Post-crisis speculations – What does society expect from knowledge production?

19th International Summer School of the Graduate School Global and Area Studies of the Research Academy Leipzig

Leipzig, 20 to 22 September 2021

ONLINE

Research Context of the Summer School

Over the past decade, the summer school of Leipzig’s Graduate School Global and Area Studies has established itself as a productive meeting place for the interdisciplinary discussion of transnational, transregional, transcultural, and even global encounters and entanglements as well as new trends in the research of globalization in general. The 2021 edition, which is organized in close cooperation with the Research Centre Global Dynamics (ReCentGlobe), addresses the possible effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the role science in general and the social sciences and humanities specifically may have after the crisis is declared to be over.

During the pandemic, we have learned a lot about the role of science and its societal acceptance, particularly in connection to the high demand for new knowledge in an exceptional situation of uncertainty. This situation is expected to be long lasting. Critics insist that there is an evaluation of which kind of knowledge, knowledge production, and knowledge producers have or have not gained influence and why there is a differing degree of visibility and impact. This overall context has not only provided new material and insights for research on knowledge production but has also raised questions about our own role in society and how running projects may contribute to the knowledge that is needed in society but not necessarily per se in demand.

In this year’s summer school, we aim at looking at the mechanisms of knowledge production as well as its circulation and perception in and across societies. During the pandemic, there was a new spin on the discussion around useful knowledge, in addition to a controversial debate in many societies about the specific role of scientists – those working in the social sciences and humanities being sometimes included or omitted. But knowledge production and distribution is not limited to science and academia. On the contrary, the borders of specific academic knowledge (production) have recently become more and more porous and metaphors such
as science 2.0, citizen science, participatory knowledge production, open science, etc. raise questions how exactly academic and scientific knowledge can be defined in its relationship with other forms of tacit knowledge – more so when thinking about the problem at a global scale.

The summer school is meant to provide participating PhD candidates of the Graduate School with an opportunity to engage in an intense exchange with fellow PhD students and postdocs from abroad on topics of common interest and to network across disciplinary as well as geographical boundaries. Thus, we heartily invite young researchers from all over the world whose research interests are related to the focus of this year’s summer school.

**Thematic Focus of the Summer School**

A look at the German Science Barometer 2020, which surveys the (German) public’s perception of science and research by asking how citizens evaluate communication from research, shows overall that society’s interest and trust in science is stable – despite or because of the pandemic. The survey also shows that science plays a central role in dealing with the pandemic and in solving the related social challenges as well as that the presentation of controversies seems rather to strengthen trust in science. This implies the need for transparency about how science generates knowledge. In other words, not only knowledge but also the answer to the question “How knowledge comes about and what is it used for?” seems to be central to society’s expectation of science.

Knowledge production always has a place (one or more often many connected ones), and it aims at becoming universal to the greatest extent possible. But at the same time, global and area studies together have increasingly problematized the relationship between the place-bound character of knowledge and its universalistic claims. Is that only a concern for the humanities and perhaps the social sciences in part or does it also affect life and natural sciences? And what do we do in a situation such as the pandemic 2020/21, when diachronic comparison was to a certain extent only helpful in coming to terms with the challenges the virus and the infection rates brought to the fore? To what degree are speculation and prognosis necessary, even when established on a highly uncertain basis, when data are not (yet) available, and when scholars have to admit that their traditional models and theories are no longer working? And what are the effects on societal arrangements when knowledge orders seem to collapse? This is a series of questions that take inspiration from the observation of an extraordinary situation that seems to come to an end, but even this is not 100 per cent certain, belonging to the type of prognosis and expectation we have learned to live with.

One may also ask at which scale the problem becomes particularly relevant: does the comeback of the nation-state – which is observed with joy, surprise, or fear – result in a more stable knowledge order, or do we continue to take the (perhaps somehow flexibilized) narrative of globalization as the anchor in an age of uncertainty?

How do scholars in the field of global and area studies deal with such questions and tensions? And what is the contribution of the younger academic generation to these fundamental problems? How does one use knowledge about global structures or transnational knowledge to meet the public’s need for knowledge about local and national futures?

**Sequence of Events of the Summer School**

In four workshops – dealing with dimensions such as climate change, global health, mobilities, or transnational populism – participants will have the opportunity to relate their own work to the workshop topics by means of short papers and to discuss them after a kick-off lecture.
At the end of the summer school, a round table with reports from the workshops will bring the major findings together and integrate them into a final discussion.

The selection of contributions to the workshops will be undertaken by a committee of the Graduate School where supervisors as well as PhD candidates and postdocs are represented.

**Application**

Early researchers interested in the topic are invited to submit a proposal that relates to one of the main topics. The application should include:

- Personal details, as well as academic status, including relevant academic affiliation.
- An abstract of 300 to 500 words, together with an explanation of its connection to the ongoing dissertation/project as well as its relevance to the overall topic of the summer school.

via e-mail to:
Leipzig University, Graduate School Global and Area Studies
Dr. Martina Keilbach
E-mail: phd@uni-leipzig.de

Application deadline: **15 July 2021**

Authors of accepted papers will be informed no later than 20 July 2021. A maximum of 20 papers will be selected. In order to prepare the workshops, submission of the actual paper (~10 pages) is expected by **6 September 2021**.

**Organizational Issues**

**ECTS**: You can also earn ECTS credits for the summer school (3 ECTS for the continuous participation in the summer school). The acceptance of credits is the responsibility of your home university.

**Tool**: The summer school takes place online – we will use Zoom.