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Report on the “Induction Week of the 4th Doctoral Cycle” (in cooperation with the IPP and the GCSC) of the PhDnet “Literary and Cultural Studies”

International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)

Giessen, 16 – 19 January 2017

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Welcome and Presentations of PhDnet Partner Institutions

As of January 2017, the 4th cycle of the PhDnet has officially started, with the Induction Week as the opening event. During these four days at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), the members of the current cycle had the opportunity to get acquainted with each other and gain an insight into how the collaboration will look like for the next two years.

ANSGAR NÜNNING (GCSC, Giessen) started his warm welcome with a music clip, opening the Induction Week on a high and melodic note. Following this introduction, the representatives from Giessen (MICHAEL BASSELER), Helsinki (HETA PYRHÖNEN and PIRJO LYTIKÄINEN), Graz (ALEXANDRA STROHMAIER), Stockholm (ELISABETH WÅGHÄLL NIVRE), Lisbon (PETER HANENBERG) and Bergamo (ANGELA LOCATELLI and RAUL CALZONI) presented their respective institutions. Afterwards, there were many opportunities to talk to our fellow doctoral students, learn about their projects and ask them what life is like in all these very different cities they were coming from.

Transnational Perspectives on the Study of Literature and Culture – Keynote by Ansgar Nünning

The difference between ‚Cultural Studies‘ and ‚Kulturwissenschaften‘ is more than a simple shift in language. In his keynote lecture, ANSGAR NÜNNING (GCSC, Giessen) gave us a very comprehensive introduction to different academic traditions and styles. The knowledge of these varying backgrounds

and their effects is essential in pursuing the transnational and interdisciplinary research of culture. He directed our attention to the fact that concepts and theories do not exist in a vacuum: We ought to take into account what boundaries and borders are crossed by concepts when we use them, be it across disciplines, nations, time or between academia and society. This approach is highly relevant for a diverse network such as ours. Before turning to an open discussion with the audience, Ansgar Nünning accentuated the necessity for universities and cultural studies in particular to become more political in order to be able to articulate the importance of their research to the public.

Doctoral Students' Presentations

During three separate sessions, the doctoral students presented their PhD projects by outlining main questions and objectives, and providing an overview of their theoretical and methodological frameworks. From historical, political and scientific implications of narratives and keywords such as space and chance to practical cultural management, the projects cover a wide range of interests within cultural studies, while at the same time maintaining a common basis for exchange. After each presentation, all professors and students had the opportunity to give feedback and share their ideas about the project presented, leading to fruitful and stimulating suggestions. These discussions were continued during the breaks and often went on for the whole duration of our stay in Giessen. Faced with the multitude of different perspectives and insights, the benefits of presenting the projects to an international consortium became apparent. We returned home with hastily scribbled notes, many new ideas and the urge to turn on the computer and put them all into practice.

Applications of Translation – Master Class by Doris Bachmann-Medick

It was a great privilege for us to have DORIS BACHMANN-MEDICK (GCSC, Giessen) hold a master class on the translational turn. After a discussion about cultural turns in general and the question about how concepts can initiate new ‚turns‘ (through their interdisciplinary applicability), Doris Bachmann-Medick gave us an introduction on the translational turn. She offered three different areas of application of the translational turn in cultural studies: Translation as representation, translation as cultural practice and translation between theories and disciplines. In all of these instances, translation as an analytical tool reveals aspects of conflict in interactions that were not visible before. Culture and cultural techniques as processes of translation was for many of our projects a very inspiring and useful methodological concept. Especially the concept of a translation without original and the idea of negotiation between cultural contexts were discussed based on examples of several PhD projects. The realisation that no act of translation leaves either of the partners or actors intact is also highly pertinent to cultural exchanges and serves as a measure to counteract universalising trends.

Guiding Through Early Stages of a Dissertation Project

There are questions every doctoral student inevitably sooner or later has to struggle with: How am I going to deal with the new task of writing an academic work of such a length as a dissertation? How am I going to reconcile private life with writing a doctoral thesis? And most importantly: How do I get started? All those questions were discussed by KATHARINA STORNIG (GCSC, Giessen) in her master class „Getting started“. Of course every doctoral student has to solve these questions on their own, but Katharina Stornig’s master class gave us helpful tools to face these challenges. Since the PhD candidates are at different points of their doctorate, it was enlightening to hear from our colleagues about what pitfalls and difficulties they face in their day-to-day work. Their reports were complemented by tips and practical solutions by Katharina Stornig. The session provided us, also, with the certainty that we are neither the first nor the last ones who struggle with this situation. These problems are part of the process and we are going to find our way!

Meet & Greet with PhDnet Alumnae Kerstin Lundström and Anna Weigel

Probably for all of us, it was very helpful to meet KERSTIN LUNDSTRÖM and ANNA WEIGEL, alumnae, who went through the whole circle of the PhDnet. How does it feel to present your very own project and get feedback from an audience that is not familiar with diverse disciplinary backgrounds? How can we apply ourselves to make the most of the opportunities offered to us? And what is the PhDnet going to be all about? Both of the speakers offered a glimpse of their experiences during past cycles of the programme, showing us how we can benefit from the regular symposia but, also, what we have to invest to successfully participate in our meetings. The conclusion Kerstin Lundström and Anna Weigel drew can succinctly be summarized: „It is hard work but there are lots of inspiring impressions and good contacts to be gained“.

Roundtable with Research Team Postdocs: The Thesis and Beyond – Mentoring, Publications & Conferences

What is the best way to get an article published? What should I know about different conference formats and which one suits my purposes best? Should I become a member of a field-related association? And what can I do if my supervisor is too busy to meet me regularly? All these and many more important questions about mentoring, publications, and conferences were addressed at the roundtable with the GCSC postdoc researchers ALESYA KRIT, PAUL VICKERS and TOM CLUCAS, who kindly shared their experience of academia with us. They pointed out common difficulties and nuances in navigating through one’s early academic career by referring to various practical examples. In addition to the postdoc researchers’ informative talks, there was ample time to discuss these practical issues with them and thus benefit from their know-how.

Organisational Matters and Guided Tour through JLU and Giessen's Downtown

We are grateful to the PhDnet coordinator NORA BERNING and her assistant IMKE POLLAND who made us all feel comfortable during our stay in Giessen and who made the programme run smoothly for the duration of the Induction Week. They not only provided us with necessary information about the Cotutelle programme, but also showed us around the Giessen campus and city centre and helped us out with every question we had, no matter how small or big, relating to the PhDnet and beyond.

Programme

Presentation of PhDnet Partner Institutions I

- Michael Basseler: International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture
- Heta Pyrhönen/Pirjo Lyytikäinen: Doctoral Programme in Philosophy, Arts, and Society
- Alexandra Strohmaier: Doctoral Studies Programme at the University of Graz

Presentation of PhDnet Partner Institutions II

- Elisabeth Wåghäll Nivre: Doctoral Studies Programme at the University of Stockholm
- Peter Hanenberg: The Lisbon Consortium at the Catholic University of Lisbon
- Angela Locatelli/Raul Calzoni: Doctoral Studies Programme at the University of Bergamo

Nora Berning: Information on Cotutelle and bi-national degrees

Ansgar Nünning: Trans/national Approaches to the Study of Literature and Culture: National Traditions, Intellectual Styles and Transnational Perspectives (Keynote)

Doctoral Students' Presentations I

- Alena Heinritz (Graz): Literary Representations of Communism in Early 21st Century Novels
- Susanne Christ (Giessen): Forms and Functions of the Representation of Dementia in Anglophone Literature
- Vera Jerosch Herold da Costa Reis (Lisbon): The Lissaboner Deutsche – Memories from the 1930s and 1940s

Doctoral Students' Presentations II

- Mareike Zapp (Giessen): Transcultural Influences in the Narrative Format of Life Writing: Elisabeth Elliot
- Sarianna Kankkunen (Helsinki): Harassing Habitats – Experienced Space in Maarit Verronen’s Prose Fiction
- Dimitri Smirnov (Graz): Auditory Violence. A Phenomenology of Power in Postcolonial Prose Fiction
- Fredrik Renard (Stockholm): Chance and the Modern German Novel

Master Class on the Topic of Translation (Doris Bachmann-Medick, Permanent Senior Research Fellow GCSC)

Business Meeting (professors only)

Doctoral Students’ Presentations III

- Daria Steiner (Giessen): Representations of Cultural History in Contemporary Historical Fiction: A Case Study of Forms and Functions of Intertextuality in Joseph O’Connor’s Irish-American Trilogy
- Agata Wiórko (Lisbon): Transcultural Narrativity for Local Resilience: A Strategy for Urban-Based Connectivity
- Iida Turpeinen (Helsinki): Contemporary Manifestations of Science in Anglo-American Experimental Literature

Master Class „Getting started: Developing a Research Question and Conducting a Dissertation Project“ (Katharina Stornig, Junior Professor GCSC)

Nora Berning: Guided Tour through JLU and Giessen Downtown

Meet & Greet with PhDnet Alumnae Kerstin Lundström and Anna Weigel

Roundtable with Research Team Postdocs: The Thesis and Beyond – Mentoring, Publications & Conferences

Nora Berning: Organisational Matters and Concluding Remarks

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