

# Welcome.

Dear members, partners, and friends of the Berlin Graduate School of Social Sciences,



I am pleased to introduce this newsletter “N°1,” which allows us to present an in-depth look into the activities of the young researchers and senior faculty and to share our projects, events, results, successes, and challenges.

The last academic year was marked by the preparation of the follow-up funding proposal for the Excellence Initiative (Period 2012-2017), which we submitted September 1<sup>st</sup>. We will present our proposal in January 2012 at the DFG head office in Bonn. In this proposal we have taken further steps in fostering a vibrant research environment by establishing a university-based Humboldt Center for Social

and Political Research (HCSP), focusing primarily on post-doctoral research. In addition to the two existing research agendas, ‘varieties of democracy’ and ‘varieties of inclusion’, we have added a third research pillar on ‘varieties of knowledge’. Moreover, we have designed gateways into and out of the doctoral education, while also profiling professional perspectives outside academia.

The BGSS, which started as a small reform project, has developed into a successful platform for the promotion of young researchers in the social sciences at Humboldt University of Berlin. This continuity and the funding through the German Excellence Initiative during the last four years has helped us to develop a rigorous research-oriented training curriculum marked by phase-specific milestones, high quality supervision, and a diverse and ever-growing faculty of senior researchers. Each year we have enrolled a new generation of bright doctoral researchers from Ger-

many and around the world. This year we welcome 11 new doctoral researchers, bringing the current number of doctoral researchers and associates working within the BGSS to 80. Thanks to the intense cooperation with our non-university partner institutions, we succeeded in developing a research network of doctoral researchers beyond our university. The most recent new cooperation was the Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences organized by doctoral researchers from BGSS and the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). Many doctoral researchers contributing to this newsletter, like Natalia Besedovsky and Sergiu Buscaneanu, spend some time at a university abroad, benefitting from international partnerships. The BGSS also welcomes international guest doctoral researchers, such as Hillary Angelo who is spending one year in Berlin working on a project with Einstein Visiting Fellow Craig Calhoun (NYU). Next spring BGSS will host the European Graduate Network Conference, a doctoral network of seven European Universities, including the EUI, LSE, CEU, SUM, Sciences Po, Pompeu Fabra).

I wish all the BGSS doctoral researchers – new and returning—as well as our faculty and partners all the best for the new academic year.

Kind regards,



Prof. Klaus Eder  
BGSS Director

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# Doctoral Experiences

## In the eye of the storm – my research stay in New York City

by Natalia Besedovsky  
BGSS Doctoral Researcher



Social scientists sometimes get mocked for allegedly choosing their dissertation topic only on the basis of the research site that they would like to visit. Even if I can assure you that this is not true in my case, I have to admit that New York City is not the worst place to be. I am studying the changing role of rating agencies, companies that rate other companies and states. These agencies have played a major role in the global financial crisis, e.g., by downgrading Greece and Portugal. The three most powerful rating agencies, Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch, are all based in NYC's financial district. Being in NYC was like being in the eye of the (financial) storm.

Thanks to generous financial and organizational support from the Einstein Foundation Berlin, current Einstein Fellow and NYU Professor Craig Calhoun, as well as the BGSS, I was able to spend three months at NYU's Institute for Public Knowledge (IPK). The IPK is a remarkable institution, aimed at supporting communication between social scientists and broader publics and linking university research with practical purposes.

In the IPK's working group on "Cultures of Finance," I had the opportunity to talk to leading researchers and young scholars working on financial topics from a social science perspective. Through talks with the group members, conversations that lasted un-

til the middle of the night, as well as practical help on how, for example, to approach American finance professionals, I was able to develop and improve my dissertation in a way that would have been hard to achieve on my own. I reformulated my research topic and question and gave it the edge it needs to be interesting and innovative. I also profited from the broader research environment and met with professors from the Economics Department and Stern Business School to get economists' perspectives on my research. After a few struggles, I managed to get invaluable interviews with rating analysts and other experts in the area of credit ratings, which now serve as a basis for my dissertation.

The cultural shock for a European in the U.S. can be severe, and New Yorkers certainly live by their own rules. I was therefore quite happy to be welcomed so warmly at the IPK.



My colleagues and the staff were very helpful and patiently answered even the silliest question about everyday life (thanks, Jessica!). I also had plenty of opportunities to train my social skills at the many cultural events at the IPK as well as at several official and unofficial parties. I was even able to persuade some people at the institute to pursue the apparently very "European" tradition of having lunch together. I am sure a research stay abroad is always enriching. For me, going to NYC as a visiting scholar was one of the best things I could do, both personally and of course for my research.

# Doctoral Experiences



## The Quest for Knowled... a bit of Knowledge

by Sergiu Buscaneanu  
BGSS Doctoral Researcher

In the seventeenth century it was still manageable for an educated person to have a broad understanding of most scientific knowledge. Since then, it became impossible even for the most gifted individuals to keep up with the pace of knowledge expansion. The *primus inter pares* discipline started to lose its privileged status in the face of rapidly evolving new areas of inquiry and a process similar to that of the division of labour became rooted in the subsequent quest for knowledge. The specialization of scientific introspection was one consequence of this division of labour and, as we have seen, it was destined to become a long-lasting one.

Nowadays it comes to no surprise that scientists dedicate all their energy (and life) to the study of extremely narrow fields, as they might appear from the height of inherited Pantheon of knowledge. Yet, the monopoly of knowledge which stayed for a long time with particular communities vanished in the face of knowledge diffusion and as a result many became masters of knowledge far away from their subjects of study.



Benefiting myself from this diffusion of knowledge, I went in March-May 2011 on a research visit to the University of Toronto in the quest for knowled... a bit of knowledge on the impact of the external environment on the regime patterns in Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus. As an additional proof of knowledge diffusion, I received the invitation following a

public lecture on political regimes and their relations to the external world, given by University of Toronto professor Lucan Way in Berlin.. My goals for the visit were simple: dis- or proving that my project builds on an appropriate ontological foundation; getting feedback on whether the methodological tools I use fit the data at hand; setting the basis for a further collaboration with my host “master of knowledge;” and producing the draft of the first “coherent” chapter required at the end of the second doctoral year at BGSS. .

Getting feedback on the conceptual dimension of the project was important in order to double-check whether it rests on the right analytical framework, articulates appropriate hypotheses, singles out reasonable variables, and derives a testable model. Exchanges on these dimensions were also necessary to get to know if the used concepts are clear and that, in the end, I speak the same scientific language my host does. Advice I received relates to an aspect I had not thoroughly considered: the marketization of science. In the face of two more or less similar concepts, one should opt for the one whose meaning is “out there,” the scientific language we speak should largely be understood by our grandmothers, and one should carefully think of how “to sell” and market the goods we are producing and why should one “buy” them.

That data and methods should fit was well-known. My supervisors at the BGSS, Silvia von Steinsdorff and Bernhard Weßels, have contributed a lot in this regard. I was however reminded once more that a too big of a methodological “hammer” (statistics) is not ultimately necessary for fixing only five “nails” (cases). Luckily, one could justify (almost) everything under the name of triangulation! 🇪🇺

As a gift for not overstaying my welcome in Toronto, Prof. Way accepted to continue his supervision, this time at a distance. I still keep my fingers crossed for finding the right “hammer” for the first (in)coherent chapter.

🙏 Dear supervisors, your comments are welcome!

*NB: I would not be able to write this if not the help of BGSS, DAAD, Lucan Way, and my supervisors in Berlin. Thanks! Your help was (is) much appreciated!*

# Events and Projects



## Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences - Linking Theory and Empirical Research

by Johannes Gerschewski  
BGSS Doctoral Researcher

The first Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences – Linking Theory and Empirical Research which took place from July 17<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was a joint project by PhD candidates at BGSS and the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). It aimed at promoting young researchers by strengthening their methodological understanding in linking theory and empirical research. The summer school consisted of a two-week program with a varied format of lectures, seminars, question and answer sessions, as well as a panel discussion and a poster session.

issues that arise in all research efforts. While in her keynote speech Michèle Lamont (Harvard University) addressed what is defined as a theoretical innovation in social sciences, Klaus Eder (HU Berlin) focused on the question of how to bridge with the divide between micro- and macro perspectives. John Gerring (Boston University) concentrated on the different types of causal relationships and Gary Goertz (University of Arizona) shared his insights into concept-building efforts. Finally, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, offered a summary of the three key methodological challenges of the summer school.



In the first week, we focused on key methodological challenges of causation, micro-macro-linkage, and concept-building. These are

During the second week, all participants took part in one of the four following thematic groups: “Democracy and Democratiza-

tion,” “Civil Society,” “Social Inequality,” and “Politics, Economy, and Society in a Globalizing World.” Within those thematic groups, participants discussed exemplary readings that dealt with the methodological challenges in their research fields and had the chance to present their own work.

The summer school attracted a pool of over 670 applicants, from which 40 young international and Berlin-based researchers were selected. Participants came from 15 different countries. In total, 19 professors were involved in the first Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences.



The Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences was generously funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, the BGSS, and the WZB.

Due to the success of the first summer school, a second Berlin Summer School in Social Sciences is in the works. The call for applications will be sent out at the beginning of next year.

Further information on the Berlin Summer School of Social Sciences can be found at: [www.berlinsummerschool.de](http://www.berlinsummerschool.de)

# Events and Projects



Source: The Social Science Research Council

## The Einstein Research Project

The Einstein Research Project will meet regularly this academic year with a small team of graduate students focusing on the themes of „Good Strangers“ and „Infrastructure.“

by Craig Calhoun  
BGSS Einstein Visiting Fellow

### The Infrastructures of Social Organization

All social life depends on infrastructures – starting with language. “Infrastructures” here means simply the “structures” on which other dimensions of social organization and interaction rest. Once created, infrastructures are one source of the relative stability and autonomy of the social, constraining individual action at the same time that they enable it. But of course infrastructures deteriorate, change, and are sometimes rendered obsolete by innovations.

Many of the most basic infrastructures are systems based on material technologies. Familiar examples include transportation, communications, power and energy, and waste. Modern cities, states and “globalization” are inconceivable without such infrastructures. They are basic to material production and circulation of goods, to managing relations with

“nature”, and to the interaction of different geographical settings. None of these infrastructures is simply and entirely material, however; all involve socio-technical systems. They depend in varying degrees on culturally mediated human understanding and on socially organized human effort to create and maintain them.

In addition, there are a variety of less material or technological infrastructures. I’ve already mentioned language, and indeed the infrastructure here goes beyond grammar, syntax, and semantics to dictionaries, spell-checkers, and authoritative institutions for determining when a word is “French enough” to be legitimate. We might also think of the monetary and financial systems. These depend to some degree on technology, but also on elaborate cultural understandings, legal conventions, and algorithms enabling semi-automated trading. Infrastructures of knowledge span

books to libraries to Wikipedia; scientific laboratories to professional associations to universities.

This project seeks first to trace the role of infrastructures in the social organization of the modern era and in contemporary social change. One aim is simply to put the idea and material influence of infrastructures more clearly at the center of social science attention. Clearly, many infrastructures are noticed by social scientists, though not always conceptualized as such. Indeed, infrastructures are relatively easy to ignore when they are stable – and their importance is obscured when technologies are made glamorous by studying them only as technological innovation and not as infrastructures-in-the-making. Complementing the overall account of infrastructures, the empirical focus of this project is on the infrastructures that sustain and help constitute urban life. This means not just cities

# Events and Projects

as distinct formal units, but the relationship among population centers and countryside, and both spatially compact and long-distance connections. Urban infrastructures include the “built environment” but also transformed “nature”. From streets to parks to grand plazas and buildings they offer spaces that enable or constrain social interaction.

## Good Strangers

Relations among strangers are crucial to many dimensions of contemporary life. They shape the ways ethnic differences are (or aren't) bridged in multicultural cities, the social nature of international humanitarian interventions or business collaborations, and the interaction of face-to-face and mediated sociability in the public sphere. They are fundamental to all successful social organization on scales larger than local communities and personal networks.

Yet to a large extent, sociology has based thinking about social relationships overwhelmingly on close personal relationships: friendship, family, community. Relationships with strangers are approached as attenuated versions of personal relations.

This project attempts to rethink relational sociology with more attention to the implications of relations among strangers. This links questions about the dynamics of interaction to larger scale questions about structural relations, reliance on cultural categories, and demands for different sorts of information, whether in markets, or politics, or even religion. The project thus seeks to integrate a more or less “micro” understanding of the practical accomplishment of such relations with a more “macro” understanding of the contexts larger structures involved.

This means asking empirical questions about how relations among strangers are accomplished and organized. The project starts by examining practical norms for “good” stranger interactions – in action, not in abstract deliberations - from what is appropriate to do in a park or discuss in a coffee shop to whether it is legitimate to shoot those stopped at a roadblock in Israel's occupied territories or Afghanistan. Second, it addresses the work of formal organizations in mediating between groups (e.g., organizations advocating for Turks in Berlin or Catholic churches providing services to Latin American immigrants). Third, it seeks to understand and evaluate efforts to change the deep-rooted production of normative understandings and embodied practices (their habituses) whether in the context of migration, or education, or the training of soldiers or humanitarian workers for international deployment. And finally it asks how people interrelate their use of various media with their face-to-face interpersonal relationships, and how this relates to developing or changing ideas of one's own group or others.

# BGSS

## New Members

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### Generation 2011

**Abou-Chadi, Tarik**

Political determinants of institutional change in democracies - the role of political competition and electoral pressure

**Choi, Kyu Youn**

Social integration of renewable energies in the case of Chinese Renewable Energy Law

**Douglas, Nadja**

The Role of Federalism in Multi-Ethnic Societies? Perception and Regulation of Conflict in Russian Centre-Region Relations

**Keller, Eileen**

Institutional evolution of the regulatory regime in the financial sector in the aftermath of the 2007-2010 crisis in Germany, the United States and France

**Legewie, Nicolas**

Educational Attainment of Second-Generation Students: Narratives and Networks

**Lohmann, Natalie**

The role of social capital for the labour market success of immigrants in Germany

**Merz, Nicolas**

Comparing Media and Party Agendas in European Democracies

**Nast, Julia**

Mixed Schools, Bridging Networks? Social Mix, Social Capital, and Varieties of Inclusion in Urban Schools in London and Berlin

**Orlova, Anna**

The role of the public in shaping data privacy in Germany.  
Online data privacy

**Seibel, Verena**

Social Capital, Immigrant Labor Market Integration, and Public Policy

**Ullrich, Jan**

Organized Interests All The Way? - European consumer protection policy between path dependence and gradual change

### Guest Doctoral Researchers

**Kivanc Atak**

European University Institute (EUI),  
Protest Mobilization and Policing Dissent in Turkey: Does Europeanization Matter?  
October – December 2011

**Hillary Angelo**

New York University  
Making Nature  
July 2011 – September 2012

**Merethe Dotterud Leiren**

University of Agder, Norway  
Post, Public Transport and Ports - Differential Integration of Public Services  
October 2011 – March 2012

### Recently Associated

**Jörn Ege**

Member of Research Staff ISW  
Chair Michael Bauer  
Ursachen und Folgen von Verwaltungsautonomie in internationalen Organisationen

**Meike Olbrecht**

Institute for Research Information and Quality Assurance (iFQ)  
Wie finden Gutachtergruppen zu einem Urteil? Bewertung wissenschaftlicher Qualität durch Panel-Peer Review am Beispiel des Förderprogramms Sonderforschungsbereiche der DFG

# Department of Social Sciences

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## New Post-docs

### **Jan Zutavern**

Just Liberalization? Ideas, Justification and Rhetorical Choice in 30 Years of German Employment Policy Making

### **Till Weber**

The Structuring Effect of Electoral Competition

### **Bernhard Forchtner**

Rhetorics of Judge-Penitence. How Moral Superiority is Publicly Constructed through Admissions of Past Wrongdoing

### **Irit Dekel**

Home-museums: narrating the domestic in German and Israeli public spheres

## New Professors

### **Prof. Dr. Anette Eva Fasang**

Junior Professor for Demography



## Events

October 19	<b>Welcome Lecture</b> Prof. Dr. Karl Ulrich Mayer, President of the Leibniz Association Topic: Recent Trends in the German Research System and the Role of Doctoral Training <b>6 pm, Luisenstr. 56, Haus 1, Festsaal</b>
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## Brown Bag Lectures

Wednesdays, 12-14 pm, Room 003, Uni 3b

November 16	<b>Andreas Schedler</b> Karl W. Deutsch Professorship at the WZB/CIDE Mexico Concept Formation in Political Science
January 18	<b>Martin Riesebrodt</b> The University of Chicago Theorizing Religion
February 15	<b>Hanspeter Kriesi</b> Universität Zürich, The Political Consequences of the Financial and Economic Crisis in Europe: Electoral Punishment and Popular Protest

## Workshops

October 25	<b>Zsófia Ignacz</b> Justice Profiles on the Macro Level: a comparison of justice attitudes between East and West
November 1	<b>Kivanc Atak</b> Protest Mobilization and Policing Dissent in Turkey: Does Europeanization Matter?
November 8	<b>Timo Lochocki</b> How to keep the Radical Right out of Parliament - a comparative study of the handling of matters of asylum and immigration by moderate parties
November 22	<b>Merethe Leiren</b> tba
November 29	<b>Hillary Angelo</b> tba
December 6	<b>Anita Gohdes</b> tba
December 13	<b>Hannes Neiss</b> tba