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HUMBOLDT KOSMOS

Research - Diplomacy - Internationality

DEUTSCHE
VERSION:
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WENDEN

EXTREME CLIMB

From a blue-collar household to academia

EXTREME COSTS

Who eventually has to pay the price of violence

#ProgressDiversity

Why science needs more diversity



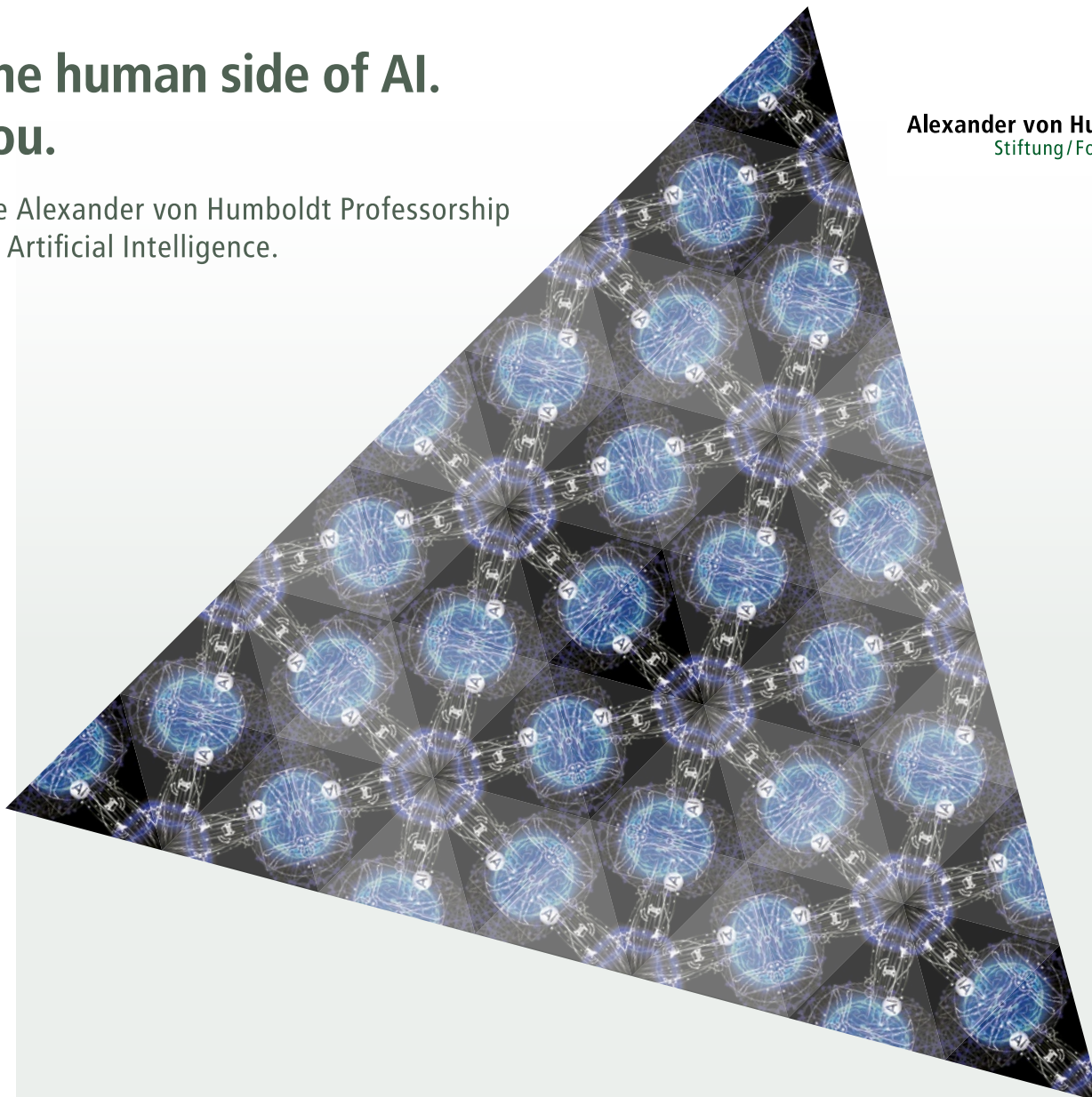
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Think **Humboldt.**

DIVERSITY TAKEN FOR GRANTED: Serge Fobofou on a boat trip in Boston together with colleagues from Harvard Medical School



IN THE USA, NOBODY ASKS WHERE I COME FROM

I was born and grew up in Cameroon. I have been living in Germany since 2011. If someone here asks me where I come from, it may indicate a genuine interest. But this innocent question, when driven by stereotypes or the fact that I look different, may imply that I do not belong in this country and that hurts my feelings, especially my feelings of integration and sense of belonging.

In 2018, I went to Harvard in the United States on a Feodor Lynen Fellowship. Top-class research and innovative start-ups cooperate very closely there. Ethnic and national origins play no role at all; diversity and internationalisation are taken for granted. In Germany, I still find it surprising that there are so few professors who come from abroad. At the grassroots, amongst students, it is a different matter and there is some diversity. But at the top level, the vast majority are native German professors. In the USA you have to state how you will contribute to the culture of diversity and inclusion when applying for a job at a university. And people will not ask me where I come from or they will do so only if I myself have previously stated that I am not American. Because of the high level of integration and diversity it is already in the minds of people that an American can be any kind of colour. Nevertheless, not everything is perfect in the USA and there is structural racism against which the Black Lives Matter movement is now making a stand.

By the way: in my opinion, categorising people by the colour of their skin poses a problem. Even as a sign of diversity. For example, describing skin colour as “black” or “white” is inaccurate, because there is really nobody that

is white like a sheet of paper or black like ink. There are just different pigmentations of our skin. That should not be an issue at all.

I have to say that many people do not realise that “black” is associated with negative cultural attributes. For instance, in movies angels are always white while the devil is usually black. Such attributions have an impact on reality, too. We should use alternative terms which are closer to reality. In the USA, people usually say, “Caucasian” or “European” descent, “African-American” or “African”, “Asian”, “Latino” etc.

We are blessed with a multicultural and diverse world. Integrating this diversity in all aspects of our society and abandoning racial stereotypes and discrimination can really foster the advancement of science and can even to some extent promote peace. ●

Recorded by **SERGE FOBOFOU**

DR SERGE ALAIN FOBOFOU TANEMOSSU

earned his doctorate in chemistry at the Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry in Halle and Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. He was a Feodor Lynen Research Fellow at Harvard Medical School, USA. He is now the head of a research group in the Institute of Pharmaceutical Biology at TU Braunschweig, Germany.



Photo: Henning Mack

Dear readers,

Mixed teams are more productive and more creative – not least in research. In the end, differences and diverse perspectives often generate the best ideas.

Why am I stating the obvious? Because although diversity is a major talking point, the higher you go up the academic career levels in Germany – and in many other countries, too – the less diverse it becomes. And because diversity is important to us at the Humboldt Foundation, we have devoted this entire issue of Kosmos to the topic. If you take a look around the world you discover that diversity often means different things in different countries. Are we discussing gender, social background, subjects, ethnicities, disabilities or age?

The challenges of diversity are just as manifold as the definitions. This is not only illustrated by the analyses in this magazine but also by personal stories from within our network.

We want to take this topic beyond the limits of our magazine and are launching a campaign on Twitter. Let's talk about it! We look forward to sharing your thoughts or your own experiences on #ProgressDiversity.

For the first time in the German version of this issue, we have used the so-called "gender asterisk" to address all genders. We should also be interested in your opinion on this point.

Happy reading and stay safe!

GEORG SCHOLL
Editor in Chief



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COVER PHOTO Getty Images/Flaming Pumpkin



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Illustration: Humboldt Foundation/Martin Rümmele, Photos: Adobe Stock (fruits), Humboldt Foundation/Elbmotion

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WHAT CAN STOP YOU, MR GUCK?

Recently, it was the 30th anniversary of my accident. I have now been in a wheelchair for almost twice as long as I was able to walk. I was in Year 11 when the accident happened. After six months in hospital, I was able to go back to school and take my *Abitur*. During my physics degree, I went to the United States, to Austin, Texas, originally for a year, but then I wound up staying on. I started focusing more on biophysics and investigating how biological cells can be captured using laser beams. How and why do cells deform, especially cancer cells? That has remained my research topic to this day.

After five years in the United States, I started feeling rather less comfortable. George W. Bush was president, and after 9/11, the climate in general turned much less friendly and more aggressive. So, I took up a postdoc position in Leipzig where I stayed for five years until the Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge offered me my own research group. I returned to Germany in 2012, assuming a Humboldt Professorship at TU Dresden. Dresden was just in the process of reinventing itself.

A new, interdisciplinary Life Science campus was being established – this is where I'll put down roots, I thought. And then I came into contact with the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Light in Erlangen where I have now been director since 2018.

During this entire time, I have never experienced reservations about my being in a wheelchair, only a tendency for people to be unaware or overcautious. There was only one occasion when my wheelchair became the focus of attention: concerns were raised about my undergraduate practical chemistry course – I could tip something over my legs and not be able to react quickly enough. Instead, I was supposed to do one theoretical exam per lab day, 20 in total. I appealed to the university's disability representative and was allowed to do the practical course. In my experience, academia is the ideal environment for diversity. Research continuously scrutinises established patterns of thought, which encourages openness and makes it easier to integrate everyone – oddballs and eccentrics included.

One thing is clear to me: my life in a wheelchair has taught me to recognise what is really important and what is just a distraction. What others think and consider normal? That is not a question I ask myself. My normal is different anyway. Nor am I the least interested in what happen to be the hot topics. I have always done the things that interest me. And, in the end, that was what was in demand – but that no one else was working on. ●

Text **TERESA HAVLICEK**

PROFESSOR DR

JOCHEN GUCK is the director of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Light and Professor of Biological Optomechanics at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany. He previously held a Humboldt Professorship at Technische Universität Dresden.





HOW DID YOU BECOME ETHIOPIA'S FIRST FEMALE PROFESSOR, MS MEKONNEN?

When I went to Germany in 1988 to do my dissertation, that was totally unusual for a woman from Ethiopia. Girls were allowed to go to school, certainly, but women in research? “A married woman with a family belongs at home” was the traditional notion. And I even left my adolescent children behind with my husband. Luckily, he and my family have always supported me.

Time has passed since then, and a lot has changed with regard to education and careers for women in Ethiopia. Nowadays, 30 percent of first-year students are female. Sadly, many drop out of university when they get married.

PROFESSOR DR YALEMTSEHAY MEKONNEN

teaches Cell and Human Physiology in the College of Natural Sciences at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. From 2001 to 2002, she was a Georg Forster Research Fellow at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

So much potential gets lost! That is why I think it is right to implement measures to promote women, at least temporarily. At my university, for example, we have lowered the grades for university entrance slightly in order to recruit more women. This is designed to compensate for any disadvantages during their schooling. Gender parity is a fine goal, but a distant one.

I always enjoyed going to school. My parents never discriminated between boys and girls. For me, learning new things is an inherent need. My maxim is that you have to at least try everything in order to make progress. My determination has always stood me in good stead – and the fact that I do not let myself be deterred easily. I am proud that I was the first woman in Ethiopia to be granted the title of professor in 2009. As a role model, promoting women is more than close to my heart. That is why, as chair holder, I took on responsibility for the Gender Office in the science faculty at Addis Ababa University. My door is always open to the topic. “Keep at it! Try everything! Be flexible, persistent and, if all else fails, even diplomatic! Don’t give up!” is my message to women.

Where I can, I open the way for them. If there is a position to be filled, I would prioritise an excellent woman over an excellent man. It is important to remember that in Ethiopia and other African countries promoting women does not just relate to non-material values like diversity, gender equality and individual self-determination. Access to higher education is quite simply a social necessity. We need well-educated women in highly qualified professions in order to continue developing our country technologically and socially. Women are our future! ● Text MAREIKE ILSEMANN

HOW STONY WAS THE PATH TO MATHEMATICAL HEIGHTS, MS PYAKUREL?

I grew up in the little village of Kalika 3, on a plateau in the Himalayas some 70 kilometres east of the Nepali capital, Kathmandu. From the village you can see the Jugal Himal mountain range; below it, the forest stretches down the valley to the Sun Koshi River. Where we lived was completely cut off from the outside world. There was no electricity and no transport connections. If I wanted to read in the evening, I had to use a kerosene lamp. No one could ever have predicted that I would end up pursuing a career in academia.

My parents Mana Maya and Devi Nath Pyakurel grew vegetables, rice and millet. We had ten goats, five buffaloes and three cows as well as two pairs of oxen for the plough. They were called Kaluwa, Bichya, Tare and Phurke. We lived on what the farm produced. Just occasionally, we sold some ghee or goat's meat to earn money for clothes and medicine. Being the youngest of 12 children, I was spared the farm work. But on Saturdays, when there was no school, I looked after the cows and goats in the forest.

Then I would spend the whole day sitting by the river daydreaming. I must have been 11 or 12 when I sensed a great darkness in my life. I wanted to get away, continue going to school and see the world. But at the time, my parents were searching for a boy for me. Child marriages were still common in those days. However, my brothers convinced my father that I should be allowed to continue with my schooling. It was not the last hurdle along my path.

PROFESSOR DR URMILA PYAKUREL teaches and conducts research in the Central Department of Mathematics at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal. From 2017 to 2019, she was a Humboldt Research Fellow at TU Bergakademie Freiberg.

The secondary school was a two hours' walk away in the mountains. The climb up was tiring, the climb down perilous, especially in the rain. From Year 4 onwards, I was always the best in my class. In Year 8, I was the only pupil in my area chosen to take part in a study visit to Japan. For the first time, my father was really impressed. From that moment on, he encouraged me and supported me. But when I then wanted to go to university, I had another fight on my hands. Again, my parents would have preferred me to get married. This time, my cousin intervened to help me.

Even at school, I was fascinated by mathematics and was highly motivated by my maths teacher. Not that he could teach me anything, but he punished me by showing his contempt: a girl who was good at maths was a contradiction in terms, in his opinion. And that really spurred me on. Today, maths is my life. It could not have worked out better. ●

Text MAREIKE ILSEMANN





MR MOLE, HOW DO QUEER PEOPLE FARE IN EXILE?

Even as a child I used to ask myself how people in different societies lived together and why things in other countries were so different from what I was used to in the UK. That brought me to social science. But it was my husband who triggered my current research topic: why do queer people – that is, lesbians, gays, bi-, trans- and intersexuals – leave their own countries?

My husband is Peruvian. When we first met in London, I asked him whether he had Peruvian friends in the city. No, he said, he didn't want that – in case they were just as homophobic as people in Peru. In Berlin, I then studied the situation of queer Russian migrants. They are in a similar situation to my husband. But in Berlin, a queer Russian diaspora has developed

**PROFESSOR DR
RICHARD C. M. MOLE**

from University College London, United Kingdom, was a Humboldt Research Fellow in Berlin in 2011/12 and 2016. A paper he wrote at the time received an award from the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies in 2020.

in which they can maintain their national identity, traditions and festivals – without having to deny their own sexual identity. In their contact with other Russian migrants this would be harder.

The story of a woman who had fled for fear of her family made a particular impression on me. She was extremely worried that she would not be able to prove the degree of threat she was under to the German authorities because she had not dared to come out in Russia. Many queer women experience this plight: they often suffer discrimination within their own families, hidden behind closed doors, unlike political activists who are persecuted publicly.

Since my time at Cambridge, I myself have lived openly as a gay. I have never experienced any problems. Being an academic in the UK is a pretty liberal existence. And as a Humboldtian, my sexual orientation was never an issue. During my research stay in Berlin, it was taken for granted that my husband and I would receive the same fellowship benefits as hetero couples.

Of course, not everywhere are queer academics in the same situation as I am. That is why many look for jobs in more liberal countries. But what we should not forget in our academic conversations is that the hurdles to voluntary migration can be very high. It requires very good qualifications as well as a certain amount of capital, which not everyone has by any means. These things are often overlooked. It is not their stories I hear, for instance, when I am investigating the situation in exile. Therefore, it is important to conduct research in their own countries, as well. ●

Text TERESA HAVLICEK

MS OMBAKA, WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A SINGLE PARENT AND A RESEARCHER?



My story begins four years ago. Three things happened in my life all at once: I was offered a new job at my university in Kenya, I was granted a fellowship by the Humboldt Foundation and I discovered I was pregnant. What to do? I talked to the Foundation and decided to accept the job and have my baby first and then take up the fellowship with the baby at a later stage.

In 2017, I gave birth to twins. Sadly, the little girl died after a month in intensive care. But I wanted to stick with my plan. “Are you mad? You’ve just lost a baby and you want to go to Germany?” was the reaction of those around me. But I knew that the fellowship was a once-in-a-lifetime chance. In Kenya, although I was teaching at a university, I had no opportunity to do any research of my own.

What I had let myself in for dawned on me when I got stranded at Frankfurt Airport late at night. Me, all on my own, with a fifteen-month-old infant strapped to my back. The flight was six hours late, the last train to Hannover had long since left. I didn’t know where to spend the night. My baby son was crying from exhaustion.

I would so much like to be able to thank the kind man once again who spoke to me, listened to me, helped me find a hotel and put me in a taxi.

Less than 48 hours later, I embarked on my fellowship in Hannover. The university nurs-

The Kenyan, **DR LUCY OMBAKA**, is a chemist at Technical University of Kenya in Nairobi, Kenya. In 2016, she was granted a Georg Forster Research Fellowship, which she took up at the Institute of Technical Chemistry at Leibniz University Hannover in 2018.

ery promised to call me immediately if my son started crying. I spent the whole day staring at my mobile. It got later and later. No one called. I finally picked up a visibly contented child who had enjoyed the day watching the funny white faces.

Getting a place at kindergarten was rather more of a challenge, but we managed in the end. When you are a single parent you don’t have much time for work. I have taught myself to work very efficiently when my son is being cared for by others. Of course, my male colleagues have a much easier time of it. They concentrate on their research while their wives look after their children. It would have been easier for me in Kenya, too, because my family would have helped us.

But it was definitely the right decision to go to Germany. My son speaks fluent German and is the happiest little boy imaginable. And I have learnt so, so much. That will be to my benefit, I’m absolutely sure. ●

Text **MAREIKE ILSEMANN**

LONG LIVE DIVERSITY

The more heterogeneous the researchers in a team, the more creative the results: this is a fact now generally acknowledged. Diversity in science has become an important catchphrase – and every country interprets it differently. A journey round the world discovering diversity.

Text **KILIAN KIRCHGESSNER**





Silke Wieprecht has never forgotten one particular review, although it happened a long time ago. The head of the Department of Hydraulic Engineering and Water Resources Management at the University of Stuttgart was a member of the selection committee for a prestigious fellowship for prospective academics. “Suddenly, I read this sentence written by a reviewer: ‘She’s not bad at all,’ he wrote about a highly-qualified candidate, ‘given that she’s a black woman.’” Silke Wieprecht found the sentence so absurd that she remembered it – despite the fact that her work on a host of different selection committees means she reads dozens of candidates’ application packages every year.

AT GERMAN UNIS THE TOPIC IS STILL RELATIVELY NEW

Nearly everyone who deals with diversity can relate anecdotes like this. At German universities, it is a topic that is still comparatively new. Gülay Çağlar, professor of politics in the Gender and Diversity Division at FU Berlin and a Humboldt host, says she encountered the term for the first time in works on organisational theory in the private sector. “In business, the term ‘diversity management’ is quite common, clearly linked to the logic of exploitation,” she explains. “For universities this means the more diverse the perspectives, the more multifaceted and excellent the research.” But universities still had very different interpretations of diversity: for some it was a kind of extended equality policy, for others, an internationalisation policy and for yet others, a facet of anti-discrimination policy.

DIVERSITY TRUMPS GENDER – THAT SUITS SOME PEOPLE VERY WELL

To begin with, Gülay Çağlar therefore suggests breaking the term down. Ultimately, it was all about portraying the diversity of society at a university: “Traditionally, we encounter the triad ‘gender, class, race’, but the list is often extended to include disabilities, for example, or sexual orientation or age.” And this is precisely where the problems start: whilst it is statistically straightforward to determine how equally women and men are represented in the student body and amongst researchers, there is often no data on other categories. Whether a woman applying for a professorship is the daughter of academics or unskilled workers is just as difficult to survey as the question regarding her ancestors’ nationality. And another cliff edge was threatening, Çağlar has observed: with all the efforts to apply diversity criteria, gender issues, in particular, could get pushed into the background. “Some people who are critical of promoting women look on it as an opportunity when gender differences are no longer such a focus of higher education policy,” says Çağlar.

Above all, diversity policy was a process, she continues, explaining how she and her research team are helping FU Berlin to draw up a diversity concept. One of the first official acts was to share ideas with the university’s strategic partners worldwide. “At our Israeli partner university, for example, the question of religious affiliation emerged as a category of difference but played nothing like the same role in the other countries involved,” says Çağlar. So, how diversity is defined crucially depends on the specific conditions in the individual countries. >

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WHAT DIVERSITY MEANS DEPENDS ON THE COUNTRY YOU ARE IN.”

IN THE UNITED STATES CHILDREN ARE CONFRONTED WITH THE TOPIC EARLY ON

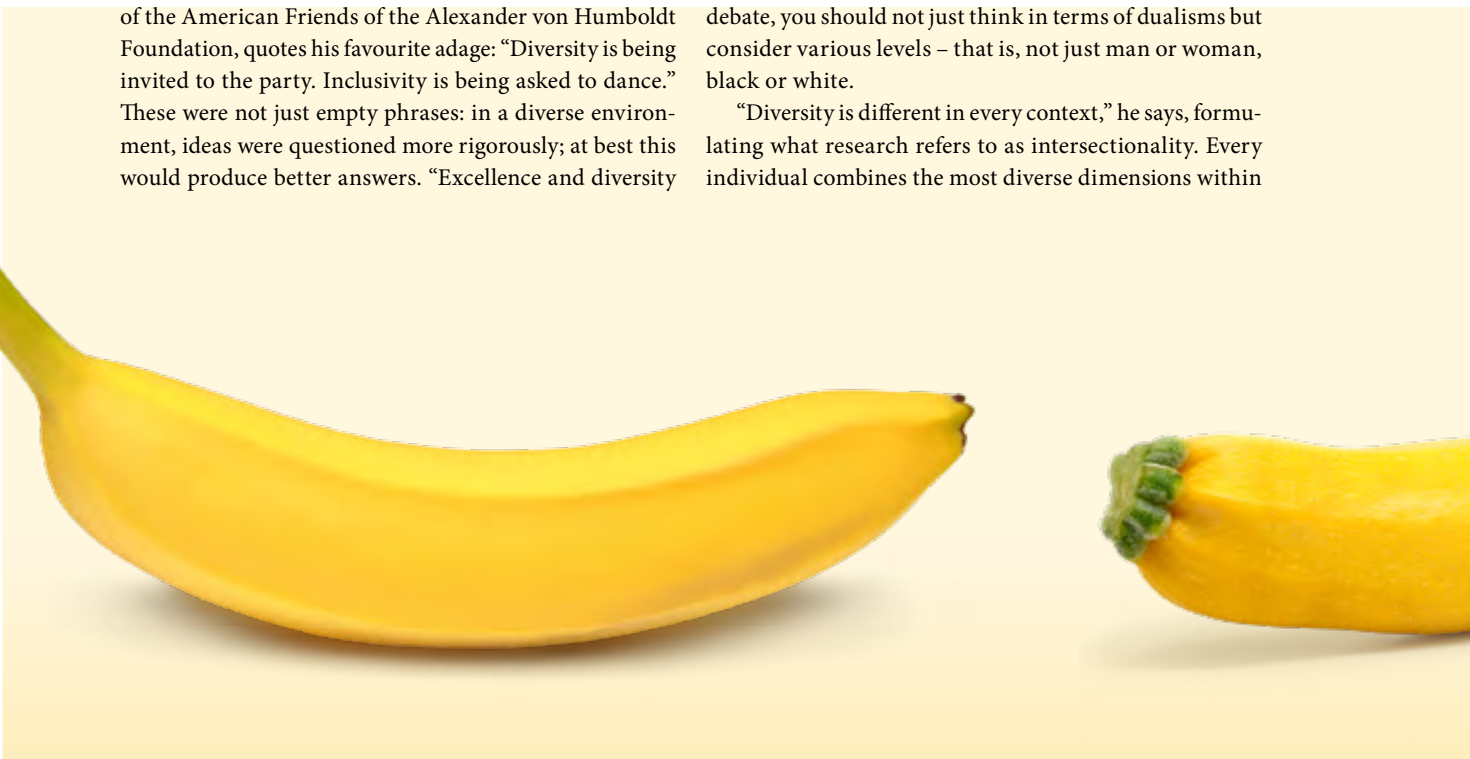
The term is most firmly established in the United States. “Americans are confronted with the topic from their earliest childhood; after all, the US is an immigration country,” says Jeffrey Peck, former Dean at the City University of New York. “For example, I grew up in a corner of the United States where there are a lot of immigrants and a lot of African Americans.” After many years in Europe, he had a pivotal experience at his university in New York. “The fact that a society is highly heterogeneous does not automatically mean that people know how to deal with diversity.” He himself had only realised this in the course of his work as Dean and during his research on diversity. What was crucial was to incorporate differentness. Jeffrey Peck, who is also a member of the Board of Directors of the American Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, quotes his favourite adage: “Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusivity is being asked to dance.” These were not just empty phrases: in a diverse environment, ideas were questioned more rigorously; at best this would produce better answers. “Excellence and diversity

are not opposite poles,” Peck emphasises, “they are mutually dependent.”

Empirical evidence for conclusions of this kind can be found, for example, in a recent study which appeared in the US journal PNAS (Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America). The study followed the careers of thousands of doctoral candidates over a period of three decades – with unequivocal results: “Demographically underrepresented students innovate at higher rates than majority students,” the authors write, “but their novel contributions are discounted and less likely to earn them academic positions.”

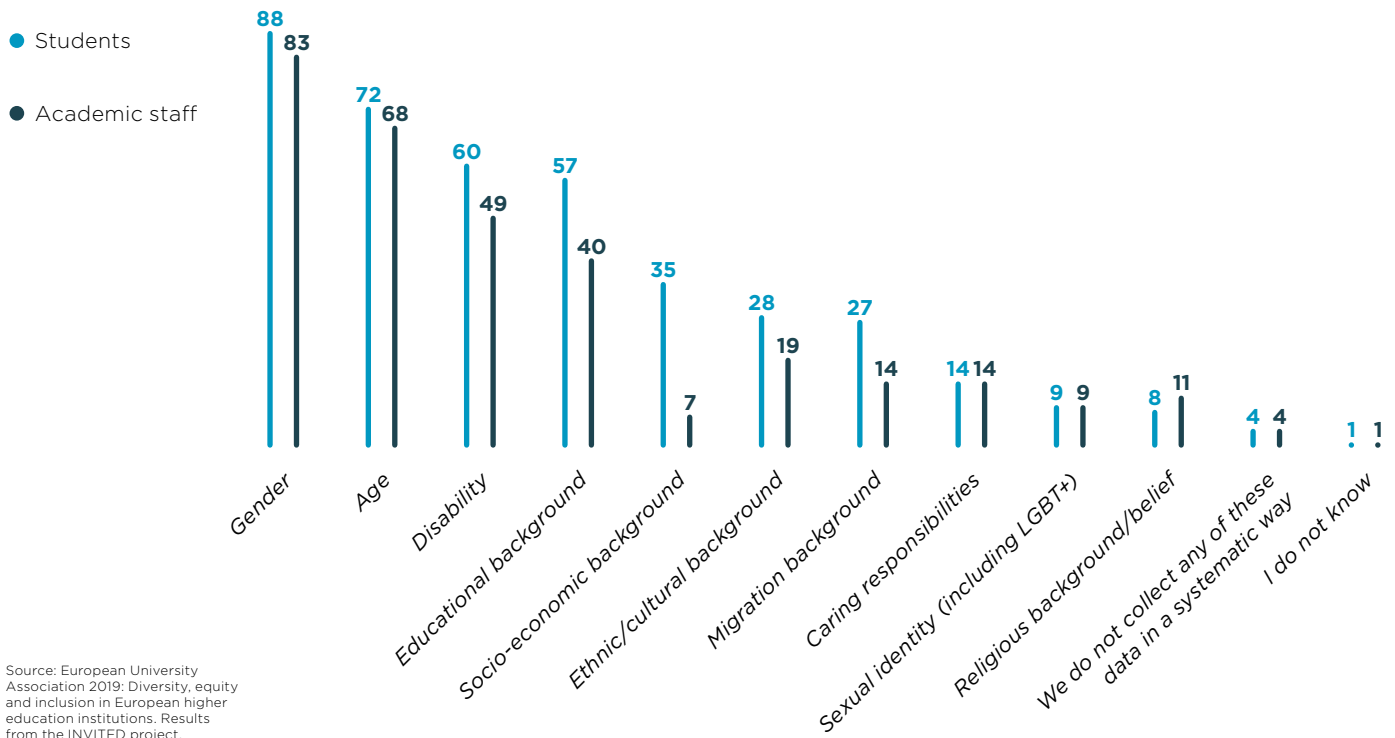
Jeffrey Peck himself had a transformational experience when he was a student in Germany. “The fact that I, as a Jew, learned German was something special.” What he discovered was that when it comes to the diversity debate, you should not just think in terms of dualisms but consider various levels – that is, not just man or woman, black or white.

“Diversity is different in every context,” he says, formulating what research refers to as intersectionality. Every individual combines the most diverse dimensions within



What data do you collect about your students and staff that is of relevance to diversity, equity and inclusion?

A survey under a total of 159 higher education institutions from 36 European systems, information in percent



Source: European University Association 2019: Diversity, equity and inclusion in European higher education institutions. Results from the INVITED project.

themselves which, depending on context, play a different role. In the US debate, according to Jeffrey Peck, racism is formative. In Germany, it was now unthinkable to hold a panel discussion only involving men; in the US, you also had to be sure that you didn't just have white people on the podium. "I have the impression that, in Germany, diversity and gender are often seen as separate categories. In Amer-

ica, diversity is the superordinate category, and gender is an important sub-category."

THE EXPERT COMMUNITY IN CHINA IS DIVIDED

A journey to the opposite end of the world, from the United States to China. "In China, the gender issue does play a role, but not as pronounced as in places like Germany," says Liqiu Meng. She is a professor of cartography at TUM in Munich and an authority on the Chinese science scene.

Meng digs deep into history to address the topic of diversity. "For 1,300 years there was an imperial examination system in China regulating access to higher education," she says. To this day, entrance examinations were standard practice for university courses. That was why the gender ratio amongst students was more or less equal, without the need for quotas. "Up to doctoral level, it remains roughly balanced – it only tips after that", Liqiu Meng comments. "Fewer women attempt to get a professorship, which has to do with the traditional distribution of roles." In one particular aspect of diversity, Liqiu Meng does, however, identify a Chinese speciality: "Unfortunately, the expert community is increasingly fragmenting into schools of thought that tend to compete with one another rather than collaborate," she says. "The talent system at Chinese universities >



OPINION

ON NO ACCOUNT A MONOCULTURE

In the German science system, opportunities are not fairly distributed.

It is time for change.

by **JAN-MARTIN WIARDA**

Something is happening in German science. “Diversity and excellence – for me, these two concepts are inseparable,” said Katja Becker, the new president of the German Research Foundation (DFG), at the beginning of 2020. And she did not just mention this casually but made it a core message upon taking office. It was just the same in nature, she continued. “The rainforest develops more dynamically than agricultural monoculture.” The more multidimensional diversity in science became – not just amongst scientists themselves but also with regard to funding formats, topics and international collaborations – “the more exciting new combinations and research results we shall see.”

The DFG is the largest funding organisation in German research. It seldom takes the lead, but when it comes to standards and scientific procedures universities and scientific institutions usually follow its course. Which means that when a DFG president makes a statement, it is not just an empty phrase. It will have consequences.

Another example: The minute she took office, the new rector of TU Dresden, Ursula Staudinger, who had just returned from the United States, immediately emphasised that diversity and inclusion in every guise should “not only somehow be tolerated but utilised for the contin-

ued development of our university”. The great leaps in science happened, above all, at the boundaries and intersections “between the disciplines, between the subject-specific perspectives and between the different people who express them and listen to each other”. And then Staudinger also drew a comparison with nature or, rather, agriculture: “When you have a monoculture, productivity drops.”

Two new women bosses at the head of leading German science institutions, the one at the largest research funder, the other at the only East German university of excellence outside of Berlin. Two institutions that are renowned for outstanding science. And they both say, right, the way we have been doing things in Germany so far is no longer fit for purpose. That is remarkable.

The fact that they both refer to monoculture as the obverse of their ideal is no coincidence either. Anyone looking at the German science system with its professors of whom under ten percent have a foreign passport, of whom three-quarters are men who largely come from academic families, with hardly a single one from an immigrant family, anyone looking from the perspective of more diverse systems like the one in the US is amazed that the German higher education landscape could have worked so moderately well for such a long time. But they also know that given the extent to which the societies and science systems around Germany are changing, this will not continue for very much longer.

MANY WORDS, FEW ACTIONS

Moreover, you cannot help getting the feeling that whilst many people talk about and invoke diversity, when it comes to appointments, to drawing up new funding lines or research projects, they sometimes ignore it altogether and almost never act strategically and systematically. Perhaps they have only learned to say the “right” thing but are still basically unconvinced that more diversity would make science not only morally better but qualitatively better, too.

Indeed, you do not have to search far amongst professors in this country to hear voices claiming diversity is just an adjunct of social policy: well-meant, but largely deleterious to research quality. Excellence, they say, is only generated by hard, competitive science – not by thoughts of offsetting disadvantages and special support programmes.

They like to point out that there are hardly any scientific studies that conclusively prove the added value of diversity for scientific productivity – a claim, by the way, that the Dresden TU rector Ursula Staudinger would hardly contest. Whilst studies have been conducted, especially in

corporate and organisational research, they reveal, above all, that diversity is not a sure-fire success. "It's not enough to sit old and young, men and women, next to each other round the same table, perhaps with the odd token foreign woman for good measure and expect the creative ideas to flow. It doesn't matter whether it's a company or a university, you need an organisational culture that is based on mutual esteem and promotes innovations."

DON'T WAIT FOR THE STUDIES

You will certainly not achieve a culture of this kind, however, if you do not believe that diversity can mean more to an academic institution than just a benefit on the human level. Moreover, to expect studies to first of all demonstrate – above all for Germany – that diversity leads to greater excellence does not seem to hold water in my opinion: Are there then genuinely serious scientific studies the other way round, proving that white men with comparable career credentials and without the traditional social bias to their advantage are demonstrably better scientists?

Yes, it is a normative statement to say that diversity makes science better. But the current science system shaped by unequal opportunities is also highly normative. It prevents many from following their aspirations and development opportunities and impedes new approaches and unusual ideas.

Perhaps it is not necessary to realise that nearly all the world's leading universities are in countries that have made diversity a core principle of science. Perhaps a little healthy common sense and personal experience are enough to comprehend that, always and everywhere, knowledge and progress derive from productive opposites and intellectual tension. ●



JAN-MARTIN WIARDA is a journalist, political scientist and economist. He was editor at the weekly newspaper DIE ZEIT and subsequently head of communications at the Humboldt Association. Since 2015, he has been a freelance author, journalist and moderator.



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IN CHINA, THE
SCHOOLS OF
THOUGHT NEED
OPENING UP.”

is still steered by a planned economy.” As a professor in Germany she was free to recruit her own staff. “In China, on the other hand, professors are not allowed to appoint more than one doctoral student per year,” explains Meng, who has been an expert on the Humboldt Foundation's International Advisory Board for many years. In order to achieve greater diversity in China, these self-contained schools of thought would, first of all, have to be opened up. That was why top universities had gradually stopped employing their own graduates: doctoral students now had to change university for their postdoc positions and even Bachelor's graduates had to do their Master's elsewhere.

URBANITES HAVE AN EASIER TIME AT AFRICAN UNIS

Universities in Africa face different issues when it comes to academic diversity. “Here the urban-rural gap is a major topic,” says Romain Glèlè Kakai. The professor of biometrics from Benin is a Humboldt Foundation committee member and chair of the African German Network of Excellence in Science. He is very familiar with the situation in West African countries. “Someone who comes from a city here has better access to education and usually comes from a more affluent family,” he says. Consequently: “just ten years ago, students from rural areas, which are also often difficult to reach, were not well >

represented.” Recently, however, policy-makers had tried to introduce countermeasures. For a number of years, university applicants from disconnected regions had gained easier access to scholarships; moreover, quotas had been introduced that took account of geographical factors. Another development in recent years had seen women being given privileged access to scholarships. “These incentives are an attempt to increase diversity at universities,” says Kakai. “But, of course, this only functions to the extent that the state budget allows for the expenditure.”

FROM WEST AFRICA TO INDIA

The next stop on our journey is Mumbai, India. This is where Mala Pandurang works at Dr. BMN College of Home Science, an exceptional institution: when she is teaching, the class in front of her is entirely composed of young women. And the professors are largely female, too. “We are a university exclusively for women,” the English literature professor explains. Women account for more than 40 percent of students in India but on the topic of diversity, gender issues are not the only pressing problems: “There are huge socio-economic disparities,” says Pandurang who works in an honorary capacity as a Humboldt Foundation Ambassador Scientist in India. Wealthy parents are in a much better position to send their children to university than poor families, and these differences are exacerbated by the caste system. Although according to the Indian Constitution of 1950 no one is supposed to experience discrimination on the grounds of their caste, in day to day life the system often perpetuates.

In 2016, a dramatic incident hit the international headlines: at a university, a 26-year-old doctoral student who



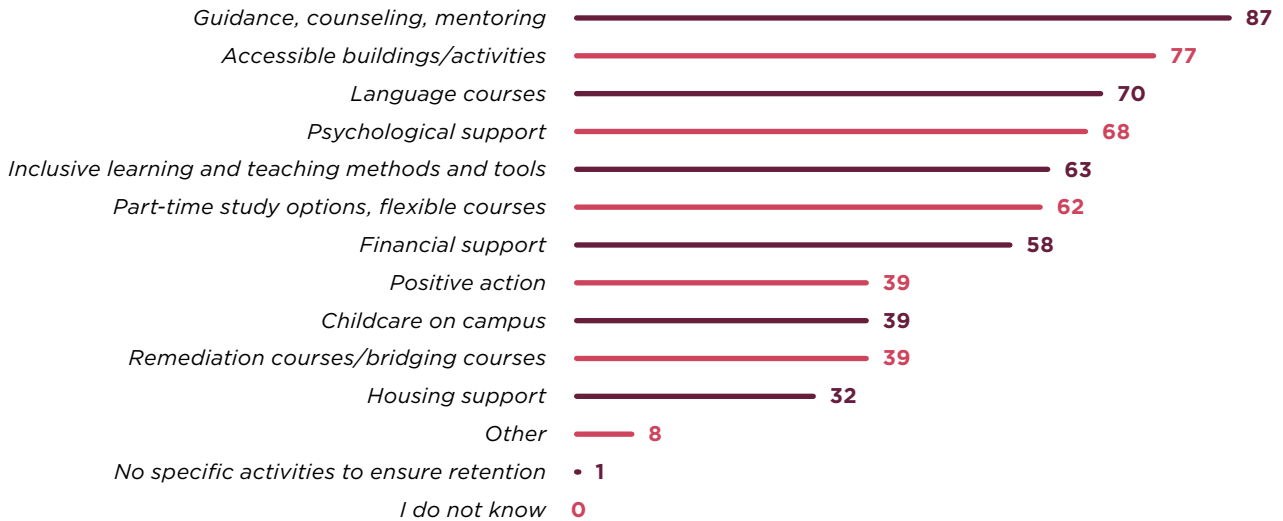
IN INDIA, TOO, THE BIGGEST DIFFICULTY IS THE LIMITED BUDGET.”

belonged to the Dalit caste, formerly known as “untouchables”, committed suicide. He had complained about unfair treatment by the university. An activist for Dalit rights, his own scholarship had been stopped and his student accommodation withdrawn. His death triggered protests all over India. Across the world, the media reported that his suicide was no exception at Indian universities. Nonetheless, Mala Pandurang thinks the country is on a hopeful course. Quotas and a new educational concept were pointing in the right direction. “But the biggest difficulty is the limited budget” which was often absent from the national budget. “Private sponsors and alumni associations are trying to bridge the gap, at least partly.” >



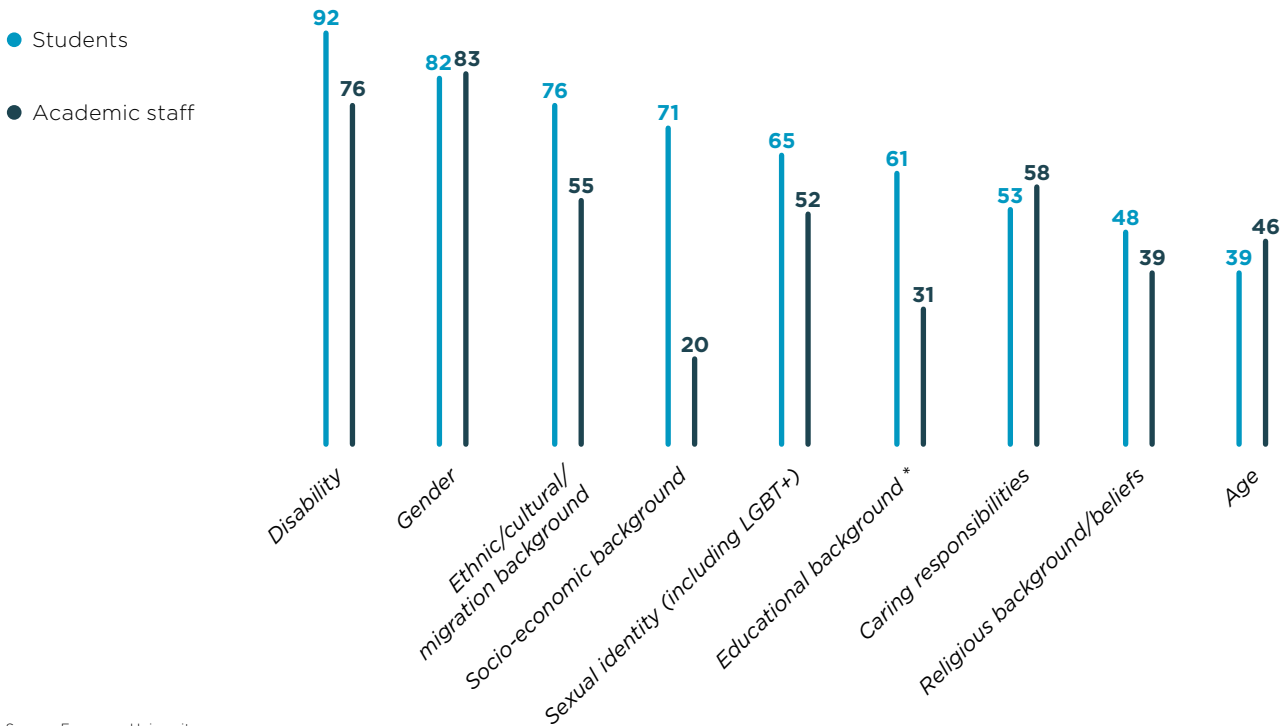
How do you support students during their studies to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion?

A survey under a total of 159 higher education institutions from 36 European systems, information in percent



Which aspects and dimensions of diversity do you address at your institution?

A survey under a total of 159 higher education institutions from 36 European systems, information in percent



Source: European University Association 2019: Diversity, equity and inclusion in European higher education institutions. Results from the INVITED project.

* alternative pathways, lifelong learners



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WITHOUT DATA, YOU
ARE JUST LEFT WITH
DECLARATIONS OF
INTENT BECAUSE YOU
CAN'T MEASURE ANY
PROGRESS AT ALL.”

Back in Germany with Silke Wieprecht, the Stuttgart water resources professor who, for many years, was chair of the selection committee for the Humboldt Foundation's Georg Forster Research Fellowships and Awards. “The trouble with selection processes is that you simply can't identify, for instance, the candidates' social background from their application documents,” she says. You could read about their university education, research interests and how the reviewers evaluated them – but not whether they were the first person in their family to go to university or came from a socially disadvantaged region.

Traditionally, the Humboldt Foundation does not apply quotas. It sponsors excellent researchers. And it is clear that the Humboldt Network draws its power from the diversity and internationality of its members. In its almost 70-year history, the Humboldt Foundation has united more than 30,000 researchers worldwide: current sponsorship recipients and alumni in all disciplines from over 140 countries. Nonetheless, in several consecutive selection rounds for Germany's most valuable research award, the Humboldt Professorship, for example, not a single woman was selected. Not least in response to this situation, the Foundation recently commissioned a gender potential and needs analysis based on data from 14 countries around the world. It seeks to ascertain how high the percentage of qualified women who could potentially be recruited for a research stay in Germany really is and what their needs are. According to the head of the study, Andrea Löther of the Centre of Excellence Women and Science at the Cologne-based Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, it is also about factors that may influence women's perception of whether they can envisage a research stay abroad: “For instance, what role is played by the female applicants' family situation or the discipline in which they conduct research?” The aim, Löther continues, is to formulate clear recommendations for action when the study is completed at the end of 2021.

For Jeffrey Peck from the United States one recommendation is already a given: in order to achieve greater diversity, more data must finally be collected – particularly in Germany where data protection often poses obstacles. “If I want to promote researchers from a migrant background or ethnic minority, I must know the figures – otherwise you are just left with declarations of intent because you can't measure any progress at all.” ●

“IT’S NOT ENOUGH SIMPLY TO SAY, IT IS AS IT IS!”

Excellence and diversity are not a contradiction in terms, according to Hans-Christian Pape. A conversation about the power of positive incentives and diversity in the Humboldt Network.



PROFESSOR DR HANS-

CHRISTIAN PAPE is President of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and head of the Department of Neurophysiology at the University of Münster.

KOSMOS: Mr Pape, diversity is a key component of the Foundation’s strategy. Why is the topic important to you?

HANS-CHRISTIAN PAPE: Diversity is a core characteristic of our academic network. It’s in our DNA. We sponsor researchers from more than 140 countries in this world, whether from the United States, India, Cameroon or Peru. We sponsor quantum physicists and sociologists, practitioners and theoreticians as well as people who pursue different schools of thought and approaches. We invest in seminal subjects like AI and in vital applications in fields such as medicine. We consciously promote basic research with just the same degree of enthusiasm because we are convinced that every scientific insight is functional and contributes to the development of society. Ultimately, it is the dynamism of science, too, that benefits from the tension between the complex of values surrounding truth and utility that is conveyed in their discourse, and thus from the diversity of their protagonists. This diversity and dynamism are quality features of the Alexan-

der von Humboldt Foundation. Without them we would not only be less good, we would fail in our mission.

In what way?

It’s all about the variety of ideas and perspectives, the variety of imprinting and horizons. In business, the correlation between diversity and corporate success is well established. Companies with a high degree of diversity across all levels of the hierarchy are considerably more likely to register above average profitability. The same presumably applies to science, too, as its success depends especially on the creativity and diversity of those involved. Another aspect that is important to me is equity. And I don’t just mean the respective share of men, women and diverse groups of people, although at the moment Germany is really emphasising this aspect. I’m also talking about old and young. Or people with disabilities, people who have to overcome social inequality. If we ask around in our international network, we discover that diversity >



DIVERSITY is a core characteristic of the Humboldt network.

means different things in different countries. We should think of diversity in terms of comprehensive variety and be guided by that. And we want to get better at doing that.

Where do you think there is room for improvement?

In our award programmes, for example, women are under-represented. And, as in the case of the Humboldt Professorship for example, Germany’s most valuable research award, there are hardly any researchers from countries outside of Europe and North America. You could of course argue that our network merely reflects what is unfortunately the general representation of certain groups in research. We all know about the “glass ceiling” which, for many women, means the end of their chances of advancement in science. We are also concerned when we read of surveys like that of 1,000 physical scientists working in the United Kingdom of whom 30 percent had experienced discrimination in the workplace because of their sexual orientation or identity. Diversity in science means valuing and including all groups – irrespective of their religious beliefs, sexual orientation or social background. It is not enough for us at

the Humboldt Foundation to sit back and say, it is as it is. We want to recruit the best talents and the leading minds, and you can’t do that if you always stick to the same narrow segment. We are an organisation that actively wants to acknowledge, value and promote innovation and multiple perspectives. That’s why we constantly review our selection and sponsorship tools to determine how we can proactively promote diversity to an even greater extent.

Quotas would help to accelerate the change. They are being discussed in business. But science has misgivings that this could impact on excellence ...

Yes, I’m aware of that. And nobody I know would want to be selected for a fellowship or award on the basis of their gender, nationality or skin colour – but because of their own outstanding performance! Quotas have their attractions and are one possible tool because they have a quick effect. But I consider them to be a sort of last resort when other approaches fail.

And what are they?

For instance, we’re considering how to reach people who have Humboldt qualities but

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE VARIETY OF IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES, THE VARIETY OF IMPRINTING AND HORIZONS.”

don't apply to us. In every network, including ours, there are path dependencies and sub-networks. That's why we've launched our new Henriette Herz Scouting Programme to introduce new groups of fellows and hosts into our network by direct recruiting. And we resolutely support the reconciliation of family and working life whereby we are also investigating the possibility of achieving greater diversity by offering financial incentives.

Have you met with scepticism? Diversity is a relatively new topic after many years of prioritising excellence as your goal ...

Excellence and diversity are not opposites, they go hand in hand. In science, I have never experienced anyone openly expressing reservations about diversity. But it's not enough not to be opposed to it, in my opinion. We have to be more active. Every time we make an HR decision we have to ask: How can I promote multiple perspectives? How can I create an environment within my sphere of influence in which diversity promotes careers instead of hindering them? And, of course, I always have to ask myself to what extent the diversity spectrum can be laid down in the framework of concrete general conditions and objectives.

This undoubtedly poses challenges but also offers a raft of opportunities that we should address on a broad front, resolutely and, above all, systematically.

It is enough to appeal to people?

Being a neuroscientist, I'm a believer in the power of positive incentives and motivation. Positive examples and role models are important. And we shouldn't just look at the major research awards like the Nobel Prize, which went to four women in 2020 – for their ground-breaking research! They included a Humboldtian, Emmanuelle Charpentier, who received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. We should also look at all the researchers who combine their undoubtedly equally wonderful and demanding jobs with everyday and family duties, who bring along their culture, experience of life and creativity and who thus sustain science itself. Here at the Humboldt Foundation it is one of our key priorities to reinforce and promote this diversity. Without a doubt, we are moving in the right direction. But we have still a long way to go. ●

Interview **GEORG SCHOLL**

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF VIOLENCE

The Humboldt Professor Anke Hoeffler studies the causes of violence – whether in civil wars or people’s own homes – and what it eventually costs.

Text **MARLENE HALSER**

When it comes to her research, economist and political scientist Anke Hoeffler is not easily thrown off course, almost as though she were following an inner compass. When she gets her teeth into a topic, no obstacles are too great. Tenacity was also required to establish her research topic within her discipline. Anke Hoeffler investigates the causes of violence and wars. “To do so, I rely on what I can prove and calculate statistically,” she says.

It is her perception for topics of global importance as well as her persistence that recommended Anke Hoeffler to be a recipient of an Alexander von Humboldt Professorship. In 2019, she was granted Germany’s most valuable research award that comes with funding of up to five million euros. She thus joins the ranks of 84 top international researchers to date (as of December 2020) whom the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has brought to German universities under this programme since 2008. Part of the aim is to break up what are often antiquated structures in the German academic system and infuse it with new interdisciplinary spirit.

Anke Hoeffler is seated in a spacious sitting room with picture windows working on her laptop. It is the last days of the researcher’s summer holidays in Oxford, UK, where

she previously worked at the Centre for the Study of African Economies. She moved to Konstanz, where she is now a Humboldt Professor, with her husband and two sons back in January 2019.

“My life could have turned out quite differently at various points,” she says, citing the example of her much acclaimed article “Greed and grievance in civil war” which she published together with the British development economist Paul Collier in Oxford Economic Papers in 2004. This paper played a major role in making Hoeffler one of the world’s most frequently cited social scientists – whereby the text nearly wasn’t published in a journal at all.

In the aforementioned paper, which became the cornerstone of her career, the development economist demonstrates that, ultimately, it is not political defects and social inequality that lead to civil war. Instead, as Hoeffler and Collier wrote at the beginning of the 2000s, it was much more important whether a civil war could be financed. Where there is no money, according to the results of her data analysis, there is no war either.

IF YOU FOLLOW THE MONEY TRAIL, THINGS GET EXPLOSIVE

“Motivation on its own doesn’t trigger wars,” says Hoeffler. Basically, there are small groups of people who want to overthrow the system – in every country, Hoeffler claims. “Whether they really gain the power that could endanger the state depends heavily on their financial support,” she explains.

But when you ask where the money for civil wars comes from, then it gets politically explosive. You end up, for instance, with organised crime. Frequently, other countries are involved, too. Proxy wars break out that would be impossible without external financing. This, Hoeffler says, is one of the reasons why it took her and her colleague Paul Collier five years to find a respected scientific journal that would publish their article. “Civil wars were simply not a topic for economic science.”



DISPLACEMENT: Children play in between armed Peshmerga fighters in the Hasan Sham refugee camp in northern Iraq. Thousands of people fled here from the fighting against “Islamic State” around the former IS stronghold of Mosul.

Her tenacity also possibly helps explain why Anke Hoeffler is one of the few top women researchers to hold a Humboldt Professorship today. The Humboldt Foundation is all too painfully aware how low the percentage of female nominations and appointments in the programme actually is. Only 15 of the 84 Humboldt Professors appointed to date are women, despite the Foundation explicitly campaigning for female researchers to be nominated – also a familiar gender ratio in Hoeffler’s discipline. “When I studied economics in Würzburg, there wasn’t a single female professor,” she says. She encountered the first woman teaching in academia in the UK in 1992.

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WHETHER THESE GROUPS REALLY GAIN THE POWER THAT COULD ENDANGER THE STATE DEPENDS HEAVILY ON THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT.”

As soon as free movement within the European Union became possible in 1992, Hoeffler grasped the opportunity and moved to London where she had enrolled for an additional master’s degree in economics. Back then, she found German curricula far too narrow and inward-looking. She wanted to keep pace with research in her subject in the English-speaking world, which was setting the tone at the time. The fact that she is now returning to Germany is just a logical consequence of Brexit, she says. In leaving the European Union, the scope for research in the UK has been reduced.

CAREER DESPITE FAMILY AND PART-TIME JOB

“When I was a student, I would never have thought twice about the dearth of female role models,” Hoeffler remembers. “But when I experienced the first woman professor in London, I was pleasantly surprised.” Hoeffler herself spent ten years of her research career working part time. For the sake of her husband’s preeminent position, she took a back seat when her two sons were small. Another point in her biography at which everything could have gone wrong, >

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, IN PARTICULAR, AFFECTS WOMEN AND CHILDREN DISPROPORTIONATELY.”

she says. Part time did no harm to the quality of her work, but definitely did to her chances of getting on in academia.

“The fact I only worked part time and my job was completely financed by third-party funding meant that I never got a permanent position,” Hoeffler explains. “When I tried to get a full-time job, many HR departments and colleagues just couldn’t understand.” In this respect, the Humboldt Professorship that is scheduled to last five years and culminate in a permanent position means a previously unknown degree of long-term planning security.

But, despite that, she doesn’t have a recipe for increasing the number of women in top research, says Hoeffler. In her personal opinion, funding that is based solely on gender is suspect anyway. Instead, she wants to see much broader scope for diversity in the research sector. “There are many other factors apart from gender that can determine whether someone is successful or not,” she says. A young man from a deprived area who is the first in his family to go to university could de facto find it more difficult than a woman like herself with an academic family background. Unfortunately, she criticises, diversity is still largely cosmetic at present. “We have to find new, inclusive ways of conveying knowledge – including the sort that discovers connections

instead of just plumbing the depths. And we then have to test this knowledge differently.”

Hoeffler’s own research field has expanded significantly in recent years, but she has remained true to the topic of violence. In 2015, however, whilst conducting research on behalf of the United Nations for the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, she made a crucial discovery: it is not wars and civil wars that claim the most lives worldwide; vastly more people experience and suffer everyday violence. But neither policymakers nor civil societies consider what impact these supposedly individual cases and costs have on society as a whole.

VIOLENCE WITHIN PEOPLE’S OWN FOUR WALLS IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED

“If you just keep looking at civil wars, you forget that most of the countries in the world are peaceful,” says Hoeffler. “What we also forget is the full extent of murder, manslaughter and domestic violence, which all have terrible consequences in peaceful countries, too.” Domestic violence, in particular, affects women and children disproportionately. Twelve percent of women worldwide experience violence from their intimate partners. And, as Hoeffler discovered in her studies published in 2017, 311 million children are the victims of severe corporal punishment. That is 17.5 percent of children worldwide. The poorer the people, the higher the level of violence, her data analysis reveals. She has set herself the goal of calculating the costs resulting from everyday violence and interpersonal violence. She also wants to collaborate across disciplines with other researchers to elaborate solutions to eliminate the causes of this hidden violence.

Anke Hoeffler had planned the 2020 summer semester of her Humboldt Professorship at the University of Konstanz in minute detail. She was set to become the hub of a new Centre for Conflict Research and Development Policy, financed with the help of the award amount. But then came COVID-19 and put a stop to all that. “The opportunity to do my own field work in a whole raft of countries like Haiti, Ghana and Kenya was the great gift I was given by the Humboldt Foundation”, says Hoeffler. But, at present, global travel restrictions have put an end to these studies.

Necessity is famously the mother of invention, so Hoeffler quickly turned her attention to investigating the



PROFESSOR DR ANKE

HOEFFLER has been a Humboldt Professor at the University of Konstanz since 2019. She was previously a research officer at the Centre for the Study of African Economies at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. Hoeffler has received financial support for her research from institutions like the World Bank and the European Commission. She is a member of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and the International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

effects of the global pandemic. Together with researchers in Helsinki and Berlin she developed an online study surveying people all over the world on how they were experiencing the pandemic. Within the first six months, nearly 12,000 people from more than 130 countries took part in the survey. It is the first assessment of the global

mood in the crisis – and some of the results are surprising: Contrary to popular belief, the majority of young adults claim to observe the recommended precautions to protect against infection. The image of young people as thoughtless super-spreaders is thus refuted according to Hoeffler and her colleagues.

Less surprising is the finding that women, in particular, say they are affected by the additional strains within the family caused by the crisis. “It is also interesting that, globally speaking, most people say a vaccine should be made available in every country at the same time,” Anke Hoeffler reports. “It’s only in the United States that the majority is in favour of a vaccine being used there first.”

In this research project, too, the economist has maintained a focus on violence. Many things suggest that the case numbers for domestic violence are increasing during the pandemic, she says. And again, it is probably women and children who are worst affected. Hoeffler wants to use a second questionnaire to investigate this aspect further. Amongst other things, she would like respondents to tell her how safe they feel at home during the pandemic in contrast to outside. Here, too, Hoeffler is tenacious. Even a worldwide crisis can’t throw her off course. ●

MAKING THE CLIMB HARD

Working-class children who reach the top in academia – that’s the exception in Germany. The experiences of one who managed.

Text UWE SCHÜTTE



Sad but true: equality for everyone, that core element of any society that considers itself democratic, is just an empty promise. The continuously widening gap between poor and wealthy social classes paints a clear picture. This same gulf between aspirations and reality is particularly characteristic of the promise of equal opportunities held out by educational policy. In theory, educational institutions – from kindergarten to university – are supposed to help eliminate social differences. In truth, however, they tend to replicate them.

You can discover what form this takes in the case of my own country, Germany, in the recent edited volume “Vom Arbeiterkind zur Professur. Sozialer Aufstieg in der Wissenschaft” (From working-class child to professorship. Upward social mobility in academia). The book is an example of memoirs in which people report on their own

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EQUALITY FOR EVERYONE IS JUST AN EMPTY PROMISE.”



THE SO-CALLED EDUCATIONAL FUNNEL:

One out of 100 German “first-generation students” from a non-academic background manages to take a doctorate in comparison with ten out of 100 from an academic background.

advancement from a working-class or petit-bourgeois background to the exalted heights of an academic or artistic career, a subject that has recently enjoyed popularity on the book market, as evidenced by the works of French authors like Didier Eribon and Annie Ernaux. The sociological anthology “Vom Arbeiterkind zur Professur” combines scientific analysis with personal experience. Some 20 professors in both the sciences and humanities from Germany look back on their educational path. In some respects, I found the book an eye-opener. Given my background, it was hardly to be expected that I would ever pursue an academic career at a British university. My mother was a political refugee from Slovenia, my father came from a family of small farmers and labourers in rural Germany. Neither of them finished school with any qualifications; my father worked for years as a simple lathe operator in a fittings factory. There were barely any books in the house,

but there was plenty of ambition for their son to do better – although they hardly envisaged a career as a scholar of literature.

THE PARANOIA OF BEING OUTED AS AN IMPOSTOR

However different the individual stories of upward social mobility from lower social classes may be, you still encounter the same points time and again, namely, feelings and imprinting that Eribon and Ernaux also focus on in their memoirs: such as the feeling of having betrayed their social origins, paired with shame about being a social climber; then, having reached a top position in academia, bouts of paranoia about being exposed as an impostor. Moreover, professors from a working-class background share a basic consciousness – especially at informal meetings amongst colleagues – of not belong- ➤

Photo: Getty Images/skynesher



THE PROFESSORS FAVOURED THE STUDENTS WITH SURNAMES THAT IDENTIFIED THEM AS ARISTOCRATIC.”

ing. After all, as the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, put it so succinctly: it is all a question of subtle differences.

But these subtle differences are not taught by the state education system, they are acquired through family background. In her polemic “Die Elenden” (The Wretched), the German journalist, Anna Mayr, who herself grew up as the child of long-term unemployed parents, pinpoints the difference: it lies in middle-class children’s innate certainty and almost inherent conviction that they are entitled to an elevated place on the career ladder and in society. So, it all boils down to a question of attitude to life, self-confidence. But this is precisely the confidence that gifted young people, who want to embark on an academic career, lack if they come from educationally disadvantaged families. It is partly responsible for them being filtered out at the decisive transitional points in the German educational system: *Gymnasialempfehlung* (recommendation for university-track schooling), *Abitur* (university entrance qualification), Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree, research assistant jobs, doctorate, postdoc, *Habilitation*, appointment to a professorship – this is an almost insuperable obstacle course for a working-class child on the path to a

professorship in Germany. But the crux is this: other people do not think they are up to it because they themselves do not believe it.

The result of this is the so-called educational funnel: out of every hundred first-generation students from non-academic backgrounds in Germany, only one manages to take a doctorate whilst ten out of every hundred children from academic backgrounds go on to acquire the title. The path from there to a professorship continues to be stony: once again, only ten percent of all professors have a working-class background. And the majority of them, moreover, tend to be employed at *Fachhochschulen* or technical colleges rather than universities. Furthermore, at the latter, they are more likely to hold lower paid extraordinary professorships instead of tenured chairs equipped with financial resources that enjoy social and professional recognition. Amongst junior professors, a status introduced in Germany as a springboard to full professorships, working-class children only account for seven percent. Particularly in prestigious subjects like medicine, law and music, first-generation academics are the exception. Disciplines like mathematics and education, on the other hand, are much more open to social background. But nevertheless, the entire situation speaks to the poverty of Germany’s educational policy.

AT UNIVERSITY, EVERYTHING SUDDENLY CHANGED

I recognised myself, in many ways, in the findings of “Vom Arbeiterkind zur Professor”. But not in all. Growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, the German school system did not put any obstacles in my way; not even when I was a day pupil at a prestigious Bavarian boarding school. As a student of German literature at LMU Munich, however, everything changed. In the overcrowded seminars it was immediately obvious which students knew how to conduct themselves in order to attract the professors’ attention.

The latter, in turn, made no secret of favouring the students with surnames that identified them as aristocratic or as relatives of well-known intellectuals. Agreements were quite openly made between tutors and students supported by the Studienstiftung (German Academic Schol-



DR UWE SCHÜTTE, born in West Germany in 1967, is a reader in German in the School of History, Languages and Translation at Aston University, United Kingdom. He studied modern German literature, English and history at LMU Munich and moved to the UK in 1992. He took his PhD at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, in 1997, supervised by the writer and literary scholar, W.G. Sebald. Uwe Schütte has been a Humboldt Research Fellow at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (2008/2009) and the University of Paderborn (2011). In 2017, he completed an external *Habilitation* at the University of Göttingen. His research focusses on contemporary German literature (especially W.G. Sebald) and popular culture/pop music (especially the band Kraftwerk). He regularly publishes literary criticism and essays on culture in German daily newspapers and magazines.

arship Foundation) to secure their examination success. If you wanted to take a doctorate, you had to apply to a professor as a candidate. Some of my friends failed at that point. Put off by this, I did not even give it a try.

Instead, I organised my own year abroad in England which took me to the University of East Anglia where a German-born German scholar by the name of W.G. Sebald was teaching. His outstanding essays on Austrian literature ultimately convinced me to go to Norwich. After a year there, nothing could have enticed me back to Munich; I took my PhD with Sebald, who, with publication of the English translations of his collection of stories, “The Emigrants”, and his prose work, “The Rings of Saturn”, was just shooting to fame as arguably the most important German writer of the late 20th century. After graduating, I soon found a lectureship at Aston University in Birmingham where I have been teaching ever since.

So, the fact that my “emigration” to England, whilst not getting me, the working-class boy, a professorship, but clearly enabling me to realise my ambition of a university career, is my version of an upward mobility story. I therefore have a lot to be grateful to England for. Not just the opportunity to do a doctorate with the most unusual, impressive supervisor in every way imaginable who himself had seen just as few prospects of a university career in Germany at the beginning of the sixties. As opposed to the German university system, I could also spend time productively working on research without the existential worry of whether an underpaid, fixed-term, project-financed position would be extended, or uncertainty as to whether unpaid teaching duty as a *Privatdozent* (private lecturer) would ever earn me one of the rare professorships in German studies.

Therefore, I have the Humboldt Foundation to thank for repeatedly sponsoring me since 2008. I consider its meritocratic principle of basing funding decisions on academic excellence without regard to social background or gender to be eminently fair. Only an egalitarian approach of this kind can produce diversity in academia. Increased diversity is a moral necessity in response to the unequal social distribution of opportunity. Particularly in view of the challenges currently facing society, the issue of social justice is of the utmost importance. ●

COMMUNICATION LAB

Reinforcing science communication



The Humboldt Foundation has introduced a new series of events to reinforce science communication. At the Communication Lab for Exchange between Research and Media, Humboldt Fellows are given the opportunity to discuss the challenges of science communication with journalists and implement joint projects.

Twice a year, ten selected fellows meet ten young journalists from all over the world, themselves fellows of the International Journalists' Programmes (IJP). They spend three days together working on journalistic products. The first ComLab workshop took place in summer 2020 and addressed the topic of science communication during the Corona pandemic; the second ComLab on the climate crisis and the European Green Deal was held in November. ●



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/explore/organisation/reinforcing-science-communication

NOBEL PRIZE

Humboldtian honoured

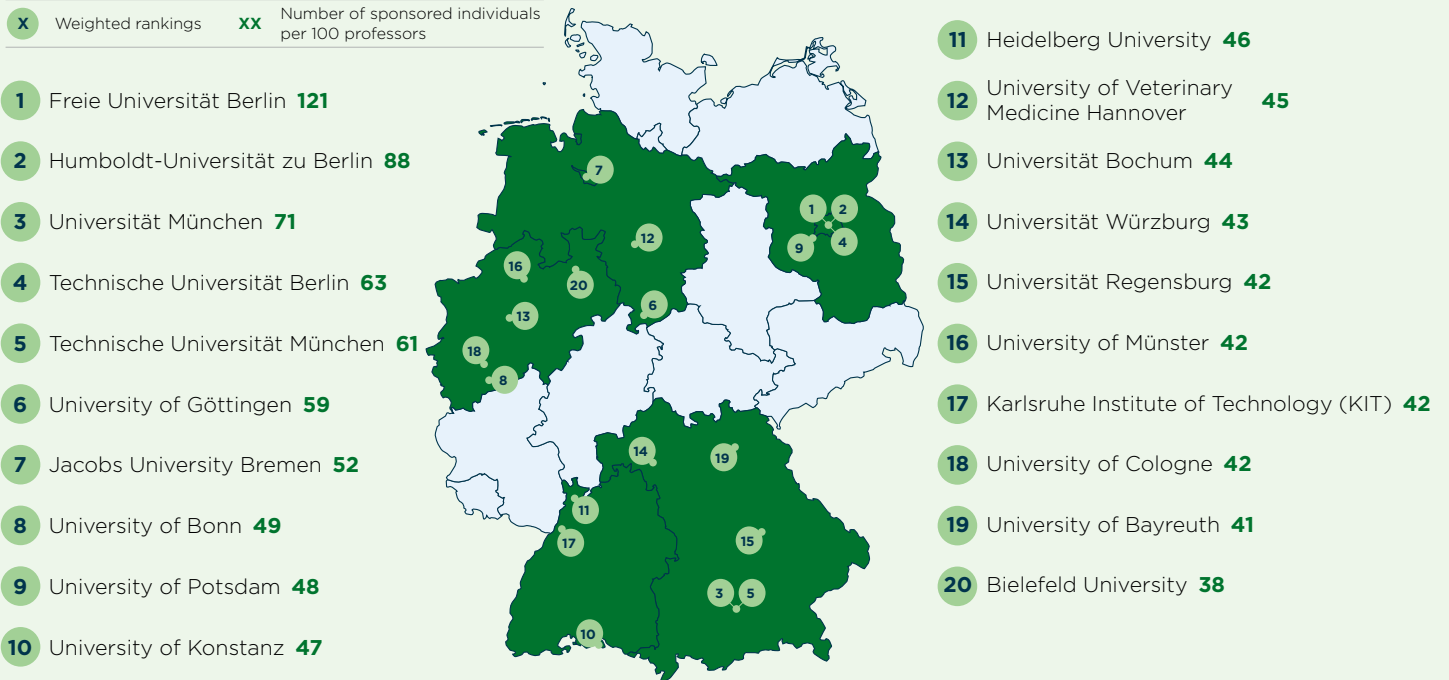
The geneticist and molecular biologist Emmanuelle Charpentier is the second woman in the Humboldt Network to be awarded a Nobel Prize. This brings the total number of Nobel Laureates amongst Humboldtians to 56. Together with Jennifer Doudna, Charpentier received the 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. Both researchers were honoured for developing the CRISPR/Cas9 genetic scissors, a method of altering DNA.

Emmanuelle Charpentier is the director of the Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens in Berlin. She received an Alexander von Humboldt Professorship in 2014 and has conducted research in Germany ever since. She was a Humboldt Professor at Hannover Medical School and the Braunschweig-based Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research until 2015, when she relocated to Berlin, initially as the director of the Department of Regulation in Infection Biology at the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology. ●



Where are the top 20 host universities from the 2020 Humboldt Rankings located?

Distribution of the leading 20 host universities in Germany by weighted rankings (sponsored individuals per 100 professors)



SCOUTING PROGRAMME

An eye for sought-after talents

The Humboldt Foundation's new Henriette Herz Scouting Programme makes it possible to recruit research talents directly. Researchers in Germany can apply to become so-called Humboldt Scouts. When selected, they can then recommend up to three international partners with whom they would like to cooperate for a Humboldt Fellowship directly.

The aim is to increase diversity within the Humboldt Research Fellowship Programme, both in terms of subject and region. In order to augment the share of women, a female researcher should be recommended for the first fellowship. Otherwise, the same quality criteria apply as for standard Humboldt Research Fellowships. When sponsorship comes to an end, an ex-post evaluation will be conducted.

In 2020, moreover, one-time awards were granted: the Henriette Herz Awards for innovative recruitment concepts. Eight universities were recognised for their concepts for recruiting international talents for their institutions and for Germany as a location for research. They will each receive 125,000 euros to implement their ideas.

The Henriette Herz Scouting Programme and Award are financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. ●

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/apply/sponsorship-programmes/henriette-herz-scouting-programme

HUMBOLDT RANKINGS

These German unis are popular among researchers from abroad

The universities in the big cities of Berlin and Munich are in great demand amongst foreign researchers. But even universities in smaller cities like Göttingen, Bremen and Bonn are popular. These are some of the findings of the 2020 Humboldt Rankings, that shows how many researchers have come to Germany in the last five years on the strength of sponsorship from the Foundation and where they most frequently conducted their research.

“The Humboldt Rankings reveal how attractive Germany is as a research location,” says Hans-Christian Pape, President of the Foundation. “In addition to the big city universities, many smaller institutions are internationally visible and attractive, whereby the Rankings also reflect the subject-specific profiles of the various locations. This dispersed excellence is a real strength of German science.” ●

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/explore/figures-and-statistics/humboldt-rankings



NO NEED OF WORDS TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Who actually does what at Humboldt headquarters? Who are the people behind the scenes making sure that everything runs smoothly? This page is devoted to the colleagues at the Humboldt Foundation, their lives at work and beyond.

TODAY: FRANK ALBRECHT.

I work on the Philipp Schwartz Initiative that offers at-risk researchers a safe haven at German universities. I manage the programme and, together with my colleagues, think about how we can improve things for the people we support. After all, the fellows are in a very special situation. They come from countries like Cameroon, Yemen, Turkey and Syria, and for some of them this is their very first contact with a completely foreign academic system. And the German system is highly complex and competitive – an enormous challenge if you have just gone through the pain and trauma of fleeing your country.

I damn well love my work, not least because I can see what an enormous bonus these researchers are for German science and its diversity. They bring along their expertise and networks from regions people here often know very little about. This also means that they make a big impact on their host universities: usually for the very

first time, students in their classes are confronted with people who have lived in authoritarian systems and lost many of the freedoms we take for granted.

Variety and diversity are core issues in my eyes. I am grateful that I can work in a non-discriminatory environment. As part of our Diversity Task Force I was also able to help the Foundation continue along this path and sign the Diversity Charter, for instance.

Music is the way I relax. I have played the violin since I was a child. In Cologne, where I live, I play in various orchestras. But my real passion is chamber music: a string quartet grows together; you have no need of words to understand each other. It's not just a case of technical ability, you bring along your temperament, your experiences, your moods. This disparateness generates something new, a common expression – for me, this is also a symbol of the value of diversity. ●

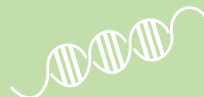
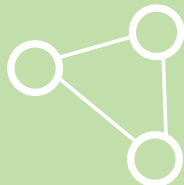
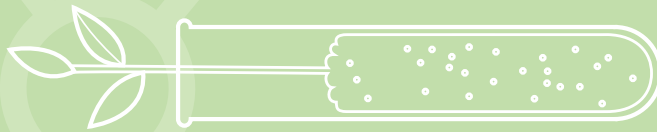
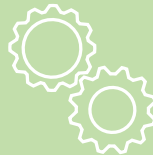
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THE ENGLISH
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UM DIE DEUTSCHE FASSUNG ZU LESEN.

PROMOTE THE HUMBOLDTIANS OF THE FUTURE



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Donors in the USA may also support the work of our partner organisation, American Friends of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and strengthen the bond between American Humboldtians and Germany with a tax-deductible donation:

www.americanfriendsofavh.org/make-your-gift-now



Visit www.humboldt-foundation.de/en/explore/organisation/donations for additional information