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Newsletter for Research on Society and Space

Creativity from Crisis

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The IRS and the Crisis

When the lockdown to contain the coronavirus pandemic began in March 2020, the work routines of the IRS, like those of many other institutions, were massively thrown out of sync. But a new mode of working quickly established itself: with home office and online communication, not only writing and organisational tasks could be managed - virtual working also proved its worth for events and sometimes even for empirical research. And some research findings were applied more quickly than expected.

On 26 February 2020, Verena Brinks wrote to her project team that she had read the word "corona crisis" in the media for the first time that day. In the weeks before, when the disease just named "SARS-CoV-2" by the WHO had spread first in China and then in more and more countries, the word had been in the air, so to speak. Crisis teams had been set up. There was a growing sense of threat, pressure to act and fundamental uncertainty about the behaviour of the new virus as well as ways to counter it - all defining characteristics of a crisis. Brinks, junior professor at the University of Mainz and alumna of the IRS, is conducting research together with IRS researcher Tjorven Harmsen and IRS director Oliver Ibert in the BMBF project "RESKIU" on the role of expert knowledge in cri-ses (see p. 8). Oliver Ibert also repre-sents the IRS in the Leibniz Research Network "Crises in a Globalised World" (see p. 6). From Erkner, the Corona crisis was thus viewed from the out-set through the lens of social science crisis research.

Nevertheless, the force with which the Corona crisis changed everyday life in Germany also came as a surprise to the Institute. On 16 March, when it was foreseeable that the usual pattern of presence work, lively travel, inter-national guest stays and well-atten-ded events could not be maintained, the IRS also set up a crisis team. This immediately sent the institute into emergency mode, which meant home office for almost all employees. Except for the caretaker and reception, the IRS building remained empty from then on; only the crisis team itself met daily

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at first to "get in front of the situation", as it is called in crisis management.

Securing the Operation

Since then, the crisis team has sent out 26 "updates" by email to all employees and dealt with countless individual problems, from simplifying internal application procedures to extending positions and projects. From the strict emergency operation, which allowed almost no presence work and no presence events, the IRS switched in June to a "relaxed emergency operation", which allows very limited presence work and adherence to a hygiene concept. So far, it has not been possible to reach further levels of relaxation on the specially developed step-by-step plan - the situation is too unstable, the infections have developed too dynamically in recent times. And yet, in the year since the beginning of the corona crisis (at least in Germany), the IRS has learned valuable lessons that will shape the Institute's future actions.

During the weeks of the first lockdown, the public recognised with a new and hopefully lasting appreciation that not only civil protection and emergency services, but also, for example, supermarket employees and care workers are among the absolutely indispensable service providers of society. The IRS had a similar experience in the first weeks of the lockdown, when securing administrative processes and the IT infrastructure as well as building management were among the most urgent tasks of the crisis management team and the corresponding specialists performed essential presence work. The

fact that administrative processes were still insufficiently digitised proved to be a major hurdle. The Institute is in the course of tackling this problem.

The general rush for laptops and webcams at the beginning of the lockdown was also felt by the IRS IT. Especially the hardware equipment of the institute, which was not designed for mobile working as a rule, became a bottleneck. The search for video conferencing services that would run stably and meet the various requirements for team and external communication also proved challenging. Overall, however, the switch to virtual formats in in-house collaboration went surprisingly well. "In our case, team communication is even better than before," says Wolfgang Haupt, a postdoc in the research department "Institutional Change and Regional Commons". Before the lockdown, team meetings were difficult to organise due to the high density of appointments. "Now we meet more spontaneously and much more often online." For their part, the IRS management issued the motto that researchers should consistently use the new circumstances as an opportunity to try out new ways of working.

Opportunities and Challenges for Research

However, the restrictions caused by the pandemic proved difficult to compensate for in the empirical research itself. Numerous IRS projects, especially in the third-party funded sector, envisage intensive field work and thus long research trips - in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. "We had to give up our foreign field research in Nigeria and Estonia. Not everything can be collected via Skype interviews, especially if you want to work ethnographically," explains Gabriela Christmann, who, among other things, heads the DFG project "Digital Urban Planning" with case studies in New York and Lagos. Jana Kleibert, head of the Leibniz Junior Research Group TRANSEDU, which sheds light on universities' internationalisation strategies, also emphasises how important it is to look around on site, to experience the concrete conditions for oneself. "We had just started the second wave of data collection when the lockdown came," Kleibert describes. "We had to bring our team back, partly on the last flight." Months of preparation for the research trips to France and the Gulf region, which lasted several weeks, were in vain.

On the other hand, advantages of online formats were also shown in isolated cases, for example in the MaFoCi project, which compares the climate strategies of several large cities in the Baltic Sea region. "The lengthy planning of business trips is often not compatible with the daily work of potential interview partners," says Wolfgang Haupt. "We now arrange interviews more flexibly online". A focus group with experts from the city administration of Turku (Finland) was even much more productive online, he says, because it was possible to connect live to the researcher who was working on the comparative case study in Groningen (Netherlands). "But we have already been to all our case study locations, we have contacts and know the local conditions," Haupt limits. "I don't know what would have happened to our research if the lockdown had started in October 2019".

Ongoing projects took up the topic. The team of the DFG project DeReBord, which investigates everyday practices of border demarcation along the German-Polish border, included the consequences of border closure in its data collection. The lead project of the research department "Institutional Change and Regional Public Goods", which examines discourses around critical infrastructures using the example of the energy transition and climate adaptation, expanded its view to include the debate around healthcare as critical infrastructure. Two articles by IRS researchers on socio-spatial dynamics of the Corona pandemic appeared in a special issue of the Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie (see p.7).

In addition to problems with data collection, the additional organisational workload for project extension applications is also a factor. New projects are now being planned intensively with online formats, even if these cannot ultimately replace research trips. Methodological emergency options in the event of a long-lasting pandemic are now part of application and project planning. Thematically, the corona crisis will occupy a prominent position in IRS research in the near future. Recently, for example, the Regional Studies Association approved a research proposal for a project on the impact of COVID-19 on college campuses abroad (see p. 22). Other projects are in the application process. However, researchers are looking with concern at future opportunities to network internationally. "Conferences are going away, especially the particularly productive hallway talks on the sidelines of the official sessions. This makes it difficult to orient oneself in the community," says Matthias Bernt, acting head of the research department "Regeneration of Cities".

New Formats

For events organised by the IRS, the aspect of creative experimentation again predominates. "From our point of view, events such as workshops and conferences can be held very well virtually, which is what we are doing," says Gabriela Christmann. "In fact, we have not cancelled anything that was on our agenda for 2020." For example, Christmann's research department hosted the

final conference of the RurAction project on social innovations in rural areas online in September, and several thematically related transfer events were also held online.

Central IRS events such as the IRS International Lecture on Society and Space and the Brandenburg Regional Talk have been converted to online formats, and video and audio recordings are published. The International Lecture is particularly suitable for this. "We now reach a larger and even more international audience with the Lecture, and also more visibility in social media," says Sarah Brechmann from the Science Management and Communication department. Two Lectures have taken place online so far: In May 2020, Canadian journalist Doug Saunders spoke about "Arrival Cities", and in September, British geographer Mark Shucksmith spoke about social exclusion in rural areas. In June, IRS researcher Madlen Pilz also discussed arrival neighbourhoods in eastern German cities with Stefanie Kaygusuz-Schurmann from the Cottbus city administration and Rene Wilke, Mayor of Frankfurt/Oder, in the first online regional discussion. The conversation was published as an audio recording on the IRS podcast Society@Space. The following regional talk on the question of whether "East Germany" is still a valid category today was held in the form of a video conference and published on the IRS video channel.

Competence in Crisis Research

Scientific crisis expertise also quickly found its way into the public domain during the Corona crisis. In "Crisis Calls", for example, the Leibniz video podcast on the Corona crisis, Oliver Ibert discussed the discrepancy between a pandemic that is global by definition and the dominance of national solution strategies. In an interview with Leibniz-Transfer, he explains how experts act in crises and how scientific expertise becomes effective in crises. In Deutsche Welle, IRS researcher Ariane Sept commented on the "urban flight" in the Corona crisis. In numerous blogs, such as the Corona blog of the Hessian Foundation for Peace and Conflict Research, the blog of the Collaborative Research Centre "(Re)figuration of Spaces" and the blog of the Viadrina Center "B/ORDERS IN MOTION", IRS researchers also posted scientific classifications, observations from research and reflections on new everyday practices.

All in all, the Corona crisis has triggered strong learning dynamics in the IRS, the effects of which will manifest themselves far beyond the pandemic - especially in the digitalisation of processes, online collaboration and mobile working. The crisis will also be (further) strongly present in research in the future. Nevertheless, IRS employees hope that the pandemic will end soon. ▪

A Manual for Crisis Research

Our perception of the world has been shaped by crises and crisis diagnoses for some time. But what kind of research on crises is needed? No scientific discipline alone can shed light on the complex dynamics of crises. That is why the Leibniz Research Alliance "Crises in a Globalised World", of which the IRS is a member, has been working on interdisciplinary approaches to crisis research since 2013. A new handbook is a central joint product of the research network. IRS scholars contributed three articles to the anthology.

In the research network, 24 Leibniz Institutes from almost the entire disciplinary spectrum of the Leibniz Association work together to better understand the mechanisms and dynamics of crises and their mutual interdependencies in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary manner. The "Handbuch Krisenforschung" ("Crisis Research Handbook"), published in 2020, examines a key concept in the humanities and social sciences in an interdisciplinary manner. It elaborates the state of research on crises as situations of political action for various fields and at the same time emphasises the close connection to political practice that can be observed in the use of the concept of crisis. While research on individual crisis events and phenomena is part of the daily business in many disciplines, overarching conceptual considerations on crises are usually limited to organisational aspects of crisis management or to crisis discourses. Following on from these states of research, but pointing beyond them, the handbook deals with crisis research from various conceptual and methodological perspectives, arguing for a reflexive approach that understands the concept of crisis itself as a concept to be observed.

The volume is edited by Frank Bösch (Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam), Nicole Deitelhoff and Stefan Kroll (both Peace Research Institute Frankfurt) . In his introductory chapter, Stefan Kroll argues for "reflexive crisis research": It should consider the factual side of threats, but also the dimension of perception and crisis-related action. In this way, the concept of crisis will serve less as an objective category for certain types of events than as a focus of observation for the way real dangers and the way they are dealt with relate to each other in a typical - i.e. crisis-like - way. The volume is structured in three parts: Part I deals with concepts of crisis. Part II deals with the time dimension, with the course and tempo of crises. It also looks at the interdependence of different dynamics and the connection between temporality and spatiality in crises. Part III examines different fields of crisis and their specific dynamics. Finally, Part IV deals with structures for managing crises.

Bösch, Frank; Deitelhoff, Nicole; Kroll, Stefan (2020) (Hrsg.): Handbuch Krisenforschung. Wiesbaden: Springer VS

Contributions from the IRS contribute to Parts II and IV of the volume: In the chapter "On the Spatiality of Crises", Verena Brinks and Oliver Ibert bring to the fore the aspect of the spatiality of crises, which has so far been rather neglected. In doing so, they address four different but mutually influential perspectives on spatiality: relationality, territoriality, scalarity and topology. Also in Part II, Heiderose Kilper discusses the interdependence of crises in a globalised world. While crises always painfully remind us of the interdependence of different spheres of society, she argues, in a globalised world the aspect of transnationality is added. Finally, in their chapter on expert consultants (Part IV), Verena Brinks and Oliver Ibert discuss the interplay of different types of expert knowledge in crises. With their distinction between experts in crises and experts for crises, they make clear that expertise is mobilised in very different ways in crises, each with its specific relevance, but also its limitations. ■

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The Social Spaces of the Corona Pandemic

The spread of COVID-19 is a spatial phenomenon. Maps capture the degrees of affectedness of different countries and regions; hotspots are identified and the influences of mobility practices such as holiday travel are examined. Thus, geography can contribute significantly to understanding and combating the coronavirus pandemic. A special issue of the Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie with two IRS-contributions has addressed the geography of the coronavirus pandemic.

Aalbers, Manuel B.; Beerepoot, Niels; Gerritsen, Martijn (eds.) (2020): The Geography of the COVID 19 Pandemic. Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie 111 (3)

In their contribution "From Corona Virus to Corona Crisis: The Value of An Analytical and Geographical Understanding of Crisis", Verena Brinks and Oliver Ibert use the example of the COVID-19 outbreak in Germany to show what a spatial perspective on crises can contribute. To this end, they use the TPSN concept (Territory, Place, Scale, Network) of the British sociologist Bob Jessop and colleagues. This concept is used to analyse social phenomena along their territorial dimension, their manifestation in concrete places, their manifestation at different scale levels and their spread in networks - but above all with a view to the interaction of these dimensions. Brinks and Ibert point out that in the reactions to the spread of the new coronavirus, different levels play into each other: Concrete places, such as supermarkets, are redesigned to avoid infections; at the same time, such redesigns are organised in a network-like manner (in chains) and differ according to network affiliation. Different territorial levels (federal, state, transnational entities) sometimes interact and sometimes conflict in pandemic response, also depending on how a state is organised (federal or centralised). Brinks and Ibert take a critical stance against a territorial logic of pandemic control. They emphasise the contradiction between a problem that requires internationally coordinated action and a way of acting that is, at least initially, strongly conceived in terms of national borders.

Andreas Kuebart and Martin Stabler also refer to the TPSN concept in their paper "Infectious Diseases as Socio-Spatial Processes: The COVID-19 Outbreak In Germany". They evaluated the first 1000 or so cases of infection in Germany during the first COVID-19 wave to identify the socio-spatial processes that produced infections in each case. They identify three main dynamics: the influence of superspreading events, such as carnival celebrations, religious festivals or club parties, on regional outbreaks; the spread of the virus through mobility networks, especially tourism; and outbreaks in closed environments such as cruise ships and retirement homes. In contrast to the well-documented outbreaks of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) in the 2000s, hierarchical spread (via closely networked metropolitan areas) played a significantly weakened role, and area spread across municipal and county boundaries was also relatively negligible. The particularly dramatic outbreak in the Heinsberg district, for example, remained limited to the district; commuter links to other districts or across the German-Dutch border did not lead to a spatial spread of the infectious event. Kuebart and Stabler conclude from this that the closure of borders, which led to severe disruptions of everyday life and also of cooperation in the fight against the pandemic in the strongly interconnected European border regions, did not make sense. Regionally limited mobility restrictions, the banning of events and restrictions on travel, on the other hand, had been adequate.

Hence, territorial thinking, including border closures, was only useful in the early phase of the coronal pandemic insofar as it led to the disruption of causative mobility networks (such as tourism). Other effects and consequences were rather counterproductive. ■

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"Without Pressure there is no Learning" – an IRS Discussion about Crises, Learning Opportunities and Learning Blocks

Numerous research teams at the IRS deal directly or indirectly with the topic of crises. In the future, this thematic focus will be further expanded. The Corona crisis gave rise to an exchange on the question of whether and how we can learn from crises. In summer 2020, Tjorven Harmsen, Wolfgang Haupt, Oliver Ibert, Kristine Kern and Elisa Kochskämper discussed this via video conference. The conversation is summarised here.

In your research, you all deal with crises or crisis-like events from different perspectives. What actually is a crisis? And what interests you about it?

Oliver Ibert: In our crisis research, we work with three features that characterise a crisis: fundamental uncertainty, urgency of decisions and threatening nature - all things that we see in the Corona crisis, for example. I started to get interested in crises in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008/09 because we as economic geographers were not asked for our expertise at that time, again. I thought: We need a universally valid understanding of crises and how they happen. That was one reason why I got involved in the Leibniz Research Alliance "Crises of a Globalised World". I have also spent my entire career working on innovation, i.e. on the question: How does something new come into the world? From this perspective, I find the ambivalence of crises interesting. They are turning points for the better or for the worse. They are threatening, but they can also be opportunities for innovation.

Tjorven Harmsen: I study the question how resilience potentials are activated in crises, i.e. how actors can deal with crises and also learn from them. In the team, we also deal with the role of consulting and expertise in crises. In doing so, we look at very different types of crises: The refugee crisis of 2015 is an example of administrative crises, the crisis in the porcelain industry is an example of economic crises, and as an example of environmental crises we are looking at complex shipping accidents. In doing so, we refer to the three characteristics that Oliver Ibert has already mentioned.

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Wolfgang Haupt: I am working on urban climate adaptation strategies. We don't work explicitly with the term "crisis" in our project team, but of course we look at disruptive events that could trigger a crisis. Specifically, we are looking at how cities prepare for potentially destructive heavy rainfall events, which are becoming more frequent as climate change progresses. So it's more about the strategic perspective, anticipation and how to prevent a crisis.

Elisa Kochskämper: My perspective is similar. I am interested in the role that preparation plays in dealing with crises, in the new routines that emerge in crises. The Corona crisis came unexpectedly, climate change, on the other hand, has been known for a long time, and in the context of climate adaptation many actors are actively preparing for crisis-like conditions. What difference does it make whether one was warned or not? What is the impact of more theoretical preparation compa-


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red to practical experience? What is learning in the moment, what is rather the application of existing experience?

Kristine Kern: I'm an economist by training and have always dealt with crises - the Great Depression, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the oil crisis; environmental crises have also been around for a long time, just think of Chernobyl, later Fukushima. More recently, there was the financial crisis, the refugee crisis, Corona. The impression is that the crises are never-ending. But the Cold War was also a time of permanent crisis. I am mainly interested in how crises influence each other. For example, the Corona crisis and the climate crisis. But it is also interesting to see the events that steer politics in new directions, such as how the reactor accident in Fukushima changed energy policy. Such events also occur in climate adaptation, albeit at a different level. In crisis, institutions are created to prevent the next crisis, for example in flood events.

Crisis, disaster, uncertainty, disruptive event, how do you tell them apart?

Tjorven Harmsen: We often look at crisis cases with a triggering event that we call disruptive. For example, an explosion on a large merchant ship that threatens people and the environment. In the financial crisis of 2008, the analogous event would be, for example, the bankruptcy of the Lehman Brothers bank. Uncertainty exists with regard to the question of how to proceed after the triggering event, what to do, what consequences are imminent. A disruptive event is followed by reaction mechanisms, some of which are professionalised. There are organisations that specialise in limiting the consequences of such events.

Elisa Kochskämper: A disaster has long-term effects. With a disruptive event, it's not so clear. It depends on how well the respective system can deal with it, how resilient it is.

Oliver Ibert: Yes, a disaster is a loss that has occurred. A crisis, on the other hand, is open to the future; the greatest damage can still be averted if the right decisions are made. Disruptive events, on the other hand, do not necessarily have to trigger a crisis. Many organisations deal with emergency situations that occur regularly, the "normal emergencies". Floods happen almost every year, there is also damage, but there are routines of dealing with it

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and most of the time it does not turn into a crisis. Only when the routines fail, when the uncertainty increases, is it a crisis that can grow into a disaster.

How is it that some events become a crisis and others do not?

Elisa Kochskämper: A crisis can arise due to a lack of coordination or because existing structures are simply inadequate. The 2013 floods in southern Germany are an example of this. Just because you know what happens during a flood does not mean that you have well-rehearsed, established ways of responding. In smaller municipalities, the volunteer fire brigades are responsible for disaster control. Formally, they have to have a crisis plan. In reality, however, it is often a DIN A4 sheet with three bullet points that the fire chief keeps. When he is on holiday, nobody knows what to do. Especially in the case of floods, there is also the time factor. In the past, floods were primarily river floods. They develop relatively slowly. For some time now, however, floods have increasingly been the result of heavy rains that come very quickly. The speed influences how well the existing routines work.

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Oliver Ibert: It is basically impossible to predict when a crisis will occur. If a problem is ignored for a long time, however, the probability increases that it will force itself onto the agenda as a crisis without being asked. You always have to think of crises from the perspective of the social actors who are affected by them. In the case of a flood, it is not the river that is in crisis, but possibly the flood protection authority. Initially, organisations that are directly involved in averting dangers - security authorities or central banks, for example - are very close to the action. They work with probabilities of occurrence, threshold values, etc. They live with the danger. They live with the danger. But I find the ramifications of crises in other systems much more interesting. The Corona pandemic not only affects the health system, it also affects aviation, the meat industry and cruise operators in a completely unforeseen way. They find themselves in an existential crisis overnight, without having dealt with it beforehand.

But there is also a communicative aspect. When someone uses the word "crisis", they are signalling: "I am dealing with a very urgent problem!" The word "education crisis" makes a problem in the education system look twice as big. We see throughout that you cannot pin down a crisis to objective factors. Economic data like unemployment can develop badly over a long period of time, and then all of a sudden there is a crisis discourse. We say that crises are socially constructed and performatively produced. That does not make them any less real. There are actors who proclaim crises. Some organisations have taken to plunging others into reputational crises - for example, when Greenpeace specifically denounces the environmental sins of a very specific company that is in the spotlight. For the latter, the three crisis characteristics of insecurity, threat and pressure to act are very real and cannot be ignored.

Kristine Kern: It's true that crises are socially constructed. The media and organisations like Greenpeace play a role in turning an event into a crisis in the public perception. But there are also objectively different frequencies of events. Take nuclear energy: we know that an accident like Chernobyl or Fukushima will happen again, but we don't know if it will happen now or in 1000 years. Floods occur more frequently, there is an established way of dealing with them. Nevertheless, there are always disasters like the storm surge in 1962, the Oder flood in 1997 or the Elbe flood in 2002.

What does it mean to learn from crises? What happens there?

Kristine Kern: Crises lead to institutionalisation: New institutions, i.e. rules, are introduced to prevent similar crises or the occurrence of damage in the future. The question is, however, who can learn and at what level is learning taking place. A flood is relatively local. It also happens relatively often, so there is a long history of institutionalisation. For example, the local fire brigade can learn from flood events. In the case of Corona, citizens can at least participate; in the case of a reactor accident, hardly at all. The more far-reaching the possible consequences of an event are, the more centralised preventive and reactive measures are controlled, for example by national authorities or even international organisations.

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Oliver Ibert: However, the learning effects mentioned here all take place in the organisations that are responsible for damage prevention. But there are also other variants of learning. In shipping, for example, there has been a professionalisation of crisis management, a whole new domain of knowledge has emerged. People accept that crises occur because they cannot be completely prevented anyway. Instead, there are crisis management companies that have even specialised in individual phases or partial aspects of crises and whose task it is to prevent a crisis from turning into a disaster. Some organisations specialise in learning ex-post lessons from each crisis, which are then applied again in crisis management.

Then there are learning processes that don't directly have anything to do with security, for example digital collaboration. At the beginning of the Corona crisis, we were all in the home office at once, trying to maintain our work routines. We replaced meetings with video conferencing and started doing research online. This mix of urgency and uncertainty created learning opportunities. We were forced to try things, improvise and also show a higher tolerance for mistakes. In online teaching, for example, no one expected everything to work out perfectly. Increased fault tolerance can be liberating, can help to try things and allow experiences beyond the routine. These are then consolidated, for example in lesson plans that combine online and face-to-face formats as a matter of course. And in research proposals, online survey phases are now planned as a matter of course. These are innovations for which a crisis has provided the impetus.

Elisa Kochskämper: Perhaps, however, new routines do not necessarily have to emerge in the crisis for one to speak of a learning effect. Crises can reveal systemic weaknesses. Things can come to the fore that have not been dealt with for a long time. For example, the fact that digitalisation has been insufficiently implemented in everyday work has been on the table for a long time, but it was not considered so dramatic, so nothing was done. The Corona crisis has shown that this is a vulnerability. This is now being taken seriously.

Are there certain factors that determine whether or not lessons are learned from a crisis?

Tjorven Harmsen: Crises do offer learning opportunities, but especially in highly professionalised problem-solving, crises also have a momentum of their own, which at least slows down deeper learning processes again. In organisations dealing with a disruptive event, the acute crisis moves to the top of the priority list. It acts as an attention grabber, like a stress impulse that causes muscles to be supplied with more blood. However, as soon as the acute crisis is over, resources are again diverted from the respective issue. The organisation would then have to actively decide to learn from the crisis. That is a hurdle.

Elisa Kochskämper: What we know from research on policy learning in the context of floods is that learning only really happens under pressure. Learning through experience leads to more results than learning through theoretical examination of a topic. Learning across spatial and professional boundaries of responsibility or across policy fields also tends to work poorly. This means that for the organisations that are directly affected, crises offer windows of opportunity for learning. The question remains, however, whether new knowledge is really transferred into new routines. Exactly which consequences are drawn ultimately depends heavily on the prevailing discourse, as well as on the interests and agendas of the actors involved.

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Members of a community of practice learn most intensively from each other, i.e. people who deal with the same kind of problems in their everyday lives. This also works across distance and regardless of whether someone is personally affected by a crisis. So, in a crisis that takes place in a particular place, the question is how the local community might overlap with communities of practice that can carry important experiences further.

Wolfgang Haupt: There was a storm in Münster in 2014 that caused severe damage. This generated attention. Münster is considered very progressive in climate adaptation, i.e. in preparing for events like this. If severe damage can occur there, then other municipalities see that it can also happen in their area. This is an essential point: for actors to learn from an event that happens elsewhere, they need to have a connection to the place. There must be reference points that convey: "This can also happen to us". Chernobyl was in the Soviet Union, which felt - economically, politically - very far away. It was possible to say, "Something like that can't happen here." Japan is closer to our self-image as an industrial nation, so the reactor accident in Fukushima had more direct consequences for our energy policy. The smoky sky over San Francisco also affects us more directly than fires in the Amazon or in Siberia..

Oliver Ibert: Certainly, the decisive factor is whether an organisational unit is prepared to learn new lessons, for example if it has already dealt with the respective topic. The crisis then confirms the preparation. But the question of readiness also has a normative, institutional component. In France, for example, nuclear energy is a symbol of modernity. The country gets about 70% of its electricity from nuclear energy. If you are positioned in this way, you will not be shaken by an event like Fukushima. How a crisis is explained is also important. Are internal or external explanatory factors used? The more a crisis is explained by external factors, the less is learned from it. If others are to blame or even no one is to blame, I cannot draw any conclusions. But the more I see a crisis as a consequence of internal inadequacies, the more I am prepared to learn.

But there is also the opposite danger that crises completely dominate the logic of political governance, that nothing can be worked through strategically and according to plan any more, and that in learning from crises, individual events are inflated and general conclusions are wrongly drawn from them. I find the question exciting whether it is really true that we are slipping from one crisis into the next and that we only govern in crisis mode. What is the relationship between everyday political understanding and crisis management? How can I successfully use crises as learning opportunities and at the same time not lose the ability to manage politics in everyday life? This is a research topic for the future.

Kristine Kern: You can certainly see differences between national cultures in the way risks are assessed. In Germany, dikes are higher than in the Netherlands. There is no rational explanation for this. The discourse about forest dieback in the 1980s did not exist in France either.

But one also has to look specifically at the nature of the crisis. If we are talking about an administrative crisis, then the question is how an administrative organisation can look like that promotes learning. There are discussions about the concept of "agile administration", which envisages completely different structures than we have. But here, too, there are differences between countries. City administrations in Finland, for example, learn faster than in Germany. This may also be due to the fact that digitalisation is more advanced there. In the Corona crisis, new things were learned very quickly. The more difficult part, however, is unlearning old routines.

> For actors to learn from an event that happens elsewhere, they need to have a connection to the place. There must be reference points that convey: ‘This can also happen to us’.”

Before Corona, there was a lot of talk about the climate crisis. Does it even make sense to talk about a "crisis" here?

Kristine Kern: I think that there are also crises that run longer. We have known since the 1980s that climate change is a global problem. Since then, there have always been disruptive events, recently there have been more and more of them. One can argue about whether one should speak of a climate crisis, but it is being done more and more lately. And it is always events that give rise to it. It doesn't have to be weather events like droughts or floods. It can also be the publication of the latest IPCC report, the failure of the Copenhagen climate summit, the conclusion of the Paris Agreement. However, political agenda-setting works in such a way that only one crisis discourse can be on everyone’s mind at a time and the previous one is suppressed. Already in 2008 there was a lot of talk about climate, then came the financial crisis. Currently, the corona crisis has displaced the climate crisis. But it will come back, just like the refugee crisis of 2015.

Oliver Ibert: I think it is misleading to call long-term global warming a crisis. Climate change favours disruptive events like droughts and hurricanes. But the term "crisis" should be limited to social systems that are challenged by and respond to an event coming from outside or even inside. A crisis is always a temporally compressed attention-grabbing event that is characterised by the three features mentioned at the beginning. Climate change, however, is a field in which crises arise frequently. This can be a good criterion for learning in a crisis: If crises keep arising in a particular field, then it is worth learning from these crises. And

it is true that the global migration issue is not nearly solved. We will still experience many crises here. Although it can't really surprise anyone, situations will arise again and again that no one anticipated, that escalate quickly, and in which improvisation and learning have to be done quickly.

Elisa Kochskämper: I can understand the separation between crises as individual events on the one hand and a triggering problem area or a longer-term development on the other, but I am not sure if it is really reasonable. After all, what has made climate change so crisis-like is the decade-long lack of meaningful action, i.e. the absence of learning. There are models of experiential learning that distinguish several strengths of behavioural change, from "simple" to "system-changing". These models could actually be well linked to the crisis definition we have already discussed. Then learning could no longer be understood only as a result of crises, but also as an influencing factor on whether developments escalate more and more crisis-like in the long run.

Is the Corona crisis also an opportunity for climate protection, for example if financial resources for economic recovery are consistently channelled into climate-friendly projects?

Oliver Ibert: Rhetorically, this point is made quite strongly. I have my doubts. As has been said here, we always learn from crises what we are willing to learn. A crisis is also an opportunity to push through an agenda that one has always had, such as expanded "emergency" powers for governments and authorities. In this respect, the Corona crisis can provide an impetus for a slow reorientation, which is already taking place anyway, but it will not trigger a fundamental rethink among actors who have so far shown no interest in climate protection.

Kristine Kern: The Corona crisis certainly offers opportunities for climate protection, but they must be used consistently: This crisis has meant that Germany will most likely meet its 2020 reduction target for greenhouse gas emissions, which would otherwise not have been possible. The Corona crisis has also influenced the mobility behaviour of the population. Public transport has been negatively affected, many have switched to cars, but many have also switched to bicycles. In Berlin, pop-up cycle paths have emerged that have already become the subject of court decisions. How this battle for public space will end is open. But the crisis has shown that changes in favour of walking and cycling are possible. Berlin's mobility law must now be implemented more consistently and quickly. Especially in the transport sector, CO2 emissions are not decreasing, but rather tending to increase. New challenges are arising in the relationship between city and country: If more city dwellers move to the countryside, this can reduce the pressure for more densification, which endangers inner-city green spaces - which we urgently need for climate adaptation. On the other hand, new commuter traffic is created that must be avoided or at least organised in a climate-neutral way. And more land is being consumed overall. It depends on the political design whether the opportunity that lies in this crisis is used. ▪

Debate: Are Social Innovations the Answer to Social Crises?

Crises typically expose structural problems that have often existed for a long time: unsound business models, for example, the political suppression of social problems or environmentally destructive production and consumption practices. At the same time, crises are also seen as opportunities to help new approaches achieve a breakthrough: "Never let a good crisis go to waste" is a quote that, like so many others, is attributed to Winston Churchill. Do crises promote innovation? And, asked the other way round, are innovations the answer to conditions that are structurally unsustainable and thus repeatedly produce crises? When the social sciences talk about innovative ways out of crisis situations, they do not primarily mean purely technical or purely economic innovations. After all, it is obvious that a socio-ecological transformation in response to the climate crisis, for example, cannot be achieved through technical-economic innovations alone, but that new social practices are needed, such as changed mobility habits. At the IRS, there is intensive research on social innovations, but not all researchers assess the concept of social innovation in the same way. Two researchers, the political scientist Timmo Krüger and the sociologist Ralph Richter, take a position here in the debate on social innovations.

Timmo Krüger

The Innovation Imperative Is Part of the Problem

Although the diagnosis of a deep socio-ecological crisis in society is now widely shared, solutions persist in conventional economic policy thinking that prioritise growth - now in the form of "green" growth. In fact, however, it is not green growth strategies that have led to absolute reductions in global emissions so far, but only economic slumps (triggered by the financial and economic crisis of 2007 to 2009 and currently by the COVID-19 pandemic). From 2010 onwards, emissions rose rapidly again, and without far-reaching measures, this will also be the case again after the COVID 19 pandemic.

So, the call for social innovation is obvious. And indeed, the popularity of the concept has increased attention to the complex social requirements of transformation processes and contributed to an appreciation of the important work of grassroots civil society initiatives. From the post-growth perspective from which I argue, however, the concept brings with it some problematic aspects. There is no question that good research and emancipatory projects have also been carried out under the slogan of social innovation. In this respect, my criticism is not aimed at the concrete projects that have actually been carried out, but at the innovation imperative that is reproduced with the concept of social innovation.

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At the core of degrowth is the demand for a democratically controlled, drastic reduction of resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in order to come closer to the goals of social and ecological justice (especially on a global level). A correspondingly drastic reduction in the consumption of energy, raw materials and land can - with the urgency required - only be achieved through reduced production and consumption of resource- and emission-intensive goods and services. The concept of social inno-

vations is not compatible with this perspective for four reasons.

Firstly, it assumes that it is always the supposed or actual innovations of social practices and initiatives that are decisive for socio-ecological transformations. This sometimes overlooks the fact that the transformation potential of certain practices and initiatives may be found on completely different levels - for example, in experiences of self-empowerment and self-efficacy. Furthermore, the expectation of innovation increases the principle of permanent activation of physical, social and cultural energy sources that have not yet been fully exhausted. This has a very practical effect, for example, on criteria for awarding funding. The pressure for permanent innovation created by calls for funding is an obstacle to the desired continuation of non-market work. It promotes the tight timing of deadlines, the shortening of planning horizons, but also the simulation of innovations.

In 2012, the repair initiative "Café kaputt" was founded in Leipzig. In regular operation, skilled volunteers work together with visitors to repair defective items they have brought with them. In the repair consultation hours (on a donation basis), the focus is - in addition to enabling the long-lasting use of objects - on acquiring repair skills together. In addition, Café kaputt is a place for exchange on topics such as the throwaway society and post-growth, where educational projects are also carried out. In the first years, the strong focus on innovation in tenders such as the “Innovationspreis Weiterbildung” (“Innovation Award for Further Education”) of the federal state of Saxony was not yet an obstacle for the project. On the contrary, the idea of repair cafés had just come to Germany from the Netherlands, so many funding opportunities were open at the beginning. However, the pressure to innovate is increasingly becoming a problem for Café kaputt. It is becoming increasingly difficult to finance the regular operation. Funding can still be acquired for new offers (such as additional educational projects), but neither for the remuneration of administrative and coordination tasks nor for rent or worn-out tools.

Secondly, the concept of social innovation has a "harmonious" bias. What remains underexposed are conflicts and questions of power, which are primarily not fought out in relation to innovations, but in relation to exnovations. "Exnovation" refers to the intentional elimination (or deconstruction) of practices, products, technologies, and infrastructures. Processes of exnovation are almost inevitably accompanied by conflicts. After all, those who produce or use the elements chosen for elimination usually have an interest in perpetuating their patterns of production and consumption. However, it is obvious that in an ambitious socio-ecological transformation, new, innovative practices, products, technologies, and infrastructures cannot simply be added without touching the existing ones.

This can be seen, for example, in the case of mobility. Transport is the only sector in Germany in which greenhouse gas emissions have not decreased compared to 1990, but have continued to rise. Here, great hopes are currently pinned on technical innovations such as electromobility, but also on social innovations such as car sharing. However, the decisive lever to drastically reduce resource consumption and greenhouse gas emissions in the required short time would be at least a partial abolition of air travel and motorised individual transport - and neither electromobility nor car-sharing contribute to this. A study by the Öko-Institut, the Frankfurt-based Institute for Social-Ecological Research and car2go even states that the offer of car2go led to an increase in the number of cars (because fewer cars were abolished than were provided by car2go) and to an increase in transport-related greenhouse gas emissions (due to more car journeys).

Thirdly, the concept of social innovation favours the gradual optimisation of existing structures over transformative approaches that aim to break with hegemonic structures. The practices and strategies of actors are considered transformative when they are not content with establishing a niche, but position themselves in political debates to contribute to the transformation of social models, norms, institutions and infrastructures. But only a few initiatives that are generally considered socially innovative have a transformative claim in this sense. They step into the breach when traditional forms of economic and state action do not offer adequate solutions to social and ecological problems. To a certain extent, they take over repair functions without fundamentally changing the social structure. This is no coincidence, since the concept of social innovation is based on precisely the basic principles that, from the perspective of degrowth, led to the socio-ecological crisis of modern societies in the first place: namely, the modernisation-theoretical idea that growth and acceleration bring social progress.

For Café kaputt, too, it is increasingly becoming a challenge to live up to its own transformative claim because it has to adapt to the funding tenders. External people regularly suggest that the team could found a social enterprise and organise their own services in such a way that they generate profits. Or they could run a commercial business on the side (a "normal" café would be obvious), which would cross-finance the non-profit activities. The operators of Café kaputt reject these options because repair cafés are spaces beyond the logic of the market and exchange. To change this would not only make it more difficult for people with low inco-

mes to participate. They would also be forced to think and develop the project from a business perspective. This would greatly change the character of the café and lead to an extensive loss of its transformative power.

Fourthly, the focus on innovation obscures the fact that (locally and globally) so-called traditional lifestyles often tend to be post-growth compatible. Traditional lifestyles should not be romanticised or overlooked for their inherent injustices - for example in relation to gender issues. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to focus more on the existing (but partly already lost) marginalised, supposedly outdated or simply little noticed social worlds, which are characterised precisely not by their innovative power but by their immobility, unproductivity, conviviality and contemplation.

While political and socio-cultural initiatives are usually supported almost exclusively by a dynamic, highly mobile, well-connected, academic clientele, the spectrum at Café kaputt is more heterogeneous: its volunteers come from very different social milieus. Here, people also take on tasks and functions who do not necessarily embody the habitus of trendsetters from so-called leading milieus. People who are perhaps not used to holding office, positioning themselves publicly, networking or exchanging ideas internationally contribute with their expertise in handicrafts and their affinity for repairing things and doing things themselves. Precisely because they are less mobile and involved in fewer activities and networks - compared to students, for example, who are of course also represented in Café kaputt - they play a stabilising role for the Leipzig Repair Café. They don't move, they don't dedicate themselves to the next project after a short time and they are not out of the country for many weeks or months a year. They identify with the Café kaputt and are prepared to take on long-term responsibility. ■

> "The pressure for permanent innovation created by calls for funding is an obstacle to the desired continuation of non-market work. It promotes the tight timing of deadlines, the shortening of planning horizons, but also the simulation of innovations."

Ralph Richter

Social Innovations Stand for Incremental and Transformative Change

So far, I have not seen myself in the role of a defender of the concept of social innovation. I use the concept in projects and publications because it is well suited for the analysis of incremental and disruptive change processes. At the same time, I also recognise some problematic aspects - but more on that later. The term "social innovation" can mean different things: In the sense of an observable phenomenon, it refers to novel ways of thinking and practices that people push forward and adopt in order to solve problems and meet needs better than was possible before. Examples include gender-responsive language, online video conferencing or sharing transport. In the sense of a research concept (social innovation research), it stands for the analysis of such phenomena as an expression of social transformation processes.

Finally, there is a third, normatively charged meaning. From this perspective, social innovations are desirable developments that contribute to the self-empowerment of social groups and are thus a key to a just, democratic society. However, such a definition threatens to lose the analytical distance to the empirical phenomenon. The diffusion of the term into the political sphere also makes academic work with it more difficult. Admittedly, this mainstreaming also has positive effects in some cases, for example when EU research funding moves away from its technology-centredness and turns towards social science research. But it also leads to wear and tear and dilution of the concept.

Timmo Krüger's contribution to the debate states that the concept of social innovation is tied to the growth paradigm. In it, change only occurs through

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innovation, which ignores other forms of change such as self-empowerment and self-efficacy. I can understand this argument insofar as the frequent use of the concept of innovation in politics and funding practice blurs its meaning and it is then partly no longer about real change, but about the permanent production of supposedly new things. In funding practice, this is reflected in the well-known phenomenon of generous seed-funding and abrupt shortages in the consolidation and scaling of innovative approaches.

However, the concept of social innovation itself does not prescribe such an agenda. "Innovation" does not refer to the breathless development of new ideas, but to the long-term establishment of new ways of thinking, practices and structures in sometimes lengthy, non-linear processes. To a large extent, the concept of social innovation is simply an analytical tool specialised in the study of new kinds of social practice. Where its own political programme has been developed in the name of social innovation, as in the environment of the Belgian planning scientist Frank Moulaert, it corresponds to the very opposite of what the critique assumes: Here it is about structural change through "empowerment", i.e. the self-empowerment of people on the ground, through novel forms of political organisation in neighbourhoods and the political claim of social movements.

This brings me directly to the second point of criticism, according to which the concept of social innovation only stands for changes of symptoms, but not for a real social transformation and, moreover, aims too much at harmony, so that questions of power and conflicts are left out. It is true: Whenever social innovations are unilaterally described in politics or science as something desirable, the treatment of conflicts and power issues comes up short. In research on social innovations, however, conflicts in innovation processes do play a role. This is already explained by the origins of innovation research with Joseph Schumpeter, who considered creation and destruction as two sides of the innovation process. Social innovations always mean that something familiar is questioned and replaced. They therefore inevitably provoke resistance.

The well-known innovation researcher Frances Westley developed the concept of transformative social innovation, which is not only about novel solutions to concrete problems, but about changing the social institutions themselves that have created the problems. It is thus definitely about changing structures and power relations. In the literature, examples are given of both "incremental" (step-by-step) and "disruptive" social innovations. The fact that the latter are cited less frequently may be due to the fact that disruptive innovations occur less frequently overall. The example of the repair café mentioned by Timmo Krüger is, incidentally, cited in the literature as a classic case of social innovation.

I cannot help but also take up the cudgels for car sharing. Car sharing, the critics say, is a harmonious social innovation that does not contribute to a necessary radical change in transport. Specifically, the case of car2go is mentioned, which, according to a study, does not contribute to a reduction in the number of cars, but on the contrary even results in an increase. In fact, so-called free-floating services such as car2go - which has been merged into Share Now since 2019 - damage the original idea of car sharing. Providers such as Share Now, which are not coincidentally backed by traditional vehicle manufacturers such as Daimler, awaken new mobility needs through the easy availability of sharing vehicles, not the willingness to do without. However, it would be completely wrong to conclude from the example of car2go that carsharing as a whole is ineffective. Station-based car sharing can indeed noticeably reduce car ownership, as a study by the Bundesverband Carsharing shows. Its users in particular apparently do not buy their own cars to a large extent. In my opinion, the fact that station-based car sharing has not yet brought comprehensive relief is rather due to the systematic discrimination by the legislator, for example in the allocation of parking space in cities.

In a changing world, where new things emerge quickly, but counter-movements also form quickly, the analytical skills of the social sciences are more in demand than ever. The social sciences have always had a large repertoire of theories on social change. For a long time, however, they lacked a concept for describing change at an intermediate level: between social developments on the one hand and changes manifesting themselves in ways of thinking, practices and structures on the other. Moreover, the social changes that accompany technological and economic change were long treated as a residual category, insignificant as an explanatory variable. The concept of social innovation compensates for this one-sidedness, and does so in a way that is compatible with the long-established concept of innovation in business and technology. It takes into account the fact that innovations are not only produced in the service of economic success and technical inventiveness, but also to solve social problems and to better meet social needs. ▪

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Jana Kleibert and Alice Bobée

Brexit and Corona: The Double Crisis of Universities

British universities are currently being hit by a double crisis: Brexit is jeopardising their access to the European Research Area and thus to EU research funding. At the same time, the COVID19 pandemic is jeopardising an important pillar of the globalisation of higher education, which is being pushed by France and the UK in particular: offshore campusses that attract affluent, highly mobile students. Universities are responding with adapted strategies and even taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by the crisis.

Brexit is currently presenting British universities in particular with funding problems in several respects. It is still unclear to what extent universities in the UK will participate in the EU student exchange programme Erasmus or in joint European research funding in the future. What will happen to academic staff from EU countries if visa regulations become stricter? Will British universities remain attractive to European students? Until now, they have had to pay a reduced tuition fee, just like British students. Now they will be subject to the much higher rates for "international" students. And what will happen to research funding when the attractive funding programmes of the European Union are no longer accessible to UK-based researchers?

The Leibniz Junior Research Group "TRANSEDU" at the IRS investigates internationalisation strategies of universities, especially the establishment of offshore campuses. During the field research, it also gained insights into the effects of Brexit.

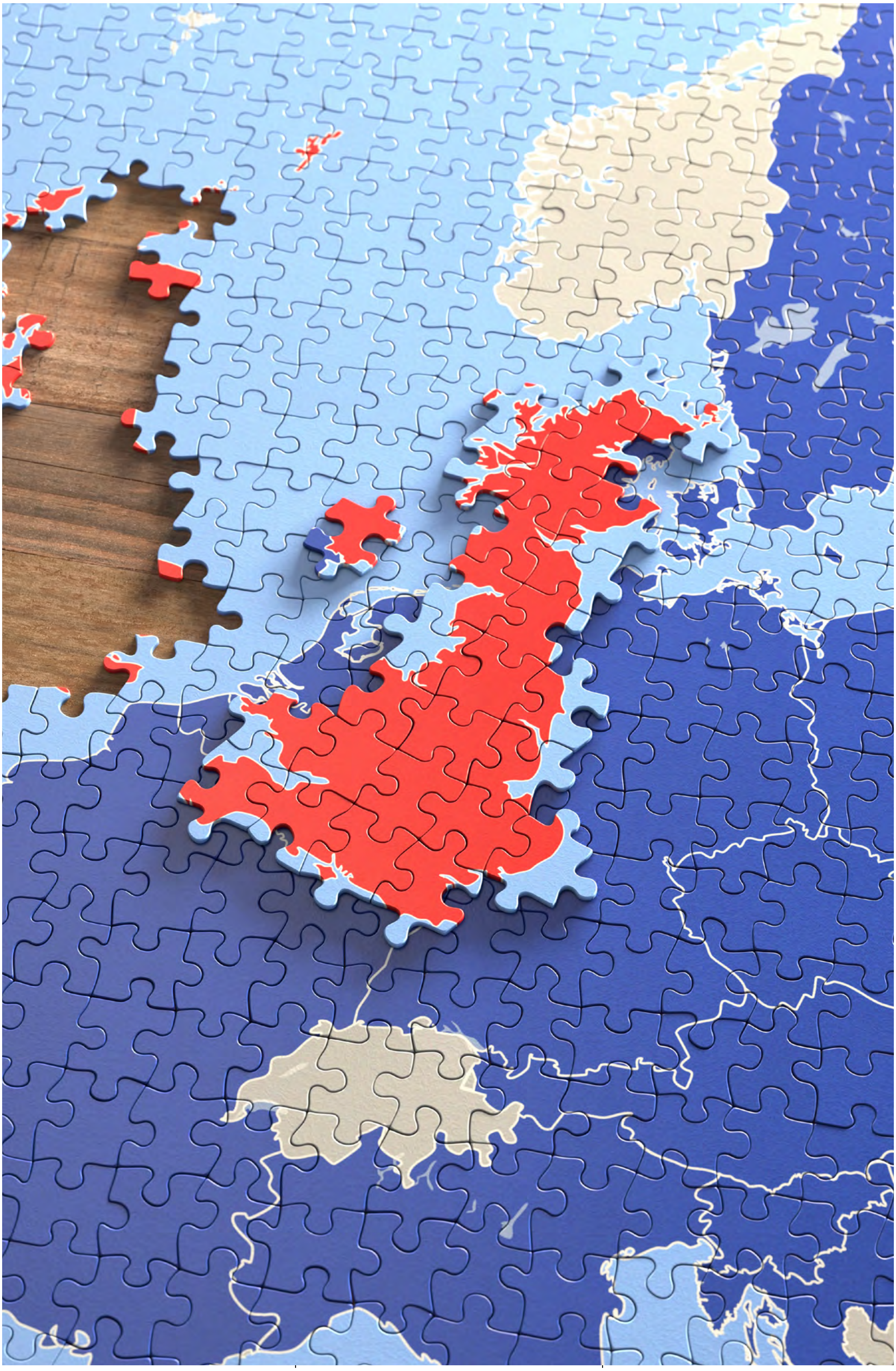
“Some universities follow the ‘Global Britain’ mantra of the government: They are stepping up their activities abroad and thus further contributing to the established profile of the British economy as an exporter of services.”

Brexit: Strategies against Disengagement

The loss of access to the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area thus does not affect all British universities in the same way. Some universities are more exposed to continental Europe than others. Those with a high proportion of EU students in their current cohort are concerned about tuition fee income. Elite universities with high research intensity and traditionally high success rates in European Research Council funding are more likely to worry about these sources drying up.

So, while the economic impact of Brexit on universities will vary, it is above all the lack of clarity about what the rules of the game will be in the future that is causing a lack of planning certainty. Those responsible at the universities are pursuing different strategies to mitigate the potential loss of income.

One strategy is to establish physical presences abroad. British universities have a long history of exporting higher education. One form of going abroad is through international branch campuses, which are now mainly located in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, China or the United Arab Emirates. Some universities are following the government's "Global Britain" mantra: they are increasing their activities



abroad and thus, through the international commercialisation of higher education, contributing to the further profiling of the British economy as a service exporter. Some are also seeking closer cooperation with the Commonwealth. By focusing on stronger links outside Europe, the potential loss of EU links could be compensated for.

Other universities have decided to set up branch campuses in the EU. These investments are intended as an "insurance policy" against the impact of Brexit. Lancaster University, for example, has announced the development of an international campus in Leipzig and sees a campus in Germany as a "natural extension" after previous branch campus investments in China and Ghana. Coventry University is planning a campus in the Polish city of Wroclaw.

In addition to UK campuses established on EU territory to teach EU and international students, several research-intensive universities have established collaborations, including physical presences in the EU. The University of Oxford has intensified its contacts with Berlin-based institutions. The Oxford/Berlin Research Partnership was established as a strategic response to Brexit and aims to create a legal structure that will allow Britons to continue to access EU research funding. The University of Oxford's new physical location in Berlin is intended to "support the intensive, direct collaboration that will be necessary for the partners to submit joint research proposals for EU funding programmes", according to a statement from the Berlin University Alliance.

Similar research collaborations are driven by research-intensive universities trying to access research funding from EU funds. The universities that have been particularly successful in accessing funds in recent years are the ones that are most active in shaping their close relationships with other EU countries. In this regard, Germany has become the partner of choice. The University of Cambridge entered into a strategic partnership with Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Munich). King's College London and Technische Universität Dresden developed a "transCampus" initiative, and the University of Glasgow initiated a collaboration with Leuphana University Lüneburg.

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The idea behind some of these initiatives may also be to create "continental outposts" where European Research Council funding can still be accessed by UK researchers. The success of these projects in avoiding loss of income is still uncertain. Previous examples of overseas campuses have proved difficult to manage and expensive to run. Thus, of all things, what is meant to be a solution to funding problems could end up being very costly. So are appropriate university strategies a sound response to the challenges posed by Brexit?Herausforderungen durch den Brexit?

COVID-19: Danger for the Globalisation of Higher Education?

The corona pandemic in particular could now jeopardise the globalisation of higher education through campuses abroad, which originated in the UK, but also in other, predominantly Western countries such as France and the USA. International mobility has been repeatedly restricted as part of the pandemic response. How will this affect student mobility at branch campuses? How are the universities reacting? The new externally funded project "International Higher Education in Crisis: COVID-19 Impacts and Strategies", which will be funded through the Regional Studies Association's Small Grant Scheme on Pandemics, Cities, Regions & Industry and led by Jana Kleibert, will explore these questions. Some clues are already available.

On the one hand, branch campuses of international universities could provide an alternative for students who want to obtain international education degrees but are unable to enter the university's country of origin due to mobility restrictions. For example, in autumn 2020 - and perhaps even early 2021 - universities could recruit only domestic students who do not live too far from the branch campus. Similarly, they could provide an opportunity for international universities that have become dependent on the tuition fees of solvent foreign students to teach these students in their home countries. In Vietnam, VinUniveristy, in cooperation with the elite American university Cornell, wants to reach out to the more than 5,000 students who cannot travel back to Ithaca, New York in the new semester. They can now live on campus in Hanoi and follow their university's lectures in New York online. Similarly, future students who have been accepted to study at prestigious universities in the US will be given the opportunity to start their studies here instead. Some UK universities are likely to try to use their existing branch campuses in this way. Overall, this could also further accelerate the development of branch campuses as a resilience strategy in the future. According to a newspaper report, the Université Paris Sciences et Lettres, for example, sees the development of branch campuses as a possible future strategy to serve foreign students in the event of a future (pandemic) crisis.

However, some branch campuses have followed a different model: they depend on international physical mobilities of students and faculty and are thus particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Some function as mobility-enhancing hubs integrated into a larger international campus network. Students enrolling at the French business school ESCP, for example, move from branch to branch on a yearly or semester basis. Other offers follow a logic of educational tourism, targeting students in the university's country of origin who are interested in studying temporarily in a foreign country, as has been seen with some French campuses in Asia. In a global crisis that restricts freedom of movement across national borders, these branches need to rethink their business models.

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Another trend that could be observed in HEIs after COVID-19 is a redefinition of mobilities to include online experiences. This can be seen, for example, in the Erasmus Virtual Exchange programme, a European online course programme that was launched in 2018 and in which around 8,000 students participated in 2019. Indeed, it remains to be seen whether the trend towards online learning will have a detrimental effect on offshore campuses, which are physical investments in a foreign country, or whether, on the contrary, online learning will become an integral part of the offshore campus structure and reinforce the development of transnational university campuses in the future.

Restrictions on international mobility, whether due to political dynamics such as Brexit or health crises such as the corona pandemic, are currently challenging universities oriented towards international branding in particular. As has been shown this year, several crises can reinforce each other: strategies in one crisis can be devalued by another crisis. But windows of opportunity for new ways of thinking also arise. And major trends such as the digitalisation of higher education are reinforced. ▪

This post is based on two blog posts :

- **Jana Kleibert**
  Higher Education and Brexit
  https://ukandeu.ac.uk/higher-education-and-brexit

- **Alice Bobée**
  COVID-19
  crisis & branch campuses: reconfigured mobilities?
  https://ibc-spaces.org/COVID-19-crisis-branch-campuses-reconfigured-mobilities

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