areas. Not only in the case of concrete failure of self-governance and market failure is the state still the legitimate representative of the public interest. In meta-governance at the latest, state representatives must assume responsibility for designing governance networks. In some areas, such as digitalization, states are faced with the task of having to make a new or stronger contribution to areas that are already privately regulated.

Research Area 2

Development Partnerships in Times of SDGs

(Focus: Poverty Reduction and Political Participation)

In the thematic area of "Development partnerships in times of SDGs", the focus is on the responsibility formulated in the SDGs for selected goals, in particular poverty reduction and food insecurity. The challenge of this normative order for development cooperation for the next one and a half decades between 2015 and 2030 is great.

Central questions are: Where can good practices for poverty reduction and food security be identified in existing projects of development cooperation that are effective, sustainable and can contribute to a reorganization of development partnerships? Is the responsibility of Western donors really defined relationally in terms of ownership and self-responsibility on the ground, or is it rather defined as top-down? The research has interfaces to global inequality research at the [Käte Hamburger Kolleg/Centre for Global Cooperation Research](#) (KHK/GCR21).

In addition, research in this area raises the question of how „new donors“, such as China, challenge existing models of development partnerships in particular, but also India. This is not only about power rivalries between “old” and “new” donors fought out by means of development cooperation, as emphasized frequently. In fact, also the normative and procedural standards which the OECD countries have developed within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) are put to the test. Will this new contestedness of normative and institutional orders lead to further fragmented development partnerships? Or will novel chances arise that “new” donors will take over responsibility extensively for implementing the SDGs in the Global South?

In contrast to economic, social and cultural human rights, the SDGs take civil-political human rights, as defined by the United Nations Civil Pact, rather casually into account. Only SDG 16 on "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" has a corresponding focus. However, only relatively few sub-goals of SDG 16 explicitly demand that civil-political human rights, such as freedom of information, should be protected and independent national human rights institutions be established. Accordingly, issues of democracy promotion and the protection of human rights are largely irrelevant. However, what trends and trade-offs can be observed? What form does development cooperation take with partner states that follow the "developmental state" model, which is neither based on a liberal understanding of democracy nor on individual participation and plural representation of interests? In view of the implicit premise of the SDGs that it is primarily a matter of social and economic development, is a new normative order emerging here whose "tunnel vision" is to achieve the SDGs at the expense of civil-political human rights? INEF research in this area combines the analysis of macro data with case studies of practical bilateral cooperation.

Research Area 3

Resistance and Political Ordering (Focus: Causes, Dynamics and Consequences of Social Mobilization)

In many countries, social groups organize contestation movements to influence political change in their favour. In Sudan, a broad-based democracy movement succeeded in overthrowing the long-term authoritarian ruler Omar al-Bashir in 2018/19, while the peace process in Colombia was toppled by a social campaign (2016). The two examples illustrate that social mobilization takes place in support of as well as in opposition to peace and democracy. Reflective of this ambivalence, research carried out in the area “Resistance and Political Ordering” probes into the causes and consequences of social resistance in times of fundamental political change.

Apart from explaining the mobilization of specific social groups, we are interested in the different types of protest strategies used by contestation movements. Furthermore, we take into account that in an increasingly interconnected world, international actors play an important role regarding the mobilization of social groups and the state’s reactions to mobilization. Therefore, our research also studies political environments where social groups and/or the state receive support from external actors for mobilization/repression. This includes investigating UN peace missions, which often face tensions between transnational norms or goals of international actors and the local realities in the areas of operation. In addition to the state, we also examine sub-national non-governmental actors (e.g. chiefs, clan elders, NGO representatives, but also rebels). These often pursue their own agendas based on ideas of order and security that contrast with Western-oriented concepts. We explore resistance not only in terms of its disruptive effects, but also with respect to its contributions to the formation of political order.

Existing research has focussed on the willingness of individuals or entire identity groups (especially ethnic groups) to mobilize. In our projects, we take a different approach by considering the role of social organizations. Social organizations have the networks and resources essential for successful mobilization. Paying particular attention to religious communities, political parties and rebel groups, we pursue a theory-guided empirical research agenda that combines qualitative and quantitative methods.

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