

Call for Panels

Conference of the Research Section „Comparative Politics“ of the German Political Science Association
(Deutsche Vereinigung für Politikwissenschaft – DVPW)

"Governance of Big Transformations"

21.-23. March 2019 at the School of Governance, Technical University of Munich

In cooperation with: Standing Group “Demokratieforschung”, Standing Group “Vergleichende Diktatur- und Extremismusforschung”, Thematic Network “Energietransformation”, Thematic Network “Internet und Politik - E-Governance”.

Local Organizers: Stefan Wurster, Miranda Schreurs

The main objective of this conference is to examine the emergence, development, implications and political consequences of big transformative processes. In many regards we live today in an age of big transformations. These include fundamental technological changes, such as big data, autonomous vehicles, robotics, internet of things, social media, artificial intelligence, and genetically modified organisms. They also involve major threats to ecological systems, including climate change, biodiversity loss, plastic in the oceans, and chemical pollution. We observe challenges to democratic structures and signs of a resurgence of authoritarianism. There are clashes between those supporting and those opposing globalization and the structures which underpin it. Ethical concerns are being raised by these developments. Some of the transformations are gradual, requiring long-term political commitments. Others are disruptive and require rapid responses. Some are region-specific while others will have a global reach. Often the changes involve great uncertainty and high levels of complexity. With the emergence of new technologies we see decline, decay or even retreat of traditional political and technological structures. They are reaching deeply down into cultures and ways of life of different social groups and individuals.

Big transformations raise important governance challenges. While they hold promise for contributing and even solving some long-standing problems, they may also have unintended social, environmental, and health consequences. They may lead to new discoveries but can also invite public protest or even threaten the survival of political systems. In order to keep pace with these fast-moving and highly complex changes, policymakers are being pushed to develop new, more reflective forms of governance that promote policy learning and adaptation. New forms of more participatory governance strategies (e.g. citizen initiatives, multi-stakeholder commissions), innovative policy instruments (e.g. sunset legislation, auctioning), and approaches to political participation (e.g. term limits, online petitions, ombudsperson for future generations) are being tried out. At the same, these trends have pushed some governments towards greater nationalism, protectionism, and a retreat from global institutions and norms. There may also be unexpected and unintended consequences of policy responses.

From the perspective of Comparative Politics this raises important questions of high theoretical as well as practical relevance. How can comparative politics best contribute to the study of big transformations in meaningful ways? Even though many of these transformations will affect all countries, it is already evident that effects and reactions differ tremendously by issue, level of government, or political system. Comparative analysis across national borders is therefore a necessary and timely task.

The conference aims to bring together scholars with an interest in examining these fundamental questions of big transformative changes and their political consequences from a comparative and international perspective. Conference participants may wish to examine how different political systems are adapting politically, economically and socially to these changes or are themselves working to promote or trigger (deep) change. They may also address the impacts observed in relation to specific sectors, policy areas, or

societal or policy processes from a national, comparative or international perspective. The Comparative Politics Research Section encourages theoretical and methodological pluralism and welcomes the growing body of methods and approaches used in the field. We welcome panels that address one or more of the following issues and research questions:

CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES

What are the specific characteristics of today's big transformations? How do they differ from earlier major transformations?

What are the specific (environmental, social, and/or political) implications of big transformations?

THEORY

What theories or combination of theories are most appropriate for analyzing big and disruptive changes in different policy fields?

What are the specific theoretical challenges comparative approaches face to dealing with such issues? Are new theoretical approaches needed?

METHODOLOGY

How can existing qualitative and quantitative methods be used to study (big) transformative processes and their consequences? Are new methods needed?

What are the new methodological possibilities provided by technological developments, e.g. big data, data mining, and artificial intelligence? What new methodological possibilities are available for the comparative analysis?

INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

How do different institutional contexts, policy systems and regime types shape the possibilities policy makers have to address major policy challenges?

How are different policy systems and regime types impacted by major transformations? Are there observable patterns in how different democratic political/economic systems respond to today's big problems?

What role does political culture play? Do the economic conditions facing a society influence its ability to respond to new threats?

POLICY PROCESSES

Are the roles of actors changing in the policy making process in response to new highly technical and complex problems?

What different policy processes are observable in developed and developing countries? What forms of conflict and protest are emerging in response to rapid and fundamental changes?

What new forms of participatory processes are evident and what are their political consequences?

POLICY INSTRUMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

What new policy instruments or processes are observable and with what implications for effective problem solving in this age of big transformations?

What policy advice can comparative perspectives provide to society and policy makers?

Technical Information

Structure: Panels are 90 minutes in length and may comprise at maximum four individual papers. Linked panels may also be considered. Both open panel ideas inviting paper submissions and complete panel proposals will be considered. The panels can be (in their entirety) in either **German or English**. DVPW *Standing Groups* and *Thematic Networks* or a team of *at minimum two individual scholars* are eligible to submit panel proposals.

The **Deadline** for submitting panel proposals is **August 10, 2018**.

Proposals shall not exceed 800 words, including a 200-word summary. Please send your panel proposal to the conference organizers: **bigtransformations@hfp.tum.de**

The **list of accepted panels** will be announced by **August 20, 2018**. Open panel ideas will then be circulated with an invitation for paper submission. The deadline for submitting **paper proposals** to open panels will be **October 10, 2018**. Panel Chairs will decide on the acceptance of papers by **October 24, 2018**. The conference program will be published no later than **November 15, 2018**. A conference website can be found at **<http://www.bigtransformations.hfp.tum.de>**