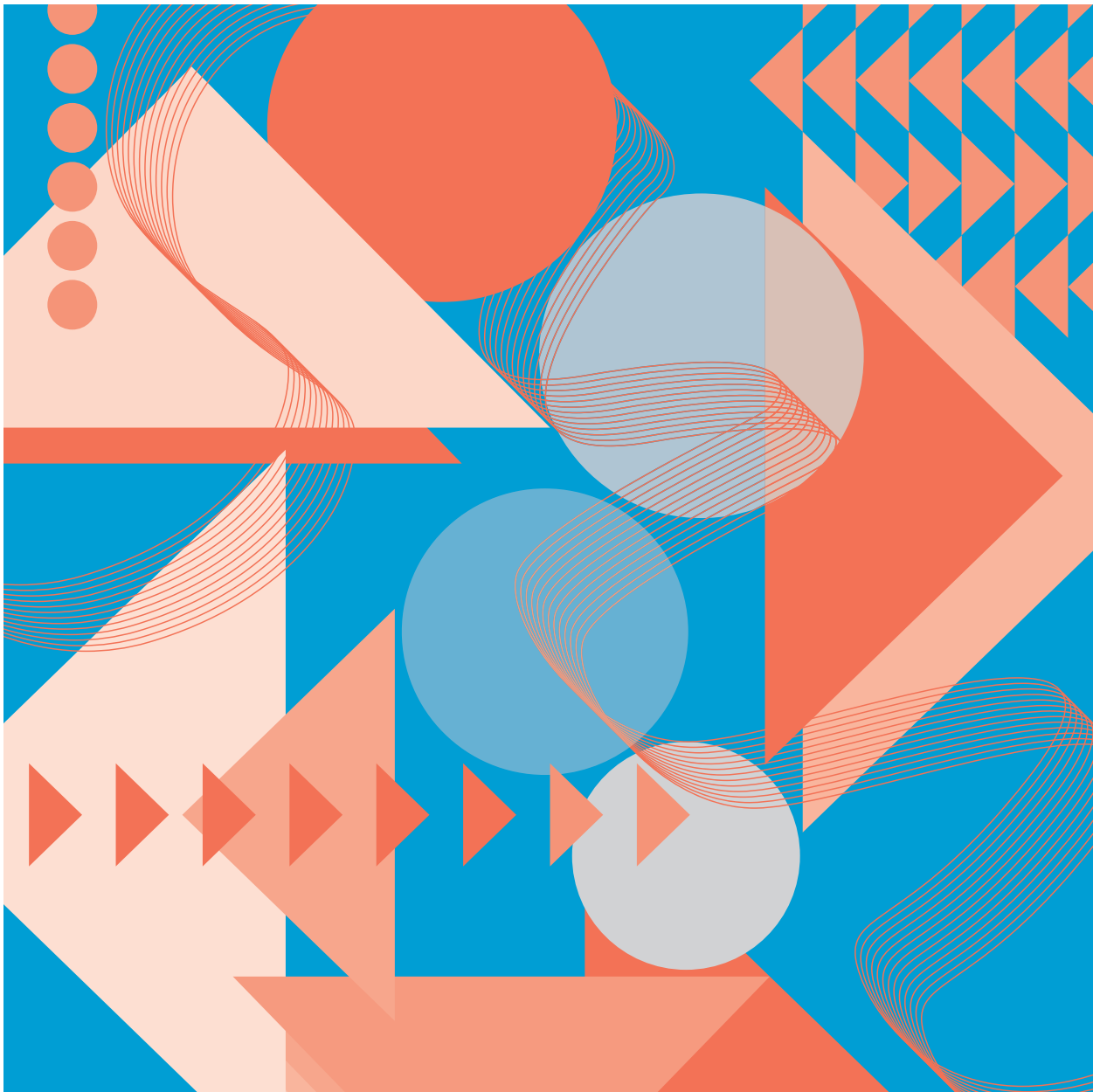


1st Interdisciplinary Uncertainty Conference

Navigating Uncertainty: Preparing Society for the Future

Book of Abstracts



Bielefeld University & Center for Interdisciplinary Research
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EDITORIAL

Uncertainty has an impact on almost all aspects of human life and the way uncertainty is perceived and treated by different actors (e.g., individuals, institutions, or policy makers) is an important driver of societal and economic change. It can have constructive and destructive effects in different realms of society that must be navigated.

Various researcher in social sciences and humanities have, over time, developed a variety of theoretical and empirical approaches to study and interpret the impact of uncertainty on (individual) decisions and social phenomena. With this conference, we would like to bring them together in a place of interdisciplinary exchange. The conference “Navigating Uncertainty. Preparing Society for the Future” provides a platform for interdisciplinary exchange on the systematic analysis of different ways individuals and institutions deal with uncertainty and of the resulting societal implications. Papers that are presented at the conference address conceptual issues related to the theme as well as applied work studying the implications of (navigating) uncertainty in concrete settings. Papers have various degrees of a theoretical or a methodological focus or are based on empirical analysis.

Research thrives when we exchange ideas and come together to network. That is why we would like to thank all authors who have submitted contributions for the conference. They all enable us to showcase the diversity and quality of research in the field of *Uncertainty Studies*.

The Organising Committee

Herbert Dawid, Ulrike Haake, Anna Maria Neubert, Silke Schwandt and Andreas Zick

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KEYNOTES

Varieties of Uncertainty: Data and/vs. the Humanities

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Can data make room for uncertainty? And if so, what kind? In this talk, I'll discuss some humanists' concerns about the growth of data-driven scholarship. Digital humanists, I argue, stand to benefit from taking some of these objections seriously. They point to real epistemological differences between "data" as the term is used and the traditional practices of humanistic scholarship. Understanding this tension can help us understand both data and the humanities more fully – and point to some exciting future directions for data-engaged scholarship.

Uncertainty in the Anthropocene

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In his monumental “The evolution of knowledge”, Jürgen Renn describes a sequence of three punctuated equilibria along the way humans have so far dealt with knowledge – and therefore with uncertainty, too.

First comes a period where our ancestors lived in small non-sedentary communities (1). The evolution of biological features ranging from the shape of human bodies to the functioning of our brains enabled them to learn about the world they lived in.

With the neolithic revolution, knowledge was then increasingly connected to the material infrastructures of cities, ships, tools, and more (2). People lived in stratified societies with a central authority – be it an individual or an institutionalized collective – claiming control over some territory. Of course, uncertainty was a normal aspect of life, but when it led to doubts threatening the social order, sophisticated explanations combined with violence could often make such doubts ineffective. Those explanations were elaborated by elites whose works of art and scientific knowledge rightly impress us today.

The transition to the third phase started nearly a millennium ago in Europe (3). There, craft-manship evolved into a division of labor based on lifetime learning that begun with apprenticeships for different occupations. It is often overlooked that academic knowledge and institutions developed hand in hand with this culture of lifetime learning in a community of practice. A key achievement of the resulting fabric of science and technology was the ability to manage the risks and uncertainties of investing capital, using concepts of probability and optimization.

Paradoxically, this ability has led humankind to the global risks and uncertainties of the Anthropocene. Developing concepts and institutions adequate to this challenge will take a long process of inquiry. An illustrative example is given by the future of the car as means of transport and cult object.

PRESENTATIONS

DEMOCRACY AND POLICY

Performing the “human side” of politics: Empathy and affect in governing (under) uncertainty

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Within the realm of democratic governing, uncertainties pose a particular challenge since references to “routines” or “expertise”, as common argumentative resources for claiming political capabilities, tend to lose credibility. Under these circumstances, my contribution argues, a distinct type of political performance has emerged in which the struggle with uncertainties is depicted as a common feature of life, and thus also of politics. As an effort to reveal the “human side” of the political business, this performance aims at generating trust in political actors by portraying them as human beings who, in light of the complexities they face, deserve empathy. On the basis of current empirical examples, I will argue that this type of performance attempts to establish an affective bond between the governing and the governed by articulating both a constitutive condition of human existence (struggles of coping with uncertainties) and collective experiences characteristic for contemporary society (e.g. instability of social relations, work overload). To illuminate this symbolic technique, I will relate it, firstly, to Andreas Reckwitz’s claim that late modernity could be captured as a “society of singularities”. From this perspective, the public staging of struggles with uncertainties could be read as an instance of the increased importance of showcasing individuality, here in the sense of staging specific emotional states of those who have to navigate political uncertainties. Secondly, I will make use of the recent writings of Pierre Rosanvallon where he elaborates on a political theory of democratic governing and how governing rationales are changing in times of uncertainty and individualization. From this normative point of view, the recent trend of articulating the “human side” of politics appears in an ambivalent light, as it both bears the potential for increasing reflexivity and proximity, and entails the risk of being applied for the purpose of strategic immunisation.

The Politics of the Unknown and the Threat of Nuclear War in Britain, 1979-85

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During the so-called Second Cold War from 1979 to 1985, Britain, like other European countries, witnessed increased anxieties over the prospect of nuclear war. At the centre of these fears lay considerable uncertainties over the anticipated

consequences of nuclear conflict. Yet, historians have not yet paid appropriate attention to uncertainty in relation to the nuclear threat. My paper thus proposes a theoretical framework for studying the socio-political roles that uncertainty, as a consequence of a lack of verifiable knowledge, played in political debates over the perceived threat of nuclear war in Britain during the Second Cold War. Focusing on this politics of the unknown in the period from 1979 to 1985 when Britain witnessed resurging fears of nuclear war, my paper examines the ways in which different historical actors, including the state, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary groups, experts from various disciplines as well as popular media, navigated the uncertainty about the expected effects of nuclear war to prepare British society for an uncertain future. In this, it sets out to make three main interventions: first, it conceptualizes ‘uncertainty’ as a subjective social and cultural construct with fluid meanings that does not necessarily have to hold exclusively negative connotations but might offer opportunities for historical actors. Second, I propose an examination of the politics of the unknown about the anticipated effects of a nuclear war within a wider synchronic economy of non-nuclear-weapons-related concerns. Finally, my paper introduces the periodization of ‘Britain’s long nuclear 1980s’ to allow for a consideration of relevant diachronic aspects of this politics of the unknown, thereby adding further depth to the investigation of uncertainty in relation to the nuclear threat.

Framing the democratic present as an uncertain one. Emotions as a Political Resource of Right-Wing Women's Organisations at the End of the Weimar Republic

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In 1930, Lisa Lehmann, Press Officer in the of the Queen Louise League’s Silesian branch, declared that the fatherland was “inundated by waves that try to sweep away all that is good in it”. With these and other threatening scenarios, leading members of one of the largest women’s organisations of the Weimar Republic repeatedly described their republican present. Emotionalised political messages such as these used uncertainty as a strategic political resource. Among other thing, members of the League argued the nation had been sold down the river by male republican politicians. It was therefore a nationalist woman’s duty to safeguard the fatherland in uncertain times. The “Führerinnen” of the Queen Louise League glorified the past, portrayed the uncertain present as a painful break with that past and hoped for a better (authoritarian) future.

My presentation will look at how right-wing women politicians used uncertainty productively for their political goals. Drawing on Monique Scherr’s concept of emotional practices, I will firstly examine the discursive creation of uncertainty as such a practice. Yet, according to Scheer emotions are also embodied in a literal sense: They are made visible in bodily manifestations and are experienced physically. Therefore, secondly, I will turn to the League’s practices that aim at a physically experienced sense of belonging. The League’s leading members adopted a number of emotional practices in order to achieve their ultimate goal, a functioning Volksgemeinschaft which also meant the end of the uncertain democratic present.

While the world outside the League was an uncertain one, the meetings allowed a glimpse into a future that no longer threatened the fatherland. Thirdly, new forms of demarcation can be observed in the construction of this emotionalised national community: These no longer run along national borders, but between the victims and the supposed perpetrators of uncertainty.

PREDICTION

Navigating Uncertainty caused by Viruses: Preparing for Future Pandemics

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"The next pandemic is bound to come, it could kill millions of people - but the world is hardly prepared for a major epidemic," concluded the weekly "der Spiegel" the discussions at the Munich Security Conference in 2017 (Feb. 22, 2017). Three years later, the pessimistic assumption came true with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Contrary to what the quote suggests, the world, including Germany, was not unprepared for a pandemic. Rather since the 1990s, policymakers regarded pandemics, along with natural catastrophes and terrorism, as the world's greatest most likely security threats. They assumed a rapid spread of pathogens as the downside of globalization with its high frequent international trade and travel. Comprehensive preparations for a pandemic, fueled by the emergence of epidemics such as Ebola or the H5N1 (avian flu), against which there were initially no vaccines or drugs, thus became urgent and a central issue of national and global security. Health experts worldwide declared it impossible to prevent pandemics, but instead aimed to prepare for it.

Since the late 1990s health experts in Germany with the help of internationally coordinated planning, have sought to contain the projected threat of a future pandemic. In many areas, pandemic planning operated with uncertainties and insecurities, since it was a matter of unknown time periods as well as unknown pathogens. Newly developed techniques of surveillance, prevention and preparedness to navigate and manage these uncertainties were established. Thus, pandemic preparedness techniques became a new public health field. What strategies in particular did actors in Germany develop at the various levels of the federal and state governments and in communication between experts and the population to counter the uncertainties of a future pandemic? How did they prepare the health system and society for future pandemics?

The paper is based on a wider research project conducted in cooperation with Jonathan Voges (Leibniz Universität Hannover), funded by the DFG: "Pinning down the Hypothetical. Pandemic Preparedness since the 1990s – Historical preconditions of managing corona virus response".

Prediction for Planning: Scientific Experts and Earthquake Risk in Modern Japan

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Japan is situated on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," making it prone to large-scale earthquakes, especially in the densely populated metropolitan areas on the southern coast. As a result, identifying earthquake risks has been a major concern since the late 19th century. Earthquake prediction was deemed most useful for preparing against earthquakes, a goal that eludes seismologists to this day. While a disaster preparedness regime developed which was mainly based on planning, uncertainty surrounding earthquakes became a major driver for promoting earthquake research in Japan.

While Japan became a modern state after 1868 through an organized transfer of knowledge from the "West", scientists in Japan already played an important role internationally for the formation of seismology. In 1892, the Imperial Earthquake Investigation Committee was established to generate knowledge intended to inform preparedness policies, including earthquake prediction. In a democratized Japan during the Cold War, earthquake prediction served as a peaceful means to receive funding for seismology. The increased importance of disaster preparedness in urban planning led to a large-scale research program in earthquake prediction linked to a response plan for the metropolitan Tōkai region in the 1970s. However, earthquake prediction came under scrutiny after the Kobe Earthquake of 1995 happened without warning.

The uncertainty resulting from the unpredictable nature of earthquakes became a major driver for promoting earthquake research in Japan since the late 19th century. Seismologists argued for a need to fund the earthquake sciences and monitor the unpredictable earth. In return, the experts were obliged to offer their expertise for creating a sense of certainty and security for the citizens as their duty for society. However, communicating uncertainty not only strongly affected scientists' careers depending on the "outcome" of their predictions but also led to "created certainties" within a highly uncertain subject matter, which potentially created new risks.

Navigating the Uncertainties of Climate Change: Preparing the Society for a Different Future

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The uncertainties arising from climate change are not merely limited to the loss of habitat or displacement. Climate change also poses serious challenges to the European identity. There have been many concerns over threats to security, to the integrity of the traditional European ways of life, and to sustainable economic development as caused by climate change. Furthermore, the public discourse surrounding climate change is fraught with political contentions as several right-wing

institutions and politicians in Europe manipulate the rhetoric of skepticism or ignore overwhelming scientific evidence outright.

Alongside mitigating measures, therefore, many policies and pieces of legislation include adaptation to climate change. This research contends that humor and satire have adaptive and coping affordances; therefore, they can be employed in encouraging citizens, organizations, and corporations to adapt to climate change. They can increase community buy-in and help foster resilience among citizens. This research builds upon previous studies to explore the adaptive and coping functions of humor and satire. Then, it showcases the potentials of humor and satire in climate change communication through analyzing an episode of Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO) within the framework of environmental psychology and environmental humanities.

Oliver uses humor and satire to encourage adaptation in lowlands against flooding in “Floods” (2017). The episode opens with concerns over increasing prevalence and impacts of floods that are exacerbated due to climate change. Oliver explores many reasons behind floods and the devastations they cause, emphasizing ineffective (perceived) behavioral control in the form of relief funds. Discussing the decision of a low line community that refuses to leave their homes, Oliver appeals to humor not only to reach out to the community but also to encourage climate change adaptation

UNCERTAINTY COMMUNICATION

Expressing and Attributing Uncertainty – Linguistic Insights into Uncertainty Communication

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The paper focuses on two linguistic perspectives of uncertainty communication – a lexical and a discursive perspective – to draw conclusions with regard to “linguistically navigating uncertainty”.

Language is naturally vague and ambiguous, and it can create scientifically and socially relevant reception and interpretation problems, as empirical studies have shown: the various linguistic possibilities for expressing more or less certainty do not lead to unambiguity in the denotative sense; instead, the expressions are interpreted differently (cf. Dubben/Beck-Bornholdt 2016). Focusing on this lexical dimension of uncertainty, I will link different types of non-knowledge/uncertainty with typical expressions and patterns (including means of negation, modality and temporality, cf. Janich 2018).

Also, I will look at how uncertainty is attributed to a person or group of people in discursive settings (e.g. Janich/Rhein/Simon 2023). These attributions of uncertainty can be used strategically in different settings and fulfil different functions: e.g. threaten somebody’s face as a competent researcher or criticise a scientist’s research findings in scientific discussions (Rhein 2015), or dramatize, emotionalize or scandalize uncertainty in popular science texts (e.g. Janich/Simmerling 2013).

Literature:

Dubben, Hans-Hermann/Hans-Peter Beck-Bornholdt (2016): *Der Hund, der Eier legt. Erkennen von Fehlinformation durch Querdenken*. 9. Aufl. der vollst. überarb. und erw. Neuauflage von 2006. Reinbek bei Hamburg.

Janich, Nina/Simmerling, Anne (2013): „Nüchterne Forscher träumen...“ – Nichtwissen im Klimadiskurs unter deskriptiver und kritischer diskursanalytischer Betrachtung. In: Meinhof, Ulrike/Reisigl, Martin/Warnke, Ingo H. (Hgg.): *Diskurslinguistik im Spannungsfeld von Deskription und Kritik*. Berlin, 65-100.

Janich, Nina (2018): Nichtwissen und Unsicherheit. In: Birkner, Karin/Janich, Nina (Hrsg.): *Handbuch Text und Gespräch*. Boston/Berlin, 555-583.

Janich, Nina; Rhein, Lisa; Simon, Niklas (2023): Nichtwissen und Unsicherheit in Naturwissenschaften und Mathematik. In: Atayan, Vahram; Metten, Thomas; Schmidt, Vasco Alexander (Hg.): *Handbuch Sprache in Mathematik, Naturwissenschaften und Technik*. Boston/Berlin, 355-377.

How does the communication of scientific uncertainty affect trust in the communicator?

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Communicating uncertainties in scientific evidence is essential, to accurately inform the public on scientific knowledge, raise public awareness of known unknowns and ensure the accountability of policy around the use of scientific evidence. However, organizations and scientists often shy away from explicitly acknowledging scientific uncertainties to the public as they fear losing trust (van der Bles et al., 2020). Is this fear warranted? So far, empirical research has provided mixed results how the communication of uncertainty affects trust in their communicators (Gustafson, 2019). One potential explanation for these mixed findings are varying contexts and audiences.

We present two studies in which we examine a specific context (change of evidence, study 1) and individual factors that may moderate the effect of uncertainty communication (study 2). In study 1 ($N=800$, convenience sample), participants read fictional information about a public health authority who announced no link between a new COVID-19 live vaccine and myocarditis. The health authority communicated either 1) no uncertainty, 2) uncertainty or uncertainty with one of two reasons for the uncertainty: 3) imprecision or 4) loss to follow-up. Participants were then informed that the health authority's statement was no longer correct as new data showed a link between the vaccine and myocarditis. Participants rated the health authority's trustworthiness before and after the evidence update. Our findings indicate that communicating uncertainty buffers against a loss in trust when evidence changes and providing an explanation for uncertainty does not harm trust. In study 2 ($N=500$, convenience sample), we set out to test different individual factors that may moderate the effect of uncertainty communication on trustworthiness perceptions, e.g. prior beliefs, preference for uncertainty communication and epistemic beliefs. The data collection is still ongoing and results will be presented at the conference.

Literature:

Van Der Bles, A. M., van der Linden, S., Freeman, A. L., & Spiegelhalter, D. J. (2020). The effects of communicating uncertainty on public trust in facts and numbers. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(14), 7672-7683.

Gustafson, A., & Rice, R. E. (2020). A review of the effects of uncertainty in public science communication. *Public Understanding of Science*, 29(6), 614-633.

Theories of uncertainty communication: an interdisciplinary literature review

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How can scientists and other professionals optimize the communication of uncertainty? Many experimental studies have addressed this question – so many in so many different disciplines, in fact, that the literature has become difficult to oversee. We reviewed which theoretical frameworks such studies invoke to explain the effects of how uncertainty is communicated. Using a machine learning-aided pipeline, we selected 413 studies that we coded manually. We found many of these studies (46%) to be undertheorized, especially in medical and public health communication. Moreover, the vast majority of studies (95%) addresses shallow uncertainty, meaning that probability values are known and communicated (resembling Knightian risk) or intermediate forms of uncertainty (which we call medium uncertainty). So, although in realistic decision contexts, uncertainty is often not communicated in terms of probability, few studies address deep uncertainty (equal to Knightian uncertainty). In the sample, Rational Choice Theory and Probability Theory emerged as dominant normative theories. These theories are by definition tied to probabilities and thus only applicable to shallow uncertainty. Hence, their dominance may explain the underrepresentation of experimental research into deep uncertainty communication. We suggest ways in which uncertainty communication research can diversify its use of theories and cover a wider array of research topics, including deep uncertainty. The review can help to improve knowledge transfer between different disciplines and inspire a broader research agenda on uncertainty communication.

How the structure of scientific communities and communication channels impact the public understanding of science

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In this study, we aim to describe how scientific uncertainty impacts the public understanding of science. Civil society is considered to have a good understanding of science if its members adopt the right scientific theory. This understanding (our dependent variable) can be assumed to be influenced by a range of key variables, of which the structure of the scientific community and the communication channel are two main factors. Little is known, however, which role these elements play, and especially how these interact. This is the focus of this paper.

Based on an adapted version of an agent-based model originally presented by Zollman [1], we determine how the shape of the scientific network (for instance, a highly or lowly connected network) and the communication channels between the scientists and the citizens (for instance, a rapporteur or a journalist) impact the beliefs and degree of uncertainty concerning a scientific hypothesis (one of two mutually exclusive alternatives) of both the scientists themselves and the citizens. Some other

parameters such as the openness of scientists to different opinions, the precision of their experimental devices, and the scientists' prior degrees of beliefs are taken as extra inputs in our model.

Based on our results, we conclude that a highly connected scientific network decreases the chance that the public adopts the right hypothesis. Interestingly, moderately connected networks perform better when scientists are reluctant to listen to others' beliefs. As for communication channels, our model suggests that citizens only have to be aware of few of the shared scientific outcomes in order to have a good picture. Furthermore, the citizens in our model reduced their uncertainty faster than the scientists. Altogether, our findings contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of scientific uncertainty within the scientific and the public communities.

Literature:

[1] K. J. Zollman. "The communication structure of epistemic communities." *Philosophy of Science*, 74(5):574–587, 2007.

MIGRATION AND MINORITIES

Social navigation and citizenship in the context of criminalization of solidarity towards migrants

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Processes of criminalization of humanitarian search and rescue (S&R) produce a context of uncertainty and rapid social change for NGOs and activists. The multiplicity of European authorities involved in the crackdown of S&R NGOs and the variety of legal tools used to realize it has created an ever-changing legal environment in which activists must constantly adapt to pursue their activity of rescuing migrants at sea. This paper explores how this context affects and transforms practices, discourses, and materialities within humanitarian S&R. Through this analysis, the paper unfolds the transformation of the "activist citizen" (Isin, 2009) whose purpose progressively changed from "claiming rights for others" to "claiming the right to make claims" for themselves (as one can see in the claim "solidarity is not a crime").

Parting from the concept of social navigation developed by anthropologist Henrik Vigh (2009), this paper conceptualizes activist citizen practices as future-oriented strategies aiming to navigate this moving and uncertain environment and as a "motion within motion." These practices sometimes resemble cat-and-mouse play in which NGOs and activists try to anticipate the next possible attack without ever being sure it will succeed. Based on ethnographic material (interviews and participant observations) gathered between September 2019 and December 2022 with S&R activists, the paper shows how materialities (e.g. size of the ship, security equipment, food reserve), discourses and activities (e.g. creation of anti-repression training) are evolving to adapt to a hostile and moving environment. In a second section, I show how social navigation in the context of criminalization also leads to unexpected

situations leading to unforeseen outcomes such as new collaborations between groups or new kinds of political action and strategies.

Literature:

Vigh, H. (2009). Motion squared (...). *Anthropological Theory*, 9(4), 419–438.

Isin, F. (2009). Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen. *Subjectivity*, 29(1), 367–388.

Uncertainty, Posttraumatic Stress, and Return Intentions of Displaced Persons

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Posttraumatic stress is common among residents of conflict zones, and influences how people attend to, interpret, and respond to uncertainty. How does posttraumatic stress influence attempts to reduce uncertainty? We hypothesize that the relationship depends on the interaction between an individual's symptoms of posttraumatic stress and the trustworthiness of an uncertainty-reducing information source. Information from a trustworthy source reduces uncertainty and influences decisions. But persistent and high posttraumatic stress leads to hypervigilance and mistrust in others. This means that even trustworthy sources cannot influence decisions. We test our hypotheses with a factorial survey experiment, drawing participants from residents of internally displaced person (IDP) camps in northeastern Nigeria. We find that information from a more trustworthy source leads to increased return intentions. However, the more participants report symptoms of posttraumatic stress, the smaller the effect source trustworthiness has on their return intentions. We conclude by discussing the implications for return of displaced persons and the role of uncertainty and trust.

Prolonged uncertainty as quest for survival: Maritime refugees in the Andaman sea

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The number of Rohingyas (ethnic minority) travelling on boats from Bangladesh and Myanmar to Malaysia has increased substantially over the last decade and so have the deadly tragedies that occurred along this maritime migration corridor. Between 2012 and 2020, more than 120,000 Rohingya embarked on secondary maritime movements to Malaysia with the help of a well-developed transnationally operating smuggling and trafficking infrastructure. Thousands of Rohingyas have perished along the way.

The drifting and drowning of the Rohingyas is the result of the militarized borders and hostile asylum policies in Southeast Asia that have materialized in the form of proactive push-backs and redirections of refugee boats as well as in more passive policies of non-assistance. In the past, maritime crossings by Rohingyas were rather short and straightforward journeys in search of protection. The territorial basis of asylum means

that people must enter the territory of a state other than their own to claim refugee protection. Due to the international principle of non-refoulement, more and more potential receiving states make use of pre-emptive measures and maritime patrols in order to prevent refugees from reaching land and claiming protection. The increase of such “non-entrée politics” is mainly to blame for why maritime trajectories of Rohingya refugees have become prolonged and fragmented. The encounters out at sea with state forces and also the smuggling/trafficking facilitators have prevented rapid forward movements and created situations of enforced strandedness for undetermined periods of time. Enforced strandedness at sea, used here in both a literal and figurative meaning, entails circular mobilities at sea, as disembarkation is impeded or prohibited. Not being allowed to come on land, turns the passengers of these refugee boats into inmates of floating prisons who face prolonged uncertainties with hard to predict outcomes. The uncertainty, which we seek to capture, results from an imposed strandedness that suspends the spatio-temporal interstice between life and death.

By making the refugee boat the prime site of research, our ongoing research seeks to explore the fleeting and stagnant conditionalities of unsanctioned maritime migration. While the evolving dynamics of the passengers onboard are shaped by the specific materialities of the boats used – whether they are dinghies, wooden fishing boats or freighters – In this presentation we focus in particular on the temporalities of such maritime journeys and the impact of time-space on the production of prolonged uncertainty. Focusing on refugee boats as part of the commercialised migration infrastructure allows us to trace technological and communicative aspects of these attempted crossings but also the enforcement of border surveillance and extraterritorial migration control by potential destinations states.

Governing exclusion through uncertainty. Negotiating health care restrictions for asylum seekers in Germany

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Conflicting rationales permeate the European flight migration discourse: inclusiveness ideologies and human rights obligations are opposed by xenophobia and aims to protect territory and wealth. On this backdrop health care access for newly arrived asylum seekers in Germany is legally restricted. The legal frame allows for extended restrictions as well as inclusive health care. Vague legal formulations have to be defined by the many involved actors at the health care and administrative level. They decide if a condition is to be considered as “acute” or a service as “indispensable”.

We aimed to investigate how organisations and their professionals navigate uncertainties created by the regulations and are in turn navigated by these uncertainties. Through an ethnographic approach, we identified actors, decision-making-powers, processes, and prioritisation criteria. We found that while

professionals either make concessions or impose restrictions, many are under the impression, they would just “implement the law”. However, legal terms and entitlements are defined differently by different actors and we could identify reflections on deservingness in these health care contexts. Imaginations of prospects of staying associated with national origin of asylum seekers and illegitimate motives for flight, such as poverty, were contemplated while negotiating what services should be provided to whom.

Legislation does not prevent political and societal discourses on, for example, justified and unjustified motives for flight from seeping into negotiations of refugees' health care benefits. The question is whether such social penetration of medical decisions is even wanted: The uncertainty allows for the implementation of a plethora of restrictions based on non-medical grounds in practice, that would contradict international conventions if included in the legal norm unambiguously. In the face of contradictory imperatives our state has chosen not to decide, but to leave policymaking to practitioners. This raises ethical and practical questions.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF UNCERTAINTY

Firm risk and the banking accelerator

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Increases in firm default risk raise the default probability of banks in US data. We analyse firm risk shocks in a New Keynesian business cycle model, where entrepreneurs and banks engage in a loan contract and both are subject to idiosyncratic default risk. In the model, a wave of corporate defaults leads to losses on banks' balance sheets, thereby increasing bank defaults. A more leveraged banking sector exacerbates the contractionary effects of firm risk shocks, acting as a 'banking accelerator'. We study macroprudential policy in the form of a penalty on excessive bank leverage. Such a penalty increases bank capital buffers, helping to dampen the effects of risk shocks. Furthermore, we find that countercyclical capital buffers can stabilize output and investment.

Sustainability and uncertainty in Thailand's innovation policy discourse: ideas, institutions, and politics

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In Thailand, innovation policy discourse has articulated the idea of sustainability with an aim to tackle increasing global and domestic uncertainty. Several future-oriented innovation policy instruments have been utilised such as technology foresight and targeted research funding. The extant scholarly work has provided insights into the

employment of such instruments to address sustainability and uncertain future (Haddad, et al., 2022). However, hardly do we know about the local production and articulation of policy ideas such as sustainability and foresight in innovation policy discourse which may influence policymakers' understanding of 'uncertain social reality' in the first place. This article integrates insights from two bodies of literature that commonly deal with policy ideas. The first is discursive institutionalism that examines the framing and mobilising of new policy ideas in an institutional context to shape policy change (Schmidt, 2008).

The second is concerned with the production of policy knowledge which emphasises the ways in which a set of knowledge is supplied to policymakers and may influence the terms of policy-political debate (Weiss, 1992). The synthesis of these literatures entails a theoretical perspective that can capture the political use of locally generated policy knowledge and the discursive structure legitimising this political move. This theoretical lens is applied to the empirical case of Thailand's innovation policy with a particular emphasis on the substantive issues of sustainability and uncertain future. Two main arguments are made here. First, new ideas in Thailand's innovation policy such as resilience and foresight are strategically mobilised and integrated in a particular narrative which, in turn, influences: (a) how problems about uncertain future are defined; and (b) how suitable policy instruments are selected. Second, the underlying discursive structure has provided a basis for a certain discourse coalition to dominate the production of knowledge about sustainability and uncertainty that is subsequently fed into the innovation policy discourse.

Consumer inflation uncertainty – assessment methods and differentiation in the society

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The aim of the research is to assess inflation uncertainty among different groups of consumers in Germany. The research presents the assessment of inflation uncertainty using the Shannon entropy measure. The measure of statistical entropy was used to evaluate the results of surveys on inflation expectations. According to its definition, the higher the entropy value, the more uniform the distribution of structure elements. In the context of uncertainty evaluation, the smaller the value of the entropy measure, the smaller the uncertainty. This is the result of a less even distribution of structure elements. Also, relative entropy (Kullback-Leibler divergence) was calculated. This enables the assessment of the degree of change between a priori and a posteriori structures. It is as a measure of dissimilarity of structures. As part of the research, responses from the Joint Harmonized EU Consumer Survey were used. Calculations can be made for any other EU country. This research includes surveys of consumer responses from Germany, from January 1999 to March 2023. Two qualitative questions from the consumer survey questionnaire were used: assessment of consumer prices over the last 12 months and expectations in the next 12 months. The results of the conducted research indicate that society perceives uncertainty differently depending on gender, age or education. For example, in terms of respondents' education, respondents with primary and secondary education were more uncertain about

consumer prices development. In the analyzed period, a similar inflation uncertainty was found between women and men. Greater uncertainty related to the direction of price changes in the future is correlated with the value of entropy for younger respondents, aged 16-29. Granger causality was also found between some entropy measures and the Economic Policy Uncertainty index for Germany.

NARRATIVES AND PRACTICES

War-caused uncertainty in Ukraine's narratives

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The invasion which started on 24 of February 2022 caused a sudden collapse of usual life for millions of Ukrainian citizens. These massive events forced Ukrainians to face all facets of uncertainty: the unexpectedness and speed of the changing situation, the inability to calculate risks and predict events; the lack of a complete picture, and information hunger (especially among people in the occupied territories); the inability to plan their lives even a day ahead.

Our study presents the results of a narrative analysis of the stories collected in March-April 2022 from 169 respondents (22% men, 78% women, age $M=43$, $SD=12$). We offered to write answers to 4 questions about the specifics of the first months of the war experiences. There was no a direct question about uncertainty and the texts were analyzed by indirect or spontaneous mentions of uncertainty in the narratives. In addition to other variables, we coded references to uncertainty (neutral - traumatic), the view of the future ("one day", "after war", "time has stopped" and "I don't see future") and its valence (neutral, positive, negative, ambivalent).

Almost 22% of the answers contained references to uncertainty, and reactions to uncertainty ranged from a neutral statement of the fact "it is impossible to plan anything under such conditions" (14%) to a reference to unpredictability as a component of the traumatizing part of the experience "the most traumatic thing was the uncertainty, the impossibility to make a decision" (7,7%). The view of future is connected with its valence and presence of hope. The ability to tolerate uncertainty and see the future from wider perspective helps to overcome circumstances and rebuilt life with fewer negative emotional consequences. Strategies of coping with uncertainty and perspective of further research are discussed.

Uncertain Peace: Communications from a Conflict

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Conflicts, specifically ones characterised by politics and violence, are heavily impregnated with uncertainties of uncertain kinds. Peace, as an adjunct category to conflict (theoretically and empirically), depends on the then state of conflict. This

Uncertain Peace (UP), as a construct in a conflict environment, has the following forms. As a ‘conflict strategy’, it supplies violence resulting from conflict with justification from all sides (state and nonstate). For a state, violence arising out of its counter-conflict measures is collateral damage suffered for establishing peace. Contrastingly, for a non-state party to the conflict, uncertain peace is symptomatic of the systemic inadequacies and structural injustices entrenched in a polity. As a contested but ‘situated reality’, uncertain peace assigns meaning to the socio-political despondency experienced by communities at large. Furthermore, as a ‘political deficit’, it facilitates state policies and civil society networks towards building a counter ‘certainty’. A common underlying theme to these forms is the language used for the communication of uncertainty around peace – be it in the construction of a response or reactive strategy within the conflict, as a description of reality experienced by people, or as an acceptance of the current state of inadequacy and attempts at designing a way forward. This communication - of a strategy, a reality, or a deficit - can happen through political dialogues/monologues, cultural symbols, or socio-cultural practices. The paper seeks to inductively support the above-mentioned stratification of UP with empirical inputs from contemporary politics. It further presents a thematic analysis of the data to codify the language of communication of uncertain peace. The objective is to reflexively decipher the language practices in conflict environments leveraging the conceptual frame of ‘uncertainty’ and ‘peace’ and attempt their interpretation through contextualisation.

‘Before entering a shop, I counted the people already in there.’ How Covid-19 made people translate uncertainty into modified social practices

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In 2020, a time of multiple uncertainties started to alter societies worldwide. The Covid-19 pandemic started to affect our lives and the ways infrastructures could (not) be used. It was a time when citizens could witness on a day-to-day basis how policies were made and communicated, and trust in governmental actions was recurrently negotiated. Based on auto-ethnographic accounts, data from visual ethnography and document analysis collected in four different German cities during March 2020 and September 2022, we discuss how Covid-19 made people translate uncertainty into modified social practices and establish new routines of living together even after the immediate crisis. Social infrastructures such as supermarkets remained functional in Germany even during repeated shutdowns, being perceived as essential for everyday life. Supermarkets turned from mundane sites of provision to sites where we could witness how infrastructures are deeply entangled with the micro-foundations of urban social life. They provided the material-spatial and social framework of negotiating our modes of living together. Similar phenomena could be observed in the case of cafés

and restaurants when they were allowed to open again. Based on our data, we highlight the need to attend to the ambiguous role of design, objects and materiality to adjust collective social practices and urban conviviality in the times of Covid-19 and, ultimately, in times of uncertainty. In addition, we ask for the longer-term effects of such a living in times of crisis on social interactions between citizens and between citizens and their governments. We argue that living in a phase of uncertainties and ambiguities has consequences for our society even in the time after the immediate crisis, observable in the altered social practices and material traces that the pandemic left in our environment.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Stages of uncertainty. From technology to social and biological consequences

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Is there an end to an uncertain period or process? Continued technological, social, or political development imply repeated stages of uncertainty as new challenges or aspects of complex systems emerge. The convergence of uncertainty in one field results in ambiguity in other fields about a suitable reaction. With respect to a technological transformation like the energy transition, we are in a period of social and political uncertainty. The logistics of building a clean energy system are now the subject of public and political debate. Whether the transformation will be successful within a framework of fair resource allocation is an open question. The technology, or building blocks with which the transformation can be accomplished, on the other hand, are well-defined and at high levels of technological readiness. But this certainty was not always the case. Advances in scientific knowledge and engineering expertise over decades have resulted in our ability to generate clean energy. These developments themselves were at one point fraught with uncertainty that was eventually constrained by the scientific process. The readiness of these concrete energy solutions has revealed today's uncertainty about their implementation. Looking to the future, after the social and political questions have been resolved, still another uncertainty appears on the horizon: how the climate and the biosphere will react to our decisions. Severe climate change and (mass) extinction are possible. But to what extent? The uncertainty concerns us today because the events portend fundamental and unknown shifts for society. How do we prepare ourselves if complex interactions between the stages of uncertainty are possible? Or is the delineation artificial? Perhaps the course of events is more homogeneous, containing similar threads of uncertainty. We need to develop a more refined perspective.

Pollution Abatement Investment under Financial Frictions and Policy Uncertainty

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This paper examines how financial frictions and policy uncertainty jointly influence firms' investments in pollution abatement. Our data analyses suggest that financially constrained firms are less likely to invest in pollution abatement and are more likely to release toxic pollutants, with this pattern intensified by policy uncertainty surrounding future environmental regulations, as measured by "close" gubernatorial elections or uncertainty revealed in firms' earnings conference calls. We then develop a general equilibrium model with heterogeneous firms, including both financially constrained and unconstrained firms, in which financially constrained firms face increased marginal costs of finance from pollution abatement. These costs are further amplified by policy uncertainty, reducing firms' incentives to prevent pollution. Therefore, the aggregate effect of environmental policies depends on the distribution of financial frictions and policy uncertainty.

Which climate change mitigation policy pathways are socio-politically feasible?

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Carbon taxes are effective to reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and integral in the transition to a climate-neutral economy. Preventing adverse path dependence in technological change requires a timely introduction of a sufficiently high carbon tax to increase firms' relative profitability expectations of green investments. In practice, the implementation of carbon taxes is hampered by perceived high transition risks such as surging energy bills, unemployment, and financial instability as politicians are committed to respond to constituencies and corporate leaders with vested interests. Addressing these complex trade-offs requires an appropriate institutional configuration. However, integrated assessment models (IAMs) which are widely applied to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of different policy pathways cannot take into account socio-political feasibility concerns.

We aim to provide a framework to jointly assess macroeconomic transition risks and socio-political feasibility concerns of the structural transformation of the EU economy. To that end, we develop an agent-based opinion dynamics (OD) model of public support for mitigation policy and calibrate it to Eurobarometer survey data. Acknowledging their embeddedness in natural and socio-economic systems,

individuals may change their policy opinion over time based on social influence (i.e., social conformity), perceived climate change evidence, business cycle dynamics (i.e., unemployment, real wage) and lobbying influence. Integrating the OD model and an agent-based IAM – the ‘Dystopian Schumpeter meeting Keynes’ (DSK) model (Lamperti et al. 2018) – we study how macroeconomic transition risks related to different carbon tax scenarios (e.g., transition speed, macroeconomic costs, emissions) may feedback to the socio-political sphere, potentially reducing public policy support to levels which would impede actual implementation in the real world. Finally, we evaluate whether and to which extent complementary fiscal and redistributive policies aimed at mitigating macroeconomic transition costs can increase or stabilize public support for mitigation policy.

Literature:

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UNCERTAINTY CONCEPTS

‘Uncertainty’/‘Freedom’: Adventures of the Conceptual Pair

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In both systems and information theories uncertainty stands not only for the insecurity of the present but also for openness of the future. Indeed, its direct correlation with the number of options available at the next step is open to two starkly different – and emotionally opposite – interpretations: nagging indeterminacy is one and the same thing as the freedom of choice. The famous saying of John Maynard Keynes – “uncertainty makes us free” – vividly captures this inextricable duplicity of the notions attached to each other as a sort of conjoined twins.

Since most systems in nature in society either alternate or combine stability and development, there is no set value attached to any of the interpretations: rather, they serve as markers for subjective evaluations of entropy measuring the difference between the expected and the available values from either end of the scale.

The proposed paper provides a very brief sketch of conceptual history of the pair ‘uncertainty/freedom’, elucidating its working in various political, social and theological contexts. The major attention is called to the contexts when both terms (or their customary correlates in the respective situations) are simultaneously applied to the same state of affairs from different angles). For example, the very same state of safety net available to American citizens is commonly branded “economic insecurity” by a President belonging to the Democratic Party (John F. Kennedy) and “economic freedom” by his Republican colleague (Ronald Reagan). Other contexts, reaching deeper into history of the terms and the sentiments that engendered them, are offered for discussion. At the end, the evolution of both meanings and its dependence on historical and cultural circumstances has been suggested as a blueprint for the future large-scale study.

The problem of conceptual uncertainty of biodiversity for nature conservation

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In this talk, I will address the problem of conceptual uncertainty of biodiversity and evaluate various proposals to address it in policy contexts. Conceptual uncertainty is understood as uncertainty that arises from epistemic difficulties in assessing the adequacy of definitions and operationalizations of key concepts.

In the first part of the talk, I will distinguish two levels of conceptual uncertainty of biodiversity: Low-level uncertainty concerns the taxonomic categories on which biodiversity measurements are based. To the extent that there is no consensus on the definition of the species concept, this leads to similar ambiguity in the concept and measurement of biodiversity. This is problematic because the choice of a taxonomic classification system is directly linked to the effectiveness of conservation policy. If the wrong classification is chosen, there is a risk that potentially valuable units will be excluded from conservation priorities. However, uncertainty also exists at the higher level of selecting the relevant aspect of biodiversity, i.e., genetic, phylogenetic, taxonomic, or functional. For example, focusing on taxonomic diversity may result in high biodiversity scores for a site even though its elements are phylogenetically very similar or functionally poorly differentiated. Both forms of uncertainty thus contribute not only to conceptual incoherence, but also to epistemic and practical risks associated with biodiversity conservation in practice.

In the second part, I will argue that to successfully manage the conceptual uncertainty of biodiversity, these two levels must be addressed differently. While suggestions for standardizing species lists to address low-level uncertainty may turn out to be an appropriate method, a similar suggestion seems to be out of reach for the higher-level conceptual uncertainty. Instead, I will argue that conservation programs need to incorporate the multidimensionality of biodiversity explicitly by adopting a pluralist concept of biodiversity.

LIGHTNING TALKS WITH POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Being Chinese Online – Discursive (Re)production of Internet-Mediated Chinese National Identity

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A further investigation into how Chinese national(ist) discourses are daily (re)shaped online by diverse socio-political actors (especially ordinary users) can contribute to not only deeper understandings of Chinese national sentiments on the Chinese Internet but also richer insights into the socio-technical ecology of the contemporary Chinese digital (and physical) world. I propose an ethnographic methodology, with Sina Weibo (a Twitter-like microblogging site) and bilibili (a YouTube-like video-streaming platform) as ‘fieldsites’. The data collection method is virtual ethnographic observation on everyday national(ist) discussions on both platforms. Critical discourse analysis is employed to analyse data. From November 2021 to December 2022, I conducted 36 weeks’ digital ethnographic observations with 36 sets of fieldnotes. For 36 weeks’ observations, I concentrated much upon textual content created by ordinary users. Based on fieldnotes of the first week’s observations, I found multifarious national(ist) discourses on Sina Weibo and bilibili, targeted both at national ‘Others’ and ‘Us’, both on the historical and real-world dimension, both aligning with and differing from or even conflicting with official discourses, both direct national(ist) expressions and articulations of sentiments in the name of presentation of national(ist) attachments but for other purposes. Second, Sina Weibo and bilibili users have agency in interpreting and deploying concrete national(ist) discourses despite the leading role played by the government and two platforms in deciding on the basic framework of national expressions. Besides, there are also disputes and even quarrels between users in terms of explanations for concrete components of ‘nation-ness’ and (in)direct dissent to officially defined ‘mainstream’ discourses to some extent, though often expressed mundanely, discursively and playfully. Third, the (re)production process of national(ist) discourses on Sina Weibo and bilibili depends upon not only technical affordances and limitations of the two sites but also, to a larger degree, some established socio-political mechanisms and conventions in offline China.

The Emergence of Conservative Populist Protest Movements in Latin America. The uncertainty of the Right-Wing

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Prior to 2023, social protests against neoliberal policies that affected the middle classes were seen in different countries in Latin America. These phenomena were known as *estallidos sociales* and showed a desire for change from the dominance of conservative governments. These protests were characterized by artistic and cultural

expressions that allowed the appearance of cultural movements (Aguilar-Forero, 2020; de Vivanco & Johansson, 2021; Estrada, 2021). Governments from countries like Colombia, Chile and Brazil showed a violent response to those protesters who disagreed with their neoliberal political agendas. With the election of Petro, Lula and Boric a new political cycle configuration started in the region. These leaders are challenged to manage policies that respond to the needs of the millions of citizens who expressed their claims in the streets and the grievances of those who feel they have lost their privileges (Bringel & Domingues, 2022). This PhD research proposal seeks to explore the appearance of these new conservative, populist and contestatarian movements characterized not only by a right-wing-based defense of neoliberal, anti-gender, and nationalistic policies, but also environmentalist and inclusion-oriented discourse and contrast them with the prior movements that led citizens to the streets between 2019-2021. From an interdisciplinary approach, I address three current movements examples and their resonance strategies: Centro Democrático in Colombia, Movimiento Brasil Libre (MBL) and Acción Republicana Chile. The proposal also explores the definition of the political cycle connected to social movements and questions the conception of right-wing and left-wing in an era of reactionary populisms where the right-wing has different faces and the phantoms of historical political trends coexist in the uncertain (Rees et al., 2021; Meléndez, et al., 2021; Svampa, 2020).

Facing Uncertainty in German Real Estate Lending.

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This lightning-talk addresses the challenges of real estate lending in Germany in the second half of the 20th century. Against the backdrop of the political goal to extend homeownership (Eigenheimpolitik), financial institutions were tasked to provide the necessary funds. Generally, this meant that loan ceilings had to be raised. Thus, the politics of homeownership provided financial institutions with lucrative business options and new uncertainties about loan risks and the structure of their finance offerings. This talk investigates three paths taken to extend loan ceilings and how financial institutions dealt with the accompanying uncertainties. The first option for financial institutions was to bundle their financing power and pool information. This path was used from the 1970s onwards and resulted in compound loans (Verbunddarlehen). With these compound loans, it was possible to raise loan ceilings and pool information about borrowers and real estate to a comprehensive overview of lending uncertainties. The second path used was the modification of repayment schedules. To extend homeownership to the younger population, early repayment installments were reduced and gradually increased over the repayment period. This modification rested on an assumed increase in the general wage level. The talk is able to show, that this assumption was present for many financial institutions for a prolonged time, and that uncertainties about wage developments were perceived to be low. The third option was the usage of public guarantees, either by the public hand or by public-legal institutions. This allowed financial institutions to raise loan ceilings, without the need to modify loan conditions. When the public-hand offered these guarantees, they were extensively used by financial institutions. In summary, the talk

shows that German financial institutions had a great interest in keeping uncertainties about real estate loans low and predominantly chose paths to extend loan ceilings, which matched this ambition.

On imagining the future despite uncertainty: Krenak Quadrilogy and the densities of indigenous insurgent knowledge in Brazil

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In this work, I delve into the Krenak Quadrilogy, a series of books published by Brazilian environmentalist and indigenous leader Ailton Krenak between 2019 and 2022. Through an exploratory and preliminary discussion of the titles "Ideas to Postpone the End of the World," "Tomorrow is Not for Sale," "Life is Not Useful," and "The Future is Ancestral," I examine how they offer a perspective on human existence based on the experiences of indigenous peoples. The books highlight the contradictions inherent in the life of the "white man" and suggest an alternative way of imagining the future, despite the sense and experiences of uncertainty. I begin with the premise that the national publishing market provides valuable insights into not only consumption trends but also the demands and imaginings of readers. The political imagination conveyed through the circulation of ideas and worldviews can be a resourceful compass for navigating the multifaceted crises that affect current times of uncertainty regarding environmental, economic, and socio-political issues. In the case of the Krenak Quadrilogy, my goal is to explore how non-hegemonic forms of knowledge can symbolically and materially reproduce in the current public debate in Brazil. In his work, Krenak challenges the linear and rational concept of time embedded in Western white culture while reflecting on the future. He envisions a future that subverts the linear and accumulative logic of time, when states that "the future is ancestral, and we need to learn from it how to tread lightly on the earth." I aim to understand how his books and their repertoire, while aligned with certain frontiers of academic thought (especially regarding decolonial thinking), can communicate with a broader audience. This situation suggests more than just a commercial interest from the publishing market but also a demand for forms of political imagination that recognize the cognitive limitations of hegemonic epistemological models. In the Brazilian case, such demand is particularly symptomatic, especially in light of the successive accumulation of environmental crimes and persecution against indigenous peoples. The availability of such titles expands the range of explanations for the various crises of contemporary society, giving momentum to insurgent thoughts that challenge notions of utility, progress, and humanity. Moreover, the titles invoke, as the author suggests throughout his words, a sense of "wonder" or "postponement of the end of the world" as an ethical position that demands other ways of inhabiting the world.

Testing Future Solutions Framework (TFSF)

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We develop a research approach for giving a reasonable voice to citizens in process of designing policies by consulting/testing future scenarios and proposed policies with/on citizens. Our approach has three phases: Problem definition, Solutions and scenarios formulation, and Solutions and scenarios testing.

(1) In 'Problem definition' phase we give a voice to different stakeholders to get knowledge how they see and define the same problem. We use here stakeholder analysis, focus groups and interviews combined with Q-methodology that is able to identify different subjectivities.

(2) In 'Solutions and scenarios formulation' phase we let experts, stakeholders and the public formulate how to solve different aspects of problem. Ideal result is set of solutions assessed regarding their consequences and feasibility for all stakeholders. In case of vast number of solutions, we have to select them with stakeholders. We use survey, focus groups and interviews for solutions selection formulation and selection.

(3) In the last phase we test solutions and scenarios. The problem of assessment of future solutions is the respondents usually have no experience with the solution and their ideas regarding solutions might be very diverse. To address this gap we let respondents experience the solutions and their consequences in role-playing simulations and role-playing experiments. Respondents assess the solutions after experiencing them and getting common idea. In such intensive methods might participate only tens of respondents, so we turn the most promising solutions and respective scenarios into the online experiments and surveys using vignettes both with support of videos and infographics. For this phase we use online surveys with supporting material (videos, infographic etc.), online experiments, role-playing simulations and role-playing experiments.

The Role of Uncertainty in the Support for Government Policies about Crises

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Individuals seek information that makes them feel more secure during crises and uncertainty. While the political authorities look for further compliance and trust, individuals use different ways to navigate uncertainties by supporting or opposing policies regarding the crisis issues. Published studies mostly conceptualize uncertainty dichotomously as individual versus informational or personal versus external. We propose that uncertainty is more complex when considered as a social and political dynamic, particularly during crises. In an attempt to adopt uncertainty to intergroup

conflict research, we state that uncertainties emerge, are processed, and navigated in structural, collective, intergroup, intragroup, interindividual, and intraindividual lenses, which are interrelated. We propose that these lenses enable us to observe varying expressions of uncertainties in cognitive (lack of knowledge about issues evoking uncertainty), affective-relational (insecurity related to the future of self, significant others, society, or the world), and self/identity facets, in addition to shared and contextual uncertainties.

Considering three emergent issues, that is, the pandemic, climate change, and the migration flow, German residents indicated the extent to which they support relevant policies by the German government. They also answered questions about their issue-based uncertainty levels and relational uncertainty regarding the future of themselves, their loved ones, society, and the world. According to our perhaps counter-intuitive assumptions, support for crisis-related government policies should vary with political orientation: Left-wingers should indicate more support than right-wingers. When we recognize uncertainty, this relation strengthens, making the policy support a way of navigating uncertainties. Accordingly, left-wingers' issue-based uncertainties coupled with relational uncertainties should increase their support for government policies. For right-wingers, however, issue-based uncertainty decreases government policy support. The first results will be presented and discussed considering the implications of uncertainty in different political settings.

Decoding the Meaning of Democracy: Digitally assisted Analysis of Newspaper Discourses in the Weimar Republic

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The Weimar Republic faced many social, political, and economic strains that ultimately resulted in the downfall of Germany's first democracy. At the same time, the interwar period was a time of political and social progress, which delegitimizes any teleological narrative for Weimar's history. Against this background, historians have increasingly criticized the one-sidedness of the long-dominating crisis motif to characterize Germany's "laboratory of modernity." Since the new millennium, they have instead emphasized open history. In other words, Weimar's uncertain development can be interpreted as a history of contingency.

Much uncertainty, in that sense, existed about the concept of democracy. Political thinking and discourse in interwar Germany were fragmented and polarized, with many actors of different political orientations battling over definitions of 'democracy.' While there has been more attention to democratic thinking and the republic's defense in recent research, pro-democratic discourses are still underexposed. This makes perceptions and meanings of democracy uncertain objects to scrutinize. The research project I want to present at the conference addresses this desideratum. It proposes a methodological framework to explore discourses on democracy in newspapers.

The press was the most influential mass medium for Weimar's public sphere. Its focus on opinion journalism reflected the polarized political landscape. Previous studies on newspaper discourses have yielded valuable insights into political ideas for different

milieus and political orientations. However, these findings have remained limited in terms of region and theme. This is partly due to incomplete preservation and challenges of analyzing large quantities of newspaper articles. Additionally, identifying discourse contributions beyond what one would expect in the context of significant political events proves to be difficult. These challenges represent another phenomenon of uncertainty – uncertainty for historians about how to master heuristics.

The project tackles these methodological problems by developing a framework of scalable reading or blended reading, which means combining large-scale digital text analysis (distant reading) and hermeneutic assessment (close reading) of Weimar's historical newspapers. The essential workflow looks as follows: (1) Compilation of corpora based on manual selections and keyword searches primarily in Germany's leading aggregator for historical newspapers Deutsches Zeitungsportal; (2) frequency analysis of defined search terms; (3) close reading of the source texts for the definition of discourses/topics, analysis of co-occurrences, and topic modeling; (4) compilation of thematic sub-corpora; (5) discourse analytic close reading of the texts, correspondent manual annotation of text passages via the annotation tool CATMA; (6) linking and structuring the annotated passages; (7) visualization; (8) source criticism and interpretation.

This heuristic framework supports identifying relevant pro-democratic statements, their connections, and proliferation, as it has not been done before in Weimar research. It renders possible a well-structured overview of relevant text passages for interpretation. Also, for re-interpretation, when documents must be consulted again when new contexts arise while further material gets analyzed. In sum, this approach contributes to a genuine digital history methodology to gain more certainty about political discourses during a crucial period of Germany's history.

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