Introduction: Towards a New Foreign Cultural and Educational Policy

We live in a globalised world full of complex interrelations and reciprocities, disruptions and conflicts, innovations and new beginnings. As a major cultural agent in ongoing processes of change, foreign cultural and educational policy has both reactive and formative roles. We are constantly reacting and adapting to changes in situative local framework conditions at the international, regional, and local levels. We simultaneously find ourselves in large-scale processes of transformation and deep change, which often go unnoticed over longer periods of time. In our world of highly interdependent connectivities and glocalities, we observe winners, losers, and new deeply disturbing inequalities. Climate change, the finiteness of natural resources, and the changing structures of geopolitical balance and imbalance in a highly competitive world of dependencies further aggravate the challenges ahead (cf. Ebert/ Grätz 2018).[1]

The understanding of the role and potential of foreign cultural and educational policy in Germany as the so-called 'third pillar' (*dritte Säule*) of German diplomacy has accordingly changed (cf. Maaß 2016). This encompasses the structural reorganisation of the Foreign Ministry, strengthening its resources and commitment in this field as a "fundament of our relations with the world" (Frank-Walter Steinmeier, cited in: Auswärtiges Amt 2008: n.p., own translation), the ongoing shift at many levels to co-productive formats, and the enhancement of inclusive citizen participation. New and well-researched ongoing questions are raised and discussed in changing contexts: Which pluralities prevail in enhancing our local and world heritage? How do new 'cultural standards' establish themselves on a temporary basis of ongoing adaptation and change or as more permanent witnesses of cultural plurality, and how do we enable and manage diversity? How can we counter neo-nationalist mobilisation, supremacist ideologies, and the unprecedented acceleration of conspiracy narratives, hate speech, and disinformation campaigns?

---

[1] See also the recent discussion in Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. (ifa) 2020.

The lack of transparency and the unpredictability of the consequences of change and global actions make people feel insecure. This offers room for stereotyped ascriptions, for one-sided interpretations, for populist manipulation, and for new and old racisms. We observe the increased emergence of authoritarian personalities and regimes that appear to have plebiscitary legitimacy. Cultural relations thus take place under complex changing conditions. Not only in the field of culture and the arts but also in science and technology or in urban planning, to name just a few, under the term 'participatory turn' major shifts of inclusive decision-making and co-productive formats are being developed, implemented, and assessed. With the striving for a democratic 'participatory culture' – a concept earlier discussed in media education (cf. Jenkins 2006), questions arise and must be addressed: How can we evoke interest, awareness, and engagement? Which actors participate with which (hidden) agendas? Have educational concepts evolved to face the challenges of transparency and reliable sources? Where do structures of policy-making and governance require reform, and in which contexts is this highly unlikely? As participation cuts across all societies, special attention should be paid both to clearly defined attributions of formal competence and nation-state organisation and to complex interacting informal transnational 'elusive borders'. The central role of cultural education is often overlooked (cf. European Commission 2018).

We need to engage in forward-looking and future-oriented thinking and acting. In view of the present trends of renationalisation of foreign policy, which in many countries is coinciding with the ambitious expansion of geopolitical power politics, this is a major challenge. Post-nation-state concepts have proven to be vulnerable constructs.[2] Furthermore, we experience the strains of misinformation and manipulation in digitised 'post-factual' society.[3] Cultural policy must, importantly, include informed educational policy and in particular capacity-building resources.

---

[2] On foreign cultural policy beyond national culture, see also Weigel 2019. Andreas Görgen (2017) delivered a plea for a post-nation-state foreign cultural policy in his speech in 2017.

[3] For a recent discussion on the freedom and the restrictions of arts and culture in times of crisis, see Bernecker/ Grätz 2021.

The present volume aims to contribute to raising awareness of the continual need to adapt to the new realities of non-linear cultural relations development. With our symbolic choice of book cover, we indicate what the present publication has to offer: A variety of individual blocks can be seen. It is noticeable that while they are the same in external form, they differ in colouration and are even unique in the individual grain of their wood. In a similar way, the contributions to our present volume deal with different subject areas and have each emerged from a very individual practical experience or topic of research. There are several blocks with variations of one colour, as well as elements that are less colour-related to the 'large colour fields' and confidently go their own way. This can be seen as emblematic for the approach of the present publication: It does not claim to present an elaborated 'new foreign cultural and educational policy'. Rather, selected impulses are collated and, together with the photographic 'caesuras', the compilation is intended to stimulate one's own conclusions.

The fourth volume of the WIKA Report series is a further collaboration project of ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) and ZAK | Centre for Cultural and General Studies at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT). The volume was preceded by the three WIKA Workshops on the topics of "Culture: Upheaval – Breakthrough – Reorientation" (2017), "Models of Future Cultural Relations: Realities, Challenges, Visions" (2018), and "The Role of Civil Society in Cultural Relations" (2019). Those past presentations, impulses, and debates inspired the present volume.

Opening up to the field of civil society and cultural relations, Rupert Graf Strachwitz reflects on the current state of the civic space in its global dimension and on the implications this may have on international cultural relations. Following on this work, I set out to explore new challenges for international cultural approaches by concentrating in particular on the phenomena of 'elusive borders' and the increasing influence of globalities and transnational interdependencies. The next contribution, by Zaal Andronikashvili, opens up the genealogy of the divide between Eastern and Western Europe. Is it possible to overcome the dilemma of the contested narratives concerning the historical past through cultural policy? Furthering our perceptions of Eastern Europe within the framework of cultural relations, the article by Edita Štulcaitė, one of the photographers of the publication's photo spreads, sets out to explore her very personal approach to Georgia as a foreign traveller, photographer, volunteer, extracurricular educator, and researcher.

In the next section, the question of how to integrate civil society and its organisations into governance arrangements, especially in non-democratic countries, is raised. Research in the field of civil society-government relations, presented by Annette Zimmer and Katharina Obuch, examines the development and scope of action of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in non-democratic settings. The next article, by Susann Worschech, analyses the role of the arts and culture sector in democratisation processes, based on empirical data on the German-Ukrainian cooperation patterns in democracy and cultural cooperation. In the following contribution, Egon Endres also focuses on cooperation processes, and demonstrates the increasing importance of networks in recent years, in addition to arguing that the networking of networks requires a new type of management.

Following on from that, Dominik Herzner investigates how German schools abroad can serve as a model of future cultural relations and reveals how the concept of these schools abroad – with their close exchanges between different nations, cultures, and languages – developed. The ensuing contributions also deal with educational processes. By providing the example of an Indonesian project in partnership with the Goethe-Institut Indonesien, Michael P. Canares shows the importance and potentials of digital education, especially for marginalised groups. In the next text, Manuela Sato-Prinz examines how study-abroad experiences may influence the formation of country images. Continuing this line of thought, another example of how ideas and images of countries are created is given by Maria Sobotka. She asks how the image of South Korea in the West today is shaped by the imagination and representation of traditional Korean art and culture.

The next contributions deal with the question of how target groups that have not been sufficiently considered so far can be included in cultural work and intercultural projects. The article by Burak Yusmak focuses on the alternative role of diplomacy in empowering youth through cross-disciplinary partnerships among intergovernmental organisations. Being a co-founder of the first LGBTQI film festival in East Africa, Kevin Mwachiro shows how obstacles can be overcome with courage, commitment, and the support of strong networks. Bundling the preceding individual examples, Swenja Zaremba summarises the challenges and new exemplary approaches in the fields of intercultural relations and collaboration. Which concepts from other sectors can be useful for reaching out to new target groups and how can these concepts be implemented?

In the last section, Mechtild Manus highlights the challenges posed by radical positions and interventions by state and non-state actors for cultural work at home and abroad, based on her experiences while working for various Goethe-Instituts. Connected with the increase of radicalisation and neo-nationalisms, the question of the extent of a 'politic of lies' is raised: Jörg Armbruster examines the consequences of so-called 'fake news' for democracy, especially in developing countries, but also in Germany.

With this publication we address reflections, paradigm shifts, and practical examples which are relevant to the search for possible new approaches in foreign cultural and educational policy in the light of accelerated challenges. The texts provide an inter-disciplinary and diversified overview of topics of research on civil society and cultural relations, democracy, and international cooperation. Past, present, and future realities, challenges, visions, and bridge-building tools: The change of perspective, the awareness of multi-layered interests and constraints, the appreciation of 'good' and 'worse' practices, and the involvement of civil society are prerequisites for the critically constructive further development of international cultural relations. With a broad variety of contributions, we aim to foster the wide-ranging discussion of democratisation, education, and civil society participation processes. This book is not about mainstream discourse and cultural policy development, but rather reflects on the challenges facing foreign cultural and educational policy in times of changing constellations of (geo)political, cultural, and economic influence. The authors present us with insights, examples, and new questions for further development in research, practice, and advocacy.

I and many others owe particular thanks to ifa. The space provided to WIKA, as an interdisciplinary and intergenerational meeting place that brings young researchers and practitioners into contact with experienced researchers and policy-makers, is unique. My sincere thanks to all involved, in particular to Secretary General Ronald Grätz for his engaged commitment, his generous support, and his openness and involvement. Gudrun Czekalla, Head of the ifa Library, is responsible not only for the organisational management of our activities. She has also stood for the continuity and support of WIKA from its very beginning. Her academic knowledge and engaged commitment have greatly enhanced this project.

At ZAK | Centre for Cultural and General Studies at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) I owe special thanks to a supportive team. Foremostly to Swenja Zaremba, who has been involved in the thematic and scientific coordination of the three WIKA Workshops on which this report is based. I would also like to thank Julia Stübe, Janina Hecht, and Lilian Maier from the ZAK editing team, who accompanied this volume in its creation, and Kareem James Abu-Zeid and Christine Wölfle. I thank our graphic artist Kristina Pruß for taking excellent care of the publication's design and outlay. Further thanks go to Brigitte Maier and Marion Schrieber from KIT Scientific Publishing for their support. Finally and most importantly, my sincere thanks to all authors for their contributions to this volume, as well as to Edita Štulcaitė, Christian Vögtle, and Jochen Maier, who agreed to enrich our publication with their photographic work.

Prof. Dr. Caroline Y. Robertson-von Trotha
Chairwoman of the Academic Council on Culture and Foreign Policy (WIKA) at ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) and Founding Director of ZAK | Centre for Cultural and General Studies

References

Auswärtiges Amt (2008): Nationalkultur im 21. Jahrhundert. Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, 24.04.2008; https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/newsroom/080424-bm-nationalkultur/218938 [01.02.2021].

Bernecker, Roland/Grätz, Ronald (eds.) (2021): Kultur und Freiheit. Beschreibung einer Krise. Göttingen: Steidl.

Ebert, Johannes/Grätz, Ronald (2018): Die Chancen der auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik. In: Mair, Stefan/Messner, Dirk/Meyer, Lutz (eds.): Deutschland und die Welt 2030. Was sich verändert und wie wir handeln müssen. Berlin: Econ, pp. 355–364.

European Commission (2018): Building a Stronger Europe. The Role of Youth, Education and Culture Policies (COM/2018/268 final). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 22.05.2018; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0268 [01.02.2021].

Görgen, Andreas (2017): Für eine post-nationalstaatliche Kulturpolitik; https://menschenbewegen.jetzt/neuvermessung-der-welt-wettbewerb-der-narrative-wie-muss-die-auswaertige-kultur-und-bildungspolitik-in-2020-aufgestellt-sein-rede-dr-andreas-goergen [21.05.2019].

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. (ifa) (2020): Reset Europe. Time for Culture to Give Europe New Momentum? Culture Report Progress Europe 2020. Göttingen: Steidl.

Jenkins, Henry (2006): Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture. Media Education for the 21st Century. An Occasional Paper on Digital Media and Learning (The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning); https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/jenkins_white_paper.pdf [01.02.2021].

Maaß, Kurt-Jürgen (2016): The Third Pillar of Diplomacy. Transl. by Jonathan Uhlaner; https://www.goethe.de/en/m/kul/ges/20723017.html [01.02.2021].

Weigel, Sigrid (2019): Transnational Foreign Cultural Policy – Beyond National Culture. Prerequisites and Perspectives for the Intersection of Domestic and Foreign Policy (ifa Edition Culture and Foreign Policy). Stuttgart: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen).