

Call for Papers

Performativity and Agency in International Politics

Workshop at Goethe University Frankfurt, 21-22 February 2014



The international community declares ‘war on hunger.’ Armed rebels attack a UN convoy in South Sudan. Beijing signals a shift on economic policy. A Predator drone kills five insurgents in Afghanistan. Portugal's ambassador presents his credentials to Queen Elizabeth II. Detainees in Guantanamo go on hunger strike. The markets react to the crisis in Cyprus.

As these one-sentence-stories illustrate, the actors of international politics are manifold and heterogeneous. Debates in International Relations (IR) have often centered on the question of who or what counts as an actor of international politics. Recently, however, scholars from various subfields of IR have begun asking a different question: How does one become an actor of international politics in the first place?

Mobilizing the vocabulary of ‘performativity,’ these scholars shift the focus from given agents to the processes through which agency itself is constituted. Thereby, they make visible the work that goes into the production of actors in international politics. For theoretical inspiration, such approaches draw on a wide range of sources, among them speech act theory, post-structuralism, feminist theory, and science and technology studies.

The workshop is intended to bring together scholars from the various subfields of IR whose research is based on the notion of performativity. Our aim is to collectively explore the processes through which international actors are performed into being, and to examine the implications for international politics. True to the idea of performativity, we take the constitution of agency and its consequences as not only a theoretical matter, but also – and principally – an empirical one. We thus aim for a discussion firmly grounded in participants’ respective empirical research.

We are particularly interested in questions such as:

- How is agency performed in international politics?
- How do different performances create different qualities of agency?
- How are ‘self’ and ‘other’ linked in performances of agency?
- Can performances of agency fail and, if so, what are the consequences?
- How is agency – intentionally or not – denied, sabotaged or de-constructed?
- How are we, as researchers, involved in performing or denying agency?

The workshop will take place on 21 & 22 February 2014, in Frankfurt/Main, Germany. Professor Michael Shapiro (University of Hawai’i) will give the keynote speech. We welcome paper proposals until **31 July 2013**. Please send your title and abstract (max. 200 words) to performingagency@gmail.com. We are in the process of applying for funding and hope to be able to cover travel costs.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any further questions.

Organized by: Prof. Dr. Christopher Daase (Goethe University, Frankfurt), Benjamin Braun (University of Warwick), Sebastian Schindler (Goethe University, Frankfurt), Tobias Wille (Goethe University, Frankfurt)