
EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Globalization, as historians remind us, is not a new development. Globalization has, however, clearly entered a qualitatively new phase, which social scientists increasingly refer to as transnationalization. Contributing factors include the compression of time and space driven by global technological developments, increasing systemic homogeneity through the spread of market economies and the declining sovereignty of nation-states in protecting national policy from international developments.

Comparative and international studies have been slow to take the lead in generating new insights into emerging cross-border social, political and economic activities, though insights from the traditional sub-fields of comparative and international research remain key in understanding the extent to which context and nation-states are shaping transnationalization processes. Language-based regional studies and cultural studies, fields which had

been segmented away from the social scientific mainstream, have gained new currency through developments like the economic rise of China and the role of non-governmental organizations and social movements in global politics.

The challenge for the future of social science research involves recalibrating expertise in comparative, international, regional and cultural studies into a different scale of research able to understand a qualitatively new phase of globalization. This involves theory-building projects and methodological innovations aimed at the study of large scale inter-regional analyses of institution-building and cross-border social, political and economic activities. Such research is at the center of the cross-disciplinary research programs of the Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST) and the Institute for Development and Peace (INEP). New empirical insights into supra-national regional dimensions of

policy- and market-making are the focus of comparative and international research at the Institute for Work, Skills and Training (IAQ). Fundamental research in the social sciences is never “outside” of “real existing” societies, politics and economies, and the capacity to both generate new research ideas and to transfer findings are supported by institutes at the interface of theory, professional training and practice, such as the NRW School of Governance, the Rhein Ruhr Institute for Social Science Research and Political Consultancy and the Confucius Institute Metropolis Ruhr. Strong alliances with regional, national and international institutes with complementary research competence is key to this research agenda, as demonstrated by our cooperation with the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI), the German Development Institute (die) in Bonn, the White Rose East Asia Center in the UK, and the American Institute



for Contemporary German Studies, USA, to name a select few. Other innovations are necessary in creating an infrastructure of global research excellence, such as the creation of Junior Professorships and the initiation of MA programs for newly contoured areas of transnational scholarship, like the Chair for Macro-Sociology and Transnational Studies in the Institute of Sociology, or the new English-language MA program Development and Governance in the Institute of Political Science.

Truly transnational research is admittedly in the germination stage, and important tasks involve focusing on global problems and how they play out in specific regions, going beyond Europe and North American contexts and scholarship, and building the cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary research teams which can generate knowledge about transnationalization. Definitive steps in this direction are represented by the inter-regional research pro-

gram of the DFG Research Training Group “Risk and East Asia” and the focus on emerging structures of international cooperation in the soon-to-be-established Käte Hamburger Kolleg Centre for Advanced Studies in Global Cooperation. Research from these groups are highlighted in the first and second part of this issue of UNIKATE, focusing on global governance issues like climate change, corruption, the risk of nuclear energy and the political and social as well as economic dimensions of the rise of China. While the focus of transnational research moves beyond Europe, the European Union represents one of the most important real-life experiments in the creation of transnational governance capacities at a supra-national regional scale. In the third section of this issue we present research on the problems faced by the Euro, the diversity of democratic systems, migration and labor markets in the EU. The fourth block of contributions presents

research aimed at the search for international models and solutions to local and regional social and political challenges, such as dealing with unemployment, building local administrative capacities and developing effective political communication.

The study of global governance at the University of Duisburg-Essen received an enormous boost with the establishment of a new university Main Research Area in 2009, dedicated to the study of the Transformation of Contemporary Societies: Building Order in a Borderless World. The authors of this volume have benefited from this opportunity to build cross-disciplinary and international research capacities and they present their research here in the English language in order to underline their aim to make an international contribution to the social scientific understanding of this new phase of globalization.

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