The resurgence of populism
Moderators: Nicola Holzapfel and Martin Thurau

Populist parties have become a force to be reckoned with in many countries around the world. What explains this sudden, widespread re-emergence of political protest? Three LMU specialists explore the driving forces behind this development. For the complete article, see [www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2017/02_01.pdf](http://www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2017/02_01.pdf)

Fake news? According to his spokesman Sean Spicer, US President Donald Trump’s inauguration ceremony drew an unprecedentedly large crowd. Spicer presented no evidence for this claim, perhaps because pictures like this suggest otherwise.

It’s not just words
When communicating in international groups, it can be hard to discern whether consensus has been reached or ‘covfefe’. To prepare students for work in cross-cultural environments, LMU now offers a certificate course in Intercultural Communications. (by Kerstin Maierhöfer) [continued on page 2](#)

From East Bay to the River Isar
Ten years ago, as part of the Excellence Initiative, LMU and UC Berkeley signed an academic exchange agreement. The workshop on “Intercultural Orders” held in Munich in June is but one strand in a web of interactions that has grown up since 2007. (by Kerstin Maierhöfer) [continued on page 3](#)

Sacra Conversazione: Identity, Heritage, Globalization
An exhibition organized by LMU at Venice International University in April is intended to initiate a regular dialog on art between Munich and Venice, and draw the worlds of art and academia together, said LMU President Bernd Huber. (by David Lohmann) [continued on page 4](#)

“I’ve got a crisis to resolve”
It was a real coup. In 2013, LMU graduate Angela Kane played a pivotal role in persuading the Assad regime to allow a UN investigation of the use of poison gas in Syria, and then to destroy its entire arsenal of chemical weapons. – But her greatest success came elsewhere, she says. (by David Lohmann) [continued on page 6](#)

“The ivory tower is long gone”
Thomas Höllmann’s first love was art, but decided to study Chinese. It was certainly a good choice, for he is now one of the best-known sinologists of his generation – and the newly elected President of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences. (by Clemens Grosse) [continued on page 7](#)
It’s not just words
by Kerstin Maierhöfer

When communicating in international groups, it can be hard to discern whether consensus has been reached or ‘covfefe’. To prepare students for work in cross-cultural environments, LMU now offers a certificate course in Intercultural Communications.

Everyone has heard of the real (and the apocryphal) pitfalls of intercultural communication. In some Asian cultures, it is customary to refuse food offered to one at least three times (before accepting it). In India, a shake of the head signals assent. The repertoire of gestures used by Italians is impenetrable for outsiders. But how much does one need to know about another culture in order to really understand it? And where can one learn how to behave appropriately in situations that require particular sensitivity, whether in a multinational research or business team, or in a refugee shelter?

When Truc Phan enrolled in the Certificate Program in Intercultural Communications (in parallel with her Master’s degree in Business Administration), she hoped to find the answers to such questions. “I took the course in preparation for a planned semester abroad, and I hope to work for a multinational company later on,” she explains. “Where people from different countries work together, they bring their own conventions, habits and modes of thought with them, and – most importantly – their own perspectives on the problems they are expected to solve. These differences can lead to conflict, so the more one knows about them, the easier it is to avoid misunderstandings”, she says. Her fellow-student Christina Bacher is doing a Master’s in German as a Foreign Language and ad-duces similar grounds for taking the new course: “I want to be able to deal with people as individuals,” she says. Her future students will doubtless be drawn from different cultures, so she needs to have a good grasp of their behavior, reactions and approaches in order to bring out their full potential.

**International and interdisciplinary**

Truc and Christina are now learning the theoretical side of intercultural communication: What do we mean when we talk about ‘a culture’? What do terms such as ‘identity’, ‘inclusion’ or ‘migration’ actually encompass? How do individuals from different cultural backgrounds react to stressful situations? The new course illuminates issues like these from a variety of perspectives, drawing on insights from psychology, neurosciences, communications science and ethnology, for example.

Dr. Ivett Guntersdorfer, who directs the program at LMU’s Institute for Intercultural Communications, also supervises the accompanying seminar. She places considerable emphasis on role-playing – asking her students to act out various types of conflict situations and come up with ways of defusing them. “When they, as a group, have had the opportunity to tease out and reflect on all the ways in which a person can react to a given situation, the result is often a shared aha-reaction,” she says. According to Christina Bacher, this kind of experience has led her to question her own assumptions. “Many of the things I take for granted are culturally specific – and this realization has opened my eyes to the extent to which one is unconsciously molded by one’s own culture,” she says. Of course, these differences are not defined by international borders alone: “One of my students is now designing an app with which supporters of opposing political views can invite one another to lunch,” Dr. Guntersdorfer delightedly tells me, pointing out that “intercultural communication teaches one that cultures – one’s own and all the others – are themselves never homogeneous.”

**A multipurpose toolkit**

Many of those who take the course – from physicists to psychologists – do so because they wish to participate more fully in civil society. “Intercultural communication skills are much sought after,” says Ivett Guntersdorfer. “As our society becomes more heterogeneous and more international, so the ability to adapt to unfamiliar modes of thinking becomes more important – in both personal and professional life.” That explains why the two-semester program is open to Master’s students in all fields and is designed as a supplemental course. “The program provides students with a toolkit that enables them to comprehend and resolve intercultural misunderstandings,” Guntersdorfer says. “And you can use it anywhere and everywhere.”

.translation: Paul Hardy

http://www.ikk.uni-muenchen.de/englishversion/index.html
“I was thrilled when I got the news that I could participate in this year’s Intercultural Orders workshop”, says Philipp Tvrdinić. The Workshop, which was organized jointly by Berkeley’s Institute of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies and LMU’s Graduate School for Eastern and Southeastern European Studies (where Philipp is a doctoral candidate), brought graduate students and faculty from both institutions together for intensive academic exchanges. Tvrdinić, whose PhD thesis focuses on the Polish author Stanislaw Lem (best known for his multifaceted and visionary science fiction), found the Workshop tremendously helpful. Berkeley’s Professor Harsha Ram suggested novel lines of enquiry to him, and his German and American colleagues encouraged him to explore challenging aspects of Lem’s work: “They pointed me in the direction of interesting related research and drew connections to their own exciting projects.”

Intensive preparation, inspiring atmosphere

In order to obtain maximum benefit from the presentations and discussions, each participating PhD student had submitted an extract of his/her thesis for comment to the attendees from the partner university. “I was keen to present part of a new chapter of my thesis to a group that was for the most part unfamiliar with my work,” says Frances Jackson. Her thesis, entitled Narrativierung(en) der nationalen Gefährdung (Narrating Munich and Beyond), deals with the responses of Czech poets to the Munich Agreement of 1938, more specifically with how they constructed a poetics that emphasized loyalty to the nation. “When you present at subject-specific university colloquia, after a couple of iterations and variations on the theme of your dissertation, it often feels as if the people listening have already ‘heard it all before’, so it’s great to have the opportunity to speak in front of an audience for whom everything is new and really gauge the reaction,” she says.

Elation and erudition

“Our exchange with Berkeley has been enormously valuable for our faculty, lecturers, postgraduates and students,” says Professor Martin Schulze Wessel, Coordinator of the Graduate School for East and Southeastern European Studies. “Everyone who has gone there has come back elated – and smarter,” he says, with obvious delight. “Our postgraduate centers have similar structures, both are emphatically interdisciplinary in approach, and we have collaborated very successfully over the years.”

Furthermore, exchanges between Munich and San Francisco are by no means restricted to East European Studies. Institutes devoted to areas such as American Studies, Archaeology and Philosophy involved in realizing the goals set out in the LMU-UCB Research in the Humanities Program, holding joint conferences, and facilitating collaborative research projects. In addition, LMU has set up Visiting Professorships specifically for faculty from Berkeley, while LMU professors can spend sabbaticals at UCB. Some 20 members of Berkeley’s faculty have so far come to LMU, including such well known scholars as the cultural anthropologist Alexei Yurchak.

“The Program gives us the opportunity to work in close collaboration with leading experts in our field,” says Professor Schulze Wessel. And UC Berkeley has proved to be both an inspiring partner and an ideal host. Hopes for the next phase of this dialog are correspondingly high – on both sides!

Translation: Paul Hardy
Sacra Conversazione:
Identity, Heritage, Globalization

by David Lohmann

At the opening of an exhibition organized by LMU at Venice International University in April, LMU President Bernd Huber said he hoped it would initiate a regular dialog on art between Munich and Venice, and draw the worlds of art and academia together.

On the opening day, Dozent Peter Becker of LMU’s Institute for Art Education loads his airbrush with paint before going into action. Soon goblets of paint are raining on the canvas, and splashes of pigment land on the (covered) floor. Meanwhile, Thomas Pinter from the LMU Press Office – the other half of TEAM BECKER PINTER – has donned a respirator and, armed with an array of aerosol paints, begins to make his contribution to the work in progress. Stencils and metal lattices are applied to the canvas to generate halo-like effects and excess pigment is simply scraped off. When the performance ends, the spectators applaud the creation of a new work of contemporary art, which borrows elements from an older epoch of art history. The piece is a somewhat unconventional sacra conversazione, featuring three madonnas.

The VIU’s international campus stands on the island of San Servolo, which once hosted a monastery. Tutors from 18 universities in Europe, the USA, Canada, Israel, Japan and China give seminars there. LMU was one of the institution’s founders and remains one of its most active members.

Thanks to Markus Sattler, curator of the UniGalerieLMU, visitors to the island had the chance in April (a month before the Biennale opened) to view works by TEAM BECKER PINTER, as well as a selection of photographs on “Identity, Heritage and Globalization” by Stephan M. Schuster, an LMU graduate. The show was intended to inaugurate an ongoing dialog on contemporary art. “The concept behind the UniGalerie at LMU is that it should serve as a nexus between art and the world of academia,” said LMU President Bernd Huber, in his opening remarks.

The idea for the exhibition occurred to Sattler when he saw Giovanni Bellini’s “Madonna and Child” in the church of San Zaccaria near the jetty where the ferry from San Marco departs for San Servolo. Naturally enough, it reminded him of the image of the Madonna and Child that is the centerpiece of the LMU seal. And anyone who knows the island has probably seen the third Madonna – a life-sized statue on the wasteland on its southern side.

In the work of TEAM BECKER PINTER Mickey Mouse and the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo play prominent roles. “The happy-go-lucky Mickey and the tragic figure of Frida can be seen as representing the two camps into which the world is now divided,” said LMU sociologist Professor Stephan Lessenich in his talk. While globalization is often discussed he developed world in terms of the dissolution of borders, for inhabitants of the poorer regions of the world the process has brought more barriers as evidenced by the West’s attempts to shut them out.

Stephan Schuster’s photographs illuminate this theme from a variety of perspectives. In the section on Heritage, the images confront unspoiled nature with the landscapes of agriculture – “where everything we are originates,” as LMU philosopher Professor Christof Rapp put it in his opening talk. The artist uses impressions drawn from the spheres of craftsmanship, industry, religion, art and family life to evoke the many facets of Identity. In Rapp’s view, Schuster’s take on Globalization, which features photos of environmental pollution, traffic chaos and burgeoning cities, suggests that he sees this phenomenon primarily as a threat. “Change is not always for the better, but it can eventually make things better,” Rapp pointed out.

As a stimulus for future dialog, TEAM BECKER PINTER’s Sacra Conversazione remains on the island, though its precise placement has yet to be decided. The VIU students, however, were far more interested in a by-product of the live performance – the artists’ spattered overalls. One student expressed an interest in buying them. But an amused Thomas Pinter had to disappoint her: “Sorry,” he said, “but they’re not for sale.”

Translation: Paul Hardy

www.univiu.org
Religious Studies

The seeds of secularization
By Klaus Uhrig

The process of secularization did not begin with the Reformation. It is already implicit in the beginnings of Christianity, says LMU historian Robert Yelle. For the complete article, see www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2017/02_02.pdf

Domestication genetics

The career of the cosmopolitan cat

With a little help from friends, the cat has conquered the most remote parts of the world. Archaeological evidence suggests that cats had already established a close association with human societies almost 10,000 years ago. Nevertheless, relatively little is known about the history of their domestication. Genetic analyses carried out by an international team of researchers with participation of LMUs Professor Joris Peters now show that lineages which originated in Egypt and the Near East were ancestral to our modern domestic cats. Genetic analyses of modern housecats have already shown that all were derived from the African wildcat, Felis silvestris lybica. "In order to shed further light on the cat’s domestication history, we have now performed a comparative analysis of ancient cat DNA from samples from Europe, Africa and Southwestern Asia,” says Peters. The oldest sample dates from about 9000 years ago, the youngest from the 19th century. The analyses revealed that a lineage that originated in the Middle East had arrived in Europe by about 4400 BCE. The dispersal of the domesticated Egyptian lineage onto the European continent, on the other hand, likely occurred in Antiquity and proceeded along the Mediterranean maritime trade routes pioneered by the Greeks and the Romans. On arrival in Europe, the immigrants intermixed with the local subspecies of wildcat, giving rise to a variety of hybrid lineages. However, the new study shows that a mutation which results in a coat-color pattern known as tabby blotched was actively selected only in the Middle Ages. Based on this finding, the authors suggest that the initial domestication process may have focused on selection for behavioral traits rather than on coat color or marking patterns.

Nanophysics

Saving energy with a spot of silver

Tomorrow’s computers will run on light, and gold nanoparticle chains show much promise as light conductors. Now Tim Liedl, Professor of Physics at LMU and PI at the Nanosystems Initiative Munich, together with colleagues from Ohio University, have demonstrated how tiny spots of silver could markedly reduce energy consumption in light-based computation. The physicists built a sort of miniature test track with a length of around 100 nanometers, composed of one gold nanoparticle at each end, with a silver nanoparticle right in the middle. The silver serves as a kind of intermediary between the gold particles while not dissipating energy. To make the silver particle’s plasmon oscillate, more excitation energy would be required than for gold. Therefore, the energy just flows “around” the silver particle. "Transport is mediated via the coupling of the electromagnetic fields around the so-called hot spots which are created between each of the two gold particles and the silver particle. This allows the energy to be transported with almost no loss, and on a femtosecond time scale,” explains Tim Liedl, who is an expert in the exquisitely exact placement of nanostructures. This is done by the DNA origami method, which allows different crystalline nanoparticles to be placed at precisely defined nanodistances from each other. The physicists simulated the experimental set-up on the computer – and had their results confirmed. In addition to classical electrodynamic simulations, Alexander Govorov, Professor of Physics at Ohio University, was able to establish a simple quantum-mechanical model: “The classical and the quantum-mechanical pictures match very well, which makes this model a potential example for the textbooks.”
“I’ve got a crisis to resolve”
by David Lohmann

It was a real coup. In 2013, LMU graduate Angela Kane played a pivotal role in persuading the Assad regime to allow a UN investigation of the use of poison gas in Syria, and then to destroy its entire arsenal of chemical weapons. – But her greatest success came elsewhere, she says.

“You are now leaving the protected zone. Beyond this zone, your safety can no longer be guaranteed.” The Syrian government had repeatedly refused to admit UN teams tasked with investigating reports of the use of poison gas in the country’s ongoing civil war. Finally, in 2013, thanks to the negotiating skills of LMU graduate and UN disarmament expert Angela Kane, the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad agreed to permit the necessary onsite inspections. Kane was in Damascus at the time. “Our team came under fire as soon as we left the area controlled by the government,” she says. Long and difficult ceasefire negotiations followed. “That was really exhausting,” she recalls. But the mission ultimately succeeded. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon later quipped that it was the first such mission that the UN had been able to complete.

Angela Kane was born in Hameln in 1948. When she finished school she moved to Munich to study English and French (and to avoid bumping into former classmates)! Against the advice of her parents, she obtained a fellowship for postgraduate studies in the US, and studied Politics and Economics at Bryn Mawr College in Philadelphia and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced Studies in Washington. She was among the few foreign graduates in her courses.

After several years in the Netherlands and France, Kane had the requisite educational background and language skills to land a job with the UN in 1977. She gradually worked her way up, organizing conferences, formulating development programs and leading various directorates. In 2012 she was appointed High Representative for Disarmament Affairs – and for the next three years she was Germany’s highest-ranking diplomat at the UN.

The fact that she is little known, even among foreign-policy experts in Berlin, doesn’t trouble her. “I’m not someone who seeks the limelight. I prefer to do my job with as little fuss as possible,” says Kane, holder of the Federal Cross of Merit (Bundesverdienstkreuz). Accordingly, she does not rate the positive outcome of her high-profile mission in Syria as the peak of her career. She regards her contribution to ending the civil war in El Salvador, which had claimed 75,000 lives by 1990, as more significant. In that case, Kane was responsible for the drafting the final text of a crucial section of the treaty that brought the conflict to a close. “That was an extremely demanding assignment, and I’m very proud of how it turned out, even though the final document never bore my name.”

Angela Kane and Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary General of the United Nations

Why did Kane decide to resign from her post as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs in 2015? Three weeks travel per month had just become too much for her, she says. But she hasn’t really let up much since. Having taken a position with the Vienna Center for Disarmament, she continues her fight for a total ban on nuclear weapons. “I think it’s a great pity that Germany plays no part in international negotiations on an atomic weapons ban,” she says. On the other hand, she welcomes the increasing political commitment of today’s students – particularly in efforts to mitigate climate change. She notes, however, that too many of them are primarily interested in advancing their careers. Kane advises her own students to become involved in helping others. “Instead of focusing on the next career step, one should seek out fields that engage one’s interest and enable one to learn,” she says.

Translation: Paul Hardy
“The ivory tower is long gone”  
by Clemens Grosse

Thomas Höllmann’s first love was art, but decided to study Chinese. It was certainly a good choice, for he is now one of the best-known sinologists of his generation – and the newly elected President of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the notion of writing a cultural history of Chinese cuisine was conceived in a restaurant. But it was a French restaurant in which Professor Thomas O. Höllmann, the current President of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, was dining with his publisher. The idea was more in the nature of a joke, Höllmann says, but it soon took on clearer contours – and a fortnight later he was commissioned to write such a history. In the scholarly literature on Chinese history and civilization, this topic had inexplicably been ignored up until then, and the result of his labors fills this gap.

The book Schlafender Lotos, trunkenes Huhn, written for a wide readership, which has appeared meanwhile in both English (as The Land of the Five Flavors) and Chinese versions (as 五味之地) looks at selected periods in Chinese history from the earliest times up to the present, and investigates the changes in eating habits, culinary practices and attitudes to food that took place in various parts of the country. In doing so, it also affords insights into the culinary elements of the daily lives of emperors and aristocracy, and of the Chinese peasantry.

Stimulating dialog between disciplines and generations

He very much appreciates the fact that the profile of his academic chair at LMU has given him the freedom to study China’s enormous diversity from a wide range of viewpoints. “This would not be possible in an American university, for instance,” he says. “In the US you have the choice between Chinese History and Chinese Literature. Both fields are defined by their specific methodologies and there is no focus on any particular region of China.” Thomas Höllmann celebrated his 65th birthday in February, and is now an Emeritus Professor at LMU. But he intends to remain scientifically active nevertheless: “I don’t need much – a computer, access to a well-stocked library and a desk.” Moreover, in the coming three years, a new task awaits him – as President of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences.

In fact, one could argue that the thematic diversity of the institution which Höllmann now heads is comparable in diversity – though not in scale – to that of Chinese culture. Founded in 1759, the Academy’s four sections cover all the major branches of scholarship – from the Humanities to Natural Sciences, and from Economic and Social Sciences to Medicine. “My main goals as President are to stimulate dialog between disciplines and generations, and to bring the Academy’s various sections closer together,” he says, and he believes that “the Academy provides a favorable environment for worthwhile dialog.”

He himself is directly involved in a venture sponsored by the Academy, which is devoted to the compilation of a dictionary of Tibetan, but he does not intend to become engaged in further projects of this sort. “One should keep oneself informed about ongoing projects, he says, but as President one must be seen to be even-handed and love all of one’s children equally.”

Translation: Paul Hardy
THE World Reputation Ranking 2017: LMU defends its leading position in Germany

In the Times Higher Education (THE) World Reputation Ranking 2017, LMU Munich is ranked 42nd overall. It thus retains its status as Germany’s most highly respected university. LMU remains the only German university in the Top 50. For the 7th year in a row, the Times Higher Education (THE) World Reputation Ranking is headed by Harvard University, and the runners-up – Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Stanford University – have also successfully defended the positions they occupied in last year’s list. LMU is placed 42nd. The THE’s World Reputation Ranking 2017 is based on a worldwide survey of 10,566 academics from 137 countries. The scholars consulted were asked to name no more than 15 universities which they personally regarded as being the best in their own respective fields. The survey data used for the Reputation Ranking represent the collective, but subjective judgment of the global scientific community, together with 11 other, objective indicators form the basis for the World University Ranking 2017-18, which will published later this year.


Tel Aviv University and LMU extend cooperation

Tel Aviv University (TAU) and LMU have signed a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to the LMU-TAU Research Cooperation Program. The planned strategic collaboration, which is financed jointly by both institutions, has been officially designated as the LMU-TAU Research Cooperation Program. Its goal is to strengthen cooperation between the partners in all areas of research by undertaking joint projects, organizing scientific workshops and stimulating interaction and exchange between specialists from both universities. LMU has, for example, agreed to establish a Visiting Professorship specifically for faculty from TAU. “We are very pleased that this forward-looking research program will enable us to expand and intensify the long-standing and successful collaboration between LMU and TAU,” said LMU President Professor Bernd Huber. For his part, TAU’s Professor Oz expressed the view that “the LMU-TAU agreement for joint research is a major step in enhancing the relationship between the universities and scientists of both institutions, and we are all very excited about the future prospects.” Professor Dieter Lüst of the Faculty of Physics will serve as LMU’s Coordinator for the LMU-TAU Research Cooperation Program.

LMU on Instagram: Glimpses of university life

LMU’s Instagram account is only six weeks old – and its growing archive already has striking perspectives to offer and intriguing stories to tell: www.instagram.com/LMU.muenchen

Biology at its best!?” says Kim, seen here at a Zoology practical. Despite appearances, the glittering reptile is a stuffed specimen, which serves to illustrate characteristic features of snake anatomy. (@kiiiiimi)

For the past few weeks, the Fountain in front of the Main Building has hosted a pair of ducks. Their nest is probably in the English Garden.

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