



**THEMATIC NETWORK *PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL DYNAMICS* (PCD)  
GLOBAL HUMANITIES CAMPUS 2015  
(SUMMER SCHOOL AND WORKSHOP)**

**I. Summer School (Outline), July 20 – August 2, 2015**

‘Arts, Politics, Economics: Different or Comparable Rationales of Development?’

In keeping with broad areas of interest and fields of research on the part of the variety of instructors from six different institutions and five different countries, as well as from diverse humanistic disciplines, the PCD summer schools are to represent a conceptual laboratory, an open forum for ideas, and a source of inspiration—rather than a ‘school’ in a pedagogical sense. Their respective topics and proposals for discussion are linked to the PCD’s research agenda, which focuses on describing principles of cultural dynamics (for an extended portrayal of the research agenda see the network’s website).

When it comes to discussing general principles of cultural dynamics, it is one of the most intricate questions whether developments in different cultural fields follow one common logic, or whether they are rather governed by specific rationales of their own. Scholarship within the various disciplines seems to entirely disagree in this respect. On the one hand, there are advocators (Hegel, in the first place) of a single, comprehensive rationale of development, which is said to govern the diverse spheres typically labeled ‘culture’. On the other hand, casting art as autonomous (Kant, the Russian Formalists, the New Critics, Adorno) will lead to the assumption that the production of works of art is largely independent from politics and economics. Even so, the relation between the two latter spheres may also be conceived in different ways. Whereas it has been a generally accepted view that the political system of democracy is linked to economic prosperity (and vice versa: economic prosperity leading quasi-automatically to political democracy), recent developments—like the rise of (mainland) China—might be useful in problematizing these views. – – Starting from these general observations, the classes to be taught will address questions such as the following:

- Is there a (discernible) developmental link between politics, economics and the arts; or do these spheres largely evolve independently from each other?
- If there is such a link, is it rather a structure of mutual reinforcement, or a structure of compensation? For instance, does the production of works of art thrive predominantly during prosperous times; or is it rather propelled by times of need, by ‘hard times’?
- If the economic sphere is governed by an incremental logic, does that hold true for the political sphere, as well? What about the artistic sphere in this perspective? Indeed, present-day societies produce ‘more’ works of art than previous societies (in terms of quantity); but does that also mean that contemporary works of art fulfill their task

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(‘*érgon*’) better than those of the past (as motor vehicles from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century uncontestedly perform better than cars from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)?

- Is there, perhaps, a historical dimension involved in this overall question? It may be the case that, in past societies, the spheres mentioned were closely intertwined—whereas they (seem to) have been showing tendencies of ‘autonomization’ in more recent times.
- Are cultural specificities involved? Is the separation of the economic from the political realm in fact a feature typical of Asian/Chinese culture, and the separation of art from politics an Occidental feature? Or are such views biased by largely unconscious assumptions linked to specific cultural traditions?

## II. Workshop (Outline), July 21/22, 2015

‘The Sciences and the Arts: Different or Similar Tendencies of Evolution?’

The workshop linked to the 2015 summer school aims at opening up new perspectives on a question that requires being addressed, if one takes into consideration that ‘culture’ extends far beyond the limits of the humanistic disciplines. It comprises all human activities not to be encountered with regard to animals, including mammals. In this acceptation, science is part of culture. Its emergence and further development are most evidently linked to certain places and certain periods in history—that is, to specific cultural constellations. What the sciences moreover share with the arts are the factors of invention, ingenuity and construction. Conversely, the sciences are always bound to the observation of the phenomenal world—which art is not, or at least not by necessity; and they are able to literally transform the material world, whereas the transformative ‘power’ of the arts seems to be restricted to world *views*. One could easily adduce a variety of aspects that would demonstrate that the spheres of science and of the arts are characterized by a mix of commonalities and differences which it is difficult to systematize. – In addition, there is the problem of mutual influence. Historians of art (of literature, of music) would be ready to concede that novel tendencies in these fields are—not always, but quite frequently—linked to changes that occurred in the field of science including the applied sciences. It might be a more controversial view, however, to hold that artistic production (including trivial strata) influenced the internal development of the sciences.

Questions that might be addressed comprise the following:

- Are the sciences as free as the arts when it comes to ‘choosing’ evolutionary paths; or does the commitment to be observing the phenomenal world rather put strictures on potential tendencies to be freely constructing ‘new worlds’?
- With regard to the history of science, there is one uncontested threshold: the introduction of the empirical model. In periods prior to this date, science was a hybrid of observation on the one hand, and of at times wild speculation and construal on the other. Artistic production seems to have taken a different path: from being committed to the phenomenal world (*mimesis, imitatio naturae*), it more and more evolved in the direction of ‘free’ speculation and construction. Is there a possibility of making sense of these apparently almost contrary rationales of evolution?
- It cannot be excluded that evolution within the sciences, as well as within the arts, is

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contingent upon institutional frames to a much greater degree than on an(y) internal logic. Institutions for the production of scientific knowledge, as well as for works of art, differ dramatically as to periods and places. Might cultural dynamics in general be contingent on external factors to a far greater extent than one might expect? If so, to what extent may these external factors be considered man-made (meaning: cultural) or natural (pertaining to the climate, geographical conditions, etc.)?