



Local Self-Governance and Weak Statehood: Theoretical and Empirical Insights from an Interdisciplinary Perspective

International Conference of the DFG Research Unit 2757 LoSAM

July 5-7, 2021

Würzburg, Germany

Call for Papers

The nucleus of statehood is situated at the local level: in the village, the neighborhood, the city district. This is where a community, beyond the level of the family, first develops collective rules that are intended to ensure its continued existence. But this is usually not the only level of governance at play. Above it, there are supralocal formations of power, varying in scope from regional networks to empires, which supplement the local orders or compete with them. Wherever supralocal statehood exists in the mode of weak permeation, local forms of self-governance are especially heterogeneous and prominent. How do they work in this context?

The approach of the DFG Research Unit 2757 LoSAM is to deepen our understanding of different forms and impacts of local self-governance across time and space, from Antiquity to the Global South of the present (see Pfeilschifter et al. 2020). We are examining the relations to different levels of state governance as well as to other local groups as they develop over time; the scope and spatial contingency of forms of self-governance; its legitimization and interdependency with the organization and collective identity of the groups which carry them out. In addition, we turn our attention to the significance of self-governance for the configuration of weak statehood.

In pursuing our research, we have followed both an interdisciplinary (see Lauth et al. 2019) as well as a comparative approach by looking at different cases. Bringing together scholars from various disciplines (e.g. History, Archaeology, Theology, Social Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Human Geography, Sinology, Economics) helps us to embed our case studies in a broader theoretical and methodological framework. The exchange of different viewpoints and extensive discussions will further our agenda to combine and implement different subject-specific approaches as well as theories of neo-institutionalism and to sharpen the analysis of various forms of governance.

Conference structure

The conference serves as a forum to share the first insights of our research with others and to get scholars connected who work on similar problems. We hope to learn from each other by looking at the contexts of local self-governance and weak statehood through different areas and through different periods of time, from Antiquity to Modernity.

All contributions should be based upon empirical cases and should, starting from there, tackle broader issues: the kind of methods and theories which are helpful; the definition of concepts like state, weak statehood, local self-governance, civil society or social capital in a global context. We suggest four clusters of key questions:

- 1) Which areas of community life are covered by collective rules that are given or upheld by this community? What patterns of local self-governance can be identified?
- 2) Which mechanisms of local community building can be observed? How are groups organized, and how does the internal decision-making process work? What can we say about the collective identity and the legitimization of the groups?
- 3) How do these communities relate to other local groups? How do interactions between groups affect the scope and the spatial contingency of forms of self-governance?
- 4) What are the relations to the state level? Which rules does the central state bring in? When does the government force its own rules upon the local population, when does it act in a more coordinated manner? What form and styles of governance can be identified?

Of course, additional studies that fit in the scope of our research agenda are also welcome.

The different panels will be based on these key questions. Each panel will consist of paper presentations, an in-depth comment by a discussant on each paper and an open discussion afterwards.

Submissions

Please submit your paper proposal by August 31, 2020 (up to 500 words). Please send your proposals to the coordinator of the DFG Research Unit 2757, Dr. Christoph Mohamad-Klotzbach (losam@uni-wuerzburg.de).

A final decision concerning the acceptance of the paper proposals will be communicated by September 30, 2020. The accepted papers for the conference should be submitted by April 30, 2021 to Dr. Christoph Mohamad-Klotzbach (losam@uni-wuerzburg.de), so that everybody – especially the discussants – has the time to read the papers in advance of the conference (July 5-7, 2021).

Some of the papers will be included in an edited conference volume which will be published in late 2021 by De Gruyter Press. The length of the papers should be between 8,000 and 10,000 words (including title, abstract, tables, figures, and references).

We are looking forward to your submissions! If you have any question, please feel free to contact us (losam@uni-wuerzburg.de).

We plan to cover the cost of travel and accommodation.

References

Pfeilschifter, Rene / Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Fischer, Doris / Rothfuß, Eberhard / Schachner, Andreas / Schmitz, Barbara / Werthmann, Katja (2020), Local Self-Governance in the Context of Weak Statehood in Antiquity and the Modern Era. A Program for a Fresh Perspective, English Edition, LoSAM Working Papers, Nr. 1 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.25972/OPUS-20737>

Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Fischer, Doris / Krüger, Dominique / Mohamad-Klotzbach, Christoph / Pfeilschifter, Rene / Rothfuß, Eberhard / Schachner, Andreas / Schmitz, Barbara / Werthmann, Katja (2019), Interdisziplinarität. Eine Grundlegung zu Begriffen, Theorien und Methoden in einer geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschungsgruppe, LoSAM Working Papers, Nr. 2 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.25972/OPUS-19348>