

Sustainable Internationalisation after Covid-19

Developing a Concept of Global Responsibility

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Introduction

How will internationalisation after Covid-19 look like? The developments in 2020 indicate that two trends existed before the pandemic. First, the boom of aviation had come, for the meantime, to an end. It is possible that travelling after the pandemic will become a much more conscious industry, taking into account the impact on climate change. Second, digital tools have witnessed an unprecedented boom, using digital tools in teaching and research has become the "new normal". Local and national boundaries are more and more dissolved, internationalisation will become "a daily routine", making it easier to build strong working links between countries (for a German-Chinese case study see Preuschoff 2006).

From Internationalisation to Global Responsibility

These developments will also impact university structures. After the Covid-19 pandemic, higher education institutions (HEIs) will have to find a new balance between physical mobility and online tools for their teaching and research activities, e.g. by implementing blended learning tools. Internationalisation strategies will have to be adopted to the new circumstances. The aim of internationalisation will have to be redefined. Before the pandemic, Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) proclaimed the "End of Internationalisation", arguing that internationalisation became an automatism, resulting in even more mobility numbers, without questioning the "why and wherefore". The problem with the concept "Internationalisation", lies within the word itself, it connotes that we are dealing with an administrative procedure, in which national structures and procedures are connected. "Internationalisation" builds on the concept of "nation". A study about the history of the International Office of the University of Cologne (UoC) backs this viewpoint. Documents of the international department, founded in 1928, revealed that national thinking still played an essential

role within "internationalisation" (Muel-ler, 2018). The consequences of digitalisation and the Covid-19 pandemic might make it necessary to overcome the current concept of "internationalisation".

"Global Responsibility combines internationalisation and third mission strategies, cooperation focuses on global challenges, overcoming national boundaries. The digitalisation boom caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is accelerating this process. Global Responsibility could therefore become a new, more adequate framework for international cooperation."

We argue that "Global Responsibility" is an innovative concept for universities that comprises adequate circumstances of the post-Covid-19 world. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "Responsibility" as the "[t]he states or fact of being the cause or originator of something" or "the state or fact of being in charge of or of having a duty towards a person or thing" (OED Third Edition 2010). Global responsibility therefore means, to raise awareness and consciousness that human beings are the cause and originators of what happens on the globe, students and researchers need to be enabled and capable to take this responsibility, in order to be in charge of the

future. This is the main reason why internationalisation takes place. Furthermore, global responsibility is, in contrast to "internationalisation", not an administrative process, but an attitude that regards all universities in all its aspects and with all its stakeholders. Global responsibility influences the actions and decisions that an institution takes. Actions have to be tested according to whether they are sustainable and contribute to taking global responsibility. It is, therefore, a comprehensive, holistic approach that integrates all faculties, disciplines, research & teaching, as well as students, researchers and staff. Furthermore, it helps to overcome national ways of thinking. The development caused by the Covid-19 pandemic accelerates the changes implied by "Global Responsibility".

A Shifting Focus Towards Global Responsibility

The International Office (IO) of the UoC seeks to build up concrete interdisciplinary projects to fill the concept of "Global Responsibility" with life, combining the universities internationalisation and third mission strategy on a global level. The perspective of Global Responsibility guarantees cooperation on a level playing field, as the focus on a global aim, helps to overcome national thinking. The digital bust of the Covid-19 pandemic has further shifted the focus on global responsibility.

The (UoC) maintains global branch offices in Peking (China, 2007), New Delhi (India, 2009) and New York (USA, 2011), in order to foster and facilitate global cooperation. They serve as the first point of contact for faculty and students. The office's support mobilities, organizes summer and winter schools, workshops, conferences seminars and UoC delegation visits.

Furthermore, the UoC tries to reach more high school graduates from around the globe. The BIDS-KIDS project, funded by the DAAD, seeks to inform students at PASCH-schools in Latin America about



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possible study opportunities in Cologne. The UoC offers students with a German Language Diploma (DSD II) who are interested in starting a BA, a preparation semester called Studienstart International *Plus*. By making the transition to virtual exchange, more students were included (+30%) from a broader range of schools (+60%) and more countries in Latin America (+25%). Building personal relationships and trust in virtual exchange is a challenge. A stronger focus was said on team-building measures in e-learning, the use of collaborative digital tools, commissioned testimonial videos and live streams from alumni as well as through enlisting the help of the local counsellors from the central agency for German Schools Abroad and of teachers from the chosen schools (+200%).

On a research level, the IO manages the DAAD DIES ProGRANT program, organizing proposal writing courses for young academics around the globe, who learn to build up international networks by applying for third party funding. Remote courses made it possible to integrate regional experts from different countries into the courses. The online courses makes it possible to reach more young scholars in remote or higher risk areas.

In addition, we are building up administrative links to other institutions. The DAAD DIES Partnership CYM+ seeks to build up sustainable internationalisation structures at four HEIs in Myanmar. Online workshops allow speakers from all over the world to participate, which helps to integrate different perspectives and to build up international networks during the workshop.

Already before the Covid-19 pandemic, we launched the DAAD DIES Partnership ADENIN with the Innovation Center of the Université Mohammed V in Rabat, Morocco. The aim was to build up "co-incubator" structures between both universities, in which students could exchange between one centre and the other in order to develop international business ideas. The digital boom of 2020 opened up entirely new opportunities for standard digital workshops and typical digital training camps. Students from Morocco and Germany can work together to develop ideas for global problems, such as renewable energy and water management, making national borders and geographical distance even more irrelevant.

Furthermore, the international office is currently building up a "German as Foreign Language" remote course, which would support German departments at universities around the world with online courses from Germany. The German courses at the UoC have been digitised in 2020. The digital boom of 2020 allowed us to reach target groups in regions that had been difficult to reach before with physical mobilities.

All these examples show how the digital boom caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is shifting projects towards a direction, in which national borders become more and more irrelevant, and more people in remote areas can be integrated. The way of cooperation is shifting towards sustainable ways of interaction; the concept of global responsibility can frame this new direction.

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