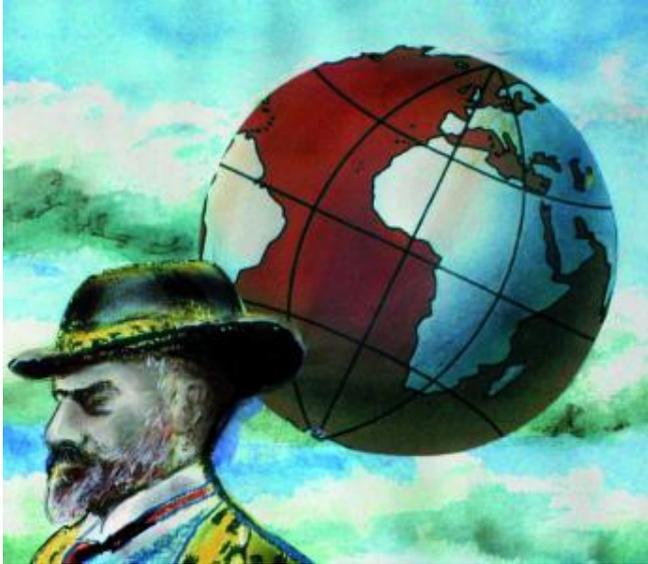


Conference report:

Globality in the Space of Reflection of the Käte Hamburger Centres



The Käte Hamburger Centres funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research are projects that create institutional "space" for the humanities. However, this freedom from certain constraints of the daily business of academia does not make the Centres self-sufficient islands in the academic landscape but rather institutions that are dependent on exchanging ideas and thoughts with their environment to a particularly large degree.

The Käte Hamburger Centres are "learning communities", as Werner

Gephart, Director of the Käte Hamburger Centre for Advanced Study "Law as Culture" stressed in his opening address to the first joint conference of all Käte Hamburger Centres. Indeed, he continued, the conference that united all 10 research institutions that have received funding since 2007 at the Bonner Bogen on 25 and 26 April, 2013 offered the necessary space and freedom to learn from one another precisely by being confronted with the different Centres' respective own perspectives. The focus of this joint effort was the concept of "globality" – a term that not only has a strong presence in political discourse, but has by now, as Werner Gephart pointed out, become firmly anchored in numerous disciplines throughout social sciences and the humanities. As Ministerialrätin Sabine Eilers from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research highlighted in a statement read out to the audience, it is only logical that the Käte Hamburger Centres should tackle this object of investigation. First, particularly social sciences and the humanities are characterized by their ability to comprehend and mediate between different disciplines. Second, only international, transborder research, as institutionalized in the Centres' projects, is capable of adequately accessing global questions. Over the course of the conference, a lively discussion was carried out about the methodological and conceptual problems of this access. How can global questions be properly addressed? Which new normative conflicts become evident under globalized conditions? Which forms of representing globality can be observed in culture and the media?

Responsibility as an answer to globalization?

In his opening lecture, Martin Albrow, currently fellow at the Käte Hamburger Centre for Advanced Study "Law as Culture", advocated an understanding of globalization that does not see it as a meshwork of opaque and impersonal structures and dynamics, but that rather reconsiders the "old-fashioned" concept of responsibility. Seeing as "globalization" does not dictate a certain direction or policy, Albrow considered it imperative to pose the

normative question as to the creative power of collective action and the attribution of actions. As these concepts connote widely divergent ideas in different societies and cultures, the goal of a global citizenship in which membership implies responsibility remains



quite vague. Yet many examples from the field of social activism, international human rights policy, but also the changing understanding of consumers show current attempts at reformulating a shared co-responsibility in order to provide a counterweight to the negative developments of globalization.

On changing cultural and media representations of the global

Lorenz Engell, Director of the Internationales Kolleg für Kulturtechnikforschung und Medienphilosophie (IKKM, Weimar), reflected on representations of the global in the media by highlighting the revolutionary importance of the TV broadcast of the Apollo moon landing. Our planetary perspective, he noted, was replaced by a “satellite’s view” through the external image of the world. Television not only acted as a medium of transmission, but also as a medium of reflection, as it raised the question of perspectivity and generally initiated a new practice of observation: While following the Apollo mission, a controlled form of monitoring replaced the merely consumptive watching of television.



Christoph Asendorf focused on an entirely different form of cultural technology by investigating the Jesuits’ practice of missionizing. As he pointed out, their transfer of elements of knowledge and faith coincided with a targeted use of aesthetic forms such as architecture and theater that contributed to a visualization of ideas and beliefs in a way that could, in fact, be described as a precursor to similar practices in the global age. Gerd Zimmermann, currently Fellow at the Centre in Weimar, ended the panel with a lecture on architectural forms of globality. Citing the example of Hannes Meyer’s considerations – a master Bauhaus architect – Zimmermann pointed out how in the history of ideas internationally oriented architecture should represent transcendence of national, let alone “nationalist” cultural forms. The buildings of contemporary multinational corporations,



however, rather exhibit a global imperialist posture: The new headquarters of Apple, shaped like a landed space ship, symbolizes almost menacing ubiquity and synchronicity that suggests that the corporation could “land” anywhere and anytime.

Global working environments

In his lecture, Andreas Eckert presented the research program of the Centre he directs in Berlin, which investigates the change of working environments in global history. Which forms of work and leisure are predominant in a society, what is considered work, which worker's rights movements became established are expressions of both cultural difference and global change. Eckert warned against perceiving global questions and problems with a Eurocentric tint – a challenge that would also be repeatedly addressed in the subsequent lectures at the conference. Mira Mohsini

underscored in her presentation how choosing an appropriate perspective is of particular importance, for instance when analyzing working environments, and stressed the danger of incorrectly framing the research domain of work via an undifferentiated use of semantics of globality. The concept of linear global dynamics, she pointed out, could easily mask "uneven" developments in specific local contexts in which the understanding of work is changing and the object of social conflict. One should therefore already exercise great caution at the conceptual and methodological stage.



Reinventing global democracy



Globality, however, is not only a space of social conflict, but also one of political cooperation, as Claus Leggewie and Tobias Debiel, the Directors of the Centre for Global Cooperation Research in Duisburg/Essen reminded. Jan Aart Scholte, Fellow at this Centre, vividly illustrated in his lecture what the quest for global democratic cooperation might look like. Scholte was not guarded in his criticism of models of cosmopolitanisms dominant in political theory, accusing them of adopting a purely

academic position seen from the western perspective that cannot live up to the complexity of global consensus across various research approaches. Decisions on global contexts and structures, he continued, require the democratic approval of those affected in order to be called legitimate. Scholte considered making the project of global democracy more concrete and more just to necessarily require a decentralization of the academic and western perspective. By reporting on the experience gleaned from project groups that got together over several years to sharpen the project of global democracy discursively, Scholte demonstrated what this decentralization might look like in practical research. Including various social, cultural, geographic and disciplinary backgrounds among the group resulted in an open, controversial, but also balanced way of discussing that could serve as an example for political processes of decision-making, as Claus Leggewie joined in stressing. Nevertheless, there was consensus that institutionalizing these positive experiences in political practice was still a great step away.

The emergence of ecological awareness – both academically and agitationaly

Kimberly Coulter from the Rachel Carson Center in Munich directed by Christof Mauch and Helmuth Trischler, also underscored the necessity of not only answering global problems through academic discourse. She presented the Environment & Society Portal, a forum of communication addressed both



to academia and the wider public. The portal provides access to material on ecological questions and issues of environmental policy. Frank Zelko, Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center, preceded her with a lecture on the development of the Greenpeace movement. He illustrated how a persistent media strategy contributed to placing environmental topics on the public agenda in the first place. Particularly in the early phase of the grouping, the stated goal was to create a global ecological counter-culture against the predatory exploitation of the environment. Use of television to orchestrate own, sometimes scandalous protest campaigns was not only an informative, but also a provocative tool in the struggle for attention. By now, Zelko continued to explain, Greenpeace has largely distanced itself from this radical cultural-political strategy of mind bombing. Rather, the group has seen itself normalized to the extent that many of its goals have become consensual components of Western societies.

On the dynamics of normative orders



The contributions by the Käte Hamburger Centres in Bonn and Bochum focused on the conflictuous dynamics of normative orders. Werner Gephart started by explaining the importance of “globality” for the analysis of legal cultures. The definition of the concept of law alone is confronted with the methodological and epistemological difficulty of including various cultural and historical forms of law without losing its edge in distinguishing law from other norms. The integration of symbolic-ritual and also organizational-cultural elements into the concept of law itself – that also drives the program of the Käte Hamburger Centre for Advanced Study “Law as Culture” – would, at the very least, guarantee a greater sensitivity towards different cultural practices and manifestations of law.

Gephart went on to stress the imperative importance of insights gained from the globality discourse in the disciplines of social science and history when analyzing new dynamics, mixtures and conflicts of legal cultures. Taking “local knowledge” of researchers, such as ethnologists and anthropologists, but also everyday actors into account could protect from making hasty diagnoses in the style of the *grands récits*.

Gephart's closing question, whether – despite all cultural differences – the dynamics of law gave hope for an emergent global legal culture of human rights already provided the segue into the lecture by Raja Sakrani, Program Director at the Käte Hamburger Centre for Advanced Study "Law as Culture". Her lecture shed light on the disillusioning disregard of women's rights in certain Arab societies. If in early 2011 the "Arab Spring" raised hopes of democracy and human rights spreading across the Arab world, the political climate particularly in Tunisia and Egypt following the rise to power of Islamists is grim. As Sakrani laid out in detail, both the new Egyptian constitution and the Tunisian draft constitution open several gateways that allow the human rights of minorities and particularly of women to be canceled out. The influence of conceptions of the Sharia, Sakrani explained, can be found throughout the Arab world, even in countries with secular legal orders. This has led to a "schizophrenic normative structure" that has become the focal point of battles over basic rights. Particularly the disregard of women's rights represents a culturally combative premise for Islamist identity politics – and has dire factual consequences for the everyday reality of Arab women who, for instance, increasingly become victims of sexual violence in Egypt.



In his subsequent commentary, Matthias Herdegen pointed to the ambivalent nature of human rights discourse that particularly comes to the fore wherever human rights need to be weighed against certain civil liberties in situations of conflict.



This mixing of the political and the religious sphere that Raja Sakrani illustrated based on Islamic societies also featured prominently in the presentation of the Bochum Käte Hamburger Centre that deals with religious dynamics past and present. The Centre's Director, Volkhard Krech, along with Otto Kallscheuer, recalled that religions cannot be considered clearly distinct entities, but are rather part of – to put it in the terminology of

Pierre Bourdieu – a dynamic and contested religious "field", whose rules and also limits are constantly being renegotiated. In a brief historical overview, Krech demonstrated how since Early Modernity, ideas of missionizing and progressive globalization in the course of colonialism resulted in the field gaining a new dynamic. Religion could now be "transported", whereby some religions proved more "mobile" than others, as Otto Kallscheuer argued with a view to Buddhism – a religion whose practice was not bound to certain ethnic groups. In any event, the infrastructure of



modern empires facilitated the transport of religions and with them the possibility of their “proto-globality”. This process not only resulted a clash of different missionizing projects, leading to conflicts, hegemonic structures, re-articulations of the religious and, by means of displacement, the formation of Diaspora groups. There were, in fact, also cases of tolerance and pluralism. Kallscheuer characterized the contemporary religious field as ambivalent; on the one hand, it could be regarded as a “global supermarket”, on the other hand it can clearly represent a battle ground on which battles over identity politics are waged.

The myth of inter-culturality

In the next lecture, Theater Studies scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte, Director of the Berlin research center “Interweaving Performance Cultures”, shifted the focus of the debate towards questions of cultural exchange and cultural policy. Fischer-Lichte demonstrated how in the course of colonialism an intercultural “exchange” of forms of theater was proclaimed between Western states and their colonies that in actuality bore traits of cultural imperialism. She rejected the very concept of “inter- culturality”, describing it as misleading due to its suggestiveness of dialog between clearly distinct cultures. In fact, these cultures have always been dynamic and influenced by other cultures.



Therefore, she continued, the concept of “interweaving” is preferable, as it is better suited to capture the complex mesh of culture. The global interweavement of theater cultures should always be investigated as to the political, economic and cultural

interests that impact it. Stephen Barber and Avanthi Meduri followed up by illustrating how attempts at adaptation and understanding the “Other” can also be a great epistemological problem: other cultures have been misinterpreted, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This has occurred not just in a colonial context, but also contemporary academic discourse exhibits a tendency of misjudging other cultural practices, other basic notions of theater due to its Western concepts – a problem of the right methodological access that was repeatedly brought up in numerous lectures over the course of the conference.

Figurations of globalization

Dietrich Boschung, Director of the Cologne "Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies - Genesis, Dynamics and Mediality of Cultural Figurations" along with Günter Blamberger, provided a cultural-historical perspective of globalization by analyzing early representations of globality in the Roman Empire. Imperial Rome, but also other empires, he elaborated, demonstrably prefigured conceptions of



globality through sculptures, architecture and cartography. In his lecture, Günter Blamberger contrasted Western conceptions of genius with Asian models of artists. In the West, where aesthetics is historically linked to the philosophy of the subject – as seen with Shaftesbury or Goethe – a cult surrounding the unshackled, creative artist emerged, even though it ignored the practical reality for artists. Shakespeare is often held up as the epitome of genius, even though his works have been considered an expression of the collective creativity of his workshop. This collective dimension of art, the incorporated nature of artistic endeavor, is much more heavily emphasized in Asia; this is why the concept of genius is widely unknown there. Instead of the Western ideal of a biblical-creative "*creatio ex nihilo*", the predominant Asian notion is that of "*creatio in situ*" – a creativity that depends on medium, material and interaction with others and is therefore better suited for the requirements of a global world.

A global ethics of compassion?



Michael Lackner, Director of the Käte Hamburger Centre in Erlangen/Nürnberg introduced Chinese director, painter and author Gao Xingjian in a film portrait not as a genius, but as a headstrong artist not typical for his culture. The film delved into the meaning of the topics of fate and freedom in the work of the 2000 Nobel laureate in literature. The closing lecture by literature studies scholar Helmut

J. Schneider closed the circle, so to speak, connecting to the question as to the normative answer to certain global developments raised by Martin Albrow at the outset. Schneider embarked on a critical reading of Käte Hamburger's late study on compassion, examining in how far it can be related to current challenges. Hamburger, he explained, spoke out against a purely affect-based interpretation of compassion, as she considered only a rational, interpretive access capable of enabling an ethical reference to the suffering of another in the first place. The compassion envisioned by Hamburger could be described as a sort of active shared humanity. Unlike emotions in close, personal relationships, she thought it always had to remain distanced and impersonal. Hamburger rejected the moralist and didactical theater of the likes of Lessing, as she could not see how compassion with fictitious figures could be transferred into the social surroundings of daily life. She rather considered compassion a relation to the suffering of real persons. Hamburger nevertheless accorded high importance to human imagination when it comes

to connecting aesthetics and reflection, casting some doubt on her rejection of Lessing's theory. For could not precisely the power of imagination, Schneider surmised, be understood as a resource through which fictional suffering could be recognized as potentially real suffering? By means of fictionalization, narration or further artistic embedding of suffering, it can be made accessible to us. Should it in fact be possible to form a solidary community by these means, it would also offer new options for the creation of moral sensitivity in the face of global forms of suffering by the media.



If not to moral sensitization, the conference at least contributed to a sensitization towards methodological questions and issues of research ethics: How can the diverse local figurations of a global world be addressed in an adequate and promising manner? To what extent can one's own perspective on global issues be decentralized in a post-European, post-colonial or perhaps even post-academic and post-planetary way? And to what extent do these questions require not only subtle analytical comprehension, but also taking a normative stance?

It ought to be the task of the Käte Hamburger Centres to continue using their "freedom" going forward to creatively and controversially tackle these issues.



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