

## Global Perspectives on Europe

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**Datum, Ort:** 05.12.2013-07.12.2013,

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### *Introduction*

Europe is entangled politically, economically and legally with the rest of the world as its policies and actions reverberate beyond its geographic borders. A DAAD sponsored conference with the title „Global Perspectives on Europe“ took place in December 2013 at the University of Flensburg to address these interdependencies and to challenge Eurocentric perspectives on relations between Europe and the rest of the world. The conference brought together scholars from various disciplines and countries and triggered a substantial reflection on Europe's economic, social, political, historical and legal relationship and mode of interaction with the rest of the world.

The President of the University Flensburg, WERNER REINHART, held the keynote speech for the conference. In his speech he depicted the various ways the European fairy tale, „Hänsel und Gretel“ is received in America. Based on different versions of the fairy tale from overseas, he demonstrated how stories are influenced by cultural transfer through generations and referred to the transnational and international processes of building up identifications by means of social constructions. Choosing the version by Anne Saxon (1971) he demonstrated the American way of dealing with love and brutality. He used this particular fairy tale to further show illusions of the Second World War, with especial focus on German history, from an American Perspective.

The first panel concentrated on the role of education for relations between Europe and the wider world. SOPHIE WULK (Flensburg) argued that the EU has developed a substantial set of international programs in the field

of higher education which are in line with the EU's structural approach to foreign policy. Despite the fact that these initiatives are clearly employed for foreign political purposes, she argued that the autonomy of the central actors in this field, i.e. academic staff, limits the degree of control over the actual projects established in the framework of EU higher education policy by political actors. Therefore, these instruments, instead of exerting power over others, nurture communicative action across borders, thus leading to the emergence of security communities which in the sense of Karl W. Deutsch, leads to the emergence of transnational social clouds of trust and mutuality.

SHAZIA AZIZ WÜLBERS (Berlin) focused on the role and implications of practices of norm diffusion in her talk, and compared practices of both the EU and the US in India which in this context are employed to advance their own interests and/or spread their values in different regions of the world.

BEATRIX NIEMEYER-JENSEN (Flensburg) and TJORVEN REJSENER (Flensburg) then asked “(How) is Europe educating the world?” Considering education as a well approved means to induce global change, they argued that the methods, instruments and programs of education are themselves subject to globalizing processes. Hence, any reflection on Europe's role in the world must include a critical revision of education politics and practices as ‘travelling ideas’, which flow around the globe through international organizations and globalizing politics and are transformed, adapted or rejected in locally situated practices.

The following panels shifted their attention from specific instruments of external relations and their implications to the relations between Europe and particular world regions/continents. The panel ‘Perspectives from Asia’ included presentations on EU-China, EU South East Asia and EU-India Relations. First, LUCIE QIAN XIA (London & Beijing) offered a novel analysis of Europe and its leadership role in the contemporary world by looking at the different schools of thought on Europe prevailing amongst Chinese elites in historical and contemporary perspectives. Drawing upon insights from the debates

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about European identity in EU-China relations, she contended that Chinese perspectives on the complexities of the concept of Europe and the dynamics of Europe-China relations provide a useful methodological lens to the interpretation of the current European Union.

ELISABETTA NADALUTTI (Luxembourg) concentrated on the question of how far the EU and its practices can be conceived of as role models for other parts of the world, in particular the growth triangles in South East Asia. She questioned how far European understandings of regionalism and EU cross border practices can constitute paradigms for Southeast Asia trans-border activities, and provided significant insights into how EU cross-border cooperation is perceived in Southeast Asia.

The succeeding panel was concerned with „Perspectives from Africa“ on Europe and the European Union. Here, YAW OFOSU-KUSI (Winneba/Ghana) concentrated on perceptions of students from secondary schools and universities in the Central Region of Ghana on Europe. He showed that views of Europe are generally grounded in the past, especially in Africa's history of colonialism, which students saw as overwhelmingly beneficial to Europe and the precursor to much of Africa's predicament of political and socio-economic instability. While there is a generally positive impression of Europe, especially its contribution to development in Africa, there is also considerable skepticism of the underlying intentions of such actions. The presentation concluded that even though the traditional relationship between Europe and Africa seems strong in the minds of the participants, there is an equally growing interest in courting the attention of others, especially China.

MALTE BROSIG (Witwatersrand) analyzed a different aspect of EU Africa relations by focusing on inter-regionalism in a presentation titled „Afro-European crisis management in organized inaction: The case of Libya“. He noted that since the Africa-EU Summit in 2007, the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU) have crafted a dense, interregional network with the aim of solving pertinent security challenges facing both continents. However, despite the emergence of an elaborate institutional framework in the

form of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES), both organizations remain without much political clout if put to a hard security test, such as the popular uprising in Libya in 2011. Instead, he argued, African-European inter-regionalism constitutes a state of organized inaction, especially against the background of AU and EU's disenfranchisement from the conflict even though Libya represents vital security interests of their member states.

THORE PRIEN (Flensburg) then stressed that observations of the European Union by African social movements reveal a picture that differs dramatically from the prevailing political self-description of the European Union. Whereas the hegemonic discourses of the latter see the EU as pacesetter of democratic values, African social movements highlight the role the European Union plays in endangering the means of existence for a large number of Africans. This observation focused on the incisive impact of European economic policy especially on small peasant and fishers, affecting negatively the observance of social human rights articulated and guaranteed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The central argument developed was that the discourses of African social movements on the EU as human rights violator are the driving force for the emergence of novel global assemblages that affect the relationship of African states and the European Union, or the states of the European Union respectively.

After touching on issues relating to Africa and Asia, another set of presentations focused on relations of the EU with possibly more 'distant' partners, such as Canada or Singapore. Here, LACHLAN MCKENZIE (Melbourne) examined the impact that Canadian and Singaporean government perceptions of the EU as an international actor have on their respective engagement with the EU. McKenzie argued that the EU's achievements in trade diplomacy have not been matched in all its other aspects of external relations, as its capabilities as a traditional foreign policy actor are limited. Nowhere is the impact of the imbalanced external role of the EU more apparent than in its engagement with distant partners. Drawing on interviews with Canadian, Singaporean and the EU interlocutors, the presenta-

tion assessed how recognition of the EU as an actor impacts on third countries' engagement with the EU.

EDWARD YENCKEN (Melbourne) focused on the relations between the EU and Australia and analyzed the extent to which the Eurozone crisis has negatively impacted on the European Union's (EU) credibility with regard to its relations with third countries. It served as a useful insight into the impact of the crisis given the relatively strong nature of the relationship between the EU and Australia and the lack of recent areas of disagreement. The interviews with EU and Australian officials conducted who, while noting the presence of the Eurozone crisis as a prominent issue at the political level, stated that it has had a limited impact on the extent of bilateral cooperation. Consequently, he argued that while the Eurozone crisis may impact negatively on certain external perceptions of the EU, its impact on overall bilateral relations with third countries may not prove to be that consequential.

ALLAN FRANCIS TATHAM (Madrid) looked at EU relations with more distant partners from a different perspective, by reflecting on how far third countries can shape and influence EU's standards, rules and procedures, especially the European Court of Justice. He argued that, until the Lisbon Treaty established the Article 255 TFEU judicial selection panel, the process of choosing and appointing judges to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) was characterized by differing levels of transparency and accountability under exclusive Member State control. While depoliticizing the procedure has helped affirm the Court's independence, he argued that it would benefit from practices of other regional models. In this respect, he argued that with its emphasis on judicial independence and accountability, the established practice in the appointments processes for the Caribbean Court of Justice and the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court – institutionalized as a judicial and legal services commission for each court – might usefully assist the EU in its future formulation of benchmarks for the work of the Article 255 panel.

MAURO GATTI (Bologna) presented his paper: "Preach the rights you practice! (In)consistency between EU exter-

nal human rights promotion and Member States' internal actions". His contribution sought to explain the gap between the EU's self-perception as a 'normative power' and its external image, by focusing on European religious policies. The literature shows that the perception of the EU as a non-distinctive player depends in part on the inconsistency of its actions. This inconsistency is particularly evident with respect to the promotion of freedom of religion. He noted that a careful assessment of European law and practice shows that even the Member States do not uphold some of the norms the EU claims to promote abroad.

BEA LUNDT (Flensburg) concluded the conference by stressing the artificial construction of 'Europe' which occurred in the 20th century. She argued that Europe was a dynamic and transcultural unit during medieval times. The people inhabiting the geographic area of Europe stood in close contact with people in Asia and Africa. She showed that 1492, when Columbus 'discovered' America, represents a central year for the construction of a Eurocentric identity and self-understanding. In analyzing ancient maps (*mappae mundi*) and retracing migratory patterns of pre-modern times, she vividly showed that pre-modern times have been more open to cultural exchange than the borders of the modern nation-state would ever allow. Using the „Epstorfer Weltkarte“ (about 1300) depicting people in Africa as being striped black and white, she concluded, „we are all striped“.

#### *Conclusion*

In the course of the conference, it became clear that Europe is and has always been a global Europe, embedded in an ever-growing and interdependent network of relations. In this respect it is neither possible nor plausible to act in isolation since its actions do not merely affect European countries but reverberate around the world. It is therefore essential that Europeans and European institutions take into account alternative views primarily from outside and also weigh the merits of these differential positions. After all, a successful constitution of Europe will be impossible without considerable attention to the understandings and perceptions of other world regions. These external perspectives represent a criti-

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cal frame of reference which Europe, epitomized by the European Union and its member states, can constructively engage itself both internally and externally.

### **Conference Overview: Sessions and Topics**

Werner Reinhart (Flensburg): Keynote Address: Hänsel and Gretel in America: The Reception of the Fairy Tale in Contemporary Poems

#### Session 1: Perspectives from Europe

Shazia Aziz Wüllbers (Berlin): Norm diffusion by the EU and the US in India

Beatrix Niemeyer-Jensen/ Tjorven Reisener (Flensburg): (How) is Europe educating the world?

Sophie Wulk (Flensburg): The Jean Monnet Scholarship for Turkish graduates and its implications for the EU's image abroad

#### Session 2: Perspectives from Asia

Lucie Qian XIA, (London/Beijing): Chinese perspectives on Europe: The idea of Europe and Sino-European relations

Elisabetta Nadalutti (Luxembourg): Growth triangles in Southeast Asia and cross-border regions in Europe in comparison

Sophie Wulk and Students (Flensburg): Poster Presentation of ongoing research projects of European Studies Students on the EU's relations with third countries (guided tour)

#### Session 3: Perspectives from Africa

Yaw Ofosu-Kusi (Winneba/Flensburg): Global Perspectives on Europe: Views from Ghana

Thore Prien (Flensburg): The European Union as human rights violator: Observations of the EU by African Social Movements as global politics in the making

Malte Brosing (South Africa): Afro-European crisis management in organized inaction: The case of Libya

#### Session 4: The EU and Third Parties

Lachlan McKenzie (Melbourne): Distance partners: The impact of EU external relations capacity on engagement with third countries

Edward Yencken (Melbourne): The undermining of Global Europe? The impact of the Eurozone crisis on third country perceptions of the European Union

#### Session 5: A Path to Globality and Justice

Bea Lundt (Flensburg): On times before the internet and intercontinental cheap flights. The long way to globality: Perspectives on Europe in Pre-Modern Times (500-1800)

Allan Francis Tatham (Madrid): Appointing regional judges in the Caribbean: A possible model for emulation by the Court of Justice of the European Union?

Mauro Gatti (Bologna): Preach the rights you practice! (In)consistency between EU external human rights promotion and Member States' internal actions

#### Concluding Remarks/ Discussion

Tagungsbericht *Global Perspectives on Europe*. 05.12.2013-07.12.2013, , in: H-Soz-Kult 28.06.2014.