

JUNGE AKADEMIE MAGAZIN

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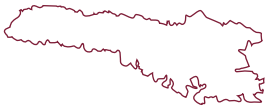
Research expeditions – routes to knowledge

POSITION PAPER

How to strengthen German universities

JA INSIGHTS

Street theatre project, Prize question on Europe, *Junge Akademie* Council



THE JUNGE AKADEMIE

The *Junge Akademie (JA)* was founded in 2000 as a joint project of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (*Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften – BBAW*) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina (*Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina*). It is the world's first academy of young academics. The *Junge Akademie* is co-owned by both academies, the *BBAW* and the *Leopoldina*. Since 2011 it has been firmly anchored administratively in the Leopoldina's budget and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*) and the *Länder* Berlin, Brandenburg and Sachsen-Anhalt. Its fifty members, young academics from German-speaking countries, engage in interdisciplinary discourse and are active at the intersection of academia and society.

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The car park – a non-entity for tourists, but perhaps a worthwhile destination for researchers?

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EDITOR'S LETTER

What do you take with you when you travel? What do you bring back with you? And, above all, why do you travel in the first place? The members of the *Junge Akademie* are constantly on the go, doing research or presenting their results in other countries. Some have to cover considerable distances between home and work on a regular basis if they want to have a career as well as a private life (see *Junge Akademie Magazin*, English Edition, December 2013, pp.4-15). Even going on holiday does not necessarily provide a respite from work – inspiration lurks everywhere.

In our Dossier, *JA* members address the most diverse aspects of research trips. Ethnologist Silja Klepp describes what it means to ‘walk a tightrope between proximity and distance’ in an interview on her undercover research in Libya and her experiences with refugees landing on the shores of Lampedusa. Agricultural and environmental economist Jadwiga R. Ziolkowska, who was recently awarded the *Berliner Wissenschaftspreis* (an academic prize for young researchers), shares her thoughts on the impact of research trips on the environment. Mediaevalist Klaus Oschema discusses the connection between travel and historical research on travel with his colleague Folker Reichert, arguing in favour of historians travelling to original sites, even in these days of digitisation. Things that members of the *Junge Akademie* find indispensable on their travels are featured throughout the Dossier. And then there is the story of sinologist Lena Henningsen’s German railcard that did her a great service in China.

As usual, the second part of this issue reports on conferences and projects organised by various Research Groups at the *Junge Akademie*. The street theatre ‘Speakers’ Corner’ shows just how relevant historical texts are to the present day. Cornelis Menke comments on doctorates in Germany, and the RG ‘Science Policy: After the Excellence Initiative’ continues to examine the performance of the German academic system. Europe is the focus of this round of the *Junge Akademie’s* international ties: *JA* members got together with members of other European Young Academies to launch joint activities on – exactly! – Europe.

The editorial team and I hope you’ll enjoy this issue!
Evelyn Runge



41° N, 44° E



TOBIAS KÜMMERLE,
GEOGRAPHER

'One important utensil are my binoculars. They help me investigate large areas in a short time, particularly in mountain regions where you can't get everywhere. Sometimes you also catch sight of animals – on my last trip to the Caucasus I saw the European Bison and the Bearded Vulture.'

Appearances are deceptive: climate change is threatening to drive the people of the Pacific from their homes.



RESEARCH EXPEDITIONS – ROUTES TO KNOWLEDGE

TEXT SIBYLLE BAUMBACH | PHOTO SILJA KLEPP

The fascinating thing about research expeditions is the allure of the (as yet) unknown. To pursue it, researchers abandon their desks and labs to face the ordeal and risks involved in reaching out to far-flung horizons where they might just be the first to open up new worlds of knowledge. But in the digital age, when even the farthest corners of the Earth are within the range of GPS and Google Maps, and everything can be planned down to the last detail, it is not just the trip into unknown territory that is often robbed of its mystique: online libraries and Skype interviews mean researchers can happily remain safely behind their own desks. At the click of a mouse they can take a trip to archives and museums all over the world, traversing continents and time zones in their lunch hour. Admittedly, researchers in geography, archaeology and ethnology are still expected to go on research trips, but in many other fields they have become a rarity. Perhaps that is what is really fascinating about today's research trips: they are becoming ever more unknown.

UNDERCOVER IN CONFLICT ZONES

Desperate people and smuggled field diaries: legal ethnologist Silja Klepp on research designs, her own travel experiences and the conflicting nature of professional distance

INTERVIEW SANDRA RAUCH | PHOTOS SILJA KLEPP

JAM: Silja, as an ethnologist you have travelled a great deal. Do ethnologists still have to like travelling nowadays, or can you use technology like Skype to do anthropological field research from the comfort of your own desk?

Silja Klepp: You definitely have to like travelling. Of course you can do interviews via Skype. We often use this method for Bachelor's or Master's dissertations and, to some extent, it works quite well. But you can't beat field work on the spot, even though the average research trip is much shorter now than it used to be when a couple of years were the norm. Since the 1990s, so-called multi-sited ethnography has established itself: the researcher follows the topic, because it cannot be researched properly in one place. My work in the Mediterranean along the EU maritime borders is a case in point.

JAM: In 2006, you interviewed refugees in Libya during the Gaddafi regime when it was already very hard to enter the country. Were you able to plan this field work or did luck play an important role?

Klepp: I prepared thoroughly and considered beforehand how I was going to be able to move around the country without endangering my informants or myself. I never asked people for their names and never made recordings. Obviously, I could not just speak to migrants on the street, so my research had to be done undercover. I managed to make contacts at Catholic masses in Tripoli. During a baptism I would be told about conditions in Libyan detention centres where a lot of people ended up quite arbitrarily – including many refugees deported from the EU.

JAM: On Lampedusa and Sicily you observed refugees landing. What were these encounters like?

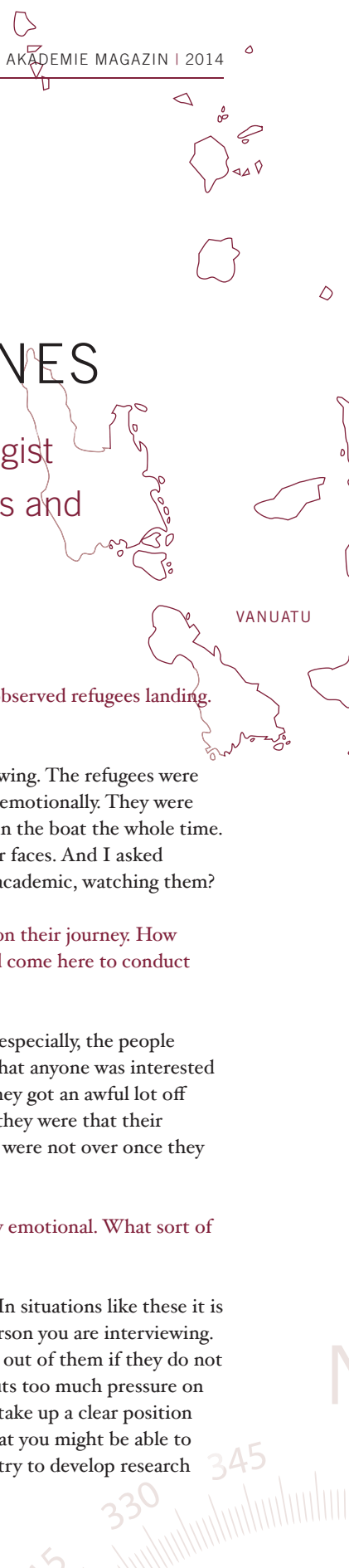
Klepp: Both times it was really harrowing. The refugees were totally exhausted, both physically and emotionally. They were completely stiff from squatting down in the boat the whole time. You could see the fear of death in their faces. And I asked myself: who am I, to stand here as an academic, watching them?

JAM: The refugees risked their lives on their journey. How did they react to an academic who had come here to conduct research?

Klepp: When I think back to Malta, especially, the people were very open. They were surprised that anyone was interested enough to listen to their narratives. They got an awful lot off their chests – such as how devastated they were that their journey and, ultimately, their suffering were not over once they had got to Malta.

JAM: Conversations like that are very emotional. What sort of methods do you use?

Klepp: I work with open interviews. In situations like these it is important not to re-traumatise the person you are interviewing. So you must not try to wheedle things out of them if they do not want to talk about them, because it puts too much pressure on them. As the interviewer, you have to take up a clear position and you cannot awaken their hopes that you might be able to help them here and now. In general, I try to develop research





THE LEGAL ETHNOLOGIST

Silja Klepp, born in 1976, is a legal ethnologist at the Sustainability Research Center at the University of Bremen. Her research focuses on migration movements. For her doctorate she followed the refugee trail along the EU maritime border in the Mediterranean; she is currently working on humane migration strategies for environmental refugees in the Pacific.

Silja Klepp has been a member of the Junge Akademie since 2012.



Colourful research destination: the island nation of Vanuatu in the South Pacific

designs that are appropriate for these emotionally and politically highly-charged, complex situations. For my doctorate, for example, I followed the refugee trail from south to north, that is, to Libya, Southern Italy and Malta, which was something hardly anyone had done before, especially the Libyan part. I was constantly asking myself: how can I open up this Mediterranean black box and get as close as possible to those involved in this conflict – the refugees and the EU border security – without endangering the people I interview?

JAM: Making contact with people you have never met and gaining their trust is very important for your research. How do you learn this kind of social interaction, which is, after all, important for all travellers?

Klepp: You do get some training when you are doing your degree, such as how to make contact with informants. But a lot depends on the individual and especially on experience. One of the things that help me is that I really do like people in general

and am curious about them. If you are open, interested, respectful and also a little bit cautious, that all helps, too.

JAM: Did you ever have difficulties getting into contact with people on any of your research trips?

Klepp: Sometimes institutions are to blame if certain things do not work out. For example, it is now nigh-on impossible to get into the closed detention centres on Malta and Sicily because the authorities have responded to public criticism by refusing to let anyone in. On the Pacific island of Vanuatu, on the other hand, I had the impression that people were just not interested in meeting white people. That is a result of bad experiences with Australian tourists and means it is harder to make contact there in the first place.

JAM: You speak Italian, English and French and rarely use an interpreter for your interviews. Does the quality of research suffer when you have a translator?



Stages along the route of African migrants heading for the EU – stages of one of Silja Klepp's research projects: boats on Sicily, refugee camp on Malta

Klepp: It is very restricting because you do not get all the nuances. If you do not speak the language you cannot properly appreciate people's lives and emotions. That is the great thing about extended research visits. You learn the language and have a chance to practise seeing the world through other people's eyes.

JAM: Ethnologists take part in people's everyday lives and experience them in very personal situations. How do you manage to remain objective?

Klepp: Ethnology stopped claiming to be objective as early as the 1960s. We are not going out to investigate strangers; researchers with all their experience and atmospheric impressions now see themselves as part of the field. This means walking a tightrope between proximity and distance, which has to be carefully considered. And, on top of this, everything you have gathered on the trip has to be translated into research. You should never fall into the trap of believing you know exactly how people tick, because it takes a long time until you can share their cultural focus and know how to put things into perspective. You have to hold back with your own interpretations and you should not publish anything until you are sure you have understood the context properly.

JAM: In your current project you are trying to find solutions for climate refugees in Oceania. Research trips there generate huge emissions of CO₂, which is a greenhouse gas. Is this a point where academia has to face up to its responsibilities?

Klepp: It is an awful dilemma that climate researchers are some of the world's most frequent flyers. We have to find a solution

for this. There are websites, for instance, where you can compensate for CO₂ emissions. I have done that. You can also create synergies by combining a trip with something else or organise one long research trip rather than a lot of short ones.

JAM: Are you able to travel for pleasure and leave the researcher at home? And vice versa: is every tourist automatically an ethnologist?

Klepp: Anyone who is curious about other people and their culture can always make a holiday into an ethnological trip. Of course, reckless tourism, like booze tourism, that tries to break nearly all the taboos, flies in the face of this view. I myself would have real problems with a club holiday: the awareness of the poverty outside and me sitting inside. For me, it is always important to get to know the country.

JAM: What travel experiences will you never forget?

Klepp: Well, I will certainly never forget the moment when I got on the plane after finishing my research in Libya: I was so relieved that my field diary, which was disguised as a souvenir, had got past the controls. On the other hand, I had been severely shocked by my experiences there, the encounters with young families who did not know what the next day would bring. By contrast, my arrival on one of the tiny islands in the Pacific will remain with me as a very positive experience. The people there live off subsistence agriculture, harvesting coconuts in their gardens. This sustainable lifestyle impressed me greatly. It was rather like one's fantasy of a South Sea paradise. ✿



The people of the island nation of Kiribati have always lived in close contact with the ocean, but ...



52° 33' N, 13° 22' E



PIRKKO HUSEMANN,
THEATRE SCHOLAR



... when global warming causes a rise in the sea level, their existence is immediately threatened.

PHOTO: PIRKKO HUSEMANN

'Part of my research involves attending theatre and dance performances in very different locations. I always have earplugs with me – you never know whether the noise level in the theatre will not be incompatible with tinnitus.'

SUSTAINABLE PATHS TO KNOWLEDGE?

Research trips and the environment – a critical perspective

TEXT JADWIGA R. ZIOLKOWSKA

Research has taken Jadwiga Ziolkowska to 26 countries all over the world. She has been a member of the Junge Akademie since 2012 and, when she is not travelling, she teaches at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. As an agricultural and environmental economist she always keeps an eye on the interactions between environmental and climatic changes, the growing world population and booming technology – all of which have led her to reflect on the topic of research trips in the context of academia's own sustainability goals.

In the increasingly global academic community, specific national features pose a challenge for the actual implementation of research trips. But in spite of all the individual idiosyncracies, the environmental problems are very similar. In the last few decades, air travel has become the most common form of transportation. It takes us to the farthest corners of the Earth, but it causes environmental damage at the same time: a single plane journey produces 15 grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre and passenger, more than a fully-laden car on the road. The bus, on the other hand, gets away with 3 grams per passenger and kilometre, whilst a long-distance train produces only 2.2 grams. In order to keep the carbon footprint as low as possible, those leaving it behind would have to avoid travelling altogether. The 2nd best solution would be to reduce the travel distances; the 3rd best solution would require to choose the means of transport with the lowest CO₂ emissions. Any remaining, unavoidable emissions could be compensated, for example, with reforestation measures.

Environmental pollution and global warming are urgent problems facing humankind. In the search for short- and long-term solutions, governments turn to research, which – to some extent – has now set for itself the goal of sustainability. At the same time, it is precisely research and the resulting technological progress that have made it possible for us to discover the entire

world and get wherever we wish to go relatively easily. Because of this, and in combination with the fact that it is a global undertaking involving large numbers of conferences, meetings and exploratory trips, research itself contributes to the pollution of the environment. Many environmental science researchers consequently feel they are partly responsible for environmental pollution, just as we, as human beings, find ourselves caught in the conflict between boundless technological possibilities and the wish to conserve natural resources for future generations.

Should we therefore choose our research destinations more carefully? Should we put restrictions on research trips even if this means losing out on knowledge? Will future generations be more aware of their environment and thus make more environmentally-friendly decisions? When we review developments over the last few decades, we can only conclude that this is not going to happen: the easier travelling becomes, and the more accessible distant countries are, the greater our thirst for mobility. There is very little evidence to suggest that this well-established and worldwide trend is likely to be reversed.

But research and technology can advance carbon-neutral alternatives. Projects can be moderated at a distance using telephone and video conferencing even though this is not always an adequate substitute for personal interactions. We can hope that researchers and research funders will become more sensitive to this problem. Then the research we conduct in different countries and collaborations we carry out could help to protect the environment and improve our living conditions whilst researchers themselves could combine the fruits of their travel with carbon compensating measures. And last but not least: training schemes could enhance the younger generation's environmental consciousness and their awareness of the urgent global problems facing us all.





52° 9' N, 9° 57' E

EVELYN RUNGE,
MEDIA SCHOLAR

'Every time I set off on a journey I am reminded that wheelee suitcases were definitely invented for my benefit. I used to travel with a rucksack and take two or three books with me. Now I travel with a suitcase, and the books often take up more room than my clothes. At the beginning of term the same rules apply to the boot of my car: there are books in the suitcase and in the laundry basket.'

A DIFFERENT WORLD, NOW AND THEN

A conversation between two mediaevalists: Folker Reichert, a specialist in the history of travel, on research trips and what historians do

INTERVIEW KLAUS OSHEMA | DOCUMENTATION + PHOTOS ULRICH PONTES



THE INTERVIEWER

Klaus Oschema is a lecturer in mediaeval history at Heidelberg University. His research focuses on the intellectual and cultural history of the high and late Middle Ages, concepts of political and social order, and symbolic communication. He has been a member of the Junge Akademie since 2009 and is particularly active in the RG 'Teaching' and the editorial team of the Junge Akademie Magazin.

Klaus Oschema: Research trips make us think of relatively recent figures like Alexander von Humboldt: someone who goes out into the world to discover something, even if the most important thing actually does discover there is himself. But that would lead to another issue. At the outset, there is an outward movement: a person embarks on a journey with the specific aim of discovering something new. Is this a characteristic of modern times? Or would a mediaeval scholar, as is so often the case, reply: they did that back in mediaeval times, too?

Folker Reichert: You should always look as far back into the past as possible – I am frequently having arguments about this with modern historians. And the topic of travel is a good case in point, although we do have a problem with the Middle Ages because curiosity was taboo. People could not just give free rein to their curiosity as Humboldt later did. But in spite of all attempts to check it, *curiositas* crops up again and again. Which is why you will always find plenty of debates on the subject – they are just different from today's debates: today, curiosity is a positive concept, but in the Middle Ages you had to cover it up, justify it, even apologise for it. However, a trip to a distant destination was not the major problem. If you wanted to exercise your curiosity inside of medieval Europe, you soon came under suspicion of having heretical tendencies – so trips to far-flung places were easier in a way. And people wanted to hear about them and were more likely to overlook any theological ramifications.

Long-distance travel is of course stimulating, and the experience is both confounding and very challenging. In my case, my first trip outside of Europe was a real initiation: In 1975, without much preparation, I went to India. I got off the plane, left what was already a fairly international airport in New Delhi and found

myself in the middle of nowhere, confronted with an emaciated, dark-skinned Indian with an ox-cart on which I was supposed to ride into town. I can still see it today. I was intensely shocked and realised I had entered a different world. And, as I found out later, that is precisely what medieval travellers to East Asia meant when they talked about the *aliud saeculum*, the other world. This is where the concept and my own experience come together, which gives you something to work on.

Oschema: After the shock of this experience, you chose an interesting path: today, you are an expert on travel in the Middle Ages. When you embarked on this field it was quite an unusual topic in a discipline that was traditionally dedicated to national and political history. Were you motivated by your interest in the subject or did your own experiences manifest themselves in your research?

Reichert: For a long time, I saw travel and academic interests as two completely separate items, and I did not find it easy to combine them – the colourful and exotic deep personal experience on the one hand and my very theoretical training, largely in legal and social history, on the other. My dissertation was on constitutional history – which, amongst other things, taught me how to deal with abstract issues. For a long time, I felt guilty about the travel topic and was worried I had chosen a contentious, short-lived field of activity. But it still generates quite a lot of interest 30 years later, which shows there is something to it after all. You can illustrate a lot using the history of travel; it involves cultural history and anthropological questions. And something my colleagues have also confirmed is that these issues can be described very well, especially if they are located outside of Europe. It is definitely much more fun than constitutional history! My dissertation was certainly important and interesting, but I spent years agonising over it, whereas, later, I was driven by the kaleidoscopic diversity of life, which you can record if you work on travel in the 8th or 13th centuries.

Oschema: The radius of travel can vary enormously – you can go on a local trip or a pilgrimage or any number of places. You focus on long-distance travel. Perhaps you could explain how this came about and how it was perceived in your discipline?

Reichert: Some people always had reservations and thought it

rather frivolous. And I am not revealing any secrets by telling you that my doctoral supervisor was rather reluctant about it – he was concerned for my career. But he had his epiphany at a lecture I gave and said afterwards that he thought there might be something to it after all. This went on to become the general view: eventually, many colleagues warmed to the topic because you can treat it seriously. And I would always demand that you do. Despite all the ideas generated by new approaches – particularly in France at the time – research always has to be methodologically impeccable.



THE INTERVIEWEE

Folker Reichert was Professor of mediaeval history at the University of Stuttgart and officially became an emeritus professor in 2012. The main focus of his research was, and continues to be, the history of travel, an area of medieval studies in whose establishment he played a significant part. In the course of his career, visiting lectureships and private travel have regularly taken him on long trips to East and Southeast Asia.

CHINA

My philosophy has always been: French stimulus, German method. So then some colleagues really did start to develop an interest and work on the history of travel themselves. The fact that I decided to focus on long-distance travel was initially a challenge for me and for the reader. To this day, there is often very little difference made between East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and so on. People have an undifferentiated image, and when they hear the term "Asia" only think of China and Japan. And you have to connect with existing knowledge if you are not going to end up in a completely exotic niche – which means connecting to European and also German history. Some names lend themselves of course: everyone has heard of Marco Polo. Or you can get a bit closer geographically, which is why I included travel to Jerusalem. You can draw connections to pilgrimages and the history of piety – classic areas every mediaevalist knows something about. From here you can work your way forward to central issues like the history of perception, cultural contact and cultural exchange. The history of travel thus leads us into a broad field, and it is easy to understand why historians are still interested in it.

Oschema: In your work you have always studied the view from Europe – practised the history of perception. How do you go about discovering this previously unknown world for yourself? How does it fit together with the more recent trend away from world history towards global history? Would you say you have had an impact on this development or do you find it rather foreign or inaccessible, because it would require you to reverse your perspective to some extent?

Reichert: Basically, I would say I have had an impact on opening the doors to global history. But my perspective was always that of Europe – which has something to do with my methodological roots. I was taught that historical science has a historical-philological method and is founded on the wording of texts. I learned to work with sources in Latin and other mediaeval European languages. I am not a scholar of Chinese! I cannot travel the world researching in archives or working on manuscripts, nor can others. Incidentally, I think one of the serious weaknesses of global history scholarship is that it always requires

you to fall back on the exploratory work of others; it can only be done by reworking the current state of literature and research. And although it can be done excellently, it cannot fulfil what I was taught to believe was the categorical imperative of history: *ad fontes!* Source-based research has always been important to me, and still is, even though I later developed an interest in travel in the opposite direction as well. It is really exciting, too, but you always have the translation problem to cope with because you cannot tell what impressions were actually being formulated. Of course, you can call on colleagues to help overcome the linguistic obstacles, but this has its limits, limits that I do not usually need to consider. As to being Eurocentric, this charge is made, but less with reference to my actual written work than in a general manner, and it comes from a quarter, like post-colonial studies, that subscribes to the idea that everything was based on transfer and exchange and everyone was on an equal footing. I would not agree with this in the first place. I have always been motivated to examine the role of Europe in the world; this was a massive issue for more than 500 years, and still is.

Oschema: You are certainly not an 'armchair historian', just working in Germany. Your radius is much wider and you have held visiting professorships in Japan and China. Did they provide essential inspiration for your work, or were they really just the icing on the cake – rewarding but not indispensable?

Reichert: There is no straightforward answer to that. If I had not spent that time abroad, things would not have turned out as they did. The impetus to work on Marco Polo came from my activities in China, but was quite unplanned. The opportunity to go there presented itself; I was interested and took it. But then I wanted to link up with my experience here in some way. And this constellation has endured – this back and forth. But it is not that easy to maintain. I just spent a considerable period of time in Japan, which I find incredibly fascinating. I can work there, too, not brilliantly, but I manage – but when I am there, I am totally surrounded by inspiration. When I come back here I have other interests. It is like riding a rollercoaster and you have to be able to deal with it, although you retain the experience whatever happens. Writing, on the other hand, I find easier here

– especially here in Heidelberg – because the library is just right for me. Otherwise, I would say that the inspiration I got from meeting students and colleagues abroad was very valuable. When I started thinking about our mutual perception and stereotypes of one another in China, for example, I tried to discuss the point with Chinese friends. But regardless of how much they actually liked me, I always felt them withdrawing from me at the time. One of them said: That is your problem. We do not have a problem with perception, neither ours of you, nor yours of us, it does not interest us. This has changed since. But, at the time, it became clear to me that cultures have their own different interests and issues.

Oschema: Is this not open to the charge of methodological Eurocentrism? That one is basically focusing on the Western school of thought with its ideas, categories, interests and approaches?

Reichert: Yes, you could get the impression that the West is dominant – the question is: which West? Is Japan the West?

Oschema: You have travelled a lot, fostered academic contacts and been inspired – do you think of yourself as a “scientific explorer”?

Reichert: At the beginning of this conversation you mentioned Alexander von Humboldt – I do not consider myself on a par with researchers of that calibre. I never had the same unerring research goal that drove Humboldt. On the other hand, I ask myself: What is the point of an historian going on a research trip, especially outside of Europe where the material in libraries and archives is barely accessible? That really does not work. Of course, you can go to meetings and conferences. Or you can visit specific locations and get a feel for the dimension of a place. That is important, and it is why students go on excursions. But what was always important to me, although it is not a feature of excursions, was the stimulus I got from the foreign cultural environment – encountering people and observing, and actually trying to understand, their ways of behaving and interacting. But this kind of stimulus is not something you can plan. So I would not label myself as a scientific explorer.



Oschema: But there is another issue: to what extent can the experience of a foreign culture guide the work of mediaevalists? Foreignness today is different from foreignness 500 years ago. Even if it is tempting, is it not following the wrong track to project one’s own experience onto the supposed mechanisms of how the Other was perceived at the time?

Reichert: We should really have learned by now to suppress our own subjectivity and investigate things objectively, as objects. And we should always consider the question of method very seriously. You have to be careful and make a conscious decision not to project your own opinions and experience onto the past. And this also means going *ad fontes*, working on the sources and examining what you find from all angles. Then you may achieve results which are not necessarily certain, but are certainly defensible.

Oschema: Very well, this amounts to the “source’s right of veto” and the containment of the historian by conscious reflection on one’s own standpoint. However, there is also a call for a kind of empathetic historiography, which has been generated by scholars of contemporary history. It not only emphasises the need to consider emotion as the driving force in human behaviour but also to consciously include emotion and empathy on the part of the historian – for example when writing about the traumatic experiences of the First World War or the Holocaust. Would you say one must – and can – keep them quite separate?

Reichert: That is very difficult. Naturally, things are rather easier if you are not dealing with the Holocaust or the First World War. That is the mediaevalist’s bonus: you are working on a distant subject. But you always have to remember that the historian is not only there to answer people’s questions but to do it in a way that is defensible and sustainable. And this can be done best by adopting a detached standpoint. One should certainly take account of one’s own emotions, and I always empathise with the themes I am working on – but I have to curb them by reflection. That is the academic’s job and, in my opinion, it creates valuable and, above all, accurate access to the issues.

THE REMAINS OF THE TRIP

Photos capture memories, and they have always been closely associated with travel. In our digital world, embedded metadata have now turned photos into the raw material of travel research

TEXT + PHOTOS EVELYN RUNGE



When William Henry Fox Talbot took his wife and sisters to Lake Como in 1833, the women sketched the landscape, but his own results were pretty disappointing. So, back in England, he started investigating photography and turned his estate at Lacock Abbey into his laboratory. He developed various techniques like shadow drawing, which he referred to as sciagraphs, *cliché verre* and the negative-positive process. Nowadays, Lacock Abbey is a place of pilgrimage for those who use Talbot's methods or go there to learn about them. One of Talbot's first and most famous photos is of a window. And this window is now the

subject of one of the souvenir photos people bring back with them from Lacock Abbey.

Reproducing familiar images is one of the most common motifs in travel photography: striking buildings, landscapes, street scenes, but also film locations, former battlefields and the places featured in bestsellers are the destination or even the reason for a journey. If you go to Abbey Road, you march across the zebra crossing as the Beatles did; or you cheat on perspective in Pisa to make it look as though you are the one propping up the Leaning

Tower; and although you might be underwhelmed by your visit to Blackbird's Field in Kosovo, you still take a picture to prove that you were there, and there, and there.

Modern travel seems to have become competitive: how many countries did you visit in how many days, and what means of transport did you use? The boundaries between private and professional travel are no longer clearly defined. For a long time, travel blogs were essentially a private forum; now, the travel blog scene is becoming professionalised, and there may even be bloggers who have not only made travel their profession, but can actually make a living from their blogs.

Tracking techniques, found in every GPS-enabled smartphone, sort our own visual memory by automatically linking up with geo-coordinates – thereby changing it from the perspective of the recipient. In science, for example, geotagging is used to discover the points of interest in a city and thus, for others, the points worth seeing. Bálint Kádár and Mátyás Gede have analysed the geotagged photos of Budapest on Flickr, differentiating between the shot data of locals and tourists. Tourists are defined as those whose photos are taken in a period of less than five days, given that the average tourist spends three days in Budapest. However, 'Even locals act like the tourists when photographing places in a city. (...) In the majority of cases one living in Budapest will be attracted to a sight the same way as a tourist, mostly because even an afternoon walk equipped with a photo camera is a tourist experience, even if the travel takes one to a much closer destination.'

In his project, 'The Geotagger's World Atlas', the programmer Eric Fischer has done something similar: he produces abstract maps based on photos he finds on Flickr and Picasa, and for every photo he puts a point on his map. Fischer's atlas has often been misinterpreted as a tourist map. So he responded with his project 'Locals and Tourists'. Locals, as defined by Fischer, are people who take photos in one place over a period of more than one month – they were given blue points whilst the tourists got red points. If he was unable to decide, he used yellow points. In the course of this process, the very concrete photos people take on their travels metamorphose into abstract point clouds. They also reveal that private travel photos shared on the Internet often connect with what people know: they reproduce land-

marks the photographer has already seen in travel guides, newspapers and catalogues.

The media and tourism are the largest industries in the world. Both thrive on phantasy – on places that exist and are ostensibly accessible, on places that do not exist but seem familiar and on hybrid places, that is, those that do exist but are overlaid with phantasy. Post Peter Jackson, who can say 'New Zealand' without thinking of Middle-Earth or at least sparking associations in the listener?

The places where we arrive and depart, on the other hand, or where we are in transit – the prerequisite for all public transport – are seldom the subject of traveller's images. The French ethnologist, Marc Augé, describes railway stations, airports and motorways as non-places of globalisation. 'Motorways, airports, supermarkets, cashpoints and computers, in all these places social life has to be mastered alone – a contradiction in its own right which, however, corresponds with our modern paradox: today, you can be alone whilst fostering relationships all over the world.' The Leipzig walking scholar, promenadologist Bertram Weißhaar, has set his sights on the non-places, the ones that are of no apparent interest to tourists. With his tours of opencast lignite mines and parking decks he encourages a different perception of the things we usually ignore in our everyday lives. 'Go By Bus' was a project in which he used photography to investigate the European bus network and its long-distance bus stations. His aim is to free our minds of the images shaped by the media and achieve a change in perception.

Research does not yet seem to have addressed the diversity of connections between travel and photography, perhaps because both fields have been considered in terms of cultural pessimism, shaped by Susan Sontag's critical writings on photography and Hans Magnus Enzensberger's *Theory of Tourism*. In any case, the travellers who visit Lacock Abbey certainly fall into the category of modern hybrid travellers – are they working there, continuing the research, or simply enjoying themselves? ❁

The media researcher and journalist, Evelyn Runge, a member of the Junge Akademie since 2011, conducts research at the University of Hildesheim.



A MECCA FOR MEDIAEVALISTS

Why you cannot avoid archives despite databases and digitalisation: a eulogy for research trips for historians

TEXT KLAUS OSHEMA

Whether in films, novels or exhibitions, in role-play or at renaissance fairs: the Middle Ages are incredibly popular. Some people feel afflicted by modernity and seek comfort in a controllable, simple world; others enjoy the aura of adventure that is still attributed to a period notorious for being dark and raw.

But what is really amazing is that even historians who work on the Middle Ages sometimes profit from its associations with adventure: Indiana Jones chases after the Spear of Destiny (well, all right, he is an archaeologist), and Dan Brown's Robert Langdon (erm, a "symbolologist"?!) only survives the totally illogical entanglements revolving round the Da Vinci Code, the Illuminati and that host of wicked clergy because of his profound historical knowledge of the Templars, the Fibonacci Sequence and other random items.

A mediaevalist's everyday life is not quite as exciting as that and, as a rule, historians work on texts which they try to read, understand and interpret. There may well have been something to the advice I was given at the beginning of my doctoral dissertation by a highly-qualified academic who warned me that the 'stabilitas loci of the posterior' was the unavoidable precondition for the 'free roaming of the mind'.

But it is not true that historical insights only mature at a desk. Mediaevalists travel, too – sometimes to go on holidays, which then confront them with objects of study all over again. You can actually feel persecuted by your work: if you travel across Europe you fall over towns, castles, churches, even roads, canals, walls and bridges. No wonder that some historians flee to the same remote islands year in, year out if they want to get away from their work for at least a few weeks.

Alluring and recalcitrant

And then there are trips in the service of research. Even if there are those who think the Internet is the ultimate medium for accessing all the knowledge in the world, a lot of the material we want to read, see and interpret is located in places you cannot just magic up onto the screen by clicking on your mouse. So historians arm themselves with pens and paper or a tablet and head for the archives, where they first have to unravel the system before they can get their hands on the treasures to be found there – and only there!

If you are not familiar with archives and manuscript collections you can hardly imagine how alluring and recalcitrant this kind of work is: modern printed books are usually available in many different places and can be traced easily in catalogues. Unique archive materials and manuscripts, on the other hand, are only to be found in the place where they are stored. Here you will be presented with a neutral, conservation-friendly envelope from which you extract an 11th century papal deed with the seal, known as a papal bull, still attached to it.

Or you open up a voluminous manuscript containing hundreds of centuries-old sheets of parchment – it was probably responsible for decimating an entire flock of sheep – on which a monk will have spent months laboriously and painfully inscribing a text. A famous note scribbled in the margin of an 8th century manuscript reads 'Writing is excessive drudgery. It crooks your back, it dims your eyes, it twists your stomach and your sides. Three fingers write, the entire body suffers'. No wonder the same note tells the reader to wash their hands and turn the pages gently.

This is even more true for a richly illuminated manuscript. If it has been preserved properly and treated carefully the exquisitely coloured illustrations will be as radiant as they were when they were first created. The material composition of the writing surface holds important information for modern historians that is difficult to access in editions:

a formal diploma comprising relatively little text will be exuberantly arranged on a vast piece of parchment, and even the quality of the parchment tells a story. But you can only capture details like this when you study the concrete object itself. Reproductions – however good they may be – are no substitute for hands-on contact, so researchers have to travel to the material they want to study.

Many items are not even properly catalogued so you might even be unable to identify them by a strictly systematic approach. Research under these conditions is to some extent an informed search: you start out with a “suspicion” and, with a bit of luck and hard work, you find what you are looking for. You are not always successful of course, but the work is rarely in vain: you come across other finds, which lead to insights that may be just as exciting and important.



40° 43' N, 74° E' W



LISA KALTENEGER,
ASTROPHYSICIST

‘I always take music with me on journeys – as a sound space to shut out the outside world and help me concentrate when I’m travelling, or just as background music: Bruce Springsteen for a road trip in the States, Jazz in New York, Blues in Atlanta ... and as a reminder afterwards.’

Historians, therefore, still have to travel if they want to make new discoveries and capture the materiality of their object of study. The Internet is no substitute for contact with originals, irrespective of the fact that professionals, students and anyone interested can now conjure up manuscripts from digital libraries

and archives more easily than ever before – and a lot of the work that is being done in this field is amazing. As such, it is odd that a society facilitating such access is introducing ever more regimented degree courses, which teach ever fewer of the skills required to read these documents ...

Libraries and archives are thus a Mecca for historians (see the RG ‘Manners!’ anthology *Mekkas der Moderne (Meccas of Modernity)* for more details). Many have their own particular favourite. It is, after all, a very special experience to be required to swear that you will not ‘bring into the Library, or kindle therein, any fire or flame’ before being allowed into the Bodleian in Oxford or to look up from your manuscript at the Baroque ceiling paintings in the Augustinian Reading Room at the Austrian National Library in Vienna. The old is everywhere, just waiting to be discovered; manuscripts that have been neglected for centuries begging to be read. The work is often time-consuming and laborious, but the thrilling moments when you discover something new make up for everything. So far, I am pleased to say, no one has taken a shot at me – perhaps Robert Langdon did something wrong?!





31° 14' N, 121° 28' E



LENA HENNINGSEN, SINOLOGIST

SHANGHAI

On my research trips to the People's Republic of China my railcard has proved to be a very useful item. I investigate plagiarism, forgery and other copyright infringements in popular literature. One day when I was doing some online research in a local library in Shanghai I happened upon a novel by Han Han that he had never published. Quite the reverse, in the preface to one of his actual books, he points out that the novel had appeared under his name but was not in fact his work. Someone was trying to make money using the name of a best-selling author – and that was relevant to my work.

It took a long time to find the book in said library – lots of volumes were not where they were supposed to be according to the shelfmark – but I did eventually discover it. As it was not the sort of novel you read in one

sitting and I was planning to fly back the next day, I needed to have a copy made. Having deposited an official document, I was allowed to borrow the book and take it to a copy centre in another part of the building. What document could be more suitable than a railcard? It has a photo (at least it did then), looks rather impressive and is similar to a Chinese identity card. At other libraries my railcard even enabled me to take out books and magazines for several days.

Back to the fake Han Han: railcard deposited, book borrowed, off to the copy centre. An older gentleman was responsible for the copying, but he was quite clearly absorbed in his newspaper and wanted to remain so. I asked him to make the copies. 'Which pages?' 'The whole book, please.' 'The whole book?' (He seemed to doubt my linguistic abilities.) 'Yes, please.' 'But

it's much more expensive to copy the book than to buy it in a bookshop!' (He seemed to doubt the rest of my mental faculties as well.) 'Yes, I know. But, strangely enough, I haven't been able to find it in any of the bookshops in Shanghai. And tomorrow I have to leave the country.' (I didn't necessarily want to draw his attention to the fact that the book was a fake.) 'But a whole book, I can't do that. For copyright reasons.' (Oops! As if the people who had produced the book had given a second thought to the copyright.)

He rang his boss, but she also insisted on the copyright. I was so nonplussed that I had not moved a muscle, so he passed me the telephone, and his boss explained the principle of copyright to me. I did my best to sound reasonable. Then I told the older gentleman how important this book was for my research, that I would be leaving next day and would not be able to return to China for a good while to come. He then had a brainwave. 'You know what? Sometimes people borrow books from the library and lose them. Then we just charge them several times the cost of the book.' I was speechless. 'So, in this case, I'd say we'll just charge you the cost of the book.' I finally caught on and endeavoured to agree as quickly as possible.

The older gentleman phoned his colleague in the other department. I went back, retrieved my railcard by paying for the book and left the premises, the proud owner of a curious addition to my own library.

CAUCASUS

PLACES, PEOPLE, ADVENTURES

Geographer Tobias Kümmerle studies the impact of humans on our ecosystem – a childhood dream come true

TEXT ULRICH PONTES



Often on research trips: Berlin geographer Tobias Kümmerle



Sometimes the terrain is pretty rough, like here in Russia

When a German, clad in just a pair of underpants, is stopped by a roadside check in the Argentinian pampa, he has some explaining to do. This was one experience Tobias Kümmerle had not expected to go through in the name of science – even if the unexpected is a core component of research trips. In retrospect, however, the course of events seems almost inevitable: Anyone who, like Kümmerle, investigates changes in the use of vast, poorly-developed tracts of land, usually drives a pick-up. He stops every so often at the side of the road to document his work by taking photos. If it then rains, which does not happen very often, but does occasionally, the ground at the side of the road soon turns into a slippery quagmire. ‘There are lots of clay minerals in the soil there.’ And if the not-so-hard shoulder is on a slight incline, the truck gets stuck. You have to push it, and if the local driver accelerates a little too hard ...

So he took off his mud-soaked clothes to stop the passenger seat from getting dirty, explains Tobias Kümmerle from the comfort of his clean, dry office in the Geography Department at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. You could be forgiven for thinking the thin young man with a beard and jeans was an undergraduate or Ph.D. student, but Kümmerle is actually 37, married with children and has been head of his own junior research group for the last three years. Since 2012, he has held a W2 professorship, initially on a fixed-term contract and as a Junior Fellow, funded by the Einstein Foundation. He specialises in biogeography and biodiversity conservation.

Tobias Kümmerle has a lot of weird and wonderful stories to tell about his experiences on research trips, and he obviously enjoys telling them once he has addressed the serious issues that take him on his travels in the first place: land use, biodiversity,

climate and environmental change, sustainability – these are the key concepts shaping his research activities. They are the issues that determine the survival of humankind and they are the ones that enable Kümmerle to live his childhood dreams. When he was boy, he relates, he could not wait for the next episode of the natural history programmes and documentaries on German television. Today, he travels regularly to South America and Eastern Europe to study the forest stands or record wild animal populations.

Kümmerle and his research group essentially want to know how people and their political and economic systems interact with nature and what the consequences will be. ‘On the one hand, we want to understand how and why land use is changing,’ Kümmerle explains. Can forests proliferate unchecked, or are they managed? Is land used for grazing or cultivating useful plants? And, if so, which, and what methods are employed? The young researcher describes land use as the crucial interface between human and environmental systems, ‘the global change factor that has the greatest impact on the Earth’s system’. This is why it is important to understand the mechanisms and create scenarios to weigh up the consequences of certain political decisions.

On the other hand, the boy who loved natural history programmes also developed a serious interest in the animal kingdom. As a postdoc he investigated the habitats and populations of the

European bison, or wisent. ‘Topics like this keep catching up with me,’ says Kümmerle. People frequently contact him about the wisent, a relation of our modern-day cattle that very nearly became extinct. The topic connects well with land use: large wild animals can be seen as an indicator for an intact natural world. Kümmerle’s work thus revolves around the issue of how a better balance can be achieved between the use of resources – on which humans do, after all, depend – and the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems: how humans can live more sustainably. And this is a field where Kümmerle sees a lot of room for improvement.

Travelling on dirt tracks – and in virtual space

The fact that his research focuses on South America and Eastern Europe is a mixture of coincidence and necessity: after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, according to Kümmerle, was like one enormous field experiment that illustrated how drastic changes in institutional and socioeconomic general conditions impact on land use and nature. ‘All in all, since 1990, some 40 to 60 million hectares of agricultural land have been abandoned, whereby the changes are geographically very unevenly distributed.’ Since his Ph.D., Kümmerle himself has concentrated on the Carpathian Mountains; in 2012, he extended his range to the Caucasus. ‘In theory, I have always been interested in the region, but it only really got going because you can find some of the last herds of wisent there.’ The Chaco, on the other hand, an area of dry forest and savannah covering parts



Landscape in upheaval, unnoticed by the world but not by Tobias Kümmerle: research in the Chaco

of Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia, is developing in the opposite direction: in order to satisfy world demand for soy, particularly for industrial meat production, huge swathes of land are being deforested without the world even noticing. Kümmerle had his attention drawn to the issue by Argentinian colleagues when he was working at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the US from 2008 to 2010.

Twice a year, if at all possible, Tobias Kümmerle spends several weeks at a time in the areas described. Is he something of an heir to Alexander von Humboldt, whose biography can be found on his bookshelf? Slightly embarrassed, Kümmerle waves this aside, refers to a “luminary” and emphasises that, even if the issues gives rise to some interesting connections, research today is not comparable. When the young professor talks about the Chaco, for example, he goes to his computer and calls up Google Earth to demonstrate the enormous areas that have been deforested in the last 20 years. But the digital images are not only useful for general demonstration purposes but also for quantitative analysis. The 21st century explorer must be just as much at home in the virtual world as on the dirt roads of distant continents.

But actual travel is still essential. According to Kümmerle, you have to go on “diplomatic trips” to meet potential collaborative partners, build trust and agree on projects. And then you always have to get down to the nitty-gritty again. To get a feeling for

the region and be able to map the details which cannot be reconstructed from satellite images, and which no-one else is recording on the spot, he and his team spend hours battling their way across rough terrain, studying the vegetation and setting up wildlife camera traps. A researcher living the romantic dreams of his youth? Tobias Kümmerle laughs. ‘It is only romantic before and after, if at all. When you are at it, it is usually just hot and tiring.’ On top of which: most of the work is done in his office. ‘E-mails, PowerPoints, writing applications and papers ...’

But working at home can be fun, too. When Kümmerle talks about his teaching, which is all closely related to his research interests, his enthusiasm is just as tangible as it is when he describes his interdisciplinary contacts, which he has consciously cultivated over a long period. ‘Whatever they happen to be, economists, institutional researchers, wildlife biologists, anthropologists, I have always found it really exciting. Human-environment systems, i.e. my object of study, are by their very nature interdisciplinary.’ So it is only logical that Kümmerle’s interest in the *Junge Akademie* goes back to his doctoral days. He has now been a member since summer 2013 and hopes it will allow him to go on tours of discovery to quite new areas. ‘One of the ideas being considered at the moment is to set our data to music’ – to transpose series of satellite images, some of which have been taken every day for years, into sound, for example. ‘It would be really fascinating to hear how the Chaco sounds before and after the massive deforestation of the last 20 years.’ ✿



Nearly extinct about a hundred years ago, small herds now live in some parts of Eastern Europe: the wisent or European bison

AWARDS, HONOURS AND FELLOWSHIPS

KATHARINA DOMSCHKE | FELLOWSHIP AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN COLLEGE OF NEUROPSYCHOPHARMACOLOGY

For her studies on the genetic, epi-genetic and pharmaco-genetic implications of fear and depression, Katharina Domschke received the Fellowship Award of the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP) in October 2013. The annual award valued at 1,500 Euros honours scientists and lecturers whose research or teaching has significantly helped drive scientific progress in the field of Neuropsychopharmacology and closely related disciplines.

TOBIAS ERB | ENCOURAGEMENT AWARD OF THE SWISS SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY

In summer 2013, Tobias Erb received the encouragement award of the Swiss Society for Microbiology for his research on the biochemistry of microorganisms. The award, worth 5,000 Francs, honours the originality of his research: he was able to refute the controversial hypothesis proposed by NASA researchers that a newly discovered bacterium used the toxic element arsenic in various biomolecules instead of phosphorus.

GIESELA RÜHL | CARUS MEDAL OF THE LEOPOLDINA

Giesela Rühl received the Carus Medal of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina in September 2013 for her outstanding research on international private and procedural law. The medal has been awarded since 1896 in recognition of important scientific discoveries or research achievements in a field represented by the Leopoldina, which since 2011 also includes researchers from outside the natural sciences.

JULIA TJUS | 'BREAKTHROUGH OF THE YEAR' FROM PHYSICS WORLD

In December 2013, the magazine *Physics World* declared the 'Breakthrough of the Year' to be the IceCube project, of which Julia Tjus is a member. The award recognises the research findings of the world's largest neutrino telescope 'IceCube' at the South Pole, the recordings of which were documented in the magazine *Science* on 22 November 2013. 'IceCube' provides first indications of astrophysical high energy neutrinos, which probably originate outside of our solar system.

REBEKKA VOSS | DFG GRANT

Rebekka Voß' project 'Yiddish, Language of Love: Isaak Wetzlar's "Libes briv" (1748/49) in the Context of Pietism, Early Enlightenment and Moral Literature' won a DFG grant amounting to 211,000 Euros in October 2013.

HANS JAKOB WÖRNER | NERNST-HABER-BODENSTEIN PRIZE

Hans Jakob Wörner is the 2013 winner of the Nernst-Haber-Bodenstein Prize of the Bunsen Society for Physical Chemistry, which is endowed with 5,000 Euros and awarded to younger scientists in memory of Max Bodenstein, Fritz Haber and Walther Nernst.

HANS JAKOB WÖRNER | BROIDA PRIZE

Hans Jakob Wörner's work on the sub-femtosecond dynamics of nitrogen dioxide is a major contribution to our understanding of the structures and dynamics of free radicals. In July 2013, he received the Broida Prize at the International Symposium on Free Radicals.

JADWIGA R. ZIOLKOWSKA | BERLIN SCIENCE AWARD (JUNIOR AWARD)

In 2013, Jadwiga Ziolkowska was honoured with the Berlin Mayor's Junior Award, which was conferred in January 2014. The Berlin Science Award is considered the German capital's most prestigious distinction for academics. The young agricultural and environmental scientist, whose research focuses mainly on biofuel, received prize money of 10,000 Euros.

STRENGTHENING GERMAN UNIVERSITIES

The RG ‘Science Policy: After the Excellence Initiative’ calls for chairs to be abolished in favour of more professorships

TEXT CORNELIS MENKE

At present, it remains to be seen whether and how the Excellence Initiative will continue after 2017. Furthermore, another three programmes to promote research up to 2020, run by the Federation and the Länder, will also be coming to an end: the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, the funding for university construction and the Higher Education Pact. Against this backdrop, in summer 2012, the Junge Akademie established the Research Group ‘Science Policy: After the Excellence Initiative’. The RG’s aim is to play a role in debating the future of the German academic system. In autumn 2013, it produced a position paper (see p. 44), which focuses on the situation at universities. Here is a summary of the arguments.

German universities are currently having trouble fulfilling their mission – this is partly a result of insufficient funding and partly of their structure and organisation, especially their personnel structure: only 21,000 of the 178,000 academics working at universities are professors; these 12 percent have to bear the main burden of administrative and examining duties. At the same time, compared to universities in other countries, a large proportion of staff hold positions assigned to chairs where they are expected to qualify, but not do a great deal of teaching. This personnel structure neither benefits teaching nor research at universities.

Universities are confronted with three major problems. Firstly, positions at universities are no longer internationally competitive: the positions for younger academics lack independence and, given the enormous growth in the number of fixed-term contracts in the last few years, professional prospects, too. Professors, for their part, are short of time for research: on average, teaching and examining duties, acquiring third-party funding and administration account for 80 percent of their working time.

This weakens research at universities. In addition, the small number of professorships is reflected in the low figures for new appointments – the universities simply do not embrace enough new research themes. Finally, the fact that university structure is based on teaching considerations means it is harder to set research focus areas. Many German universities are very good – amongst the top 500 in the Academic Ranking of World Universities, the so-called Shanghai Ranking, Germany comes in third place after the USA and China – but very few are really outstanding.

Last but not least, student numbers have grown significantly. In 2010, 295,000 students completed their degrees – ten years earlier it was just 177,000. In the same period, the number of professorships hardly increased. Instead, the figures for non-professorial academic staff grew from 108,000 in 2000 to 156,000 in 2010 – but only some of these are fully integrated in academic teaching.

Recommendations for developing the academic system must be judged in terms of their potential to solve these three core problems of universities.

We recommend a fundamental change in the personnel structure at universities. Currently, the basic university budget (excluding engineering and medicine) finances approx. 18,500 professorships (of which 1,000 are junior professorships) and 50,000 additional full-time equivalents (FTE) for research associates – every professorship in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences has an average of 2.6 staff positions. A further 75,000 FTEs at universities are third-party funded.

Doubling the number of professorships at no extra cost

In our opinion, the funding currently flowing into the provision of personnel for professorships would be better invested if it were used to increase the number of professorships – junior, assistant and full professorships. If one were to take the entire 50,000 FTEs covered by the basic budget, according to our calculations, 20,000 full professorships and 10,000 junior professorships could be created at no extra cost. This would double the number of professorships and increase the number of junior professorships tenfold. Admittedly, such a radical transformation is not sensible for all disciplines. Where large working groups are required, especially in the natural sciences and life sciences, research associates would continue to have their place. The same is true of positions focusing on teaching subjects that prepare students for established vocational fields. Nonetheless, the calculations reveal that such a transformation holds enormous potential. It would undoubtedly have to be implemented over an extended period so as not to tie up too many resources all at once.

Transforming FTEs into professorships in this way would help to solve the three major problems facing universities: professors

would not have to take on so many leadership, administrative, and examining duties whilst younger academics would become independent at an earlier stage and have better professional prospects. The increase in the number of professorships would also benefit research because (especially smaller) departments would be able to cover a broader spectrum or use appointments in neighbouring fields to set a research focus – and this would happen within university departments, not by establishing whole new research institutes.

Finally, both teaching capacity and teaching quality would improve: teaching capacity due to the increase in the number of positions involving a full teaching load; teaching quality because individuals would be able to do more teaching in a field related to their own research. This in turn would mean that universities would be able to cope better with permanently high student numbers.

Philosopher of science, Cornelis Menke, is the spokesperson of the RG 'Science Policy: After the Excellence Initiative'.



When the research focus starts collecting dust: the system of Chairs with relatively few independent academics thwarts innovation

THE PROMISE OF POP

More than just random anecdotes: sharing interdisciplinary ideas at the launch of the RG 'Popular Culture(s)'

TEXT + PHOTOS VERA KLOCKE



The founders of the research group: Rebekka Voß and Gordon Kampe

Pictures of Beyoncé, rapper Drake, and scenes from the Batman film, *The Dark Knight Rises*, adorn the white wall of the guest house at Goethe University in Frankfurt. It makes sense to categorise these icons of mass culture as 'popular'. But what is popular culture apart from modern media phenomena? And how can academia address these themes? These were the questions discussed on 18 and 19 November 2013 by eleven researchers at an interdisciplinary workshop on 'Theories of Popular Culture'. The two-day event was organised by the *Junge Akademie's* RG 'Popular Culture(s)', re-started by the Jewish studies scholar, Rebekka Voß, and the music scholar Gordon Kampe.


In their introduction to the workshop, which also launched the work of the RG, Voß and Kampe critically examined the concept of popular culture. It seems to mean everything and nothing – even the differentiation between popular and elite is passé, it was revealed. These days, the boundaries can only be described as fluid, the RG founders opined. This broad field is both a blessing and a curse: Whilst the German studies scholar, Thomas Hecken, happily listed 16 potential areas of definition in his introductory lecture and pointed out that 'in academia, popular culture was and, in some cases, still is an exceptionally contested concept', the historian, Klaus Hödl, summed up the general feeling of discomfort: 'It would be nice if we could eventually come to a consensus'. In the course of the workshop, colleagues from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland not only presented a concrete research topic from their own particular fields, but also explained their methods. In the discussion, one of the core questions examined whether there was potential for transferring one's own skills to other disciplines.



Beyoncé in the context of academia: what exactly is popular culture?

In this context, it became clear that, in an age devoid of a universal theory, the concept ‘popular’ seems, above all, to hold the promise of wholeness. Popular culture connects the most diverse themes and divergent definitions. Thus a presentation on Jewish folk singers in the Vienna of 1900 stood side by side with a lecture on the copyright dispute between the pop singer, Beyoncé Knowles, and the Belgian avant-garde choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker. The theatre studies scholar, Lorenz Aggermann, pinpointed dangers in this interdisciplinary exchange. In his opinion, the addition ‘pop’ leads to ‘hypostatisation’: when searching for interdisciplinary connections the object under investigation acquires ‘anecdotal value’ – insight becomes secondary.

The various presentations did, indeed, have something anecdotal about them. And yet: there were examples – like that of Gordon Kampe, who announced that the lecture on Batman had opened up a new perspective on his own research interest, mass opera – which proved that interdisciplinary bridges can be built and can generate added value.

The team was thus satisfied. Rebekka Voß described the workshop as ‘a very successful experiment’. And, even if the workshop did largely assume ‘the anecdotal’ to have negative connotations endangering interdisciplinary exchange, in retrospect, this aspect also has a positive side: eleven academics, who seriously wanted to tackle the theme of popular culture, now not only know what methods their colleagues use; they are familiar with their anecdotes as well. A good starting point for sharing ideas. 



‘Successful experiment’: satisfied workshop participants in Frankfurt



Performances, exhibits, workshop discussions: 'The Performance' transforms the space into many stages to orchestrate an institution playfully.

A RATHER DIFFERENT INSTITUTION

The workshop discussion series 'Performing Institutions' in an interactive theatre installation

TEXT ULRICH PONTES

Lean back and consume – that is definitely not the motto of this piece of theatre. Those who venture into 'The Performance' are not allocated a seat and certainly cannot be sure what to expect. They have to decide for themselves whether they want to watch one of the performance scenes or listen to music, whether they want to follow one of the guides leading them around the room or opt for a bowl of soup. There are lots of stages, competing, interacting, fluctuating but, for all their diversity, united by a single theme: concrete or abstract, explicit or implicit, they all deal with 'the institution'.

In this constellation, the representational and reflective levels are conflated. 'The whole evening was like an institution – with its structures, dynamics and dependencies,' says theatre studies scholar, Viktoria Tkaczyk, a member of the *Junge Akademie*. She was present on one of the three sold-out evenings in October when 'The Performance' was presented at the Sophiensaele in Berlin. 'As the evening progresses you yourself become part of the whole,' she explains, 'but without being able to fathom it completely, without knowing what it is really all about and what the institution is actually there for.'

A permanent feature of the temporary institution was the lecture corner: grouped around a large table, academics and creative artists held short lectures, interspersed with discussion panels, all connected in some way to the institution theme. The audience was free to join the group for a while and take part in the discussions, whereby the discussions themselves – another example of the constant blurring of boundaries – were more than just an element of 'The Performance'. Featuring different participants each evening, the debates are part of the 'Performing Institutions' workshop discussion series that was launched in

early summer 2013, initiated by the RG 'Art as Research?'. 'The Performance' as a whole was directed by the artist duo Herbordt/Mohren, both members of the *Junge Akademie* and spokespersons of the aforementioned RG.

'While, in my opinion, the evening generally worked on the principle of "hospitality plus rules", which is not necessarily what you associate with an institution, our discussion "islands" provided the link to real institutions,' says Pirkko Husemann. The dance dramaturg was one of several *Junge Akademie* members and alumni who sat around the lecture table during one of the discussions. She reports on an interesting debate, sparked by short concrete presentations, which progressed to fundamental aspects of the topic. What she found really unusual, however, was not so much the content as the experience of interacting with a lay audience and specialist colleagues as well as being part of the performance at the same time. 'The way we were sitting meant our discussions were very intimate, but they were of course influenced acoustically by the other activities going on around us.'

Bernhard Herbordt and Melanie Mohren thus seem to have achieved what they intended. 'Our work is motivated by questions like: what are institutions, what is their role in society, how do they need to change to remain relevant?' Herbordt comments. Mohren expands, 'We do not want to treat this theoretically, it is all about experience, how all the actors and elements of the performance encounter and interact with one another in this very particular situation.' Both elements, the content and, as far as possible, the particular situation of the 'Performing Institution' discussions, are to be included in an anthology, scheduled to appear in the autumn.



PLUS ÇA CHANGE?

Historical texts and contemporary problems, research and the pedestrian precinct: 'Speakers' Corner' tests street theatre as a form of communication

TEXT ULRICH PONTES | PHOTO REBEKKA VOSS

The world is spinning fast – at least, that is what the extravagant suits imply, worn by the woman and man ostentatiously reading newspapers in the middle of the Göttingen pedestrian precinct on a sunny afternoon in August 2013. The material is a patchwork of black and white and bright colours, reminiscent of the time when television closed down for the night and broadcast a test card for hours on end.

Given their age, one is busy asking oneself whether these two young people can actually remember those days – when they suddenly burst out in unison with 'Civil servants'. 'Should change their behaviour,' the man continues. 'Civil servants' they shout again, and the woman adds, 'exist because of laws and the state'. The list of demands addressed to civil servants gets longer and longer, and ever more passers-by stop to listen – and suddenly become the undifferentiated target of these demands themselves, because now the criticism is potentially directed at anyone: 'Citizens who do not come from a good family, should not be rejected because of their background!' – and especially parents: 'It is important not to let children embark on an apprenticeship before they have become acquainted with books!'

Part of an election campaign, people think

What is the point of this performance that is repeated in the centre of Göttingen several times on this day? Well-packaged commercial advertising? Social/political activism? Part of an election campaign, some people assume, especially since federal elections are imminent at the time. At the end of the two-minute performance, at least those who have listened carefully are completely confounded when the actors announce their source: '14th century, Constantinople, from the Mirror for Subjects by Thomas Magister.'

Enlightenment comes in the form of postcard-sized flyers distributed amongst the onlookers. 'Bleibt alles beim Alten?' (Does everything stay the same?) – the question is emblazoned on one side in huge letters, and on the reverse everything is revealed: It is a *Junge Akademie* project with the title, 'Speakers' Corner – old texts, new contexts', and features the actors, Anna Theresa Döing and Florian Reiners, reciting from socio-historical sources and placing them in a contemporary context. Three old texts are performed, dramatised by Nina-Maria Knohl. The 'Unterthanenspiegel' (*Mirror for Subjects*) is followed by 19th century statements on civic obligations from Naftali Herz Homberg's 'Bne Zion. A religious-moral reader for children'. Formulated as headlines, the references to contemporary cases of tax evasion make this text particularly and explicitly relevant. The third text presents disturbing details from the 'Arbeitslosen von Marienthal' (*The Unemployed of Marienthal*), a study by Marie Jahoda, Paul Felix Lazarsfeld and Hans Zeisel dealing with unemployment during the world economic crisis of the 1930s.

'For us, the question about everything staying the same is real, not rhetorical,' says Katharina Heyden, a theologian and member of the *Junge Akademie* from Göttingen. Together with the Jewish studies scholar and historian, Rebekka Voß in Frankfurt, and the Berlin sociologist, Marc Helbling, she initiated the project, which was performed in these three cities. 'It was our aim as researchers to talk to people on the streets.' The basic question was a good starting point, as Katharina Heyden explains, because everyone has something to say about it. 'After all, promoting dialogue between academia and society, even using unusual formats, is one of the main aims of the *Junge Akademie*.'



An unexpected journey in time: 'Speakers' Corner' in Frankfurt am Main

Fighting for attention

And, in retrospect, the three organisers are very satisfied indeed. They admit it was not easy to catch people's attention. Many just passed by without wasting a thought on the meaning of the spectacle, and for some the project was too complex in the first place. On top of this, the organisers report that for an academic, it was a very strange feeling to stand in the middle of the throng, competing for attention with people selling newspapers, collecting for charities or handing out vouchers.

On the other hand, every so often the hoped-for discussions did come about, sometimes motivated by amazement: 'Oh, I see, are you from an academic institution?' Sometimes people were just enthusiastic about the action in general: 'Is there a video?' they asked, or, almost begging, 'You really must perform this again on Social Justice Day!' With some, it was not always clear whether the point had actually come across, for instance when what was being said was reinforced with a mere 'At last, someone is saying

it.' But many people did address the actual question and came out with statements like 'It's true, everything does always stay the same!' or 'Nothing has changed at all in the last forty years' – sentiments often repeated by older people.

The feedback they have received has convinced the three initiators to continue the project – with new performances but also, perhaps, involving new formats that develop the basic ideas of the '*Junge Akademie* on the streets' and '*Academia as theatre*'. After all, leaving everything exactly as it was, would be most unsatisfactory – and the very opposite of what the '*Junge Akademie* stands for. ✿

Visit www.diejungeakademie.de/en/activities/academia-society/speakers-corner/ for more information, the video and, possibly, the announcement of a new instalment of 'Speakers' Corner'.

BETWEEN FREEDOM AND THE PRESSURE TO PERFORM

A Parliamentary Evening explores the right measure of public involvement in steering research and academia

TEXT ULRICH PONTES

‘Art and scholarship, research, and teaching shall be free’ it states in article 5 of the German Constitution. Yet the government is a major source of funding for academia and research: every year, many billions of taxpayers’ Euros flow into research infrastructure and projects in Germany alone. Society makes this investment not out of a pure and abstract desire to gain insight, but in the hope of harvesting useful and practical results, all the more so since there is no shortage of national or global problems for which society urgently needs solutions and which often require intensive research.

So, should ‘academia’ freely and independently steer its own course and define its own issues? Or should ‘society’ have a say and a vote in it? This is a momentous and fundamental question, and much more important in the context of today’s debate on sustainability than it was to previous generations. This question was the subject of a Parliamentary Evening in November, hosted jointly by the *Junge Akademie* and the *Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften Leopoldina* for politicians and interested members of the public. The well-attended event, held at the representative office of the federal state Sachsen-Anhalt in Berlin, was entitled ‘Should a sustainable society democratise science?’ The event was part of a continuous series of activities by both academies on the multi-faceted interplay between science and sustainability.

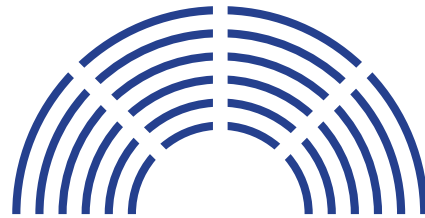
Hartmut Möllring, Minister for Science and Economy of the federal state Sachsen-Anhalt, and the event organisers welcomed the audience, after which Gerd Michelsen, Professor for Environmental and Sustainable Communication in Lüneburg, opened the discussion with a call for greater public involvement: using processes that are yet to be developed, academia has to cooperate

with societal players to identify relevant research questions and then evaluate the outcomes. The former President of the German Research Foundation (DFG) and designated President of the Leibniz Association, Matthias Kleiner, countered with an opposing view. He advocated absolute freedom of research whereby issues should derive exclusively from the intrinsic interests of academia.

In the ensuing panel discussion, a differentiated debate allowed these polarised positions to achieve a basic consensus: fundamental research, all panellists agreed, ought to derive its orientation exclusively from within itself; application-oriented research, however, does imply working on questions that are of societal relevance, in particular on the topic of sustainability. Martin Wilmking, agricultural ecologist from Greifswald, argued the same case: when society poses legitimate questions, such as how to defuse landmines or destroy chemical weapons, ‘science owes answers’. Representing the *Junge Akademie*, of which he was a member until summer 2013, panellist Wilmking also called for the involvement of more young researchers in this debate on participation. Otherwise, fields and forms of research would ultimately be determined by senior academics who would hardly be affected themselves in the long term. Exhibits around the perimeter of the Parliamentary Evening showed examples of just how keenly young researchers, in particular, are committed to the cause of sustainability. Amongst other things, the *Junge Akademie* showcased posters on studies conducted by its Research Group ‘Sustainability’ as well as the interactive learning game ‘Using Energy Sustainably’ that was developed for the 2012 Science Year (www.energie-nachhaltig-nutzen.de).



The calm before the storm: the venue of the Parliamentary Evening



Moderator Jacqueline Boysen with three of the panellists: Martin Wilmking, Jörg Hacker and Gerd Michelsen



Sibylle Baumbach, speaker of the Junge Akademie, welcomes the audience

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPE?

A Junge Akademie interactive debate at the Salon Sophie Charlotte

TEXT ALEXANDER DANZER AND MORITZ RENNER



Europe – A place for the future

SALON SOPHIE CHARLOTTE

In the tradition of the literary salons of centuries past, once a year in January, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities hosts an evening event, open to the public. The gathering is named after the well-educated and inquisitive first Queen of Prussia, Sophie Charlotte (1668–1705), and organised as a salon of many salons: various aspects of a topic are explored in different ways in many rooms. Traditionally, one of the salons is planned and designed by the *Junge Akademie*.

‘Europe – a Place for the Future’ was the motto of this year’s Salon Sophie Charlotte which took place on 18 January 2014. To launch the debate, members of the *Junge Akademie (JA)* described their own experiences of living and doing research in the ‘crisis states’ of Southern Europe, after which the salon went on to explore the opportunities that arise from the European economic crisis. An interactive poster exhibition and panel discussion encouraged the audience to contribute their opinions on the evening’s central questions: ‘Has European crisis management manoeuvred itself into a crisis?’, ‘In the course of the crisis, greater use is being made of the free movement of EU nationals. Does this solve or create economic problems?’ and ‘Is the European economic crisis a North-South conflict?’

More than forty visitors listened to the panel discussion and contributed by using answer cards or by taking the floor themselves, eagerly voicing their views. On the panel, the host, Wolfram Pernice, of Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, debated with the historian Klaus Oschema (Heidelberg University and, like Pernice, a *JA* member), the political scientist Isabel Schäfer (Mediterranean Institute Berlin), the Greek lawyer Smaro Tassi (Berlin),

and the legal expert, Mattias Wendel (Walter Hallstein Institute for European Constitutional Law, Berlin). All these various perceptions, informed by different academic angles or real life experiences, gave shape to the ubiquitous notion of ‘crisis’. Klaus Oschema pointed out that migration in all its variations had always moulded European history, whilst Isabel Schäfer demonstrated that the (Southern) European crisis radiated beyond Europe, threatening economic ties and the integration of the entire Mediterranean region. Smaro Tassi not only deals with migration law in her professional life, but moves back and forth between two worlds in private, too: Germany and crisis-ridden Greece.


Despite all its negative consequences, Mattias Wendel, in particular, strongly emphasised the opportunities that the crisis may hold for the political future of the European Union. The other panellists and the audience agreed with Wendel that Europeans would have to stand united to overcome the structural deficits that this crisis had exposed, both within individual member states and in the institutional framework of the EU. There was also a consensus that, in some ways, there had never been a better moment to tackle

PRIZE QUESTION ON EUROPE

Europe's Young Academies agree to collaborate on common topics

INTERVIEW ULRICH PONTES

these problems than right now: today's Europe can build on a young elite that has grown up and lived with the European idea and does not question the political value of integration.

With their promises of solving Europe's economic and political crisis with nationalist and xenophobic agendas, nationalist radical parties pose a real threat to the European project. The lively debate explored how integrated European media and policy programmes could unmask such populist tendencies. Yet even stalwart supporters of this approach had to admit that such a social process would have to evolve over a longer period of time. Thus to address the urgent problems of the crisis, carefully crafted reforms of the economic and political structures needed to be introduced that would serve the interests of Europe as a whole. 

Moritz Renner (law) and Alexander Danzer (economics) have been members of the Junge Akademie since 2013.

The beginning of October saw the first meeting of Europe's Junge Akademien in Brussels with the aim of forming a Research Group on Europe. Moritz Schularick, economic historian in Bonn, member of the Junge Akademie since 2010, and initiator of the gathering, explains the why's and wherefores.

JAM: How did this workshop come about?


Moritz Schularick: There are now Young Academies in many European countries – some bigger, some smaller, some more open and some more exclusive, but by and large, they all resemble our *Junge Akademie*. Europe is facing many challenges – just think of the Euro crisis – and European elections are coming up at the end of May. It was obvious that we should do something together. When we approached the other academies with the idea, they responded well. Eventually, the Belgian *Jonge Academie* (Flanders) organised a meeting that drew representatives from many countries.

JAM: What did you talk about?

Schularick: After we had got to know one another and talked about our respective situations, we had a brainstorming

on which direction our joint projects could take. One idea was that lawyers or political scientists from the various Young Academies could form Research Groups to collaborate on their European topics. These contacts have now been established. We will see what comes of it in practice. Then we also wanted to do something trans-disciplinary. So we had the idea of running a joint JA Europe-themed competition inviting people from across Europe to submit essays and other pieces of work. We are all currently investing a lot of energy in putting this idea into practice.

JAM: Meaning the competition is still under construction?

Schularick: We have decided on a prize question, but we will not make it public until June this year, to coincide with the JA festivities in Berlin – and we still have a few things to organise before then. Once the competition has been announced, we will advertise the prize question in the media and online, but you can also visit the JA website for information. Participants have until the end of 2014 to submit texts, images, sculptures, videos, or whatever else may come to mind. In 2015, we will award prizes for the best submissions. 

WHERE IDEAS RESONATE

The *Junge Akademie* Council: two new members explain why they decided to become involved

INTERVIEW ULRICH PONTES

The Junge Akademie was in its second year when it established a Council as an advisory and support body in 2002. Council members are prominent personalities from academia, politics, business, culture and the media. They are nominated by members of the Junge Akademie and appointed by the plenary for a three-year term to support and advise the Junge Akademie in its endeavours. In 2013, the composition of the council changed, which the Junge Akademie Magazin took as an opportunity to ask two of the new council members, who are also both Junge Akademie alumni, about their new assignment.

JAM: What motivated you to serve on the *Junge Akademie* Council?

Julia Fischer: I had such a fun time with the *Junge Akademie*, I found it enriching and it really spiced up my academic life. Therefore I think it is nice to stay in touch. I care about what the current members are doing with this fabulous institution; I want to encourage them to follow their own path instead of just perpetuating what has been done before. I believe it is important that the *Junge Akademie* continues to evolve.

Rainer Maria Kiesow: I feel just the same. I was part of the first generation and had a wonderful time! We enjoyed complete freedom. We were given money and companions, and from that point on, we could do what we wanted. We tried to, let us say, provoke our fellow academics as well as society, shake things up a little. Now I am curious to see what it is like today, how today's members use their freedom almost 15 years later. Not to judge it in any way, but out of curiosity. Because it is important to me to see what has come of it, after I helped shape the beginnings.

Fischer: I am also interested in the personal encounters. For a

long time, to me, the *Junge Akademie* was a place to meet people who were more open, more willing to think outside the box, and who encountered each other with boundless curiosity. It will certainly be fun to now meet and share ideas with a pool of people who, I assume, will be just like that.

JAM: What do you hope to contribute in your new role?

Kiesow: I will tell you what it is not about: my bald pate patronising the younger members with good advice or even imposing my views. After all, they are not children, but colleagues, many of whom are already tenured. I definitely do not want that. But maybe to somehow encourage them to use their freedom – if that is necessary. To communicate that the time that members invest in interdisciplinary and interpersonal exchange at the *Junge Akademie* is not lost.

Fischer: There is not much that one can contribute. At best, I think, we can be a sort of a sounding board. I serve on a number of other committees and what I observe there is an increasing trend towards streamlining. They try to press young researchers into some sort of strange academic mould, conforming to a given notion of what a modern academic is supposed to be, with all the soft skills and so on. To reject this management model and to encourage people to do their own thing, to find the niches, the new – well, that is basically all the guidance I offer people.

Kiesow: I can only second this. Back in my day, one of our contemporaries used to say: a holiday is a day ceded to the competitors. It should not, and must not be like that in the *Junge Akademie!*

THE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Professor Dr Julia Fischer

Head of the Cognitive Ethology Laboratory at the German Primate Center and Professor at the University of Göttingen, member of the *Junge Akademie* from 2003–2008.

Jürgen Kaube

Arts editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in charge of the Research and Teaching and Humanities desks, amongst others.

Professor Dr Rainer Maria Kiesow

Law professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris, founding member of the *Junge Akademie* (2000–2005).

Professor Dr Matthias Kleiner

Professor for Forming Technology and Lightweight Construction at TU Dortmund University, President designate of the Leibniz Association, President of the German Research Foundation from 2007–2013, member of the *Leopoldina*, amongst others academies.

Professor Dr Karin Lochte

Marine Biologist and Director of the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research in Bremerhaven, *Junge Akademie* council member since 2009.

Professor Dr Julian Nida-Rümelin

Professor for Political Theory and Philosophy at LMU Munich and former Federal Commissioner for Cultural and Media Affairs, member of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, amongst others, *Junge Akademie* council member since 2009.

Professor Dr Margret Wintermantel

Social Psychologist, President of the German Academic Exchange Service and former President of the German Rector's Conference, *Junge Akademie* council member since 2009.

JAM: Apart from that, do you have any other requests to put to the *Junge Akademie*? For instance, how it should evolve from here?

Fischer: Yes, I do have one request: I would like the *Junge Akademie* to continue to surprise me. How they accomplish it is up to the members. But I hope that there will be a group of people who are capable of conveying something new. I would love that.

Kiesow: As I said, I struggle with the idea of doling out advice. The way I see it, our job can only be to reiterate the basic purpose of the *Junge Akademie*. And that is not to start the umpteenth mono-disciplinary project, but to practise what is stated in the *JA* statutes: interdisciplinary exchange. This has the great advantage that people who work across disciplines meet, actually and regularly, because interdisciplinarity is not just an intellectual matter. People must share things and develop mutual understanding. And then there is the famous – and as yet unrealised – dialogue between academia and society. These are the themes we have to work on, and they do not relate to any specific discipline in isolation!

Fischer: When I was a member myself, I remember having a Council meeting, and Christiane Nüsslein-Vollhard (geneticist and Nobel laureate in medicine, ed.) was there, too. And the

only thing she really impressed on us was that we should not dwell on structural reform within institutions, but always work on contents. I thought that was brilliant! One simple sentence that can mean that a plenary session will be spent working on a question of content, rather than debating structure – so I will gladly pass on this piece of advice!

JAM: Did your view of the *Junge Akademie* change once you became alumni? Has your perception become more pragmatic?

Fischer: My perception is completely romanticised now! (laughs) I have not sobered, quite the opposite: I cherish this time incredibly. Just thinking of all the fantastic people I met. And when you meet them again, anywhere in the world, you can be sure of spending a wonderful evening in great conversation – now, that is just great. Then there is the trust factor: I have got to know people in whose integrity I believe, whom I do not hesitate to call when I have a question or need advice. It is because we spent time together, but were not pitted against each other in direct competition, as is usually the case with the people who grow up in the same institution as you do.

Kiesow: Again, I fully agree. But this has nothing to do with nostalgia. Even back then I thought it was a marvellous time. Is it still the same today? I hope so!



COMMENTARY

Doctorates in Germany: measures to improve quality and standardise assessment

TEXT CORNELIS MENKE



A nice place to hibernate? Germany is a prolific producer of doctorates – which often do not lead to a career in research.

Recent plagiarism scandals would be reason enough to continue the debate on standards for doctorates and how to organise the process of obtaining one. But assessment practices are also the subject of scrutiny. Grades awarded for doctoral theses differ widely from one subject to another and, in particular, from one university to another, as revealed by the 'Informationssystem Promotionsnoten in Deutschland' (*Information system on doctoral*

grades in Germany) published by the Institute for Research Information and Quality Assurance: within the same discipline the proportion of theses that are awarded a distinction can range from two to 65 percent, depending on the university. In this context, most dissertations receive a distinction or a grade of 'very good', with a clear tendency towards grade inflation.

The particularities of German Ph.D.

culture are commonly cited as the cause of these problems: some essentially blame so-called 'external' dissertations, i. e., dissertations that are written while working in another job, without a direct affiliation with a university department or institute. Others believe that the problem lies in the system of personal supervision by a single professor, as opposed to structured doctoral programmes such as Graduate Schools. Some think supervision and

assessment ought to be separate. Another German particularity is that it has a high proportion of doctoral candidates who are not actually looking to a career in academia, which is the reason why the overall figure for doctorates is so high.

The state of data on the actual number of doctoral candidates is deplorable. Only successfully completed doctorates are systematically recorded, which amounted to 25,000 in 2009, and approximately 17,000 if medicine and health sciences are excluded. There are about 18,000 professors at German universities, which translates into an average of one completed doctorate per professor per annum, with great variations between disciplines. The number of doctoral candidates, on the other hand, is not exactly known. The German Federal Statistical Office states that there were more than 52,000 doctoral candidates holding a scholarship or other position in the winter semester 2010/2011.

Is this 'too many'? This is not an easy question to answer. The number certainly exceeds the universities' needs in terms of future academic staff, since the number of doctorates completed successfully would suffice to replace all of Germany's professors every single year. But there is also a need for researchers outside of universities, whether in research institutions or industrial research departments. In chemistry, for example, where the proportion of graduates who go on to obtain a doctorate is over 90 percent, a doctorate is virtually the standard degree the industry expects job candidates to hold.

But even when a doctorate does not lead to a career in research, the time invested

does not necessarily have to be considered as wasted; one could even argue that it is a strength of Germany's university system that it produces academics beyond its immediate research needs, even if some of them end up working in other professional fields.

It would not be easy to reduce the number of doctoral candidates, anyway. Firstly, performance-based public funding often directly rewards the number of doctorates completed successfully. Furthermore, competition for third-party funding indirectly encourages high numbers of doctoral candidates if third party funds are earmarked for doctoral positions.


The question whether there are too many doctoral candidates is easier to answer if we put aside the benchmark of academic requirements and instead base the question on the universities' capacity to supervise them. There is certainly no shortage of Ph.D. candidates – and many (sensible) suggestions on how to improve the quality of doctorates will be difficult to implement, as they would require more intense supervision and assessment.

One easy step would be to give departments a say in which doctoral candidates to accept, which at present is still often up to each individual supervising professor.

A more work-intensive measure would involve spreading supervisory duties amongst several faculty members, which is already included in many supervision agreements between doctoral candidates and supervisors and is practised in a lot of Research Training Groups. But Research

Training Groups are in a special position, not least because they allow professors to count their supervisory duties as part of their total teaching load, which relieves them of some of the extra work that arises from the joint supervision of doctoral candidates. In addition, Research Training Groups usually offer the subject area expertise of several professors in one location – when this range of expertise is not concentrated in one place, which is probably the case for many dissertation topics, joint supervision is even more work intensive.

Many call for a separation between doctoral supervision and assessment along the lines of the British or American model. This might be even harder to implement as long as the number of dissertations remains high and the number of supervising professors stays low.

In this context, it makes sense to propose a solution that involves comparatively little extra effort: a requirement that at least those dissertations that have been awarded a distinction must be validated by an additional external expert opinion. In 2009, 15 percent of all dissertations received a distinction, which means the requirement would only affect this small percentage. Furthermore, the requirement to obtain an additional expert opinion could counteract the tendency towards mark inflation, and last but not least, a mandatory external expert opinion would help reduce the stark differences in the universities' assessment practices. 

Cornelis Menke is a philosopher of science and Diltbey Fellow at Bielefeld University. He has been a member of the Junge Akademie since 2010.

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

A glance abroad: apart from its many other activities, Sweden's Young Academy is making itself heard on the subject of science policy

TEXT ANNA SJÖSTRÖM DOUAGI, ANNIKA MOBERG AND CHRISTIAN BROBERGER



High school students meet researchers: discussion group at the summer school

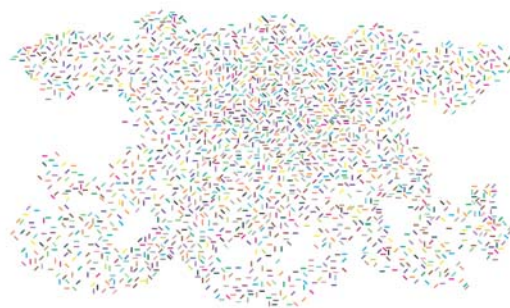
The Young Academy of Sweden was founded in 2011 on the initiative of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, after being inspired both by *Die Junge Akademie* and *De Jonge Akademie*. The Young Academy of Sweden provides some of the best young scientists in Sweden with a cross-disciplinary forum and a platform to influence research policy. Members are selected following an open call on the basis of excellence in academia and a proven engagement in the issues the Academy works on. The Academy currently has 34 members, with a future target of 40, and during its brief existence has established itself as an attractive forum for young academic leaders and a powerful voice among policy makers.

From the beginning, the Young Academy of Sweden decided that engagement, joy and commitment were central in choosing areas to evolve around. The so-called *Academy Meetings* provide

the backbone of the Academy's operations. Academy Meetings take place four times a year, lasting for two days. During these meetings, members of the Academy discuss and interact, meet invited guests and give academic presentations. The aim is to make the Academy Meetings an event worth attending. Early on, we also decided to be a constructive voice and put forward proposals on issues that the Academy believes are important to the research society. We produce statements signed by the Academy as a whole. Almost immediately after our launch in 2011, we started participating in the science policy debate, nationally and internationally.

Members of the Academy are often invited by different organisations to participate in seminars, write articles and editorials. We have good collaboration with various actors in the media sector. So far our activities have been focused on three major areas: outreach, interdisciplinarity and science policy. The Academy's operations are coordinated by its secretariat that consists of two employees led by a CEO. This function of coordination, support and promotion has proven to be vital for the Academy's ability to reach its full potential.

Outreach A central aim of the Academy is to interact outside of the academic community, to talk not only about the research we do, but also about how academics work in different disciplines, how natural science and the humanities can (and cannot) be used to inform public policy, and the importance of the scientific method to society. We believe that being at a relatively early stage in our career offers particular opportunities to reach young people and give voice to the excitement and satisfaction offered by a career in academia. In 2013, the Academy arranged a summer research school for high school students. This year, we also



SVERIGES UNGA AKADEMI


published a book, where members of the Academy describe their lives as researchers and what made them choose their particular career path.

The Academy arranges one major seminar per semester, often with quite broad themes like ‘What is a scientific breakthrough’, and during spring 2014, we will organise a seminar entitled ‘Gender and academia – from figures to action’. The seminars take place in different cities all over Sweden so that several regions are involved. We also establish collaborations with various actors, such as the Nobel Museum, where we have for instance participated in Science cafés, a concept where one member talks about their research while the audience is eating an evening meal in the Museum’s bistro. In spring 2014, we will participate in the Science festival in Gothenburg for the third time, enjoying conversations about research with a broad public audience. In one year we had a four-hour long session talking science in a shopping mall, which was unexpectedly well attended!

Interdisciplinarity The Academy encourages academics from all disciplines to apply for membership, resulting in a community where e.g. a philosopher can meet a nuclear physicist. Working together at our Academy Meetings, sharing and learning from each other’s research presentations are perhaps one of the most important things we do. We also arrange specific activities to stimulate new connections, such as transdisciplinary *speed dating events* where members sit down in pairs for five minutes, on a rotating schedule, and have to come up with at least one idea for a joint project.

Science policy One of the first activities of the Academy was to submit a ten-point proposal to the Swedish government for the 2013–2017 Research and Innovation Bill. This proposal, which was also published in the largest Swedish morning paper, received considerable attention and led to invitations to speak

in front of the Parliament’s Committee on research and higher education as well as the Deputy Prime Minister’s Commission on Research, and even a private meeting with the Minister for Education. Importantly, several of the Academy’s proposals were echoed in the final bill. The Academy also has a great networking programme with the Parliament that links one Academy member and one MP who take turns in visiting each other’s work places during a year. This year, to respond to the alarming absence of sustainable tenure track systems in Swedish academia, the Academy presented a proposal for a career system for junior research leaders. This proposal was sent out to all Swedish universities and has prompted an intense debate. Advocacy is not limited to Sweden: on several occasions we have lobbied different European Union agencies to contribute to improved policies.

As we write this, the Young Academy of Sweden has just taken the step to full independence by becoming a self-governing foundation. As such, the Academy is no longer a part of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, but acts as an independent entity. The agenda is filled with a number of exciting activities to enrich the professional lives of our members and interact with other parts of society. It gives us particular pleasure that our networks and collaborative efforts with sister academies in the world are steadily increasing, taking the form of e.g. bilateral visits and joint symposia, most recently the neuroscience symposium ‘Visions of the Brain – A tribute to Torsten Wiesel’. The channel to other talented young scientists around the globe is truly an added value of the young academy movement. 

Anna Sjöström Douagi is CEO, Annika Moberg is public outreach officer of the Young Academy of Sweden. Christian Broberger was the chairman 2012–2013, and is a neuroscientist at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm. Visit www.sverigesungaakademi.se for information and contacts.

PUBLICATIONS 2013



NACH DER EXZELLENZINITIATIVE: PERSONALSTRUKTUR ALS SCHLÜSSEL ZU LEISTUNGSFÄHIGEREN UNIVERSITÄTEN POSITIONSPAPIER DER AG „WISSENSCHAFTSPOLITIK“ DER JUNGEN AKADEMIE

(AFTER THE EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE: PER- SONNEL STRUCTURE AS THE KEY TO HIGHER- PERFORMING UNIVERSITIES)

POSITION PAPER BY THE JUNGE AKADEMIE RG
'SCIENCE POLICY')

The position paper, backed by 30 *Junge Akademie* members and alumni, takes a stance in the debate on the future of the science system after the Excellence Initiative. The signatories identify three core problems at German universities: unappealing university positions and career paths, especially compared to international standards, a lack of dynamism and innovative power in research, and ultimately inadequate structures to accommodate large numbers of students on a sustained basis. The key to solving these problems, the signatories claim, is the gradual elimination of university Chairs. They also demonstrate how the number of professorships could be increased significantly at no additional cost (see article on page 26).

Authors

Cornelis Menke, Moritz Schularick, Sibylle Baumbach, Robert Wolf et al.

*The Junge Akademie
Berlin, 2013*

To download the publication visit

[www.diejungeakademie.de/en/
publications/statements/](http://www.diejungeakademie.de/en/publications/statements/)



KLINISCHE ETHIKBERATUNG GRUNDLAGEN, HERAUSFORDERUNGEN UND ERFAHRUNGEN (CLINICAL ETHICS COUNSELLING ESSENTIALS, CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES)

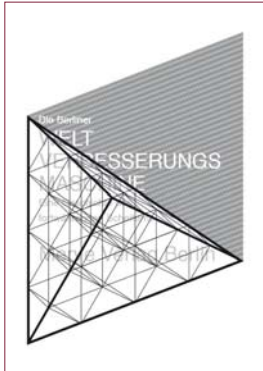
Clinical ethics counselling is a hot topic right now, both demand and availability are on the rise. The main objective is to raise awareness of ethical issues in day-to-day patient treatment and care and to improve the quality of services available. Ethics counselling offers guidance for all care providers involved in complex clinical decision-making processes. The present volume discusses fundamental issues as well as experiences at various locations. Following the volumes 'Praxisfelder angewandter Ethik' (*Implementing Applied Ethics*), as well as 'Medizin und Technik' (*Medicine and Technology*), it presents the results of a workshop held by the *Junge Akademie* RG on 'Ethics in Practice'.

Editor

Florian Steger

Publisher

*mentis Verlag
Münster, 2013*



DIE BERLINER WELTVERBESSERTUNGSMASCHINE
 EINE GESCHICHTE DES FORTWÄHRENDEN SCHEITERNS
(THE BERLIN WORLD IMPROVEMENT MACHINE
A HISTORY OF PERPETUAL FAILURE)

From the 17th century onwards, various European metropolises pursued a secret plan to use science and the arts to build a world improvement machine: artwork and artefacts, properly arranged in an architectural ideal, were supposed to unleash the necessary forces. The Prussian State did not want to fall behind and founded the Academy of Arts, the Academy of Sciences and the Royal Museums in Berlin. By the end of the 19th century, the project had sunk into oblivion, and academia focused on improving the world in small, pragmatic steps. Yet to this day, hunger, war and social exclusion remain. Perhaps the Berlin world improvement machine can provide new answers?

Editors

Friedrich von Borries,
 Jens-Uwe Fischer and
 Moritz Ahlert

Publisher

Merve Verlag
 Berlin, 2013



DIE BERLINER WELTVERBESSERTUNGSMASCHINE
 DIE REKONSTRUKTION EINER ABSTRAKTEN IMAGINATION
(THE BERLIN WORLD IMPROVEMENT MACHINE
RECONSTRUCTING AN ABSTRACT FANCY)

In summer 2013, an analytical attempt was made to reconstruct the world improvement machine and was showcased at the 'Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart' as well as at 15 other Berlin-based museums. The second volume on this research project documents this reconstruction attempt and presents the components of the machine.

Editors

Friedrich von Borries,
 Jens-Uwe Fischer and
 Moritz Ahlert

Publisher

Merve Verlag
 Berlin, 2013

EVENTS 2013/2014

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- 2013 in review** 4 to 5 October **‘European Young Academies’ Research Group on Europe’**
 The Research Group’s first workshop, organised by the *Junge Akademie*, *De Jonge Akademie* (Netherlands) and *Jonge Academie* (Belgium/Flanders) – see page 37.
Brussels (Belgium)
-
- 31 October to 1 November **‘Denaturalising Climate Change: Migration, Mobilities and Spaces’**
 Workshop by the artec Research Centre for Sustainability Studies at the University of Bremen in cooperation with the RG ‘Sustainability’.
Bremen
-
- 31 October to 2 November 2013
 and 1 to 2 February 2014 **‘Performing Institutions’**
 Workshop discussion as part of the ‘The Performance’ – see article on page 30.
Sophiensaele, Berlin/Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, Frankfurt am Main
-
- 12 November **‘Should a sustainable society democratise science?’**
 Parliamentary Evening by *Junge Akademie* and German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina – see article on page 34.
Representation of Sachsen-Anhalt, Berlin
-
- 29 November **‘After the Excellence Initiative – the Future of the Academic System’**
 Academic session at the BBAW Assembly with Cornelis Menke and others representing the *Junge Akademie*.
Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Berlin
-
- 13 December **‘Personnel structures of the future for the Humanities and Social Sciences’**
 Conference by the Volkswagen Foundation and the *Stifterverband* with Sibylle Baumbach and Cornelis Menke representing the *Junge Akademie*.
Schloss Herrenhausen, Hannover
-
- 2014 in review** 18 January **‘Salon Sophie Charlotte 2014: Europe – A Place for the Future’**
 Host contribution by the *Junge Akademie* with an exhibition and panel discussion on the ‘The economic crisis as an opportunity for the future of Europe?’ – see article on page 36.
Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Berlin
-
- 13 February **‘The performance, the apparatus, the audience – Staged encounters between daily routine, academia and art.’**
 Lecture by Melanie Mohren and Bernhard Herboldt in the public lecture series ‘Paradoxes of Aesthetics’.
International Psychoanalytic University (IPU), Berlin
-

-
- 16 January to 31 March **‘Visions and Images of Fascination’**
Junge Akademie photo exhibition
 Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Berlin
-
- 6 to 9 March **‘British-German Frontiers of Science’**
 Conference in cooperation with the Royal Society and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, coordinated by Robert Wolf and Liane G. Benning.
 Potsdam
-
- 13 to 15 March **Spring plenary session**
 Hamburg
-

-
- What’s on in 2014**
- 2 to 3 May **‘In stitches! Interdisciplinary conference on laughter’**
 Lectures and performance, coordinated by Gordon Kampe.
 Folkwang University of the Arts, Essen
-
- 29 to 31 May **‘The fascination of the other and the unknown: space’**
 Conference by the RG ‘Fascination’.
 Berlin
-
- 27 to 29 June **Summer plenary session and Junge Akademie gala, Leibniz Day at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities**
 Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Berlin
-
- 20 to 27 August **Summer academy of the German National Academic Foundation**
 Week-long summer academy, arranged by members of the *Junge Akademie* for German National Academic Foundation scholars.
 Schloss Salem, Bodensee
-
- 9 to 11 October **Autumn plenary session**
 Zurich
-

CATCHING UP WITH ... MARTIN VON KOPPENFELS

There is a life after the *Junge Akademie* – which is why this space is reserved for alumni

1. Is joy important for your work? Should it be?

The opposite is the case, actually: work is important for my joy. And the words ‘should’ and ‘joy’ don’t go together, anyway.

2. What do you enjoy about your work?

The very first phase, in particular. When I fall into a new topic and don’t even know yet how I’m ever going to work my way out of it.

3. What is humankind’s greatest achievement?

The invention of frozen pizza.

4. If you were to die tomorrow, what achievement would you look back on with most pride?

To never have been smug enough to think I had already achieved something.

5. What aspects of your research are relevant for humankind?

Why don’t you ask humankind when you get a chance, please?

6. What advice would you give to Ph.D. students?

Think for yourselves.

7. What advice would you give professors?

Think for yourselves.

8. What was humankind’s greatest mistake?

There were two: exterminating the Dodo and giving Dario Fo the Nobel Prize for Literature.

9. What does the German academic system need?

More academics and less system.

10. Should we abolish the universities?

I was almost going to say that it’s already happened. But then I thought of the work you all are doing to prevent it from happening, and I regretted this brief moment of temptation.

11. What has your career at uni and in research made of you?



ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE

Martin von Koppenfels was a member of the Junge Akademie from 2004 to 2009. He is Professor for general and comparative literature at LMU Munich. He is currently working on the relationships between dream, emotion and text.

A time bandit, crawling through the undergrowth of obligations and pouncing on any unplanned time he happens upon.

12. What did the *Junge Akademie* make of you?

It robbed me of a few certainties and gave me a few new friends.

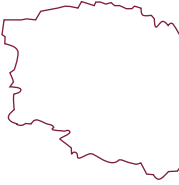
13. Do you have anything else to say?

That depends almost entirely on the person I am talking to.

14. Any final words?

Not these, I hope.





JUNGE AKADEMIE MAGAZIN

The *Junge Akademie Magazin* was conceived by members of the *Junge Akademie*. It provides insights into projects and events of the *Junge Akademie*, reports on members and publications, and intervenes in current academic and science policy debates.



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