

EPRIE

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Journal for Regional Integration
in East Asia and Europe

MEDIA
IN TIMES OF
POPULISM
AND
POST-TRUTH
POLITICS



Editorial

Fake News and so-called post-truth politics are highly contested fields in this day and age, especially as they are set against a backdrop of rising global nationalism and a growing populism that is catalyzed by the uproar of enraged citizens on the one hand, and social media on the other. The question of what is true and what is fake now needs to be addressed differently. Moreover, journalism on the whole needs to be reconsidered in order to reach the people who no longer feel represented by it and vice versa. At the same time, journalism can only be as sophisticated and self-critical as the people and the society it comes from.

With this in mind, the focus of EPRIE 2018 was 'Media in Times of Populism and Post-Truth Politics'. In co-operation with the Robert Bosch Stiftung, Korea Verband brought together a broad variety of experts and young academics from East Asia and Europe with the aim of encouraging interregional exchange on issues such as integration, mutual understanding and international cooperation. Central to this year's topic was how journalism, social media, populism and post-truth politics are interwoven. A key question was what can an open-minded

society do to overcome the challenges amid fake news and rising nationalism?

In this journal, EPRIE 2018 participants have contributed thought-provoking articles to elaborate on this question. In the introduction, Rafael Goldzweig asks how populism is benefitting from post-truth politics in the age of social media and explores what we can do to fight it. Davide Banis and Bojan Stojkovski offer two distinctive viewpoints on whether or not journalism should stick to its obsession with "facts". Furthermore, Sawa Yasuomi, Julia Trzcińska and Siyuan Li share with us their experiences and theoretical endeavors on populism in Japan, Poland and China.

The second half of the journal is strongly oriented towards our EPRIE alumni activities. In our section on 'EPRIE Alumni Reports' we learn more about the conference on 'Migrants and Refugees Inclusion Politics' that was jointly organized by Albert Denk, Marta Kanarkiewics and Selma Polovina. In addition, we are also very thankful for Matthias Jochmans insights on his highly ambitious video-project "What is home to you?", Katsumata Yu's

sharing of 'fun times' in Tokyo, and Dahye Yim's report on the 'Empowerment-Rap-Workshop' with MC Funi, which was held in Japan, Berlin and Hamburg in 2018.

Our final section, 'Migration, Nation, and Belonging' covers several topics that were brought up by previous EPRIE exchange programs. Peter Kesselburg revisits the 'concepts of nations', which was a heavily discussed topic in EPRIE 2014. Istvan Deak presents his research on 'silent migration' during the time of communism and Yang Kefan addresses gender equality and comprehensive sexuality education in China. Last but not least, we are very happy to publish Youngwon Do's article on South Korea's Candlelight Revolution in the context of post-truth politics, which is not only a perfect conclusion to this year's topic on fake news, populism and social media, but also a very sophisticated reminder on how something that seems to be perfectly fine on the outside might be utterly wrong at the heart.

Mathias Rätther, Yann Werner Prell and Dahye Yim

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Post-Truth Politics in the Age of Social Media: How is Populism benefitting from it and what can we do to fight it?

Rafael Goldzweig

When post-truth was elected 2016's word of the year by the Oxford Dictionary, the world had just witnessed the impact of both Donald Trump's win in the US election and the Brexit referendum. In 2017, the political events surrounding the French and German elections put social media in the headlines for its possible role in interfering with the results - be it through the spread of false information or by bringing populist voices into the mainstream political debate. The discussion went beyond the use of user data to target voters, and included the role of tech companies in fostering "fake news" and political polarization through algorithms.

While false information and radicalization have existed long before

the arrival of social media, we are witnessing a different side to these problems in the digital era - a side which is unlikely to disappear anytime soon. According to a poll by the Pew Research Center (Gottfried, Shearer, 2017), two-thirds (67 percent) of Americans reported that they get at least some of their news on social media - with two out of ten doing so often. This is an 18 percent increase over the presidential election cycle in 2012 and a five percent increase since 2016. With the use of social media on the rise as a source of information, how can we cope with the challenges it brings so to avoid negative side effects in the future?

The New Face of an Old Problem

The lack of attention to facts and

ideological biases when consuming information has been a problem since before the advent of new media. It is wrong to assume that social media caused them, but it's true that it has facilitated - and in many cases amplified - these problems. Solutions such as fact-checking and media literacy have been suggested, but before trying to extinguish the fire, it is necessary to understand how the spark is created.

Social media is designed to make the user stay as long as possible in the platform they are using so that they can see and consume ads. Hence, algorithms are trained to give content that pleases the person accessing the platform, and it does not differentiate between content related to entertainment or politics. While this



Participants of EPRIE 2018 in Wrocław, Poland

process is good for filtering the huge amount of content that exists, it can also foster radicalization by blocking political content that does not appeal to the users' beliefs. Without being confronted with political positions that balance one's own, studies show that people tend to move towards a more extreme position.

Another aspect of this problem is understanding how content travels in these platforms. Social media allows people to connect despite any physical distance. While beneficial to a world that is increasingly more globalized, it also brings radical groups together. In different contexts, far right movements and supporters have managed to find people that think alike, and are using these platforms to raise their voices in

an organized manner (Zhang et al. 2017). Often using artificial ways of boosting content, such as bots, these groups manage to put issues on the mainstream agenda even when these opinions are in the minority. When such opinions gain ground on social media, they spill into mainstream debate, becoming central to political discussions.

When we add misinformation to it, we witness the perfect combination for a political storm. Facts are sidelined, and instead debates based on polarization and radicalization are given space. Populists benefit from it, as they are the ones offering easy solutions to complex problems, with seemingly common strategies, in their quest for power. The rise of new media in the last couple of

decades has enabled these actors to bypass the gatekeepers of traditional media and establish a direct channel with voters. By being negative and attacking political elites and the media, they construct an atmosphere of crisis, attracting the attention of mainstream media and benefiting from the polarization of the political debate. In an online environment pervaded by filter bubbles, polarization and false information, extremism flourishes and ends up benefitting radical ideas in electoral contexts.

What can we do?

When it comes to solving pressing technology-related issues, it is human nature to look at traditional solutions to define tomorrow in terms of what we know today

(Wheeler 2018). Hence, looking for ways to improve the online environment should not only come from legislation – as it is often suggested to solve policy problems - but also from the active auto-regulation of tech companies and the participation of civil society, journalists and consumers of information to put facts back into the center of the debate. When legislation is applied, it needs to be carefully designed to address specific issues – contrary to what has been recommended by many European countries so far. We need regulation, but we need governments and policy makers to understand what they are regulating in the first place.

While legislation has so far fallen short, tech companies are changing their platforms to address such questions in their own way. In some contexts, they have been partnering with fact-checking organizations to

find ways of improving the content shared by users on their platforms. Digital literacy is becoming more and more important. As we move towards a more connected way of living, and in order to have better judgment about what we consume from these platforms, we need to be able to understand what is behind the platforms we use to interact with the outside world.

A complex problem brings complex solutions. When talking about the problem of computational propaganda, Secretary Madeleine K. Albright (Digital Forensic Research Lab, 2017) said that “citizens are speaking to their governments using 21st century technologies, governments are listening on 20th century technology and providing 19th century solutions”. It is time we adopt 21st century solutions to 21st century problems.

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joined Democracy Reporting International in October 2018 as the Research Coordinator, where he monitors the impact of social media on elections and referenda around the world. His work entails the development of methodologies and data analysis and visualisation to assess how social media impacts public discourse, offering recommendations on how to turn the online environment into a more open and democratic space. Prior to joining DRI, he worked for Berlin based think-tank Dahrendorf Forum, where he researched the interaction between regulation, new technologies and democracy. Rafael was a Google Policy Fellow and a DAAD Helmut-Schmidt-Program Scholar. He holds a Bachelor degree in International Relations (University of São Paulo) and a Master of Public Policy (Hertie School of Governance). Rafael speaks English, German, Spanish and Portuguese.



The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Germany, Dr. Jong Bum Goo, received the participants of EPRIE 2018 at his residence.

Journalism should get rid of its Obsession with “Facts”

Davide Banis

Such a click-bait headline might seem out of place at the beginning of a piece that will most likely live on paper. I don't have to entice you to click on this article with a provocative statement, you are already reading it. Yet, here it is: journalism should get rid of its obsession with facts.

Before I get mistaken for a reality-denying postmodernist, let me clarify that I do believe that objective facts exist and that journalism is, at its best, a laborious, truth-seeking effort. So, what's my point? My point is that, in this time of fake news and post-truth politics, we can't live under the illusion that we will fight off misinformation by fact-checking or “facts” in general. I'm aware that by going this way, I'm opening the proverbial can of worms, and that I don't have neither the space nor, for that matter, the knowledge to tackle the problem in its complexity, so I will just focus

on two of these worms. They are two big, fatty worms:

1) Journalism is a much more complex practice than mere facts reporting. It's also about identity and a sense of belonging. As media scholar Hossein Derakhshan pointed out in a recent article on Medium (Derakhshan, 2018), after Trump's election digital subscriptions to The New York Times spiked not just because people wanted to pay for quality reporting but also because they wanted to feel part of a resistance – the membership as a badge of support, the exhibition of a worldview.

2) I mentioned above that journalism should be a truth-seeking effort. However, ‘facts’ and ‘truth’ aren't synonym. Facts can be weaponized and used in highly misleading ways. At the same time, fiction can be as much true as supposedly objective reporting. Aristotle wrote about it more than two thousand years ago

in his Poetics where he claimed that poetry and tragedy (what today we would call ‘fiction’) are ‘true to life, yet more beautiful’ (Underwood 2013: 10).

As you can see, the discussion can escalate quickly and evoke philosophical snakes and dragons. So, back to our worms.

Media as Vehicles of Identities

In his seminal 1989 publication ‘Communication as Culture’, communication theorist James Carey elaborated two complementary views of human communication: the ‘transmission view’ and ‘the ritual view’. The transmission view defines communication as transmission of information in space while the ritual view is about the “representation of shared beliefs” and the “maintenance of society in time.” Highlighting the link between the words ‘community’ and ‘communication’, James Carey argues that to

a certain extent the act of reading a newspaper is akin to attending a mass, “a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed.”

Facts have little to do with this latter view of communication, which is more about a sense of belonging and identity. As I said, James Carey’s two ways of understanding communication are complementary and can coexist. What is important for me here is to stress once again that we’ll never understand phenomena like fake news and post-truth politics if we only take in consideration the “transmission view” of communication. In other words, if we only consider facts. As Daniel Kreiss argues in his essay ‘The Media Are About Identity, Not Information’ (Kreiss 2018: 99), “Fox News and Breitbart have discovered [that] there is power in the claim of representing and working for particular publics, quite apart from any abstract claim to present the truth.”

Facts, Fiction and Journalism

However, even if we conceive journalism to be just a truth-telling practice, an unhealthy obsession with

‘facts’ can limit our appreciation of journalism’s potential. Usually, we think of ‘journalism and fiction’ as a dichotomy. After all, journalism is about facts and facts are the opposite of fiction. Or no? If we look at the history of journalism, we see that while journalism and fiction have had a difficult relationship, they definitely know each other pretty well.

In the sixties and seventies, for example, so-called New Journalism swept America. It was a new form of literary journalism that bent the boundaries of fact and fiction. Writers like Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer and Joan Didion committed to unearth the truth about society, yet they felt they could do so also with works that mixed rigorously researched facts and made-up scenes. In the words of Pulitzer Prize (for fiction) winner Norman Mailer: “I thought that fiction could bring us closer to the truth than journalism.”

To conclude, journalism can be much more than mere news (that, as James Carey points out, emerged just with the invention of telegraph).

It’s a practice that has the potential to convey not just cold facts but a sense of citizenship and a way to interpret the increasing complexity of our world. In journalism, facts are like bricks: essential to build a house but certainly not enough.

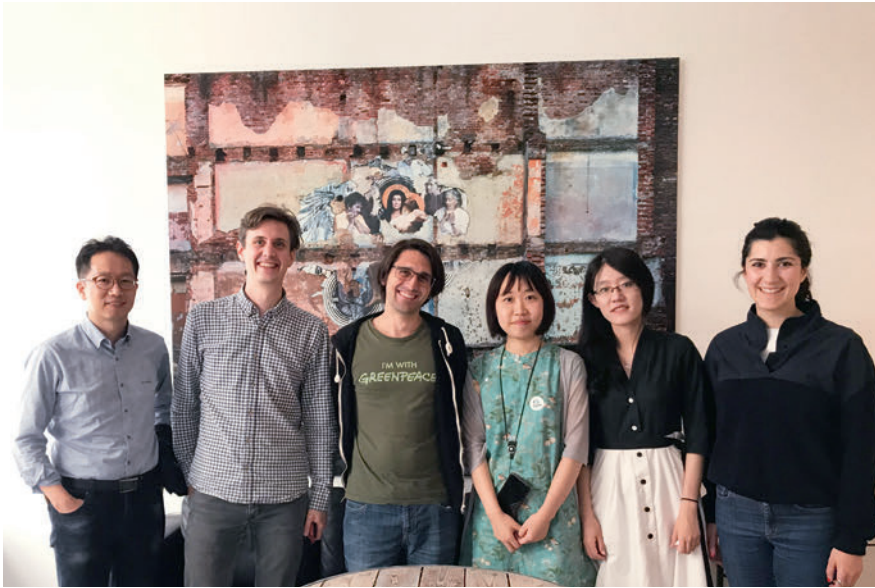
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The “Fake News” Phenomena in the Age of Growing Populism

Bojan Stojkovski

At a time when a growing number of online news outlets are becoming more and more popular, and traditional media outlets are struggling to keep up with the pace, creating quality and verified news has become a serious challenge for journalists and media outlets. During EPRIE 2018, we spent a huge amount of time discussing this particular challenge, as well as the other issues that journalists are facing nowadays amidst the rise in populism throughout Europe and East Asia.

I come from the Balkans, which during the last few years has gained a reputation for being a main source

of ‘fake news’. I learned that my country Macedonia (which was in the whirlwind of this phenomena after the 2016 US Presidential elections) became famous in the most unexpected of places – East Asia, particularly China and Japan.

My experience from EPRIE 2018 showed me that the methods used by Macedonians who created fake news during the elections became quickly widespread throughout different parts of the world. For example, a Japanese colleague mentioned that there were attempts to start websites that contained fake news and propaganda against the Korean minority

in the country, and that all of this was inspired by the developments that took place in Macedonia.

However, although there was a similarity in the approach, the main difference was what the infamous Macedonian teenagers did. They did it purely for business reasons, as they were looking to cash in on the engagement that the US audience had with the fake news they were creating (most of it being pro-Trump). The example that was mentioned in Japan, although business motivated as well, was different because it had elements of a malicious nature. These are the challenges we have to



As part of the EPRIE program 2018, participants visited non-government organizations dealing with populism and hate speech like Kleiner Fünf, Das Progressive Zentrum and Das NETZ in Berlin, Germany.

overcome and this is precisely what most fake news intends to do nowadays - divide our societies and create 'double realities' where we are not sure what is true and what is fake, therefore leading to bigger animosities between people.

With populism rising almost everywhere, one could argue that the large quantity of different types of information flowing on the internet every minute is a signal that traditional journalism as we know it is ending. However, this could also mean that

traditional journalism now has an opportunity to become stronger and more efficient in the battle against disinformation and propaganda.

As the fake news phenomena grows, so does the need for professional and verified information - and those media outlets who can offer it to audiences can survive and become even more important to our societies, no matter what part of the world we come from. During EPRIE 2018, we also explored how journalism can become more effective when

combined with social media. We explored how everyday people can become more aware of professional journalists and which news outlets are doing quality reporting, so that they will be able to tell the difference when they come across news of a dubious nature.

Nowadays there is no other way than conducting professional, fact-based journalism that is based on verified information.



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Populism, Fake News and Investigative Journalism

Sawa Yasuomi

Online Fake News and Right Wing Populism

On December 11 2018, Japan's Supreme Court upheld a decision made by the lower courts in Osaka that a viral website racially and sexually discriminated female journalist Lee Sin Hae. The top court also supported the ruling that the website unjustly defamed and insulted her. The website, Hoshu-Sokuho (Conservative Newsflash) is run by an anonymous man; its articles are mostly just selected and copied from a massive anonymous bulletin board called 2-channel, which is well known as a hotbed of candid but often offensive comments made by unidentified authors. Lee, a Korean national born and living in Japan, had sued the website owner in 2014 and the Supreme Court decision finalised the court order that the website owner must pay two million-yen (about twenty thousand US dollars) in compensation to her.

Some of the comments displayed on the website were "Is there any reason to let such trash like Lee Sin Hae live in Japan? Kick her out", "Bitch Korean", "Shit Bitch" and dozens of other offensive phrases. The Osaka district court, which initially handled Lee's legal claim on November

16 2017, concluded that these comments "repeatedly used insulting or improper languages to attack [Lee's] personality, which teased [Lee's] psychiatric status, intellectual ability, race, sex, age and look or others, and instigated to remove [Lee] from communities in Japan." Therefore, the ruling stated, "it is found that the extent to which the terms damaged [Lee's] feeling of fame, tranquillity in the life, and dignity as a woman was egregious."

This website however, is not alone. Rather, it seems to be the tip of the iceberg in Japan's cyber community, and Lee's determination to put up a legal fight was extremely rare in its kind: most anonymous racist or far-right comments in cyber space are overlooked due to the difficulty in finding those who made them, as well as the costs to tackle them.

Lee is an ethnic minority, a female, a liberal and a journalist. It is typical: these four elements are often targeted by populist right-wingers. The liberal daily newspaper Asahi Shimbun regularly faces such harassment. On January 15 2018, TV writer and popular conservative novelist Naoki Hyakuta tweeted: "If China and Japan have a military conflict, it is

one hundred percent certain that Asahi Shimbun will take China's side. As Asahi Shimbun is Japan's enemy, its readers supporting such traitor newspaper are Japan's enemy, too." This tweet got more than 6,500 retweets and 13,600 likes. A right-wing group called Go Japan! National Action Committee dispenses flyers saying: "Asahi, which releases numerous fake news stories, is disqualified from journalism. It is no longer a quality paper at all. No Reading, No Buying, No Letting Anyone Read anti-Japan Asahi Shimbun, which has turned to a yellow paper." Last year, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, from the conservative Liberal Democratic Party, made a comment on a fellow politician's Facebook page about Asahi's reaction to an alleged error. He wrote: "It's pitiful. A miserable excuse just like Asahi. It's all expected."

Another example is the treatment of popular female model Rola. Born to a Bangladeshi father and Russian-Japanese mother, she is very well known in Japanese celebrity society. Yet she faced online criticism after she encouraged her five-million Instagram followers to support protesters in Okinawa and sign a petition against a new American mili-

tary base. Litera, a tabloid-type lefty website, said: “As expected, attacks from far-right cultural celebrities, [PM] Abe’s cheerleaders and online right-wingers are getting more and more intense”...“online right-wingers, who are seemingly inspired by these influencers, unleash their attacks one after another”. Litera also pointed out that false information circulates on social media, including the comment that those who have signed the petition would be banned from entering USA.

Japan’s Anonymous Society, especially in the Cyber World

The vast majority of these online right-wing, harmful or insulting comments have one thing in common: anonymity. It is obvious that when you stay unidentified, you feel safe to say anything that you would be criticised for saying face to face. When anonymous, people become irresponsible and seem to feel free to use offensive language against women, liberals, journalists or ethnic minorities in Japan.

According to a Twitter users’ survey conducted by Japan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication in 2014, 75.1 percent of Japanese Twitter participants use an anonymous account, compared to 35.7 percent in the United States, 31 percent in the United Kingdom, 45 percent in France, 31.5 percent in South Korea and 39.5 percent in Singapore. On the other hand, only 19.4 percent of Japanese Twitter users bare their real names, compared to 56.4 percent in the US, 60.3 percent in the UK, 42.4 percent in France, 54.5 percent in South Korea and 47.6 percent in Singapore reveal their names.

Japanese society’s preference of anonymity is, however, not a unique phenomenon on Twitter. From its own online survey of over 37 countries and regions, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018 says that while globally 71 percent of respondents use Facebook and 20 percent use Twitter, in Japan only 22 percent use Facebook, while 27 percent use Twitter. It is suggested that Facebook’s platform, which usually shows real names, is not a comfortable space for Japanese users as it is for the rest of the world.

These two statistics show that Japanese cyber communication is largely conducted in anonymity, which now seems to be nearing de-facto standard in the country’s digital world.

Another aspect in the country’s online communication is that the public is not willing to share their opinion about political or societal issues online either. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 says that Japan ranks the lowest in both commenting and sharing news stories. The Report’s 2018 issue did not publish its analysis on the subject.

Strong anonymity trends and the general unlikelihood to share their views might possibly be a basis of antipathy—or sometimes hatred—against people like Rola who stand out from others by speaking out in public against authorities or the government.

Okinawa Stories

There are two local newspapers in Okinawa that are regularly attacked by conservative politicians, celebrities and anonymous citizens. Geographically and historically

marginalised, the southern islandic prefecture has been suffering financial disadvantages alongside a concentration of US military bases, which occupies 15 percent of Okinawa’s main island. Many residents have been protesting against the US base, accusing the military of aircraft noises, creating accident risks, crimes committed by troops and chemical agent contamination.

Representing the public voice, Okinawa’s two local newspapers, Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times, often take a relatively liberal and anti-military stance and are critical of Tokyo’s conservative government. This makes them a target for right-wingers.

On June 25 2015, a group of parliament members from the conservative ruling Liberal Democratic Party held a private seminar in Tokyo. During the event, House of Representative member Hideo Onishi said: “The best way to punish mass media is for them to lose advertising revenues. I would like cultural celebrities and people in private sectors to ask the Japan Business Federation [to take action against these media outlets].” Representative Takashi Nagao said: “[Okinawan media] are totally hijacked by the left-wing.” These comments were echoed by writer and novelist Naoki Hyakuta’s, who remarked that, “we should crush Okinawa’s two newspapers.”

Although the media, including the two Okinawan newspapers, reacted with criticism against these comments, the anti-Okinawa-media remarks were supported by anonymous cyber voices.

It was against such a backdrop that conservative national daily Sankei Shimbun published a story denouncing Okinawan media on December 9 2017. Written by Keiichi Takagi, the bureau chief of Naha (Okinawa's prefectural capital), the article was titled: "Unreported by Okinawa's two newspapers: A US Marine in coma after saving Japanese man, braving risk." It reported that in a traffic accident, Marine Master Sergeant Hector Trujillo tried to save a Japanese man from a crashed car before being hit by another car and going into a coma himself. The story praised his 'brave act'. Sankei criticised the two newspapers for not referring to his rescue effort: "Okinawan media, while fanatical in their belief that the 'US military is evil', stay decisively indifferent, showing no interest in telling the truth of the case. Why are the Okinawan press so cold-hearted? If they keep on ignoring this, exercising 'freedom not to report', they are not qualified to call themselves news media. It's a disgrace to the Japanese."

Indeed, the local press did not publish a story of Trujillo's rescue act. It was, however, because there were no facts to back this up. Ryukyu Shimpo, one of the Okinawan newspapers, detailed the background on January 30 2018.

"US Marines, in reply to Ryukyu Shimpo's question, answered that, '(The master Sergeant) did not carry out a rescue act', and Okinawa Prefectural Police said 'no rescue act has been confirmed'. The Sankei story was even denied by the US Military. Sankei has not contacted the police's traffic mobile unit [which dealt with

the accident] since the accident, the unit said. It is highly likely that Sankei criticised Okinawan press based on false information without a sufficient verification effort."

Sankei later admitted that "the story was based on insufficient research" and "our criticism against the journalistic stances of Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times in the story was excessive". The national paper withdrew the story and apologised to the two newspapers and their readers. Takagi was removed from the bureau chief position.

Made-Up Story Revealed

On January 17 2017, a court story about a child rape case appeared in a Japanese-language website, Republic of Korea Citizen Report. It was titled "Seoul court to acquit a man of raping Japanese girls." The report said, "Seoul City Court acquitted Lee Mu-hyun, who was indicted for raping two Japanese girls, overturning the previous ruling. In the case, Mu-hyun raped eleven and nine year-old sisters who were traveling in Korea with two other family members. The family was visiting a department store in Seoul when Mu-hyun spotted the girls getting lost in the building. He took them to an emergency staircase and raped them, intimidating them with a knife."

The story, however, was strange. Firstly, the reason for acquitting him stated by the presiding judge was: "As the victims have already returned to Japan, it is not necessary to impose a punishment on him," which is obviously doesn't make sense as a legal discussion. Secondly, while the article said the court overturned "the previous ruling", it did

not describe anything about the previous trial in the story. In addition, the defendant's name was apparently concocted from the names of two former Korean presidents.

Buzzfeed Japan investigated this. The digital media outlet found that Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not noticed a rape case in which Japanese citizens were involved in. There were no reports found in mainstream Japanese media or Korean newspapers about the acquittal. The photograph on the page was not the court building in Seoul, but a Jeju Island court photograph shown on Wikipedia. Other stories on the website named numerous company names that do not exist in Korea.

BuzzFeed Japan ran a story casting strong doubt on the Republic of Korea Citizen Report. After the report, it also successfully conducted an interview with the site owner. The interview did not identify him other than to say that he was a twenty-five-old unemployed man, who admitted in "a sleek manner and polite behaviour that all stories on the website were 'fake news'. He told BuzzFeed that his motivation of making them up was financial, "I wanted to make money quickly. It was my first attempt to make money using the traffic of political stories." He was inspired by the "fake news stories that spread during the US presidential election and made profit." He also confessed that "there are basically two information categories for those who like to talk about Korea want to spread. One is stories to inflame hatred. The other is stories where you can look down on Korea or say something 'is problematic' with them."

They spread. The rape acquittal story, which ‘inflames hatred’, was shared more than 2,500 times on Twitter and got more than 16,000 reactions, comments and shares. Other stories on the fake news websites are titled “a human meat factory cracked down in Korea”, “the next State Secretary of the US is to consider sanctions on Korea over the comfort women problem” and “a popular ten year-old actress got pregnant, which is ‘common in the industry’ in Korea.” After BuzzFeed revealed the man’s irresponsible attitude, the Republic of Korea Citizen Report shut down.

These examples show that investigative reporting can beat fake, hate and populist content. However, there are challenges in carrying out investigations in Japan. Firstly, the Japanese Information Disclosure Act, which is the equivalent of the American Freedom of Information Act, is far weaker and ineffective

than its US counterpart. Secondly, it also matters in journalism that Japanese people are highly hesitant to speak publicly or on the record. Interviewees frequently ask journalists for anonymity in interviews, even on non-sensitive subjects, because of feelings of embarrassment or because they don’t want to stand out in the very homogeneous community. This seems to cause a vicious cycle: Japan’s information environment is becoming more and more anonymous, with things like Twitter accounts making people believe that speaking on the record with their names is something exceptional, therefore then leading to a further increase in anonymous comments. Thirdly, the notion of ‘personal information’ is becoming extremely strong in today’s Japan and often confused with the concept of privacy. There seems to be a rule that you must not share any personal data with journalists, as it should be always protected. Personal data pro-

tection is, needless to say, important. However, personal information can be, at the same time, of public interest. The proper balance between these two concepts seems to be in danger of being lost. It should be noted that ultimately, any journalistic investigation needs to be based on personal-level information and individual interviews. Information without personal identity is just to believe and accept, not to inspect or investigate.

The way to overcome these challenges is for journalists to regain the trust - those who do not put trust in journalism are unwilling to share information with reporters, regardless of whether the information is sensitive or not. The trust in journalists should be built on good practice. However difficult, journalist must go on; there are no easy answers.



Sawa Yasuomi

is a senior news writer in the Investigative and In-Depth Reporting Unit at Kyodo News, which is Japan’s news wire service. His recent work includes stories of sex exploitation of teenage girls, revelation of the government’s failure to track school enrollment of more than 10,000 immigrant children, and extreme crowding of public shelters for abused children. Sawa also participated in the global projects of Panama Papers and Paradise Papers by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Prior to these investigation, he covered the United Nations as Kyodo’s correspondent. He teaches at the Journalism School of Waseda University in Tokyo as a part-time lecturer, and is the author of ‘Global Journalism: Backstories of cross-border investigative reporting’, ‘Humanising the News: British Way of Crime Coverage’, both published in Japanese language. Sawa joined Kyodo in 1990.

Humor and Sarcasm as a Tool against Populism in Poland

Julia Trzcińska

In recent years, countries all over the world have faced problems caused by populists gaining power. Problems that are not only connected to the sphere of communication and dialogue (or rather lack of it), but also problems proving that most people are rarely interested in politics and will fall for simple solutions easily. Since there is still a long way to the next parliamentary elections - and a chance to change the situation - and with the mainstream media not providing any comfort, people are looking for other ways to deal with their sense of helplessness. And as seen in the case of Poland, humor and sarcasm can be used as tools to counter this. During the time of the Polish People's Republic, humor and sarcasm were used as ways of dealing with the tough political situation, especially when censorship and control were extremely tight and any other forms of protest were almost impossible. Jokes in the PPR era were mostly political, but also economical, and were designed to add a little brightness to the reality of daily life. One of the most known examples of humor used in this way was by Orange Alternative, an anti-communist movement originating

in Wrocław that quickly spread to other big cities in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The movement opposed the politicization of life and the communist propaganda that decorated the public sphere with the color red. So in protest, the movement decided to use orange instead. From August 1982 onwards, small dwarfs started to appear on cities' walls, where previously any anticommunist slogans would be painted over by the militia. Waldemar Frydrych, who was 'the father' of the movement, explained it with reference to Hegel and Marx's dialectics: "the first painting was a thesis, the militia's painting over was an antithesis, while the dwarf was a synthesis". Dwarfs began to appear in other parts of the city too and today it's Wrocław's symbol, even though not everyone remembers its origin. Dwarfs weren't the only action that Orange Alternative organized. They always used surreal slogans instead of ideological ones and tried to expose the communist regime's absurdity, as well as force people to think and act. They often paraphrased other solidarity movements and their slogans and posters – and laughed at political forces

from both sides of the barricade. Most of their events took place in 1987 and 1988 and they used fake or real holidays as an excuse for gathering. Frydrych also explained why the dwarfs were such a powerful symbol: "How can you seriously treat an officer who asks you the question: Why do you participate in the illegal gathering of dwarfs?" Although most of the events ended with participants getting arrested by the militia, in most cases it was difficult to press any serious charges. Many of the slogans were even fake proclamations summoning to help the state's organ such as: "Citizen! Help the militia - just beat yourself!"

Another way humor was used as a way of dealing with this sad reality was through the cinema, however all movies were scrutinized by the censor board and only the ones that were approved by the state could be seen in theatres. Nevertheless, some of them were regarded as safety valves, like Stanisław Bareja's *Miś* (eng. *Bear*). The movie depicted the reality of living in the PPR so well that it is often said that younger generations can't fully understand it. Thankfully, Poland in the



Participants of EPRIE 2018 in Krzyzowa, Poland

21st century doesn't have to fight against a communist regime anymore and people often say that it's actually good that youngsters can't understand Miś like their parents or grandparents can. Nevertheless, at this moment Poland is far from being politically stable and once again humor and sarcasm seem to serve as the way to ease society's anxiety.

Just like most European countries, Poland is facing a rise in populism - mostly rightwing, but not only from that side. The origin of modern day political populism in Poland can be traced back to when political parties changed their financing system. This has led to a rise of leaders in those parties (often just one in each group), as well as changes in the me-

dia system. The first populist movements were present in the Polish political scene in the beginning of the 2000s, with parties such as Samoobrona (Self-defence) or Liga Polskich Rodzin, (League of Polish Families) who criticized 'the elites' and the EU and were examples of the so-called agrarian populism. Some even argue that the Solidarity Movement was in fact populist as well, and that for years, Poles were taught to demand from the state, to challenge the state and to protest against it, instead of cherishing it as a common good. What makes it more serious is that one of those populist parties - Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (eng. Law and Justice) - managed to get into power, and their leader Jarosław Kaczyński often contests Polish political trans-

formation. The party has the majority of seats in the Polish parliament and implements many alarming laws that affect the judicial system, schools, higher education, the media industry and many more.

Although it is clear that just making fun of those problems won't change much, Poles once again use humor and sarcasm to somehow deal with a situation where any dialogue between left and right-wingers seems almost impossible. One of the two most popular sites are ASZdziennik.pl and Donald.pl. Both look like parody news websites, but ASZdziennik.pl is a part of NaTemat.pl - a group of websites owned by the left-wing supporting Tomasz Lis (also Newsweek Poland editor-in-chief),



Dwarfs in Wrocław, Poland. Photo by matoges, Flickr.

while the creators of Donald.pl are still anonymous. Although both portals have a more liberal approach, they criticize all parties, Polish society and the absurdity of Poles' behavior. In this way, they can serve as a kind of 'third way' between the ruling party or other rightwing party supporters and the opposition, as they tend to bash both sides equally and expose their weaknesses. This can be seen in the example of the editorial published by one of the

most well-known Polish journalists Dorota Wellman, who accused the youth of not being present at the recent protest against changes in the judicial system. She asked the young generation what must happen to make them more active and suggested that maybe it will be possible when soy latte is taken away or when Netflix stops working. Shortly after, ASZdziennik published an article. It said: "The Great Expedition of the Authorities. They want to reach the

Netflix Mountain and destroy the PiS power source once and for all". This was a reference to Lord of the Rings that was meant to show the opposition's weakness.

While ASZdziennik.pl and Donald.pl are one of the most popular pages, Poles publish thousands of memes and jokes that ridicule both the ruling party and the opposition. When the media take sides as well, and when there's no place for dialogue, they use the internet to speak their mind with humor and sarcasm. Just like their parents in the 1980s, they use humor and sarcasm as weapons against a political reality they don't want. Perhaps having more distance to ourselves is the first step to the real dialogue that Poland desperately needs.

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What is the Opposite of Populism?

Siyuan Li

What is the opposite of populism? I asked this question in Potsdam, on the fifth day of EPRIE 2018. That morning, we exhausted our vocabulary trying to define the term. The challenge of defining populism is at least partially due to the fact that each of us knows only a part of the multifaceted problem. There were twenty of us who had gathered to share our perspectives from different countries and backgrounds. We summoned up our wisdom and never let one voice overwhelm the other, which was the best thing about EPRIE.

My memories in China reminded me of a version of politics that would not allow any form of populist mobilizations. And my observations in Japan revealed that when elitism and seniority prevail, the chance for populism to flourish is slim. I was bewildered: how to counter populism without silencing voices of dissent? How to encourage political participation without igniting antagonism? Is populism an inevitable consequence for democracy? Should we even bother to study the matter in a context where democracy is absent?

The purpose of the question is certainly not just to juggle with terms.

If we object what populism stands for, it is necessary to know the opposite of it so that even if we have no map in hand when searching for the solution, at least we have an idea of what could be crossed off from the alternatives. I agree that populism should be overcome, but it is no less important to avoid committing another error.

During the discussion we agreed that populism is not all negative. Populists give simple explanations to complicated problems, but the problems they address often deserve to be thoroughly debated. Populists take advantage of disagreements and are prone to antagonism, but disagreements could also ignite constructive reforms.

Indeed, despite their hypocrisy, the populists claim to represent the will of the people. A well-functioning democracy is based on a series of optimistic beliefs: man-kind is rational; they could be enlightened by reason; if freedom of speech and press is guaranteed, the mass could be well-informed and engage in balanced debates on issues that concern them; therefore, they will make the right choices. Such assumptions are highly questionable when we look

at the reality. People often act irrationally against their own interests; they ignore the facts and believe false claims; their attention is easily drawn by sensational things rather than what's really important. Freedom of expression is frequently intruded and the majority of the population could hardly be regarded as 'well-informed citizens'.

One could argue against the rule of majority in the knowledge of a malfunctioning democracy. In modern democracy, the idea of selecting leaders with above average virtue and capability is indeed a meritocratic philosophy. However, I am skeptical to any statement that denies intrinsic equality between human beings. An often-heard argument is that democracy is the least bad political system ever implemented in human history. I am not in a position to concur that opinion, but I would not risk to give away the right to decide in the name of my own good.

One could argue for pluralism in opposition to populism. Populists reject pluralism. But is a pluralistic society obliged to encompass the radicals, including the populists? I have no answer for this question, but the consequences of censorship

in authoritarian countries should be learnt before the implementation of a regulatory policy against populism.

When we tried to make cross-national comparisons, the consensus among the participants was that the concept of populism could go beyond specific ideological alignments, for example, the easiest association with the radical rightwing parties in Europe. I came to realize that despite there being no populist mobilization in Chinese elections, as we see in Europe, populist strategies could still be found in nationalistic

and anti-globalization sentiments sanctioned by the state.

If populism is interpreted descriptively, it is a rhetoric characterized by the antagonism between ‘the people’ and those who are excluded from that group. Populism is a narrative of “us versus them”. Ideologies attached to populism could be either right or leftwing, depending on the social-political contexts. The ‘people’ can mean many different things to different populists in different circumstances. It could be used in anti-elitist, anti-globalist, anti-immigrant, nationalistic or rac-

ist assertions. Populism is powerful as a method of political communication. It forms solidarity through constructing identity, and mobilizes people through disseminating anxiety. The doctrine of populists is to never compromise: there are no opponents, only enemies.

Even if, until today, I have no confidence to say that I have the full answer, I do have tremendous belief about what a cross-context contention itself means. Our discussion that morning by the beautiful lakeside of Griebnitzsee confirmed this to me.



Siyuan Li

is a writer, translator, online video contributor and PhD student at Waseda University, Tokyo. She also works part-time at Kotto Dori Law Office. Through her studies in journalism and experiences as a column writer, she has developed an academic interest in the manner through which the media is produced and perceived, especially in cross-national contexts between Japan and China.

Conference: Migrants and Refugees Inclusion Policies - Local Level Perspectives

Albert Denk
Marta Kanarkiewicz
Selma Polovina



Spain is currently at the center of migration movements to Europe. In the first six months of 2018, more than 23,500 refugees and migrants came via the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain (UNHCR 2018). In these attempts to reach the 14-kilometer long European coast, more than 1,500 refugees and migrants died. At the same time of this humanitarian crisis, three EPRIE alumni organized a conference on the topic of 'Migrants and Refugees Inclusion Policies - Local Level Perspectives' at the University of Granada. It ended up taking place exactly when

European states blocked the rescue ship 'Lifeline' from safely docking. Over a short period, the atmosphere on the European political level had changed drastically. In this climate, the three organizers tried to send out a message of global solidarity, bringing together people from different European cities including Berlin, Granada, Toulouse, and Wrocław at the local level to discuss approaches and initiatives for the inclusion of refugees and migrants.

Between 22 and 23 June 2018, the working conference took place in

a very special place symbolizing historical migration movements to Europe. The city of Granada, and especially its landmark the Alhambra, are witness to centuries-long migration from Africa to the European continent. In addition, Granada remains a city of migration today. In the tourism industry for example, African migrants provide a variety of services. With this conference, an attempt was made to provide a platform for local actors from different European regions, thereby bypassing state actors. In order to overcome national obstacles and the current political finger pointing between states, local projects and organizations were at the center of the conference. The low threshold level meant that the focus on inter-state barriers could also be disregarded.

At the outset, Prof. Jose Antonio Fernandez Aviles (University of Granada) pointed out the various limitations for non-European migrants and refugees in the labor market. In doing so, he presented structural unequal treatments, which suggest that the inclusion of non-European migrants and refugees is hampered by the state. This was followed by three



open workshops on the topics of education, housing and labor markets. The participants discussed various problems at the local level and then worked out ideas for tackling those problems. Here, the focus was on overcoming a purely critical problem and on the development of new approaches. This was followed by a discussion on the topic of ‘Building Diverse and Equal Societies – Delivering Social Services that Support the Process’, with experts Imke Siefert (Malteser Werke Berlin), Manuela Plizga-Jonarska (Wrocławskie Centrum Rozwoju Społecznego) and Patricia Bueso Izquierdo (Internacional Cruz Roja Española). All three experts presented their examples of how they are active in their cities. Thereafter, a Spanish-language panel on the topic of ‘Explorando el potencial de la sinergias entre lo público y la ciudadanía’ (Exploring the potential of synergies between the public and citizens) took place. It addressed the challenges of the inclusion of refugees on the Granada site. The effects of the current political isolation policies were discussed and the small margins for action of local actors were shown. The dis-

cussion was led by experts Manuela Durán Bernardino (University of Granada), María Llanos del Corral (La Bolina Granada), María del Mar Osuna Vargas (Diputación Vgr Group Granada) and Mustafa Saif (Toulouse City Council).

The second day of the working conference promised different highlights. A discussion was held on the topic of ‘Local Changemakers - Civil Society Perspectives on Migrants and Refugees Issues’. In this expert discussion, the voices again came from all four cities, represented by Dmytro Zozulia (Fundacja Ukraina Wrocław), Sarah Schlack (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), Selma Polovina (Airbus SAS Toulouse) and Jose Cobos Ruiz (AGEyR Granada). The experts presented the various projects in their cities and analyzed their work. They looked at issues of representation, their motivation and the contradiction between maintaining jobs working with refugees and actually making these jobs superfluous. This was followed by an interactive workshop entitled ‘Making the Invisible Visible’ by means of the 4D-mapping method. The

workshop, led by our on-site partner La Bolina, illustrated the links between the different actors in the field of inclusion. The day was complemented by a bus tour that looked at Malaga’s changing history.

The working conference was not designed to talk about refugees and migrants, but in fact with refugees and migrants. In particular, with the active support of La Bolina, the event has become an open and constructive exchange with local actors, those from different European cities and migrants and refugees. La Bolina is already a prime example of inclusion at eye level. The vision of the project “is to repopulate a village [...] which once was thriving and is now at risk of extinction due to depopulation”. Thereby a process of bringing together takes place, which contains “a group with refugees/migrants, local people and others interested in participating in the co-creation of small scale viable solutions, lifelong friendships, skill sharing and living as human to human” (La Bolina 2018). This collaboration also proved particularly fruitful during the working conference.

After the conference, political headlines once again put the importance of this topic into focus. One month after the event in Granada, more than 600 people overran the six-meter-high fortress walls of the European enclave Ceuta. Spanish and Moroccan border officials also prevented people from crossing. On the edges of Europe, it’s clear that a closed borders policy cannot be enforced and kept upright. In European border countries such as Spain, the processes of inclusion of refugees and migrants need to be much more in line with European societies.

With this conference, various local actors were able to network and further cooperation is already planned. These local actors strive regardless of their states, and their foreclosure policy, for an inclusive society.

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Albert Denk

is completing his PhD on Sustainable Development Goals at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU) in Sociology and Political Sciences. At LMU, he is also working as an assistant lecturer for theories of globalization and postcolonial studies. Moreover, he is a research associate at the Technische Universität München (TUM), as well as a research supervisor at Refugees Welcome Germany. His research interests include processes of globalization, development policy, migration and flight, as well as global transformation processes. He is active in the working group 'Young UN Research' in the United Nations Association of Germany (DGVN), he is also an active member in the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS). He previously studied in the Global Studies Programme at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales Buenos Aires, Jawaharlal Nehru University New-Delhi, Universitat de Barcelona, and has worked on several projects abroad.



Marta Kanarkiewicz

is a researcher in the topics of migration and migrant inclusion practices with a special emphasis on the local level perspective in the process and has recently defended a master thesis in this field. She is currently working as an intern in the M.E.P Europe projects Granada in Spain on the position of a project coordinator, gaining experience that will support her own future organization working with the issues of migrant inclusion. In the meantime, she is concentrated on expanding the network of partners dedicated to relevant topics.



Selma Polovina

was born in former Yugoslavia and came to France as a political refugee in 1992. She studied engineering and is currently working for the Airbus Group in Toulouse as an aeronautical engineer. She is engaged in several international associations, institutions and networks like the Bosch alumni network. She participated in the 'French German Future dialogue program' in 2015; the EPRIE program in 2016, the first conference of the Bosch alumni network called 'Balkan Refugee Route' in October 2017 and the forum 'Balkans let's get up' in March 2018 both in Belgrade.

What is Home to You?

Matthias Jochmann



The documentary series ‘What is home to you?’ fosters mutual understanding and builds bridges across cultures. “Where are you from?” This, or something similar, will often be the first question to start small talk, especially when people from different cultures meet. Despite being a simple question, in a globalized world, this question contains many relevant aspects. No

matter where you look, societies are growing more and more individualistic and competitive. Despite growing interdependencies, borders and nationalities appear to becoming more prevalent again.

We, the initiators of this project, have been gifted with the opportunity to travel intercontinentally. This motivated us to create the concept

for our documentary series, ‘What is home to you?’ The series consists of a number of interviews and focuses on the topic of ‘home’ on a transnational and intergenerational level. The constellation of two interviewers - one local, one from another continent and two local interviewees from two different generations - is the standard pattern throughout the documentary series. Thanks to the

EPRIE Project Fund, four constellations of this pattern could be filmed in 2018 – two in Germany and the other two in South Korea.

Hanna, who grew up mostly in South Korea, and me, who was raised in Germany, conducted an interview in a village not far from the city of Frankfurt with less than 5000 inhabitants. There we met Jana (30) and her grandmother Renate (88), who impressed us with how they understood the topic of ‘home’. What was and is home to them? What does it take to make a home a home? What has shaped their understanding? What role has migration played on how they perceive their environments?

When we asked Renate where she was really from, she burst into tears. She said she is still carrying the pain of being expatriated from Upper Silesia, which belonged to Germany until after the war and is in Poland today. She then lived in Eastern Germany where her family was not welcome, and eventually she moved to West Germany. After her marriage,

Renate lived in many different countries, including Tanzania and Saudi Arabia. After the loss of her husband some decades ago, she felt homeless, and said she will stay with her remaining family members now.

At the same time, her granddaughter Jana proudly declared her village as her home as this is where she feels her roots, where she knows everyone and where she wants to contribute to civil society. She plays her part by reading the village’s fairytale to children once a year, by collecting money to maintain the local heritage and by organizing neighbors events.

Jana and Renate welcomed us into their apartments, which enabled us to understand how they structure and decorate their homes and what memories they collect. When the family gathered for coffee and cake – a very German Sunday tradition – we understood how the family members, who meet at least once a week, treat each other. This was a new experience for both Hanna and I. For different reasons we don’t feel that connected to one specific place.

We never lived in places where people in the streets know and greet each other, and since moving away from home we don’t meet our families that often.

This may sound very normal, but by capturing normality we intend to make audiences from different cultures understand each other better. By sharing stories of normalness, audiences can understand the diversity of a nation’s society, as well as how history and recent societal tendencies have shaped today’s culture. During the process of editing, we hope to be able to express the surprises and emotions that we experienced during the interviews. And as the process goes on, we hope to shoot more interviews to enable us to show a multinational kaleidoscope of the very diverse understandings of ‘home’.



Matthias Jochmann

is a freelancer in documentary film, radio and theatre. He is working on different documentary formats, especially in Germany and China. His encounter with East Asia has broadened his perspectives tremendously. Taking part in EPRIE 2017 fostered these understandings even more and so he is looking forward to strengthening the network and proceeding or initiating projects that deepen transnational dialogues.



Sharing Fun Times

Katsumata Yu

EPRIE local meetings are frequently held in Tokyo. In 2018 we had several meetings and, in this report, I will look back on the last meeting.

On December 29 2018, we met for lunch at a Japanese curry house in Yanaka, in the old part of downtown Tokyo. For the local meetings we usually do our best to select a place where we can enjoy nice Japanese food. Sometimes, eating the local food is the biggest motivation for showing up to our gatherings.

After lunch we explored Yanaka's shopping district and a temple. Yanaka is a district with preserved traditions as the municipal government has intentionally maintained this part of town. Exploring

the Yanaka area can be a nice entry point into historical Japan and aligns with EPRIE's core value of deepening inter-cultural and historical understanding.

After exploring Yanaka, Ao Feng (EPRIE 2015), an entrepreneur, took us to his business sites. He started his real estate business after graduating from a master's program at Waseda University a while ago. Due to his consistent hard work, his business grew rapidly. He now manages real estate for temporary visitors and travelers mainly in the Tokyo and Osaka area. We studied the property business a lot. After visiting several of his business sites, we arrived at his newly opened coffee shop. We enjoyed casual conversa-

tion until the early evening and then closed the meeting.

Actually, I was planning to initiate a serious discussion about the future of EPRIE as we have heard that EPRIE 2020 will be the last EPRIE program funded by the Bosch Foundation. However, as our casual conversation was so much fun, I forgot to initiate this discussion. That was my carelessness to forget the important discussion, but perhaps just having fun with alumni is the best strategy to sustain the unity of our group. What makes it possible to sustain the unity of organizations like ours in the long run? Perhaps, the answer is utterly simple: just sharing fun times together. That's it!



Katsumata Yu

teaches math and philosophy in Japan. He is a graduate of Columbia University and London School of Economics. He is interested in the philosophical and sociological exploration of money.

Who am I?

Dahye Yim

Workshops for empowerment with rapper FUNI in Tokyo, Berlin, and Hamburg with people who are struggling with nationality, identity and the sense of belonging



Rapper FUNI, photo by Tsukasa Yajima

“Don’t believe anything, just believe in yourself” – this is what FUNI always says when introducing himself and I think this is the main message of FUNI’s workshops. FUNI is a rapper and a dreamer who gives empowerment workshops for people who are struggling with nationality, identity and a sense of belonging. He is a so-called ‘Zai-nichi’ Korean who was born and raised in Japan

but does not have a Japanese nationality. At home, he was taught to be a Korean but at school he was educated as a Japanese. Within his family he was a Korean but his neighbours called him Japanese. Rap was a medium he could use to overcome his struggles. So he said to himself: “I will just believe in myself.” FUNI started to give workshops to people with similar backgrounds – letting

them write lyrics and record their raps – which was designed to help participants empower themselves.

Alumni members of EPRIE, Yue Fu, Jotaro Kato, Hanna Suh, Sina Schindler, Claudia Karstens and I began the workshop. The very first idea actually emerged after Yue and Nataly met FUNI during the Alumni program in Tokyo. Immediately

they felt they should do something with FUNI. We had the luck to be funded and make our dreams come true in Japan and Germany. We had three workshops in three cities with the same topic, but the backgrounds of the participants were different in each of them. Participants in Tokyo included a former stateless person born in Japan, a third generation of Korean descendants, persons born in mixed marriages and also some with migration backgrounds. In Berlin we had participants who mainly had a migrant or refugee background and whose mother and father were from different countries. In Hamburg, participants were mainly those who were adopted and raised in Germany.

To begin the session, FUNI first talked about his story. Then we had to make our MC names, as it is the starting point of being a rapper; we are serious. We didn't have an introduction round of explaining where we come from, what our names are, what we are doing or where we live now etc. which made us trust that this is a safe space for expression from the beginning. The workshop was simple, we just wrote what we wanted to express. FUNI let us write the lyrics in our mother tongue as

it is not for a Billboard record but just for everyone to feel empowered through writing and spitting them out. This step was quite interesting for me as I had to dig deep into myself to see what I was struggling with and what is behind these feelings. I never imagined myself writing down lyrics so intensively but the atmosphere naturally led me into it, I even had some tears while writing things down. The best part for me is that swearing is somewhat allowed in rapping, just writing down exactly how I felt without filtering. One by one, we recorded what we wrote into rapping. FUNI made us feel like we were already famous underground rappers, so we just jumped on to the beat and started to rap. Throughout the process, the participants built some kind of solidarity among each other, so we became friends quickly. When we listened to all of the recorded raps at the end, it was full of different languages but we could somewhat understand the meanings and feelings. It was obvious that people felt much more excited than at the beginning of the workshop, the room was full of laughter and talk by the end. Every step of the workshop was slowly empowering us. FUNI did not try to teach us how to be empowered, but gave

us the chance to do it by ourselves. However, how he flew through the workshop saying small words of support when we needed it, was a bit like Tinker Bell. That was the key of this whole workshop.

“I am not alone, I am Plural” – one phrase from a 12-year-old girl in the Berlin workshop, who is born and raised in Berlin, has a Japanese father and a German mother. “Daughter, I don't know where I come from, then how can I tell you where you come from?” – from an adoptee in Hamburg who does not exactly know where she is from but has to answer the question from her daughter. “How long will this last? This discrimination? Until ‘Wine’ gets ripened” – from MC Wine, a participant who was formerly stateless in Japan. I cannot believe how poetic and insightful the lyrics were and with rapping, the messages became stronger. Empowerment through expression worked out well with the FUNI workshop. Everyone enjoyed it so much even though the topic itself is not so easy to untangle, but we experienced a way to resolve our struggles we have to deal with in our lifetime.



Dahye Yim

Alumni from EPRIE 2016. She is currently in Berlin working with Korea Verband working on diverse projects. Her research area is based on health inequality, happiness of young adults in South Korea, health access and empowerment level of women and girls in Cambodia.



Impressions of the empowerment rap workshop with FUNI in Berlin, photos by Tsukasa Yajima



Concepts of Nations Revisited: What has changed since EPRIE 2014?

Peter Kesselburg

In 2014, I met up with my fellow participants in Warsaw to discuss aspects of nation building and the construction of national identities within that framework. In those years, Europe and Asia seemed quite stable: The Grand Coalition between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats governed Germany with a considerably huge margin in the Bundestag, with a left-wing majority government also in reach. In France a unified Socialist government headed by President Francois Hollande and a supermajority of socialist legislators fought their battles in the Assemblée nationale against their conservative counterparts. The conservative PO governed Poland in a stable manner, whereas in Japan the traditional LDP-Komeito-coalition was in charge. In the South Korean political landscape, Park Geun-Hye and her conservative Saenuri-party dominated the National Assembly with its usual factionalism and consequent fractionalization of parties. In China, Xi Jinping consolidated his position as General Secretary of the CCP and president of the People's Republic of China by introducing his anti-corruption campaign against cadres on every administrative level. In the United States, Barack Obama had to deal with Re-

publican majorities in Congress, but US policies seemed to be in line with the principles of multilateralism and diplomatic procedures.

Some four years later, the global political environment has considerably changed, as have the topics discussed within our EPRIE framework. Topics like migration, populism, 'alternative facts' and 'fake news' have begun to dominate our discussions. In parliaments all across Europe, rightwing parties like AfD, PiS, Lega and FPÖ have achieved significant influence on everyday politics and are forming governments with either conservative coalition partners, or are forming their own single-party governments (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich; Governo della Repubblica Italiana 2018; Polnische Regierung 2018). In Germany, one is witnessing a constant rhetorical shifting of the public discourse to the (far)right. You can hear this shift in the vocabulary used in the Bundestag by conservative politicians like Federal Interior Minister Mr. Seehofer (Meisner 2018).

Furthermore, old conflicts between West and Eastern German states have re-erupted in the political arena all across Eastern German cities

like Chemnitz (Rennefanz 2018; Schulz 2018). Interestingly, the stark differences between East and Western German political systems have become more visible because the AfD was able to gain fast traction on state-level elections in Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt in 2014 and 2016, and is set to become a bigger player in the upcoming elections in Brandenburg in 2019 (Casdorff 2018). The conflict-averse, moderate governing style of Chancellor Merkel has caused further damage to the political discourse in Germany because of the lack of tangible political positions and the constant adoption of the positions of her political adversaries on long-term on issues like same-sex marriage in 2017 or nuclear power phaseout in 2011.

In my opinion, we are now living through a period of renegotiation of statehood and the definition of inhabitants' identities concerning religion, skin color, and other visible identity markers. Having studied Islamic studies as a second minor, the notion of a constant undercurrent of Islamophobia and othering of Muslims has become much more mainstream because of oversimplified narratives on Islam introduced by rightwing ideologues and pol-

iticians in the aftermath of 9/11 and the so-called 'migration crisis' in 2015. Since 2010, this topic has also been academically discussed in the Islamophobia Yearbook (Hafez 2010-2018), when anti-Muslim resentments were prominently on display in Thilo Sarrazin's best-seller 'Germany is abolishing itself' (Misik 2010). At the time, a study conducted by Amnesty International revealed that a lot of people in Germany, China and the UK were much more welcoming to refugees than other nations (Amnesty International 2016) and were much more inclined to accept refugees in their immediate neighborhoods (ibid). The Islamophobia directed towards refugees is also alive and well in South Korea, where some Yemeni refugees are housed on the remote island of Jeju. The arguments raised by anti-refugee campaigners draw heavily on identity issues (e.g. danil minjeok) and anti-Muslim talking points often used by Western ideological homologues (Koo 2018). We even encounter the same narratives in countries like Myanmar, where radical Buddhist groups like Ma Ba Tha are being supported by the

government and military as they actively rally against the Rohingya to 'purify the nation of Islam', and to forcefully remove an entire ethnic minority from a country (Lego 2018; Chalermpanupap 2016; Gamez 2017).

All of those conservative and (far) right arguments are heavily reliant on a perceived monolithic uniformity of the 'Muslim Other' as either a 'barbaric uncivilized violent perpetrator' or an 'exotic Oriental', as referenced by Edward Said in his book 'Orientalism' (Said 2014: 31ff). They also exhibit a very odd fixation on the legal term 'shariah' as undeniable evidence of their first characterization, by omitting the rich legal tradition and methodology of Islamic Jurisprudence across the centuries. And they intentionally tend to cherry-pick different surah of the Qur'an in order to underscore their argument that 'Islam' is inherently cruel and evil. By doing this, they actually mirror the arguments of Salafist extremists who use the same methodology to coerce people into submission by ignoring Islamic law and traditions themselves. In order to

gain a better mutual understanding, I opine that websites like qantara.de (Arabic for 'bridge') could contribute to a better understanding of different trends, positions and developments in the Islamic Hemisphere. In terms of the renegotiation of statehood and identity politics, we as individuals are experiencing a process of de-aligning and realigning of competitive party systems due to unresolved religious and sometimes ethnic tensions in the aftermath of the severe Great Recession of 2009. In addition, ongoing climate change is deeply affecting our planet, in places like the village Quriyat in Oman which broke last year's heat record with 42.6°C low temperature in June 2018 (Lilit 2018). Climate change could cause new global migration movements in the future due to unbearable living conditions in regions all across the globe. The focal topics of EPRIE 2014 still hold value today and in a few years, we will see what kind of reshaped statehoods and national identities would have formed out of this new period of change.



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Fleeing Eastern Europeans: The Silent Migration from East to West during Communism

Istvan Deak



This article is a summary of an investigative series developed together with my colleague Marina Constantinoiu within the 'Reporters in the field' program, funded by the Robert Bosch Foundation, and published in Romanian by miscareaderezistent.ro.

In present day Europe, news of thousands of people fleeing their countries attempting to enter Europe do not cease, and have become more alarming and tragic in the past two - three years or so. The European states seem unable to deal with the problem, with many of the deci-

sions taken at national level coming into conflict with those taken at the European level of decision-making; hence, not even the issue of introducing 'quotas' on the number of refugees each country should adopt has been settled yet.

Some nations close their borders and lift up fences, thus doing away with political agreements that gave Europe its feel of a continent of mutual understanding and brotherhood. Barbed-wire fences are up again – the very same barbed-wire fences we thought we would never have again – 29 years after communism fell.

Europe, 29-Years Before

How was it? What did Europe look back then? And what did we look like? Well, as hard as it may be to believe now, 29 years ago jumping over European borders was not only accepted, it was encouraged. Western European states in particular, were positive about this action. For them, it seemed justified to allow their European brethren to get to freedom in the West since they were only living in oppressive communist regimes because of an accident of history.

Back then, those who helped others border jumping were the good guys who fought thus their own fight against the Devil, be it the Romanian Securitate, the East-German STASI, the Soviet KGB, or other such communist regimes.

Over a period of 20 years, millions fled the communist countries in Europe. Between 1949 and 1961, some 2.7 million Germans fled from the former Democrat Republic of Germany to the Western Federal Republic of Germany alone. Thousands of people paid a dear price when their attempts to get over the border failed: they were beaten-up, imprisoned and their civil rights and lives were trampled on. Hundreds did not survive their attempt to reach freedom. They ended up on the bottom of the Danube river, or shot on the 'no man's land' strip of land by bor-

der-guards who felt justified in their actions because of state law and propaganda, which described the border jumpers as traitors.

Between 1949 and 1989, Romanians, in their hundreds of thousands, wanted and attempted to flee the communist regime. They would have done anything for this. Some paid large amounts of money. Some paid with their lives. Many found their final resting place in neighboring countries after being fished out of the Danube river, with forensic doctors in these countries recording the condition of their bodies and the reason for their death. Yet even today, their remains have yet to be identified and those responsible for their demise have still not been held accountable. The Romanian state, 29 years after the end of the communist regime, has still not dealt with this issue.

Romanian citizens, many from East Germany, Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria also found their end on the Romanian border while attempting to cross into Yugoslavia, which, at the time, seemed like an easier way to Western Europe.

Their incredible stories are probably similar to those of the North Koreans who dared to flee from hell. The number of Romanians who tried to flee from 1949 to 1989 is in the hundreds of thousands. Of these, only 100,000 were able to obtain political asylum in the West between 1969 and 1989.

Since 1953, 100,000–300,000 North Koreans have defected, fleeing mostly to Russia or China, while 1,418 registered in South Korea in 2016.

In 2017, there were 31,093 defectors registered with the Unification Ministry in South Korea, 71 percent of whom were women, according to some sources.

Grit Bordering Insanity

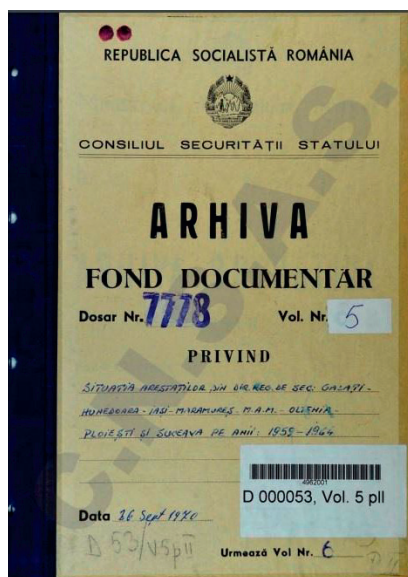
The stories the surviving border jumpers tell are chilling. The grit some showed may seem borderline insanity. The succession of events look pulled out of a movie script. Some accounts are so extraordinary they seem out of touch with reality and prompt the journalists to keep up their guard. It is overwhelming to the writers documenting these stories. Even though they lived during the same communist regime, shared part of the experience and were aware of the facts, they never fully fathomed the true dimension of these stories.

While sifting through former secret service files, it became clear that border-guard units, the army, police and courts could bring to light the full picture, albeit in the cold, clinical voice of the bureaucratic lingo. Yet these archives are seldom open to the general public, journalists or researchers.

Fleeing Romanians: Who Clipped Their Wings in Mid-Flight?

Romania during the late 80s was a time when the systemic problems caused by the communist regime, which had taken over the country four decades before, were at their worst. The people were deeply resentful towards the severe drop in living standards, the curtailment of civic liberties, the international isolation of the country, the erratic state policies and the every-day abuses. Many felt on the brink of despair.

For Romanians, the concept of freedom, as penned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, meant only defecting to the West. Beyond the water border of the Danube river; beyond the land border – finely plowed to catch the trail of anyone stepping on it; beyond the waves of the Black Sea – only there could freedom be found.



Some turned this quest for freedom into a personal obsession, and age had nothing to do with the actual pursuit of getting beyond the border. This may explain why many of the border jumpers (defectors) were minors. It is easy to judge them in hindsight as reckless youngsters in search of an adrenaline high. It is hard to imagine how walking in their shoes might have been, and to relive those times of a fenced-up society today, particularly if you are an educated adult who has access to education and information, discerning insight and has the freedom of choice on aspects of life that these youngsters did not.

Documentation Papers as Their Only Valuables

They trained and toned their bodies, they collected information, they got maps, they got money, they contacted guides, they swam laps after laps, they got their papers ready and they dared to hope. Those who left swimming over the Danube had their papers tied to their bodies in plastic bags. That was their whole fortune. The luckiest ones had family or friends in the West, and having their contact details on them was, to defectors, their ticket out; it gave them some assurance that they would not be sent back to Romanian authorities.

By the '80s, the dream of defecting was a mass one, and many cherished it in silence, for anyone made privy to their escape dreams or plans could have turned out to be a snitch. The ugliness of the political system was most obvious in these devilish details: who snitched on whom back then? Many of the former border jumpers, who went over their Securitate files - now in the custody of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Files - were stunned to find out the snitches were close to them, be they their own relatives, spouses, children, brothers and sisters, or in-laws, and also neighbors, co-workers, friends or priests.

Tracking the human ugliness oozing out of the CNSAS files would merit a journalistic investigation of its own. It is impossible to feel what happened, while sifting through those files, otherwise.

Unprecedented Migration Wave

Youngsters - some of them minors, plus grown-ups and even people

past their prime - all came to believe death on the border strip of land, or in the Danube river, was a better option than living in the cage Romania had become. Fleeing the country was a dream worth pursuing for many. The result? After 1985, Romania faced unprecedented migration of its own people willing to jump the border at all costs. That human hemorrhage was trickling over the border from 1948-1949, but never at the levels recorded in the late '80s.

To legally emigrate was not an option, except for the rare cases of people able to claim their right to a permanent family reunion. Freedom of movement in communist Romania was not only restricted to traveling abroad, but also inside the country, as traveling to border localities had to be justified and authorities had to be notified. The legal one-way out of the country was also an option for ethnic Germans and Jews, but at a price: the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel were paying for each individual given permission to leave Romania by the communist regime. The others, left with the option of fleeing the country illegally, either on foot or by swimming, were simply the border jumpers. Many of those defectors, however, did not survive their escape attempt. They died by gunshots fired by the border guards, were beaten to death, or drowned in the Danube river.

Witnesses and statistical data show that between 1988 and 1989, the Romanian-Yugoslav border was the bloodiest in Europe. Following closely behind in this ranking was the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border, where many people fell victims -

particularly East-Germans - while jumping borders in their attempt to reach West Germany.

Foreign media, and particularly Radio Free Europe, were keeping the Romanian defectors up to date. This was the true information channel from which Romanians got their news from and it helped them find out what was going on behind the Iron Curtain. On Radio Free Europe one could listen to letters sent by defectors who had succeeded in jumping the border as well as letters sent by families distressed for their loved ones who had disappeared after attempting to leave the country illegally.

The foreign media was very vocal on the topic, and after 1985, the Romanian border was already coined as the bloodiest in Europe. Newspapers in Hungary and West Germany carried in-depth reports about Romanians killed while attempting to cross the border.

A Black Hole in Recent History

Twenty-nine years have passed since the demise of communism, and the Romanian state has yet to come up with an official position on the issue of defectors being killed, arrested and subsequently abused by authorities. This is a genuine black hole in Romania's recent history; it is a collective wound left untended to; it is

'a moral meningitis', as one former defector put it. This cannot be without consequences. This is one of the reasons we, as a nation, cannot move forward.

During the communist regime, defectors were killed at the border all the time but the peak was in the last years of the regime: 1988-1989. People who gave the orders back then and people who over-zealously executed them are still around. No one has held them accountable for their deeds.



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Youth Creating Safe Spaces: Promoting Gender Equality through Comprehensive Sexuality Education in China

Yang Kefan

Taking the 2030 Agenda from paper to practice, youth as change-makers lies at the heart of the on-the-ground implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the issues of availability and accessibility of safe spaces where young people can freely express themselves and engage in social affairs without being excluded and intimidated remain challenging, and the situation varies from country to country. Instead of waiting for governments, institutions and organizations to build safe spaces for youth, the question is can we as young change-makers create the civic space by ourselves? And if so, how?

My name is Yang Kefan, and I am a 26-year-old Tai ethnic minority from Xishuangbanna, on the South-western borderland of China. As a #Case4Space youth advocate for gender equality, I am engaged in youth empowerment and promoting gender equality and non-discrimination at the community level.

Over the past seven months, I finished my work with UN agencies in Thailand and Kenya, moved back to my hometown and started a youth-led volunteer-based initiative to introduce Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) into schools and villages. So far, I have set up a team of over 60 volunteers, organized 53 workshops and trained more than 5,000 people. The initiative is an example of youth creating safe civic spaces for - and by - themselves.

In China, it is almost impossible to organize collective movements, campaigns and protests so it is very difficult to promote gender equality using these methods. However, very few people would oppose or resist an education initiative that is aligned to international standards. It therefore occurred to me that a good way to promote gender equality in China would be through an educational framework such as CSE, which is used by governments, UN agencies and organizations globally to ed-

ucate young people, protect their health and well-being and promote gender equality (SDGs 3, 4 and 5). I started in my own hometown but things are not easy when it comes to understanding CSE.

In the context of China, the topic of sexuality is taboo - few people talk about it openly. As the Chinese idiom goes, “谈性色变 Tan Xing Se Bian”, “people turn pale at the mention of sex.” Whenever people get to know that I work on sexuality education, most of them are shocked and the conversation usually ends there. In most cases, teachers who are supposed to teach sexual and reproductive health find it embarrassing to deliver the lessons. Given the fact that in China sexuality education is not compulsory in school curricula, many schools do not provide such courses simply because they don't contribute to students' grades. Although it is not rare for students to be affected by sexual health and rights related issues (such as HIV,

teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence and violence based on gender expression and sexual orientation), schools lack trained teachers who are able to deliver CSE and don't provide safe spaces where students can freely embrace positive sexuality, learn to protect themselves and effective mechanisms to monitor and solve these issues.

According to the revised edition of the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, CSE "is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and to understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives" (UNESCO, 2018). Promoting a better understanding of CSE among gate-keepers such as governmental entities, schools and parents, and convincing them to allow us to conduct the trainings, has become the most difficult part of our work. How do we open the door to the safe spaces enabled by CSE?

At first I tried the top-down approach, reaching out to local education bureaus and other relevant public authorities to ask for their collaboration, for example they organize workshops and we deliver the training for free. They all conceded that it is a great initiative, but still rejected us by kicking away the ball. As one deputy director general

put it, "we would support you only if you work with women's associations". Then I contacted a few school headmasters. Again, they all claimed to be impressed by the initiative but implementation was never possible for some reason or other: "we will invite you after you get the permission from the education bureau", or "we prefer our school teachers to do the work, not outsiders." Ironically, many of the teachers came to attend my workshop and found it helpful, but still we failed to convince the school management.

I wondered why and decided to try the bottom-up approach, which helped me find the answer. Using our personal networks, our team managed to organize training in villages with content designed for different age groups. Then we started to get invitations from teachers to conduct training sessions for their classes, and from parent committees to organize extra-curricular activities. Gradually, the positive feedback started reaching school management and after a long process we were asked to give official lessons at some of the schools. To introduce CSE into more schools, many advised us to avoid the word "性 (sex/sexuality)" which is considered too sensitive. Instead of calling the initiative sexuality education, we were advised to frame it as health education or prevention education. I didn't like this idea as these terms are unilateral, and do not represent the comprehensive knowledge, skills and attitudes that CSE aims to convey. Most importantly, I strongly believe that the more we talk about sexuality, the less people will feel sensitive about it. The initiative is part of a process of desensitization and nor-

malization of sexuality education in people's daily lives, thereby creating a safe civic space for the public to face the issues rather than avoiding them.

Who are the people who find CSE uncomfortable, and why? As I trained more and more people from different age groups, I noticed that it is much easier to start CSE at an early age to prevent issues from the beginning. I realized that the sensitivity of CSE has nothing to do with school kids, instead it is those adults or gate-keepers in power who find it uncomfortable and turn it away. These unequal power relations should not be ignored when it comes to the challenges of building safe spaces. The generation that dominates decision-making never received CSE at school, and may perceive it as a threat to the social norms that they have been following and safeguarding, or even to their power and authority. To create and maintain the safe space for ourselves, we need to develop it strategically, play around with language and narratives in order to avoid antagonizing the powerful, and maybe even win their support.

Once the safe space of CSE is created, we should increase its visibility to ensure that it is accessible to vulnerable and marginalized groups, and to attract more and more change-makers to contribute to growing the space. Since the initiative started, the number of volunteers has seen a quick increase from only four people to over 60 members, 12 of whom I have trained to become instructors. This in itself is also a process of empowering youth. As they said, "we have benefited a lot from participat-

ing in the process, slowly we are also becoming influencers in our circle of friends.” Another volunteer who recently joined our initiative told me, “I have wanted to do a similar project for a long time, but I was alone.”

This safe space doesn’t only exist in our CSE workshops, where students can talk freely about sexuality and express their gender identity and sexual orientation. It also influences their families and leads to constructive inter-generational dialogue. For example, recently a mother of two kids came to thank me for the

training. She told me that when her oldest daughter started her period, she was able to handle the situation calmly and felt comfortable talking about it with her parents. Also, the mother noted that the family relationship had improved, as they had created a safe and enabling environment where children trust parents and discuss sexuality openly.

All in all, talented and self-motivated youth leaders can and should create civic spaces for positive social change, further influencing young change-makers around them. How-

ever, one of the challenges for them is how to fully engage in the development of the space as part of their career, engendering long-lasting influence. The CSE safe space, as a way of enhancing social inclusion, must be maintained and safeguarded in a sustainable way. Everyone has the right to receive CSE, which perhaps more efficiently should start with adults or gate-keepers. Gaining support from them will largely help young people develop such established civic spaces, making it safer, more accessible, inclusive and sustainable.



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On South Korea's Candlelight Revolution: Revisiting the Deserted Diversity in the Time of Post-Truth

Do Youngwon



Candlelight protests in South Korea. Photo by @radragon, Unsplash.

When continual protests eventually resulted in the impeachment of the previous president in 2017, it was, to say simply, a people's victory. The Candlelight Revolution was a peaceful and voluntary public movement in South Korea that lasted from October 2016 to April 2017, where as many as two million citizens held

candles to protest against the undemocratic government. Although it did lead to a new presidential election, it was more than just a campaign for the next president. What made the Candlelight Revolution truly revolutionary was the strong willingness of the public to be part of the change, each one with differ-

ent social ideals but equally passionate in their own efforts to realise them.

In fact, there was much more diversity among these protesters than what was seen from outside – or even from inside. The capability of the feminist community stood out.

They organised women protesters, preventing potential gender or sexual violence against them and started a campaign to expel misogynistic comments from the protest scenes and public speeches. There were also student rights and adolescent rights activists, alongside many other young protesters, who reminded their older counterparts to respect them as fellow citizens and arguing for a teenager's right to vote. The rainbow flags, which symbolise the pride of LGBTQI+ people, were spotted in the squares, as were handicapped and homeless people. In sum, the movement was one of the most contentious political scenes in the past decade, where divergence was created and alive across many different social groups.

However, the internal disputes did not always result in agreements. Many refused to share the feminist views that making the movement safe for women was important. Surprisingly for some people - and not for others - there were many sexual harassment and assaults reported. It raised conflicting feelings among women protesters: some did not want to participate anymore, and because of the old, male-dominated atmosphere of the demonstration, they did not feel that the square was truly open to them. The modern history of labour rights in South Korea shows how the activist scene was traditionally male-dominated. Others argued that women should be more active because of that, as they had a right to be in the square. Valuable debates were held both inside and outside. It was women having their own revolutions within the wider revolution.

When the Supreme Court finally announced the dismissal of the then current president Park Geun-hye, some struggles were over. Others however, continued. Many of those whose motivation for attending the protests was to elect Moon Jae-in, the then leader of the opposition party, as their new president, thought that the fight was done and that it was time to give him their full support. Nonetheless, the gap among the participants became clear when it turned out that not everyone welcomed this change.

Political science theories on ownership issues discuss how political parties attempt to 'trespass' on another party's speciality when that issue becomes significant. A few years before the revolution, South Korea saw an unprecedented rise of feminism in public and political scenes. Feminism was, and still is arguably the most talked-about issue in the country today. The women's movement in South Korea had a turning point around 2015, when feminist debates started becoming much more public and within everyday politics rather than just in academic discourse. Posing himself on the opposite side of the former president Park, Moon and his assistants must have thought it would be a clever idea to declare himself a feminist.

Moon Jae-in has an impressive human rights law background, and many of his supporters like to advertise it as an evidence of how he would bring necessary change to the country. Given that the previous government was presented as 'anti-rights', it came as an attractive comparison to both the election camp and voters. However, even though he might

have satisfied most of his supporters, he failed in meeting global human rights standards and the important expectations of social minorities.

Typically, the queer society mentions the then presidential candidate Moon's remark on "not supporting homosexuals" during TV presidential debates. Additionally, Moon expressed his objection to the legislation of anti-discrimination law, withdrawing support he announced during the previous election campaign. It exposed the LGBTQI+ society to the mainstream media, as their activists called on him to stick to his word. Feminist and queer electorates becoming indifferent and supporting another presidential candidate with more support for their rights provided an excuse for the majority of Democrats to become openly homophobic and anti-feminism.

It might not be suitable to say that the Democratic Party, known for its progressive values, is 'trespassing' on the issue of human rights. However, they certainly did create the conditions for it to become gradually more difficult for women, people of gender and sexual minorities and the handicapped to publicise the significance of their basic rights, to which their daily lives are more directly connected to.

Could it have been foreseen? High disputes and the problematic power dynamics regarding vested civil rights that existed within the Candlelight Revolution had been prevailing in mainstream politics for some time. The conservatives were not the only party making it difficult for women, the handicapped

and LGBTQI+ people. The liberals, those who describe themselves as defenders of democracy, were sharing views against the socially disadvantaged widely. The cause of making a more inclusive and diverse society was not winning public sympathy anymore. If anyone said that the situation for those minorities did not get much better or even worse, they would often end up being widely criticised among the Moon supporters who believed that “the ideal society has come.”

Revisiting the Candlelight Revolution, it reminds us how revolutions do not only bring about the change, but rather continue to serve as a symbol of legitimacy after the transformation. Undermining the participation of diverse social groups within and out, the Democrats, the majori-

ty of the protesters, claim ownership over societal change. They say, “we are the ones who made the revolution happen, hold your own candlelight if you don’t agree with us.”

As the liberals become the new conservatives and political power dynamics transform, the socially disadvantaged realised the need to create their own power base. Since the Democratic Party triumphed at the elections, local progressive parties arose with growing support from those who were not satisfied with the incumbent party. Perhaps this is how a society develops: the liberal ideals settle, then they get older. Minority goals within the new majority then gain the spotlight and become the next common purpose and so on. Hence the socially disadvantaged did not lose in the

revolution – they promoted their political representation and developed solidarity and awareness among the community by holding the candles.

I hope, in the future, that the significance of the Candlelight Revolution will not be distorted to represent only vested interests, and that the live divergence will be remembered as the heart and fuel of the movement. However, the day will come when the historical triumphant of the public is mobilised to justify undemocratic decision-making if proper reflection does not follow.



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EPRIE aims to promote and improve dialogue between people of neighboring states, whose relations have been troubled in the past; to develop personal contacts; to build a long lasting network; to stimulate and foster the development of further cooperation.

EPRIE was founded in 2012 by the two organizers Han Nataly Jung-Hwa and Rita Zobel. It is mainly supported by Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Japan office of Friedrich-Ebert Foundation.

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The Korea Verband seeks and promotes collaboration on national and international levels with other non-governmental organizations and initiatives as well as experts on Korea in the areas of science, journalism, politics, labor unions, churches, environment, women's rights, arts and culture.

The Korea Verband was founded in 1990 and is a founding member of the foundation Stiftung Asienhaus. Since 2008 the Korea Verband has been based in Berlin.

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