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Highlights of the Fall Semester 2018

The IFK's second semester was devoted to exploring different methods in interdisciplinary conflict research. Our researchers worked in groups on the method most relevant to their own projects and presented the results to the IFK research community.

Reflective Equilibrium

Reflective equilibrium is a widely accepted method in philosophy, made popular by John Rawls. It uses both systematic normative principles and particular (moral) judgments to which we are especially attached in order to answer certain questions, such as what a legitimate regulation of religion by the state looks like. By working back and forth between principles and judgments, coherence is sought. As an example, one could consider the following judgment: "Religion has a special status vis-à-vis the state. It should receive special protection through the right to religious freedom. This justifies, for example, certain religious exemptions." We might then discover a tension with the following plausible principle: "Phenomena that are alike in all normatively relevant respects must be treated the same way by the state." The tension exists if religion turns out to be relevantly similar to other phenomena for which we do not believe special protections apply. In a further analysis, we might look for possible ways to make the principle of equal treatment and the intuition regarding the special place of religion compatible. Or we might ultimately have to give up the principle or the intuition if that is not possible.

Sabine Hohl, Elad Lapidot, Nora Scheidegger



Historical Text Interpretation

Historical text interpretation is an umbrella term for a methodology that encompasses inner source criticism, external source criticism, text interpretation, and interpretation of oral history. Starting point for interpretation is the description of the sources, such as to determine the type of source, its language, and its findspot. Inner source criticism poses questions relating to author, text, content, and context. External source criticism looks into reception history, textual criticism; it questions dating, context of authorship, and authenticity. The interpretation of texts includes formulating research questions, looking into the use of background knowledge, and evaluating the expressiveness. It is then dependent upon the intentions of the researcher what aspects are highlighted in the analysis. For historians, a reconstruction of historical context and events is sought. For example, through the analysis of council documentation conflicts and coping strategies are identified. The investigation into archival material like letters, newspapers, and autobiographies may reconstruct women's roles and contributions in religious conflicts. In oral history, researchers question contemporary witnesses about their experiences and as such create new sources, which will be interpreted using the current methodology. Exegetes or theologians may be more concerned for meaning and authorial views that are communicated through a text. This method is the only way to elucidate ancient concepts of emotion to guide us towards a better understanding of ancient texts and cultures.

Susanne Gräbner, Meral Kaya, Peter Lötscher, Liliane Marti, Martina Narman, Jessica van 't Westeinde

Digital Anthropology

In the framework of my post-doctoral research, I cross social media (mostly Facebook) analysis with the 'classical' ethnographical methods of observation and interviews. On the one hand, I use social media as a tool for collecting the highly diversified representations of the Israel-Palestine conflict that are spread out online. I take into account Facebook status, links to newspapers' articles, images, drawings, cartoons, videos (religious preach, political discourses, scenes from the zones of conflict, etc.) and others. The material collected is coded with a software (MaxQDA) in order to highlight the main themes and debates. On the other hand, I conduct interviews offline with actors with various profiles: with journalists, writers, peace promoters, bloggers, Facebook pages admins, YouTube channels admins, etc. The goal is to be able to produce a crossed analysis that will be done while keeping in mind the political dynamics, the historical background and my research questions. The data collected on the social media are used as a material to be analyzed but also as a support for conducting *photo elicitation interviews*. It is a technique that makes use of photos as a way to exchange in a more spontaneous way with interviewees. I will also conduct biographical and semi-direct interviews.

Simon Mastrangelo



Iconology

Erwin Panofsky defines three levels to analyse paintings, the description of the content, the “iconography” and the iconological interpretation. The last step is a synthesis, which uncovers the basic ideas and the main beliefs in the paintings. Panofsky thought that through the paintings the political, religious and social beliefs of the painter can be uncovered. It is necessary to deal with the historic context of the time of creation of the picture. Kenneth Burke’s cluster criticism investigates the rhetoric of pictures, texts or buildings and works in three steps. The first step is to identify the key terms. The investigator selects not more than five or six key terms, e.g. opposite terms (“good” and “evil”). Significance is determined based on frequency or intensity. Afterwards, we search terms that cluster around the key terms and underline their statement. The last step is to find associations or linkages between the clusters to make the worldview constructed by the “producer” of the picture, text or building visible. With this procedure, a new explanation and interpretation of the picture can be discovered. In our project this method will be useful to analyse historic paintings, pamphlets or caricatures, which symbolize the own and the other confessional group. The picture of the “Kappeler Milchsuppe” by Heinrich Thomann, for example, shows the civilization of the war in form of a fight between two members of a meal around the bowl of soup. The catholic soldiers seem to take more than what they are entitled to. The protestant soldiers seem to defend the right order.

Dominique Juen, Janine Scheurer

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research methods focus on *objective measurements* and the *analysis of data*, such as the relationships between variables, and are aimed at the generalization to a target population. The central idea behind it is to measure numerical information. Accordingly, different types of data are distinguished: nominal (simple differentiation btw. categories, e.g., gender), ordinal (ranked order btw. categories, e.g., “not at all” to “very much” as response whether God or something divine exists), ratio/interval (same difference btw. categories, e.g. year). Depending on the type of data different statistical methods can then be applied to analyze and interpret the data. But how do we obtain our data? There are three main ways to collect data in the quantitative research process, which is highly structured and laid out in advance of the study: (1) through *quantitative surveys*, in which individuals are interviewed using standardized questionnaires, (2) through *quantitative content analysis*, in which text (e.g. news articles) is encoded to numbers with the help of a standardized codebook and (3) through *observations*, where subjects as well as their behavior are coded and measured by using an observation schema. In Project 2, which researches inner religious and spiritual struggles, e.g., we use *surveys* to assess religious and spiritual struggles and how they are coped with. In Project 7 “Political Instrumentalization of Islam” we rely on *quantitative content analysis* to analyze how the burqa debate in Switzerland is represented in the media and also use *surveys* to assess how these media representations affect perceptions and attitudes of the Swiss population.

Dorothee Arlt, Beatrice Eugster, Jessica Lampe, Franzisca Schmidt



Qualitative Research Methods

The main qualitative research methods used within the IFK are ethnographic fieldwork, visual anthropology, and qualitative interviews. Ethnographic fieldwork includes participating in the daily lives of a particular community of people for an extended period of time (participant observation) and is an inductive and open-ended method. The ethnographer usually chooses a particular community, subculture or ethnic group in a specific defined place. Transnational research projects are called multi-sited ethnography. Participant observation, interviews, and visual anthropology constitute specific tools that are used to gather data as part of the ethnographic fieldwork. The goal is to collect different types of data about the field (the community of people) in order to understand the field not by testing a number of hypothesis but by finding out what is important to the respective communities. Qualitative interviews are a major tool to collect data on individuals' thoughts, experiences, and perceptions of specific topics and gain a comprehensive understanding of them. The types of interviews vary depending on the researchers' needs, and the research contexts but the three most common are: Structured Interviews (formal with pre-determined questionnaires), Unstructured Interviews (informal with open-ended questions) and Semi-Structured Interviews (combination of both previous approaches). For the interaction to be successful, the interviewers should, among others, have active listening skills and use specific methods to establish trust with the interviewee. They then choose an adequate interview environment, and deal appropriately with issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, and the nature and intent of the research.

Mogi Batmunkh, Lene Faust, Iuliia Liakhova, Agnes Schubert, Mylène Socquet-Juglard

Director's Highlight

On November 22, 2018, IFK Director Prof. Dr. Katharina Heyden and Janine Scheurer (Project 10) introduced the IFK to canton Bern's Great Council. For the forum "University and Society", they presented the IFK's model of conflict analysis at the Great Council's series "Dialogue at Lunch" and engaged in fruitful discussions with the members of the cantonal parliament.



Highlights from the Projects

Elad Lapidot, Simon Mastrangelo and Mylène Socquet-Juglard jointly participated in *The 2018 Telos Israel Interdisciplinary Conference on “Asymmetricality, the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict, and Abrahamic Peace”*, which took place November 18–20, 2018, at the University of Haifa, Israel. The conference was a great opportunity to present both projects and the IFK, as well as to interact with interreligious networks and reflect on the religious dimension within conflict resolution approaches in Israel Palestine.

Elad Lapidot (*Project 1: Disagreement Between Religions. Epistemology of Religious Conflicts*), Simon Mastrangelo, Mylène Socquet-Juglard (*both Project 12: The Use and Abuse of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*)

On 7 and 8 March 2019, Project 3 held an interdisciplinary workshop on parental rights in the context of religious education. Prof. Andreas Stöckli (Fribourg) and Dr. Johannes Giesinger, (Zürich) were invited as contributors. The talks analyzed the parental right to control children’s religious education and its limits from philosophical and legal perspectives, as well as criminal law’s possible function in coping with religious conflicts.

Sabine Hohl, Nora Scheidegger (*Project 3: Law as a Coping Strategy in Religious Conflicts – Assessing the Legitimacy of Legal Regulations*)

On September 4, 2018 a workshop on the Platonici Minores took place in Bern, that helped to locate Plutarch's work in the Platonism of his time. After a short introduction to the publication of the fragments by Dominic O'Meara (Fribourg), texts of the Platonic philosophers Moderatos, Kalbenos Tauros, Dion of Alexandria, Damaskios and Kronios were discussed.

Peter Lötscher (*Project 4: The One God: Conflict Zone and concept of Integration*)

In February 2019, we attended an insightful workshop on “Islam and Media” at the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies at the University of Zurich. In March 2019 starts the fieldwork of our representative survey on “Islam, Burka and Media”. Finally, we will be presenting our first results on determinants of attitudes towards Islam and Muslim at the “Lecture Series” at the University of Lugano this summer term.

Dorothee Arlt, Beatrice Eugster, Franzisca Schmidt (*Project 7: Political Instrumentalization of Islam? Framing the Burqa as a Threat to National Values and Security in Switzerland and Its Consequences*)

Since January 2019 I have attended two conferences where I liaised with Prof. Bronwen Neil from Macquarie, Prof. Olivier Hekster, and Dr. Erika Manders from Nijmegen. Prof. Neil is willing to come to Bern in context of her work on Religion, Violence, and Crisis Management in Late Antiquity. I foresee fruitful collaboration opportunities with Prof. Hekster on the role of Emperors in the ecumenical councils, and with Dr. Manders who started building a database on religion and violence in Antiquity.

Jessica van 't Westeinde (*Project 9: Councils and Conflicts. Trouble Shooting and Shooting Trouble in Late Antiquity*)



Upcoming Highlights

Save the date: The IFK first annual conference on “Coping as a Travelling Concept in Conflict Research” takes place at Bern University, May 6, 2019. Prof. Dr. Jeffrey Haynes, London Metropolitan University, presents the public evening lecture “From Huntington to Trump: 30 Years ‘Clash of Civilizations’”.

In cooperation with the IFK, the Istituto Svizzero organizes the conference “Claiming History – the Place and Role of Historical Reasoning in Religious Conflicts” in Rome, October 24-25, 2019. This international conference serves to connect Swiss and Italian research.

Together with a film team from Bern University’s didactics department, the IFK produces a Flash-Mooc on the topic: “How to cope with religious conflicts? Insights from History”.

In cooperation with the Universities of Basel and Zurich, the IFK organizes a conference on reconciliation at Bern University, February 6-8, 2020.



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