A Note on Political Touchiness

Public figures regularly enjoy attention of a variety of audiences and they are more or less used to live with the feedback they receive for their performance. G20 provides the latest varieties of the species. Their framing of messages may modulate from pronounced, even rude, to subtle, sophisticated, between the lines. We could speak of political performance cultures where codes of conduct and decoding are established, making communication between sender and receiver successful, predictable - in short: a tool for political strategy.

But if the political discourse is centered on personal performance it also tells stories of a certain kind. The touchiness of politicians develops in the current international ‘climate’, where the re-nationalizing strong man has to fight centrifugal forces and this duty keeps him exposed. The civil society of his homeland might not be as assuring as he may wish. And public dissent could already be ‘a touch too much’ (Here we go magic).

When New York’s ‘Shakespeare in Park’-company produced Julius Cesar in June (picture above), making the main characters appearance alluding to the current US-President, there was an outcry and some sponsors stepped back. Not surprising, the theatre’s director felt a certain urgency to publish a statement. Literate commentators came up quickly with what they deemed to be much more fitting (Richard III) - or rather unearned (King Lear) - Shakespeare roles in that case.

Under different circumstances artists would risk much more. It is the touchiness of political governance that puts creative people at risk and forces them to find detours for their message. Thinking of innovation and social cohesion this is likely the opposite of productive cooperation: a freezing on many levels.

Enjoy reading.

Martin Wolf
Head of Public Relations, Centre for Global Cooperation Research
**News and Events**

**Competing Narratives: On the Global Crisis of Liberal Narratives**
Public convention in Berlin

Against the background of rising illiberalism and populism, which new proponents of liberal narratives are active and how can they be defended as open society? During a two-day public convention in Berlin, about 200 international activists, artists and scholars discussed ‘Competing Narratives’ (Frank Gadinger), dealing with overlapping issues like human rights, freedom of expression, sexual orientation, or the refugee crisis and migration.

At the convention, panel discussions were held with Russian political scientist Ekaterina Schulman, Hong Kong economist Chandel Nair, US-american lawyer Michele Goodwin, Indian cultural journalist Ranjit Hoskote, and German sociologist Armin Nassehi among others. Renowned artists and activists like Nigerian Poetry Slammer EfE Paul Azino contributed further to the event. The keynote was delivered by Leibniz-Laureate Albrecht Koschorke, presumably the most influential theorist on narration of German language today.

The convention was a joint project of the Goethe-Institut, Heinrich Böll Foundation, The Federation of German Industries (BDI) and the Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21) and was initiated by Frank Gadinger and Katja Freistein of the Centre. http://www.goethe.de/narratives

**Future Scenarios: graphic recording; visuals and imagination are key strategies supporting the process.**

**Future Scenarios of Global Cooperation: Practices and Challenges**
Masterclass Retreat in Essen

Predicting, interpreting, and most challenging, developing knowledge to change the future, are important tasks scientists and others have set out to master. During the three days of the Centre’s Masterclass, participants explored the nexus between modelling and assumptions of some of the most important global problems, such as climate change, hunger or pandemic diseases, have increased the demand for coordination and cooperation. The Masterclass above all offered an invaluable opportunity to hear from narratives of a narrative and addressed questions on what fiction and non-fiction authors tell us about the future. Results from this conference will be published in the Centre’s Global Dialogues Series. A creative atmosphere was further stimulated by visualisations of graphic recording artists who translated the discussions live into images and text.

**Upcoming**

**Dammed by Dams – Artefacts of Modernization and Conflicts of Transformation**
This workshop will address a variety of issues around conflict and cooperation in hydroelectric dam projects. It will focus particularly on the differences of modernization and transformation that emerge in the context of these large-scale development projects.

**Prospective Migration Policy**
Scenario building on relations between West Africa and Europe

The Centre in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation engages in a scenario-building project that aims to scientifically ground decision making in the political arena. Migration will be scrutinized in a series of workshops with the final task to provide policy recommendations on one of the most pressing issues for transnational cooperation between Europe and African countries in the upcoming years.

Scenarios, different pictures of the future, are an instrument of strategic foresight used in politics, business, society, academia, military etc. The methodology applied follows the ‘Shell method’ with the consecutive stages of ‘orientation’, ‘building’ and ‘affirmation’. Workshops will be held in Brussels, Berlin and Dakar.

**New Fellows and their Research Projects at the Centre**

- **Dr Stephen Adawen**
  The Challenges of Regional Migration and Cooperation in Ghana and Nigeria

- **Dr Pol Bargués Pedrey**
  Pragmatic Peacebuilding

- **Prof. Dr. Larry Crump**
  Global Governance Revisited via Three Levels of Analysis

- **Prof. Dr. Fatem Ghosh**
  Getting to the Table & Getting to Yes: A New Outlook on Negotiations

- **Dr Petra Gimplová**
  Moral Psychology of Resistance in Post-democratic Age

- **Prof. Dr. Joe Hoover**
  Justice in the Global City

- **Dr Santino Regilme**
  Human Rights in the Age of Terror

- **Dr Andrea Schapper**
  State-Society Interactions for Institutionalising Human Rights in International Climate Treaties

- **Dr Deepshikha Shahi**
  Indian Philosophical Contribution to Post-Western International Relations Theory

**Conference ‘Competing Narratives’: Centre’s Dr. Frank Gadinger with Barbara Unmüßig, President of the Heirich-Böll-Stiftung**

**Käte Development Week: Future Scenarios; graphic recording; visuals and imagination are key strategies supporting the process.**

**Future Scenarios: graphic recording; visuals and imagination are key strategies supporting the process.**

**Future Scenarios: participants grouping at Zeche Zollverein in Essen.**

**Dialogue ‘Coming Home to Syria’: diverse audience due to a cooperation with Duisburg’s Adult Education Centre (VHS)**

**SPECIAL Area Studies**

**Methods in Global Cooperation Research**

Area Studies suffer from ‘various epistemic borderlines’ (Derichs) and these are closely related to the build-up of a post-WWII ‘world order’. The development into an academic discipline at that time was motivated by perceived knowledge deficits in the West with regard to increasingly autonomous ‘areas’, (soon to be) freed from colonial rule. This explains why Area studies have an exclusive focus on non-European societies but also, why these areas are chosen quite arbitrarily in shape and size, from seemingly homogenous Japan to a highly diverse region like Southeast Asia that configures different until today, dependent on the colonial past of those areas in which Area Studies are done.

But the self-scrutinization of the discipline proceeds. Interdisciplinary work between specialists of different areas is supplemented by connecting the research field with transdisciplinary perspectives. ‘Culture’ as a ‘third space’ or ‘emotional geographies’, transnational ‘creative industries’ and ‘religious geographies’ are objects of study. These notions dissolve the demarcations, Area Studies were comfortable with for a long time, while transforming the ‘area’ concept anew. ‘Knowledge production’ becomes a key driver of identity constructions that transient borders horizontally and vertically, between and inside political entities. And there’s the deal: areas of knowledge and practice on different scales and the (im-)possible joints between those areas are promising objects for global cooperation research.
Research Agenda
Full text online
The Centre’s research agenda is available on the Centre’s website (gcr21.org > research) for download (pdf). The conceptual basics of the agenda are visualised.

Global Cooperation
Research Papers

ISSN 2198-1949 (Print)
ISSN 2198-0411 (Online)

doi: 10.14282/2198-0411-GCRP-[issue]

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