

Abstracts

Mitja Sienknecht

Debordered Conflict Communication: The Emergence of Communication Structures into the World-Political System by Non-State Conflict Parties

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This article deals with an important aspect of »intrastate« conflicts that has been widely neglected by contemporary research: the (communicative) debordering of conflicts beyond national borders. Based on an analytical perspective informed by systems theory, this article conceptualizes conflicts as communicative systems that are constituted through the rejection of expectations and that tend to integrate ever more topics. This assumption is the starting point to explain how non-governmental conflict parties address the international organizations (IOs) of the world political system. These processes of debordering are analyzed along three different dimensions: the territorial, the symbolic, and the functional debordering of conflicts. By analyzing the conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdish PKK as a single case study, this article strives to explain the special form of inclusion of the EU into this conflict system.

Keywords: world society, intrastate conflicts, communicative debordering processes, modern systems theory, peace and conflict studies

Holger Niemann

Justification as Practice in the UN Security Council: From Constitution to Coordination of Normative Order(s) through the Veto

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The article analyses how the vetoes on Syria have been justified and criticized in the UN Security Council since 2011. It argues that identifiable commonalities in argumentations by supporters and opponents of the vetoes reveal a plurality of normative orders apparent in the Security Council. The article changes an understanding of the veto as representing traditional great power politics by emphasizing its importance for the Council's normative foundation. Using Luc Boltanski's practice theory, an analysis of the records of the Council's meetings facing the Syria vetoes identifies three different principles of normative worth that point to possible normative orders. As the analysis demonstrates, the coordination of the plurality of these orders, rather than their substance is important for the constitution of the Council.

Precisely because normative orders are contested and subject of instrumentalisation, they have the ability to unfold this ordering capacity.

Keywords: normative order, practice theory, justification, United Nations, Syria

Felix Anderl/Philip Wallmeier

Modes of Critique in in International Relations: the Case for Immanent Critique

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As the program of »critical IR« is becoming increasingly heterogeneous, the critique of governing in the international is losing its shared sense of direction. A shared sense of direction is, however, a precondition for collectively organized processes of transformation. In order to discuss how critique might regain a common purpose in a plural and unequally globalized world, this essay describes different modes of critique. To that end, we reconstruct a critique of international governing from the body of IR-scholarship. Building on this reconstruction, we differentiate between two types of approaches: the first type focuses on differences; the second attempts to resolve contradictions. While the difference-based approaches criticize by explicating differences and by historicizing the status quo, approaches that aim to resolve contradictions take a normative stand and promise emancipation. We argue that approaches attempting to resolve contradictions seem more amenable to collectively organized processes of transformation. Therefore, we also describe three modes of this kind of critique (internal, external, and immanent critique) and discuss their respective problems. We show that immanent critique can provide a common sense of direction by establishing a normative position starting from the current social order without falling back into paternalistic modes of critique.

Keywords: critique, norms, critical theory, eurocentrism, social change

Dustin Köhler

Beyond the Speakable: Linguistically Disguising Norm Decay in the Debt Relief for Greece

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Existing explanations for norm decay can be summarized under the hypothesis that a norm disappears when non-compliance is no longer described as such. However, this ignores an important quality of language: speakers use metaphorical and euphemistic language to speak about things without having to name them directly. This peculiar way of speaking as an element of public discourse engenders the possibility of constituting an alternative social reality in which a norm remains valid, even when agents' behavior suggest that it may be in decay. This argument is de-

veloped by analyzing the debate over debt relief for Greece in the German media between 2011 and 2012. The result of the linguistic discourse analysis is that the stability or decay of a norm depends on the specific interpretation of social reality that predominates in the discourse.

Keywords: norms, linguistic disguising, discourse, debt, Greece.

Margit Bussmann/Klaus Schlichte

Controlled Territories, Border Zones, and Blind Spots in Empirical Studies of International Relations

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The contributions in this special section deal with various types of quantitative and qualitative data that face similar challenges. Political interests and conceptual conventions imprint themselves on national statistics, documents provided by international organizations, media reports and interviews. Problems with selecting and accessing sources as well as the information they omit are equally relevant for all types of material. An intensive and critical assessment of the generation of empirical data is necessary in order to adequately interpret research results. Transparency, standards of replication, and intelligibility of the research process can provide a degree of remedy, but they are not sufficient. With this special section we would like to start a discussion on the quality and critical use of sources and data material.

Keywords: quantitative data, qualitative sources, critical assessment, transparency, replication standards, intelligibility

Sabine Otto

Challenges and Chances of Media-Based Civil War Datasets

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Recently, many datasets on political violence have been compiled around the globe, often based on media reports. Datasets that are based solely or predominantly on news outlets are often criticized because selective reporting may bias media reports, potentially omitting or underrepresenting certain information. In this article, I outline various types of media bias and discuss the particular challenges they present. The discussion shows that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges identified. However, transparency in data-collection efforts and a reflective use of the data help to mitigate statistical problems resulting from selective reporting.

Keywords: civil wars, event datasets, media bias, data collection, political violence

Sebastian Hellmeier/Johannes Vüllers

New Developments and Challenges for the Coding Process of Event-Based Datasets

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Coding decisions play a key role in the creation of quantitative datasets in the social sciences. Recent technological advances and the trend towards the increasing disaggregation of data entail new challenges for the coding process and for concept formation. Our contribution discusses the opportunities and risks that emerge from the increased availability of data and offers some guidelines on how to deal with the abundance (or paucity) of data in the coding process. In our view, technical tools can be put to best use in *support* of human coders and help to prepare and organize that process. Moreover, we emphasize the need for transparency when it comes to conceptually or empirically unclear cases.

Keywords: data coding, event data, disaggregation, validity, reliability

Klaus Schlichte

Why Numbers Don't Suffice: a Plea for an Extended Experience in International Relations

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How does the discipline learn about the world? Government documents and statistics seem to constitute the bulk of data that the discipline uses as an empirical basis. This comes at the cost of using classifications and representations drawn from non-academic language. This contribution critically discusses this numerified version of the empirical world, and it suggests an alternative: an extended experience and hermeneutical additions to formalized procedures in the empirical science that we call International Relations.

Keywords: data, empirical research, numerification, hermeneutics, ethnography, methods.

Julian Eckl

Contrasting Actors' Own Records with Others' Records: an Ethnographic Perspective on Different Kinds of Empirical Material about Political Events

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This text contrasts actors' own records with records made by others and argues from an ethnographic perspective that one's research should not be limited to a specific kind of empirical material, since the inconsistencies between different kinds of empirical material can be used productively. First, relying on different kinds of em-

pirical material helps to develop a critical distance towards any kind of empirical material. Moreover, the reconstruction of the specific logics that informed the production of the actors' own records is particularly enlightening in that it provides an additional entry point to analyze the phenomena under study. Most importantly, it shows that although public actors' own records have an outstanding social significance and are legally binding, detailedness and precision are not necessarily among their strengths.

Keywords: political ethnography, empirical material, self-recording, political records, divergent production logics

Sebastian Knecht/Maria J. Debre

The »Digital IO«: Chances and Risks of Online Data for Research on International Organizations

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Increasing availability of data and information on the websites of international organizations (IOs) has fundamentally changed IO research in terms of research practice, methods, and empirics. Since IOs are just a click away, research has advanced into the study also of smaller, regional and formerly »black-boxed« IOs, and away from single-case studies and towards sample-based quantitative designs. However, not all IO websites provide information in adequate scope, historical depth, and necessary quality for cross-case analysis. In this forum contribution, we critically discuss the trend towards »digital empirics« in IO research. While »digital empirics« have many advantages, there are also some drawbacks. Specifically, current quantitative IO research reproduces the selection bias of earlier generations of qualitative studies on highly institutionalized, global, and prominent IOs, thereby undermining the potential of online research. We thus argue that a more diligent, critical, and nuanced treatment of online data is necessary.

Keywords: international organizations, digital empirics, selection bias, quantitative IO research, online data

Marlen Niederberger/Stefanie Dreier

Types of Knowledge and Their Political Content in Expert Interviews in International Organizations

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This article addresses the types of knowledge that can be accessed through expert interviews in international organizations (IOs). The authors show that reflecting on the knowledge experts can have is important for selecting interview partners and analyzing the interviews. Additionally, expert status is constructed through the

knowledge assumed by the researchers. The distinction between expert and non-expert is thus closely linked to the knowledge attributed to the experts. Therefore, the article also deals with the political content of knowledge, which has to be considered when analyzing expert interviews. The findings are supported by case studies from research on IOs.

Keywords: expert interviews, international organizations, types of knowledge, qualitative methods

Angela Heucher/Andrea Liese/Leon Schettler

Methodological Aspiration Meets Organizational Reality: Conducting Interviews in International Organizations

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International organizations (IOs) and their bureaucracies are increasingly the focus of academic research. Research on IOs often builds on interviews as a method of generating data; in particular, semi-structured expert interviews are widely used. However, many IO studies do not systematically explain the methods and procedures used to generate interview data. This is problematic, as it hampers intersubjective understanding and complicates the systematic assessment of research results. At the same time, while a rich literature on interviews exists in the social sciences, IO-specific challenges are not addressed. These challenges arise when standards of academic quality fail to match the IO reality. We address this gap by identifying and systematizing IO-specific challenges. Furthermore, we introduce strategies to deal with these challenges, especially in regard to reducing interviewer bias. As interviews become more prominent in IO research, we seek to contribute to and further advance the academic debate on quality standards for this method of data generation.

Keywords: international organizations, semi-structured interviews, expert interviews, transparency, interviewer-bias

Mischa Hansel/Sara Nanni

Quantifying the Arms Dynamic in an Age of Digitized and Automated Warfare

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Data collection in quantitative research on armament policies faces numerous challenges. One is the tendency of both commercial and governmental actors to keep silent about particular technical features of advanced weapons systems. There is also conceptual confusion about how to categorize new technologies, such as combat drones, cyber weapons, etc. Moreover, descriptive analysis generally reaps less

academic glory than theory development and testing. In our paper, we reflect on the difficulties of quantifying the arms dynamic by reporting on our own research project on the global diffusion of advanced military information technology. Based on a detailed problem description, we assess the pros and cons of several practical solutions. We conclude by pleading for greater transparency, with regard not only to data gaps and sources of analytical bias but also failed research efforts and significantly revised research designs.

Keywords: research on arms dynamic, quantitative data collection, military transformation, digitalization, automatization

Jasmin Haunschild/Anja P. Jakobi

»Big Data« or »Unknown Estimates«? — Teaching Students with Data that is Difficult to Access

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This article discusses a research-oriented teaching project that takes the generation, use and dissemination of data as the starting point for teaching social science methods. With the rise of »Big Data«, critical analysis and data processing is becoming more frequent and more important. At the same time, ever more data is freely available and generated outside of academic research contexts, so it cannot be expected to adhere to highest quality standards. Still, this data is politically and socially relevant. To teach students skills related to this new data environment, we developed a research-oriented teaching project as part of an undergraduate module on methods. The course aims to provide students with so-called »research literacy« by combining learning through research practice and problem-based learning. In the first part of this article, we demonstrate the importance of data for teaching and learning. Second, we discuss how to identify an appropriate module for teaching such a project as part of a standard curriculum. Third, we show how such a project promotes research literacy in student education. We conclude with a discussion of the potential and limits of such courses, including an outlook on the future role of data in courses related to methods.

Keywords: methods, data, unknown estimates, research literacy, problem-based learning