

Institute for Advanced Studies Lecture Series

Professor Bob Jessop The Future of the National State



Wednesday 24 January 2007 at 6.30pm
Meeting Room 2-3 IAS Building



The idea that national states are in decline due to globalization and other pressures is far too simple. A wide range of processes is certainly affecting the nature and functions of the national territorial state and these need to be carefully specified to assess their impact. We can identify six main types of transformation: (1) Statehood is being denationalized, with state powers being transferred to international bodies, subnational states, & cross-national alliances of various sorts. (2) The boundaries between the state & the non-state sphere are being redrawn, with the state shedding some functions, but assuming others. This involves a shift from direct government to indirect governance as a mode of regulating societal affairs. (3) Nonterritorial cross-border forms of governance are replacing to some extent the territorial state as regulating agencies. (4) The economic & the political spheres are being articulated in new ways, with the state retreating from some areas of intervention but also assuming new economic responsibilities. (5) State policy making on all levels is increasingly being co-shaped by external actors in the international sphere. (6) New political communities are being imagined along ethnic & non-ethnic lines & compete with the established nations as sources of legitimacy of state power & as foci of political loyalty. But the national state is not only the object of the forces of globalization, it actively responds to the challenges posed by these changes. Most importantly, it takes on "meta-governance" functions, shaping the new structures of power & regulation & steering the nonhierarchical, network-type processes of governance within these structures. In this regard the state is not defenceless but some states are, as usual, more powerful than others. While important spheres of regulation are being relocated away from the national territorial state, its key resources are being redeployed so that territorial-based political power remains central to the dynamics of world society.

ALL WELCOME For further information please contact Susan Dray: s.dray@lancaster.ac.uk

Image: Ambrogio Lorenzetti - Effects of good government on the city life (detail) 1338-1340 Fresco. Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.