

Responsible Internationalisation Workshop 1, 14 March 2024

Stellenbosch International Academic Network (SIAN)

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1. Session One: Academic Freedom and Collaborations with Universities in Regions of Geopolitical Conflict

Facilitator: Robert Kotzé

Perspectives from: **Prof. Ashraf Kagee (SU, based on Ashraf Kagee (2022) [*The Academic Boycott of Israel: Juxtaposing Academic Freedom and Human Rights in International Relations*, *Politikon*, 49:2, 97-119](#))**

Universities are not political organisations BUT operate in a political space, thus they have the responsibility to address sensitive issues and define an ethical strategy which respect to both academic freedom and human rights.

Be careful of the phenomenon of “whataboutery?” (what about Syria, Iran, Ukraine...?) → draws attention away from the current problem and serves as an excuse not to address uncomfortable issues

To guarantee academic freedom → Academia to protect scholars from negative consequences (job loss, imprisonment, etc.) they may face for their ideas (maybe against the State or a particular political group).

Tensions between academic freedom and human rights may occur. Academic freedom is just *one* thing to consider when dealing with sensitive issues and it needs to be integrated with other rights and freedoms (e.g. political and civil freedom, right to housing, work, and education). If this doesn't happen - i.e. academic freedom is not analysed within a broader context - the risk is the infringement of human rights in the name of it → Academic freedom has the potential to become an “instrument of State power”, a tool, a *weapon* (cf. Butler, J. (gender studies scholar, political philosopher) 2006. “Israel / Palestine and the Paradoxes of Academic Freedom.” *Radical Philosophy* 135: 8–17.)

Israeli boycott → institutional issue (as for scholars supported by the Israeli government).

TUD: Katharina Schmitt (online) and Ukrainian academics at TUD (Prof. Holger Kuße, Nataliya Petlyuchenko, Olena Panych)

Initiatives for Ukraine and scholars at risk in general:

- Humboldt Foundation, Philipp Schwartz Initiative. At TUD: 17 scholars, 7 Ukrainian
- Scholars at risk
- New University in Exile Consortium
- Platform WeCare to ask for help or offer help, support on several levels (German language courses, psychological support...) and Taskforce Solidarity with Ukraine.

3 Ukrainian scholars invited to the WS, pros of TUD's approach according to them: network building; interest in micro migration and Ukrainian scholars; welcoming environment and the opportunity for Ukrainian scholars to connect.

How did TUD manage relationships with Russian academics?

TUD: The open letter published in March 2022, signed by the Russian Union of Rectors in support of the invasion of Ukraine, was a turning point. 304 Russian higher education institutions were involved → It was impossible to establish connections with the universities that signed the letter, rigorous approach in Germany, no collaboration at all on an official level. BUT 1:1 relations and cooperation between faculty members were maintained when possible. Journal of Slavic studies still going.

VUB: Jacqueline Couder (online)/ Paola Mureddu

Focus on the projects' assessment process → based on guidelines shared by Flemish universities (initial assessment at proposal stage)

Professor → Legal Officer → Ethics Committee

Defining "institutional" collaboration → for VUB: academic or non-academic collaborations that comply with formal rules and procedures, agreements are involved and signed by the Rector or someone formally delegated by them. So, not only grant agreements, letters of commitment, etc. but also, formal invitations e.g. letters of invitation for visa purposes.

Analysis on a case-by-case basis.

Critical assessment of where funds come from.

From the discussion

- Institutional collaborations (supported by official documents bearing the Rector's signature) should not be the only forms of cooperation to assess; also informal interactions convey messages, tendencies, and positions on specific issues (example from SU: a photograph of the Rector and a Russian diplomat taken during an informal visit circulated on official Russian social media channels; SU student and staff community protested, as the picture could be perceived as support to Russian actions)
- EUTOPIA values/local values and regulations: since it would be impossible to create a policy that works for all the institutions of the Alliance, the RIWG will aim to build a toolkit that every university can adapt to its own internal/national rules

Key themes

Institutional collaboration (definition and strategy)

Standing behind international/national laws

Academic freedom/human rights

Values → lead to strategies

Local values/Alliance values

2. Session Two: Responsible Internationalisation in Practice

Co-Facilitators: Stephen Soanes, Rachel Wellam, Katharina Schmitt

Introduction: Linn Gabrielsson (GU)**Presentation: Dr Tommy Shih, Lund University**

Linn Gabrielsson: They set up a task force of experts on internationalisation in GU to implement the guidelines and recommendations provided by The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT).

!! be careful not to focus too much on risks; evaluate case-by-case

Dr Tommy Shih (from STINT, he worked on the guidelines):

Focus on research:

- risk analysis
- set of questions on several aspects of the proposal (sustainability, open access, human rights, appropriate stakeholders involved...)
- compliance with existing legislation/discretionary responsibility
- benchmark what you have to work with or against (your institution and other institutions' redlines, what strategy to overcome the differences? how to compromise?)
- role of ethics committees in evaluating ethics/moral/security issues
- training of researchers on Responsible research partnerships (needs to be continuous)
- assessment not only of researchers but also of the environment in which they work
- RI it's a process, an open conversation, a general framework to fill with content
- comprehensive approach on RI: link between conversation on risks and Internationalisation at Home → students from countries with complex geopolitical situations (not enemies, integrated and welcomed)
- **Conclusions**
- A) the cultural, political and social context should be taken into consideration, treating each possible contact as an individual particular case
- B) besides legislative rules and principles (which define a red line) in the so-called grey are we should entrust in the individual researcher's personal judgment and responsibility (since the academic freedom also involves academic responsibility)
- C) common organizational procedures, guidelines and statements of standard of ethic research should be developed within the alliance that are offered to the individual researcher or staff member to allow him for an informed decision (but the decision is up the individual).
- D) on a side of discussing principles of responsible internationalisation, we discussed services to students that permit their greater integration at the host university working on improving the quality of the exchange
- measurements: onboarding documents and training of staff to foster intercultural competences and soft skills.

Proposals:

- develop training/workshops for researchers/PhDs (on risks, ethical approach, intercultural competencies)
- onboarding document for new staff members, especially those involved in research, with guidelines about how to build ethical partnerships and project proposals

Actions agreed:

- RIWG to map the Ethics Committee throughout the Alliance to reflect on functions and needs

3. Session Three: Fair Partnerships Roundtable

Facilitator: Luciana Radut-Gaghi (CY)

- SU based part of its new internationalisation strategy on the “Ethical guidelines for responsible academic partnerships with the Global South” by the Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) → fair, inclusive, sustainable partnerships
- crucial to remember and address ancient and recent history to decolonise the approach
- assess the partnerships and consolidate the ones that can be strategic partnerships
- cooperate (no competition)
- involve diplomatic actors
- producing impact

NOVA: platform to assess research partnerships

UL: best practises from the Western Balkans could be taken into consideration

Warwick's African Partnership Strategy (presented by Stephen Soanes)

internal: African hub (website)

external: partnership with Stellenbosch

partnership with ARUA

Warwick engagement:

AI & developmental changes diseases

food security and crop science

peace research

concrete actions (so far): visiting doctoral fellowships, annual distinguished lecture, senior leader visiting fellowship

Stellenbosch: fair partnership concept

functional engagement and active collaboration that is mutually beneficial, complementary, equitably, reciprocal and transformational

knowledge transfer should be transfer of knowledge for better understanding

Stellenbosch formula: cooperation is not 50/50 but 100 / 100 where 100 for one partner could mean 80% and for the other 20% nominally

results of a research cooperation should be published locally and globally

NOVA

has a tool for evaluating the fairness and the impact of a partnership

Conclusions

the Venice concept of fair partnerships:

adopting the Stellenbosch notion of a fair partnership, Eutopia should promote and reinforce

collaborations that are socially and ecologically sustainable.

4. Proposed Actions and Next Workshop

Time was reserved at the end of the workshop to consider options for Workshop 2. These are subject to further discussion and decisions by EUTOPIA's Responsible Internationalisation Working Group:

- discuss modes of formal stronger engagement of Global Partners in the alliance (also in decision boards)
- discuss models of student integration
- involve the Balkan experience for designer concrete models of fair partnerships
- map types of partnerships
- WP5 tools; WP3 CC multilingualism; WP6 impact indicators; WP2 Inclusion group
- tools to integrate (students/staff)
- connect ethics committee to share indicators about ethical partnership and impact