Social dynamics in global studies: co-evolving multi-perspectivism & consensus

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Recently, several curricula have been designed and implemented that deal with multi-perspectivism and "understanding one's enemy", mostly in the realm of "Global Studies" (GS), in the tradition of world-wide peace-building. It is essential that academia-related and students-related quality criteria are applied to such curricula (Bader et al., 2013; Ahamer Kumpfmüller, 2014) as well as to related teacher formation. In 2013, the Austrian GS curricula of Salzburg, Graz and Linz became members of the worldwide "Global Studies Consortium" (GSC).

The author co-founded the inter-departmental developmental and peace-oriented Master's curriculum GS in a co-operative team at Graz University and contributed to "Global Studies" at Salzburg University (symbols in Figure 1). GS members created articles in several special issues edited by the author, thus implementing the partnership-related teaching methodology. Recently, such global studies curricula were also presented at the European Environmental Agency EEA, symbolised at centre in Figure 1 showing all countries involved graphically. Quality control of interdisciplinary research and teaching has been taken care of by several publications: Bader et al. (2013a, b) and Ahamer Kumpfmüller (2014).

Figure 1: At right: The interdisciplinary and inter-departmental character of Global Studies Graz, Austria is proposed to be characterised by graphical representations of different disciplines and schools (surrounding circle in colours) while reminding of the shutter of a camera during the process of perceiving a complex global dynamic picture. At left: Global Studies Salzburg concentrates on globalisation and uneven development.

The 150th birthday of Vladimir Vernadsky in 2013 did inspire for comparison of world views from different parts of Europe. His portrait at right is complemented by Teilhard de Chardin's portrait at left because both researchers shared similar evolutionary ideas.

Figure 2: This collection of images symbolises the aim of Global Studies: Looking forward into the ring of stars (telescopes of doing science) and looking forward to a common, transparent world. Convergence towards joint values and increasing mutual perception (Curricula for Global Studies in Graz Salzburg and Faculty for Global Studies in Moscow) on a common globe (above). Globalistics and global evolution as suggested by Teilhard de Chardin (at left) and Vladimir I. Vernadsky (at right), stemming from different parts of Europe, as mapped in the insert at centre: This map from the cover of the EEA (2012) report "Europe's environment: An Assessment of Assessments" makes clear that European procedures are inclusive and welcoming, based on voluntary participation (Image adapted after Ahamer, 2014: 79f).

Figure 3: A three-dimensional portfolio of all mentioned cases with axes named: one or more universities, single or multi-disciplines, one's own or others' motivation (explanation of abbreviations in Ahamer, 2018, chapter 5.8.5).

The author experienced the diverse cases of work settings described in Figure 3 over the last decade of work. To ensure the success of these projects, it has been essential to take into account the many social, technological, economic, and political factors prevailing in the respective multicultural settings. It is one of the targets of the author's activities in the "Global Studies" curricula in Salzburg and Graz to convey to students the multicultural analyses based on experiences. Utilising a three-dimensional cube for mapping, a portfolio is shown to structure the manifold international experiences in Figure 2.

Figure 4: Didactic pattern (above) and social dynamics during time (below) in the Graz curriculum of Global Studies (GS). Several core lectures of GS Graz use the five-level negotiation

game "Surfing Global Change" (SGC) which sets out to construct consensus in complex intercultural questions and transdisciplinary political problems. The five levels appear during one semester (horizontal axis). The levels of SGC have the following targets (Figure 4):

- Level 1: create knowledge and pass classical learning of theories
- Level 2: to write down a fact-based standpoint and to mutually review it
- Level 3: win a controversial discussion in a team while being watched by colleagues
- Level 4: to reach a consensus with the same discussion partners
- Level 5: to frame the conclusions in global long-term trends.

It is now important to provide optimal circumstances to students for optimised social learning (Figure 5). The length of the blue rays means the social activity as monitored through postings in a web platform and as shown by the blue diamonds in Figure 4.

Figure 5: Star diagram of web activities of the 16 participants showing the degree of social activity (order: top position is student number 1 and the others follow clockwise; the trainer is at position 16, just left of top position). Bottom left: legend for the axis of the ray beams. Bottom centre: all five levels in different colours; their shades are given at bottom right.

The number of postings (blue graphs) often correlates with a student's academic effort that is put into an authoring or reviewing activity, and with the amount of listeners to such web activity. Figure 6 attempts to show the number of addressees per communicative action: On level 0, students show their motivation for the selected seminar to the trainer (above left position), on level 1 they receive purely cognitive academic input (as in traditional lecturing), on level 2 they address exactly one colleague, in the face-to-face debate on level 3 they address an entire team; on level 4 they address all participants of the consensus finding.

Figure 6: Star diagram of web activities of the 16 participants (as in Figure 5 (blue lines, at different scale) including the underlying communicative actions: Each act of communication means one arrow, the shaft of which is green, and in case the addressees are called to change their perception and world view, the point is in red. Level 1 does not yet change world views. Level 5 in this case was implemented as the authoring procedure of an article in an international journal (Altmann et al., 2013).

This social process resulting from this type of lecture is the continuous generation of a group-centred collaboration among students. I can be described as rhythmised learning process and has been used for more than three dozen of interdisciplinary university courses at several Austrian universities until now. The target of this course design was to increase as much as possible the intrinsic motivation of the students (Hüther, 1997, 2006) who were encouraged to individually define their goals during this course; Csikszentmihalyi (1990) referred to this autotelic action as "flow".

Figure 7: Materialisations of "Surfing Global Change" (SGC): At left: CDs documenting the partly web-based negotiation game "Surfing Global Change" in very high detail, prepared for the highest-rewarded European prize on media didactics "Medidaprix" in Hamburg. At right: SGC in action (photo symbolising a discussion in level 3).

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