

Epilogue

“What do we have here?” says the librarian to her colleague sitting at the next table in the university library office while looking at the book on top of the pile on her desk. “These are the incoming new books this month. I’ve skim read them in recent days. The book on top is about conflict escalation.” her colleague answers. “Okay, thank you. Unfortunately, I can’t spare the time to browse into the book before we put in on our system. Could you please tell me what it’s all about? Which conflicts? International conflicts, I mean, wars? Or, as it’s not possible to escape the topic in the media, maybe conflicts between the police and those opposing anti-corona measures? Or conflicts in relationships of couples?”

The colleague goes over and picks up the book again. “Well, there are two case studies on periods prior to a violent conflict. One is about, um..., the time before the war in northern Mali in 2011–2012, which is still ongoing, by the way.” then he pages up. “And the other ... is about the protests on Maidan, Kiev’s independence square, which ended in deadly clashes. You remember? This took place by the turn of the year 2013/2014. And, here, too, it has continued to this day. I only mention Crimea, Eastern Ukraine...”

“Oh yes, I remember the images of Maidan. It really looked like a war scene, in the middle of the capital. Horrible!” The book is handed over again. “Let’s see, this is a dissertation, right? Which discipline? Political Science? Okay, then let’s settle this quickly and file it there.” Her colleague shakes his head. “But wait, it does not really match up with the International Relations shelf in Political Science since it’s not about true global conflicts, or is it?” “Well, as we stated a minute ago”, she returns, “both cases are still active, they are global matters. Think about ongoing hostilities in Eastern Ukraine and the military intervention in Mali.”

“Let’s try it with sociology”, her colleague interrupts the silence, “as I browsed through the book, I repeatedly got caught by the name of Luhmann and his systems theory. The book develops an approach to conflict research based on the analysis of communication. But I’m not sure how the broad representation of case studies with their somehow global background would be appropriate for the sociology shelf.” While thinking about his suggestion, she takes the book and looks at the front cover. “Do you understand what this world society thing is about? That’s not a very common term, right?”

“Likewise. I’m not familiar with this notion. However, as far as I understood, the author tries to make the point that communication is nowadays capable to reach every corner of the world. In this sense, although there are many competing developments processing at different speeds around the globe, we can’t escape communicating in this very same world and, in this sense, live in one world society that, by the way, continuously produces conflicts.” he responds while partly reading out from the book. “Wow, that sounds quite straight! But how are we going to deal with it then?”

While the meeting of the two librarians continues, they exchange views on the other books on the pile waiting to be put into the library system. Yet, the discussion about ‘Observing Conflict Escalation in World Society’ has inspired them to think about further questions. *Who makes decisions on the ordering principles in our library? Should we follow a filing system which is organised according to disciplines or topics? Or are there other models in-between? Do we need this kind of differentiation in a digital age at all? Who may be interested in reading this book?*

On her way home, the librarian thinks about her workday. Spontaneously, the quotation from Goethe she picked up while browsing through the book this morning crosses her mind:

... whatever holds the world together in its inmost folds...

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