

Call for Papers

Zentrumstage 2010:

Transitional Justice – Local Conflicts, Global Norms

**Center for Conflict Studies, Philipps University Marburg, Germany
(24th-25th March 2010)**

The concept transitional justice (TJ) is rapidly gaining in significance as a way of dealing with the past of a violent conflict or genocide. It refers to processes and mechanisms of addressing the legacy of past violence in order to promote the transition to peace and security in a divided society. 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 concepts the conference asks how these globally established norms relate to the particularities of local conflicts where they are being applied and what impact they have on peaceful co-existence after extreme violence.

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.

Despite the novelty of the concept there has been a boom of practical activities and academic discussions over the past years. Against this backdrop we would like to pay particular attention to the normative content of the concept. The objective of our conference is a critical engagement with transitional justice processes, in particular the globalisation of the normative construct of justice in relation to post-conflict peace-building and the local particularities of non-Western societies.. We therefore ask *inter alia*:

- Whose justice for whom?
- Transition to what?
- Which and whose discourses determine the establishment of TJ mechanisms in particular contexts?
- Does the global concept respond to local needs?
- What impact has TJ on gender relations?
- Is it necessary to expand the scope of transitional justice from political and civil rights to economic, social and cultural rights?

Since one aim of our conference is to broaden the at times limited understanding of TJ from an institutional, legalistic one to one that includes social aspects of change and representation we invite proposals that critically examine the normative content and social impact of crime tribunals, truth commissions, memorials & museums, apologies & forgiveness, reparations, reconciliation, history writing and traditional justice.

The *Zentrumstage* will take place at the Center for Conflict Studies at Philipps University Marburg, Germany, 24th-25th March 2010. Papers for the sessions will be accepted on the basis of 500 words abstracts to be sent to the Centre for Conflict Studies (transitional-justice@staff.uni-marburg.de) by 31-12-2009.

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