

TRIESTE- ESOF2020 Scientific Programme

Session 4th September, 2020

Scientific Diplomacy for Freedom: Inter-Cultural Dialogue for Science

Introduction by Cinzia Ferrini, scientific organizer and moderator of Part I (East/West)

This joint proposal exhibits synergies between members of the Department of Humanities of the University of Trieste (in collaboration with the *Academia Europaea*: www.acadeuro.org) and the National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (in collaboration with *The World Academy of Sciences*: <https://twas.org>).

By design, this panel has been divided into two interrelated parts (with East/West and North/South axes). In the first part, I, Cinzia Ferrini from the Department of Humanities of the University of Trieste, will act as moderator; the second part will be moderated by Mounir Ghribi, Director of the International Cooperation, Communication, Skills Development and Research Promotion section of the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics based in Trieste. His distinguished guests are, in order of presentations, the President of The World Academy of Sciences, Mohamed Hassan, and the Executive Secretary of the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization](#), Lassina Zerbo

Speaking in the first part are prof. Vezzosi, head of the Dep of Humanities of the University of Trieste, present here in her capacity as prof. of history of the USA in a global context, and prof. Eva Kondorosi, joining us by remote, recipient of the 2018 Balzan prize for chemical ecology, here as member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, member of the board of the Academia Europaea, member of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors of the European Commission and former vice president of the ERC

With its title conjoining scientific diplomacy, freedoms, dialogue and interculturality, what is this panel about? Let me introduce briefly background and focus of the first part of this Session.

The post Covid-19 world inherits a controversial and complex scenario. On the one hand, in recent months, science has taken center stage in world diplomacy to address a global challenge that disregards national borders.

Gemeinsam has been Merkel's key word indicating how to overcome the pandemic crisis. It is worth noting that this call for solidarity has at least a dual aspect.

First, Scientists -- previously ignored by policy makers when they warned about avoiding vaccinations, dismantling public health care intake systems in view of potential epidemics from zoonotic origins, or about the consequences of human impact on our planet's eco-system, including climate change, -- suddenly were coopted as governmental advisors into technical-scientific committees.

Everyone looked for medical and biological expertise: virologists and epidemiologists previously unknown to the general public were spotlighted in the media, including polemical talk shows. Voices cried out that we need more scientists as leaders to translate their knowledge into political actions, since European countries did 'too little, too late', and too various, to contain the epidemic in its initial

phases. In an interview following the ESOF opening ceremony, Fabiola Gianotti urged policy makers: "Now that you have taken scientists down off the shelves, don't put them back".

Second, there are more scientific and multi-disciplinary global collaborations and efforts than ever. Thanks to digitalization, all the science regarding covid-19 is being published with open access and many pre-prints are shared on such portals as the European COVID-19 Data Portal or covid19.researcher.life to accelerate research on drugs or vaccine through data sharing and WHO's Solidarity Trial. Moreover, there are prospects that the future vaccine will be distributed for free: the Italian Minister of Health declared: "In my opinion it should always be considered a global public good, a right for everyone, not a privilege for the few".

However, regarding freedoms and intercultural dialogues, this scenario is ambivalent, if not paradoxical: sometimes bridges are built, at others rifts deepen between democracies and other forms of government, with risks that executive powers may take advantage of emergency powers to reinforce authoritarianism, controlling private lives and personal contacts, undermining academic freedoms and the role of parliaments.

Indeed, the current massive movement towards togetherness, solidarity, and shared objectives appears to pose serious problems regarding individual and social freedoms. It is a widespread view that "many governments seem to be using the Coronavirus outbreak as an opportunity to further entrench repressive measures ... Increased surveillance, restrictions on free expression and information, and limits on public participation are becoming increasingly common."

At the same time, at a European level, proclaiming togetherness and solidarity coexists with reinforcing national and regional barriers, with border policy overtly militarized to control migration flows on the Western Balkans (see the Session: "Roots and Routes of Migration on the Western Balkans. (Im)-Mobilities and Reception": 3.09.2020).

At a global level, managing the pandemic has reinforced charges of manipulation and disinformation levelled against China in the USA's geopolitical reassessment under Trump's presidency. Proclaimed global Scientific cooperation is undermined by Western countries' charges against Russian hackers and Chinese research cyber-spies, claimed to have attempted to steal the work of British and American university scientists on a coronavirus vaccine and by a race involving public funds and private pharmaceutical partnerships.

To sum up: The pandemic has developed open access to scientific knowledge and know-how, data sharing and evidence-based policy making, highlighting the role of scientists in decision-making: and yet a pervasive issue is whether Covid-19 is the latest spectre of the Cold War to surface in tensions between West and Middle East.

This controversial situation in scientific diplomacy constitutes the background to the first part of this meeting.

QUESTIONS:

Vezzosi Q1:

What counts as 'scientific diplomacy' in our contemporary scenario appears to be a matter of scientists as consultants to policy makers. Moreover, we have already heard yesterday by BRIDGE* that the notion of 'science diplomacy' still needs to be conceptualized in practical operations. Advisors and practitioners seem to be the two main roles involved. Would you please help us to examine the full meaning and extent of the notion of 'scientific diplomacy', drawing from some historical examples?

*See the Session: "Building Bridges: Big EResearch Infrastructures for Diplomacy and Global Engagement through Science" (3.09.2020)

Kondorosi Q1

Prof. Kondorosi, you are member of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors of the European Commission and are directly involved in the Scientific Advice Mechanism at the highest European level. You are an internationally renowned scientist, directing your research at the Biological Research Centre, in Hungary. Considering your working experience, would you please describe how scientific expertise relates, or should relate, to political action and diplomacy? Moreover, how you would describe the state of the relation between scientists and policy in Hungary during the Cold War and today?

Vezzosi Q2

As I mentioned, it is commonly suggested in the media that with the covid emergency, we confront the specter of returning to a 'cold war' on the western-middle east axis. From an historical standpoint, to what extent is the Cold War a useful or suitable model for these developments?

Kondorosi Q2:

ESOF in Trieste has the mission to open a window on Balcan and Eastern European Countries. You have served as Vice-President of the European Research Council and chaired the working group on Widening European Participation. You are also a distinguished member of the pan-European Academia Europaea where you also established a working group on Widening European Participation.

What is your view on this topic, how to help researchers of Eastern European countries to gain equal access to European-funded research programs, or to create conditions to integrate otherwise peripheral academic personnel, circumstances and resources? What do you see as the most effective way to make progress here and what do you see as the role for the 'Academy of Europe'?