

20th Karlsruhe Dialogues 2016
NationEUrope: The Polarised Solidarity Community

Opening Address on Friday, 19 February 2016
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– original speech held in German; check against delivery –

Introduction

We have had the EU lay out their agenda for you in such a way that the tension could hardly be any higher today. It is nice that we can still greet you as EU citizens. As a Scot, I hope that Scotland ensures that this remains the case! I would like to thank the preceding speakers for their words of appreciation.

On its 20th anniversary, the *Karlsruhe Dialogues* need not worry about attracting an interested audience or renowned speakers. And I sincerely thank all of you for this! It is only thanks to the commitment of our sponsors and supporters – especially Sparda-Bank Baden-Württemberg and the City of Karlsruhe – and the commitment of our many long-term cooperation partners that the *Karlsruhe Dialogues* are able to celebrate this milestone anniversary. These partners include Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe (State Theatre of Baden, Karlsruhe) and the television channel ARTE, as well as (for several years now) the ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe (Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe), the movie theatre Schauburg Karlsruhe, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Karlsruhe. To all of you: Thank you very much for the trust you have shown in us!

Before I briefly introduce the topic of this year's *Karlsruhe Dialogues*, which has become distressingly timely, please allow me, first, to provide a reminder about the goals of the *Karlsruhe Dialogues* and, second, to briefly look back at the questions and issues we have taken up in recent years.

It is anything but self-evident that the *Karlsruhe Dialogues* are taking place for the 20th time. Their basic concept is different from those of the usual specialist conferences: these meetings offer the presenters insights that go far beyond a single field of specialisation. The incorporation of art, theatre, and film allows diverse audiences to be reached – both on-site and online. We now have an extensive archive; we can easily be found on YouTube; we have our own Facebook page; and we also tweet! It is by these means that we hope to invite as many citizens as possible to participate.

At the first *Karlsruhe Dialogues* in 1997, which back then took place in the 'garden hall' of the Karlsruhe Palace, I introduced the concept of 'public science' for the first time: understood as the – from my point of view, necessary – institutional duty of universities to take part in socially relevant discourses. I mention this today with immense gratitude for the fact that my university gave me leeway back then and has greatly supported the ZAK ever since!

With the *Karlsruhe Dialogues*, we have discussed – and will continue to discuss – topics that are of particular social relevance from the perspective of scholarly disciplines, from those of theory and

practice, but also from the perspective of civil society. I also believe it is essential for the *Karlsruhe Dialogues* to be internationally oriented. This necessarily and consciously brings in intercultural differences and different approaches of understanding, but it also introduces very concrete geopolitical and cultural viewpoints that are driven by vested interests.

Increased competition, the strategic institutional orientation of our maxims for action, and the related preformation of our selective perceptions and decisions all belong to our fast-paced life in a globalised world, as do the risk inherent in a selective viewpoint and the possibility of losing the ability to call oneself into question by comparison with others. The *Karlsruhe Dialogues* are not meant to figuratively take up the habitus of 'leaning back'.

As early as 2007 and 2008, under the auspices of the German Commission for UNESCO, we took up the topic 'My Europe – Your Europe: Insights from the Outside': back then, the external and internal viewpoints of non-Europeans were at the centre of the discussions. We were able to listen in to how Europe was perceived, valued, but also criticised. I would like to highlight just one central aspect that has stayed with me ever since – one that is of great relevance to Europe's internal and external credibility. Salih Mahmoud Osman, a lawyer and human rights activist from Darfur in Sudan and a Member of the National Assembly of Sudan in Khartoum, described the genocide that began in 2003, and asked why Europe did not concern itself with it.

The shocking and cruel scenes from Srebrenica in 1995 had already shown us what could happen in such cases. The current situation in Syria has clear parallels to it, and is bringing our own impotence to light. One could cynically assert that Europe, as a foreign policy 'lightweight', has only rarely ever spoken with one voice. The idea that Europe is disintegrating into its component parts, or that it is politically disintegrating into two camps – as in the post-war period –, should shock us.

At this year's *Karlsruhe Dialogues* we are therefore asking what holds Europe together, what new challenges are emerging due to the political events in Poland, and how Hungary is doing with democracy; we also take up the PEGIDA movement, which has found its strongest point of departure in Dresden.

Will Europe rearrange itself geopolitically and regionally? Taking up the example of Portugal, we investigate ways out of the crisis, and paths that might lead us astray. Furthermore, the example of Catalonia allows us to discuss the new evolving power of separatist movements and the role of regions in Europe. A Brexit would amputate the EU and would most likely bring the Scottish separatists onto the scene immediately.

This year, we are thus dealing with the order of Europe, an order that it is up to us to design together. I am therefore beginning with a claim that is truly worthy of discussion. The Greek author Amanda Michalopoulou, taking as her starting point the finding that the developments in Europe are overwhelming us, recently asserted the following in an essay: "It looks as if we are residing in Victor Hugo's head – a man who believed in the potential coexistence of nationalism and Europeanness." And she goes on to ask: "Is that even possible? Or does one make a choice at some point?"¹

Yet patriotism and national pride need not immediately imply a rejection of the 'other'. Nevertheless, we must ask how Europe's growing nationalist and right-wing populist tendencies, but also its left-wing extremist tendencies, are to be classified. What understanding of the once-acclaimed 'unity in diversity' has remained virulent? What values are understood as European values and are conveyed as such?

¹ Michalopoulou, Amanda: Europa: Eine Liebesgeschichte – Essay, in: APuZ, No. 52, 2015; <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/217300/europa-eine-liebesgeschichte?p=all> (in German) [19.02.2016].

We ask: Just how far do the nation-state's responsibilities and duties, which are meant to be defended, reach? And what scope does the structural and legal framework of the European Community allow for unilateralism? Finally, we ask what can still be understood under the rubric of a European solidarity community.

We also ask the following: Can the current situation in Europe, which is ever more frequently described as 'chaotic', be an opportunity to correct the shortcomings – which we have known about for a long time – of the architecture of the European house? Can this state of affairs possibly result in a Europe of two or even more speeds being once again more strongly drawn into political calculations?

It is not only chaos theorists who assert that chaos can also offer an opportunity for hitherto unconsidered creative solutions. In relation to Europe, we now have the opportunity to draw lessons from past crises and, at least in the medium term, to consider stronger overall European responsibility in international politics. The fact that media, politics, and civil society all too rarely consider the opportunities of crises is rightly criticised, as is the fact that rational reflection of any sort and the informed exchange of political arguments are becoming increasingly difficult.

What roles are played by the current prevailing constellations of isolated events that we generally first recognise in historical retrospective as 'triggering moments' and developments? In concrete terms, the effect of social media in connection with the lightning-quick dissemination of images plays a role that must be emphasised: on the Internet, we see images of refugees in need, of so-called 'enraged citizens', or of targeted propaganda videos.

It could, for example, be helpful to remember that identity is a socio-cultural construct. This means that identities are not static, but rather change over time and can be influenced by external factors. They can be acquired, a fact that has also been empirically confirmed.

We always have several identities in play simultaneously, which are rated differently according to the context. Identity relativisation is, admittedly, a complex process. To illustrate this with an example: Whether they are migrants or refugees, hardly anyone gives up their culture lightly. Culture, socialisation, and tradition are ultimately all that remain for a person's self-understanding when faced with dislocation and often with culture shock in light of their new – and more or less friendly – life circumstances. Changes and acceptance of the new depend on encounters with others and one's personal environment, as well as on one's specific disposition.

With regard to integration processes, actual as well as supposedly factual perceptions such as access to education and jobs play a significant role, as do emotional identificatory aspects. This applies both to individual attitudes and to the collective level of the nation-state.

However, from a broader perspective we might ask whether there is or can be (or should ever be) a real consensus concerning what Europe is and what values it represents, and how much consensus is needed here in order to guarantee the cohesion of the European Community. We would like to pose three core questions in this context:

First, how many crises can Europe withstand without jeopardising intra-European cohesion, which has become increasingly difficult to maintain? Is a point of no return already in sight, as Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, has warned? One thing seems certain, however: the European integration process will no longer succeed on the basis of lessons learnt and 'business as usual'. We would like to intensively discuss interests, principles, goals, strategies, compromises, and implementation plans over the next two days.

Second, we need to ask whether the idea of a European Union, as it was formulated by its founding generation and as it has since been established in a number of European treaties, is still being shared, lived, and developed in this way among its current 28 Member States. What does 'solidarity

community' mean in this context, what interests and expectations were critical for the accession of nation-states into the European Union, and how different are their respective practical political problems and their priorities pertaining to solutions to those problems?

Finally, we ask whether the significantly increased polarisation on the level of the nation-state can return to an informed debate of democratic competition whose value will last longer than merely until the next election. Where do legitimate counterpositions end, and when do they turn into undemocratic positions or even political extortion? What priority does the European Community have in comparison to national interests, and how can the principle of subsidiarity be realised in today's globalised and glocalised world without immediately calling into question the basic pillars of a European solidarity community? What reforms, therefore, does the EU need, and which of them can be implemented, and in what ways?

As usual, all talks and contributions will be recorded and made available on YouTube. You are invited to submit your comments on Facebook and Twitter. We are also carrying out an evaluation of the *Karlsruhe Dialogues* and would be especially pleased if you were willing to take part in it.

We publish our scholarly findings. This very month, the 10th volume of our series 'Interdisciplinary Studies on Culture and Society' has been published by Nomos in Baden-Baden under the title *Die Zwischengesellschaft. Aufbrüche zwischen Tradition und Moderne?* I would like to express my sincere thanks to our publisher, represented this evening by Volker Daiber.

Before I end my remarks, allow me to briefly introduce some of this evening's further participants. Here in the wonderful rooms of Karlsruhe's University of Music, we are delighted to have Cornelius Lewenberg, baritone, and Melania Kluge on the piano with us. Before the lecture by Professor Anthony Glees, we will hear three songs by Franz Schubert, and after the speech, which is entitled "Challenging Europe: Germany's EU Ambitions", we will hear three songs by Robert Schumann.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a political community all members have to be clear about whether their respective interests or those of the community as a whole are more important and more promising. If this occurs, then there may yet be a reasonable chance for us in Europe, to – in our own interest – finally form a solidarity community. In this task, we should always keep Donald Tusk's cautionary words in mind: "Handle with care. What is broken cannot be mended."