Building Stories – Building Cooperation
The role of narrative and fiction as constitutive elements in politics

InHouse&Guest Workshop organized by Research Units 2 & 4
13th May 2015

Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21), Schifferstraße 196, Duisburg

Frank Gadinger / Martina Kopf / Ayşem Mert / Christopher Smith

Rationale

Cooperation requires understanding and appreciation of the realities of one another. In the context of international relations, this entails a certain degree of agreement upon facts, as well. In order to achieve global cooperation on any given subject the parties must first agree on the definition, problematization and solution of the issue at hand. Making sense of common problems requires not only a shared view on arguments and interests, but also on shared forms of narration. Even though this agreement is not a complete consensus, a policy area with a relatively concordant, inter-subjectively constructed amount of facts is needed to begin cooperation. Such concordance is possible when registers are shared, similar to what Hannah Arendt calls ‘common world’, a shared and public world of human artifacts, institutions and settings separating us from nature and providing a relatively permanent context for our activities. Regarding politics as a practice of collective storytelling, in which the role of fiction and narrative is a constitutive element instead of being ‘mere rhetoric’, is still under-theorized. From a narrative point of view the boundaries between reality and fiction are blurring. Thus, an important but largely ignored part of this common world is shared imageries, which are expressed or represented in stories, myths, legends, and literatures.

This workshop focuses on narrative and fiction as a critical albeit under-researched element in the social sciences. Despite the increasing interest, and the so-called linguistic turn in social sciences, the role of fiction and narrative in explaining, expressing, and representing identities, frames, and in giving meaning to political practices has been largely absent. What are the narrative modes through which the factual is being communicated, constructed and shared in the fields of global cooperation and international relations? Who uses which kind of stories and why? Are there differences in the ways we can analyze data from different media; and if so, what are they? Can these differences really be generalized? Are the problems of global cooperation linked to weak plots and boring stories by uncreative political storytellers?

We would like to bring together different disciplines from the social sciences, political science and development studies to literature and cultural studies, history, area studies and anthropology as well as various traditions and commitments of research ranging from science and technology studies to ecocriticism, feminism and postcolonial critique.
The organizers of the workshop are planning a common publication within the context of this workshop to be published as a *Global Dialogue* by the Centre. In the spirit of the workshop, the idea behind the publication is to both encourage and showcase different forms of academic journal writing. Additionally, we would like contributors to reflect on how these tools relate to global cooperation.

We aim to look at these guiding questions by examining three different levels of interaction on relevant panels.

**Panel 1: Making Sense of Contemporary World Politics through Narrative**

This panel seeks to make sense of contemporary world politics through the use of narrative. Empirical cases here include the German media during the Eurozone crisis, experiences in development policies, the Islamic State, and the Indignados movement in Spain.

**Panel 2: Political Imageries in Film, Visual Artifacts, and Development Narratives**

Critical engagements with film, visual artifacts, and development narratives are the thematic focus of the second panel. Contributors will explain the fluidity of fiction and reality by delving into film and visual portrayals of the War on Terror as well as representations of development in film, literature and geography studies.

**Panel 3: Political Imageries in Utopias, Historical Myths, and City Narratives**

The final panel will focus on imagining the political through utopia, historical myths, and narratives originating in global cities. Presentations explore discourse theoretical insights into utopia, the role of national historical myths, and the complexities of urbanity.

**Preliminary Program**

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<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks by Workshop Organizers</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15-10:45</td>
<td><strong>Making Sense of Contemporary World Politics through Narrative</strong></td>
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<td>“Sticking the finger” to Fact and Fiction – The Narrative Construction of Good and Evil in German media</td>
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<td>Sebastian Jarzebski, NRW School of Governance, University of Duisburg-Essen</td>
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<td>Commoditying Development Experience – Deconstructing Development as Gift in the Development Blockbuster</td>
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<td>David Lewis, London School of Economics</td>
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<td>Image is everything: Fictional Legitimacy Narratives of the ‘Islamic State’</td>
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<td>Axel Heck, University of Freiburg</td>
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<td>From the Spanish Indignados to PODEMOS: A Narrative in Images</td>
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<td>Nicolina Montesano Montessori, VU Amsterdam</td>
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<td>Chair: Aysem Mert</td>
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<td>11:45-12:00</td>
<td>Coffee Break</td>
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<td>12:00-13:30</td>
<td><strong>Political Imageries in Film, Visual Artifacts, and Development Narratives</strong></td>
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<td>Frank Gadinger, Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21), Duisburg</td>
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Mission Accomplished — Visual Narratives of the "Real and Fictional" Death of Osama bin Laden
Gabi Schlag, University of Magdeburg

Who is giving, who is taking? Aid and representation in African fiction and film
Martina Kopf, Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21), Duisburg

Fictionality and Development: Towards a fictionable World?
Pat Noxolo, University of Birmingham, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences
Chair: Christopher Smith

13:30-14:30 Lunch at the Centre

14:30-15:15 A Novelist’s Reflections on the Interplay between Reality and Fiction

15:15-16:45 Political Imageries in Utopias, Historical Myths, and City Narratives

Utopia -> Democracy -> Ecotopia
Ayşem Mert, Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21), Duisburg

Evidence, Story and History: Different Takes on a Foundation Myth
Bülent Somay, Bilgi University, Istanbul

Drifting through the city – narratives of African healing as an outlook on a wider world somewhat diffuse but very real to experience
Kirsten Rüther, University of Vienna

Los Angeles City Narratives – Anglo Dominance and Dominance of Space in Mexican American Literary Discourse
Carla Gierich, Anglia Ruskin University Cambridge/Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21), Duisburg
Chair: Frank Gadinger

16:45-17:00 Coffee Break

17:00-17:30 Wrap-up Session/Common Reflections on Narrative and Fiction as Constitutive Elements in Politics

Guiding Questions:

What cannot be analysed through fiction and narrative?

Which writing approaches best lend themselves to analysing politics using fiction and narrative?

What have we learned today about narrative and fiction, and where do we go from here?