

The Lichtenberg Kolleg:

Annual Report 2019 and Proposals 2021-2023

1. Introduction

This report has a dual character. First, in the tradition of the Kolleg's annual reports, it outlines the key characteristics and developments of the Fellowship programme during 2019. Second, it presents a number of proposals for future research development, marking a substantial shift, especially in terms of research themes. These proposals, based on our 2020 Call for proposals to set up thematic research groups and/or to invite individual scholars as fellows for the academic years 2021-2023, are up for discussion. They are addressed to the Academic Advisory Board of the Kolleg and to the wider academic Göttingen community.

2. Fellowship Programme 2019

For the period 2015-2021 the research profile of the Lichtenberg-Kolleg has been closely aligned with key applications from scholars within the University of Göttingen to the last round of the German Excellence Strategy (*Exzellenzinitiative*). In this sense 2019 and 2020 have been years of an *Excellence* aftermath, which winds down in the summer of 2021. In 2019 two of the three research groups of the Kolleg were still directly related to *Excellence-Cluster* applications. The Kolleg was the home of the research groups, (1) *Globalising the Enlightenment: Knowledge, Culture, Travel, Exchange and Collections*, (2) *Human Rights, Constitutional Politics and Religious Diversity*, (3) the *Moritz Stern Fellowships in Modern Jewish Cultural, Intellectual and Literary History* and (4) *European Intellectual History/History of Political Thought*. As before, Early Career Fellows had the opportunity to cooperate, also in terms of 'mentorship', on an individual basis with Göttingen Faculty members. This cooperation has an important teaching element. Early Career Fellows continue to offer, as part of the career development dimension of Early Career Fellowships, courses to Göttingen students at BA- and MA-level. The Humanities in the *Philosophische Fakultät* continue to be the main beneficiaries of this teaching.

Within the Kolleg four reading groups are at the heart of the cooperation amongst Fellows and with Göttingen Faculty members. The Kolleg's reading groups include the 'Enlightenment Club', the *Human Rights, Constitutional Politics and Religious Diversity*-group, the 'Circle' for intellectual historians, and the reading group in Modern Jewish Studies. Academic workshops continue to be at the heart of our research activities as well. In 2019 the Kolleg's research budget has been used to fund, organise and host no less than 11 academic workshops-- please see Appendix 2 for an overview-- involving all research groups and almost all of our Fellows. The Kolleg's philosophy is to go for intense two or three day workshops with up to 12-15 participants. An exception was the ambitious conference in May 2019 on one of the most controversial figures of the European Enlightenment, Baron D'Holbach (1723-1789). The outcome of this workshop will be a volume submitted to the series *Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment* – as such it is part of the Kolleg's cooperation with Oxford's *Voltaire Foundation*.

For our Early Career Fellowships the calendar year 2019 has been one of substantial change. The Early Career Fellows (ECFs) who arrived in October 2017 left the Kolleg in July 2019. A new group of Early Career Fellows arrived in October 2019. Naturally the academic life at the Kolleg has been affected greatly by the sudden arrival of the Covid-19 crisis. Like so many academic institutions the Kolleg has responded by moving into a hybrid mode, with a strong emphasis on digital activities. In addition to intensifying our public blog (<https://lichtenberg-kolleg.org>), we have set up an internal electronic platform and have opened a series of digital rooms on Whereby.com, opting deliberately for the philosophy of this somewhat smaller, more intimate Norwegian company. Our digital rooms are always open. Fellows use them to continue the activities of our reading groups and also for more informal coffee and tea digital meetings. Fellows regularly report on their activities in the new series of 'Research Moments', published on our public blog.

3. Outreach - Kolleg, Sternwarte and Göttingen

In 2012 the decision was made to set up a series of activities that open the *Sternwarte*, as one of Göttingen finest monuments, to the wider civic community. Due to the significant budget cuts of the last couple of years the 2019 outreach programme has been limited, consisting of a book launch and a public lecture. Preparations have started for a small, very fine exhibition of the university's fabulous collection of Rembrandt prints. The exhibition will show 34 prints from the print collection that is part of the *Kunstsammlung* of the University of Göttingen. The 34 prints were selected by permanent fellow Ivan Gaskell, professor of cultural history at Bard Graduate Center and intellectual historian Martin van Gelderen, director of the Kolleg. The preparations focused on the selection of prints and, more extensively, on researching

and writing the catalogue, which will be the outcome of a workshop that took place in December 2019 and van Gelderen's MA-seminar on Rembrandt, taught during the Winter- and Summer-Semester 2019-2020. Ten MA-students have researched and written catalogue entries. Due to the Covid-19 crisis the opening of the exhibition had to be postponed. The exhibition is now scheduled for 22 April- 14 December 2021, but, depending on Covid's vagaries, the opening may have to be moved once again, perhaps to September 2021.

4. Future Perspectives: Proposals, 2021-2023

4.1. Financial Context

Following the outcome of earlier *Bleibeverhandlungen* the allocation of funds from the university budget to the Kolleg has been fixed at 750.000 €. This has been so since 2018. In writing, the university has guaranteed this sum until the current director reaches the age of regular retirement. Until October 2018 there was additional funding for two Early Career Fellowships that were directly associated with the Chair of European Intellectual History. This line funding has not been renewed; the two Early Career Fellowships will disappear.

In response to the significant budget cuts of the past years, the staff of the Kolleg and the planning of outreach activities have been minimised. For 2021-2023 the Kolleg will be able to finance 8 Early Career Fellowships and about 3-4 Senior Research Fellows.

4.2. The End of Excellence

As noted, for six years, since 2015, the research agenda of the Kolleg has been dominated by the University of Göttingen's *Exzellenz* applications. The Kolleg was involved in the applications for excellence research cluster in the Enlightenment, *Primate Cognition* and *The Making and Unmaking of the Religious*, which was spearheaded by our former Vice-Director Matthias Koenig. The two latter applications made it to the final round of the excellence cluster competition, but none was successful. Göttingen did not qualify for the round of university excellence and it is fair to say that the university was the big loser of the *Exzellenzinitiative*.

As is well known, the excellence failure has had a grave impact, manifested most strongly and publicly in the resignation of the university's president, the botched attempt to appoint a successor, leading to a revolt of an influential group of university professors. The appointment was halted and the long-standing chairman of the *Stiftungsrat* resigned. In terms of governance the Göttingen crisis exemplifies the wider fundamental clash in Germany's academia between the belief in the virtues of a 'professorial aristocracy' as governance model and the idea that the introduction of

more innovative (and controversial) governance elements, both in terms of management and quality assurance, could be beneficial.

The current interim presidency has been able to calm the waters of Göttingen's downward spiral. The Kolleg has been affected by Göttingen's crisis in at least three ways. First, the 'end of excellence' has important financial consequences and the question is whether as a decent but no longer 'excellent' university, Göttingen can 'afford' to have an Institute for Advanced Study. Second, most regrettably the Kolleg has seen the departure of its Vice-Director, Matthias Koenig, to the University of Heidelberg. The fact that Göttingen was not able to convince him to stay, testifies to the intellectual effects of the downward spiral. Third, the end of excellence offers an opportunity to the Kolleg for intellectual renewal. In 2019 a Call was launched for proposals to set up thematic research groups and/or to invite individual scholars as fellows for the academic years 2021-2023.

4.3. Enlightenment Studies

The early failure of the Enlightenment application in the research cluster *Exzellenz-*competition was regrettable but did not come as a great surprise. The application was an act of great enthusiasm. Within the university it has resulted in more modest research project endeavours, especially in the field of the history of knowledge. The Kolleg's own efforts (since 2012) to develop the study of the Göttingen Enlightenment within its global contexts as a distinct research focus have been successful. In terms of applications for Early Career Fellowships, Enlightenment Studies in Göttingen are attractive. For the cohort, 2019-2021, the Kolleg received 53 applicants, for 2017-2019 the number of applications was 73 and for the cohort 2015-2017 there were 95 applications. Moreover, the Kolleg continues to be successful in attracting leading international scholars in Enlightenment Studies to Göttingen, including Dorinda Outram in 2016, Ritchie Robertson from Oxford in 2017, Lars Magnusson from Uppsala and Anthony La Vopa as Permanent Fellows, Avi Lifschitz (Oxford) for the academic year 2021-2022 and Jonathan Israel for the academic year 2022-2023. The Enlightenment group also continues to attract scholars, who come to the Kolleg with external funding, most notably from the Humboldt Foundation. Kelsey Rubin-Detlev (Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures an der University of Southern California) will join the Kolleg as Humboldt Fellow in 2022; her topic is *The Bible in the Russian Enlightenment*; another Humboldt Fellow Alexandre Mendes Cunha (UFMG, Brasil) will come to the Kolleg in the summer of 2021. His research topic is *Economic and political freedoms in Iberian Enlightened reformism: an inquiry on the political economy discourse and the uses of economic language*. Mendes Cunha has been associated with the research project on Cameralism, that was set up by a former Humboldt Fellow at the Kolleg, Ere Nokkala from Helsinki.

Together with Ere Nokkala, Permanent Fellow Lars Magnusson and former Fellow Jonas Gerlings, the Kolleg is preparing a new application (to the Kone Foundation) for a research group on *Cameralism, Cosmopolitanism and Colonialism*. The Kolleg has also committed itself to cooperate with the *Forum Wissen* project *Sensible Provenienzen, 2020-2023*, which has the controversial Blumenbach Collection of skulls at its center. The proposal is to do so with a research group on *Colonial Encounters, Enlightenment Collections, Post-Colonial Ethics and Politics* in the field of Intellectual History and Political Theory. Intellectually this means somewhat of a shift. There is a strong alignment with Martin van Gelderen's project to do a new English language edition of Hugo Grotius *De Iure Belli ac Pacis/On the Laws of War and Peace* for the Cambridge 'blue series', the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*. Historically this means starting in the period of the late Renaissance. As the reference to 'post-colonial' in the research group's title indicates, the proposal is also to focus more strongly on the enduring legacy of the Enlightenment's colonial encounters, in which the University of Göttingen (indeed Lichtenberg himself) took an active part.

4.4. Human Rights, Constitutional Law and Religious Diversity

Back in 2011 a second strategic decision has been to maintain the Kolleg's longstanding research focus on the study of religion from classical antiquity to the present, in line with the university's efforts to raise the study of religion as a distinct Göttingen point of research excellence. Vice-Director Matthias Koenig played a leading role here as a principal spokesman and Martin van Gelderen was one of the application's PIs, so the Kolleg has been deeply involved in the application for the cluster of excellence *The Making and Unmaking of the Religious*. In this light, it was deemed vital in 2017 to continue our research group 'Human Rights, Constitutional Law and the Governance of Religious Diversity. Cross-Cultural and Transregional Perspectives' for the period 2019-2021. Given (a) the unsuccessful outcome of the *Exzellenz*-application, (b) the departure of Matthias Koenig, and (c) the lack of response to the Kolleg's new Call for proposals from Göttingen scholars involved in the cluster, this research focus will stop.

4.5. Modern Jewish Cultural, Intellectual and Literary History

In cooperation with the Göttingen Academy of Sciences the research group in *Modern Jewish Cultural, Intellectual and Literary History (1500-2000)* started in October 2017. At the Kolleg the research group in Modern Jewish Studies is co-financed by the Academy and the Kolleg. All Fellowships in this research group are named after Moritz Stern (1807-1894).

The establishment of this research group was aligned with efforts within the Göttingen Arts and Theology Faculties to strengthen the university's profile in Jewish Studies. At present it is unclear where these efforts are going. A highly promising and well-funded SFB (*Sonderforschungsbereich*) *Education and Religion in Cultures of the Mediterranean and*

Its Environment from Ancient to Medieval Times and to the Classical Islam has come to a premature end; the application to Germany's Research Council, the DFG for a second round of funding was not successful.

As an intellectual venture the research group is highly promising, thanks to the research of an exceptional group of Early Career Fellows, the efforts of the Kolleg's *Geschäftsführerin* and literary scholar, Kora Baumbach, the commitment of Anke Hilbrenner, who holds the Chair of Eastern European History at the university, and the cooperation with Daniel Wildmann, director of the London Leo Baeck Institute, Moritz Stern Senior Research Fellow and currently Visiting Fellow.

Moritz Stern Fellows for the coming years at senior level include, from Strasbourg, the historian of mathematics and corresponding member of the Göttingen Academy Norbert Schappacher (2021-2022) and, from Princeton, the historian of early modern Jewry and of the Radical Enlightenment, Jonathan Israel (2022-2023).

4.6. New Research Groups: Public Health, Migration, Injustice

In combination, the long-term commitment of the Kolleg to support the *Exzellenz* cluster applications and the substantial budget cuts have left no financial room for innovation. As a result, for Göttingen faculty members not involved in *Exzellenz* the Kolleg has become an increasingly distant place. The new call offers the opportunity to open up to new research initiatives coming from the university and to cooperate with Göttingen faculty members, who have not been involved with the Kolleg before.

More specifically the proposal to the Academic Advisory Board is to set up two new research groups and to support one further initiative for more individual research cooperation.

The proposal for the *first new research group* has been submitted to the Kolleg by the cultural anthropologist Sabine Hess and Anja Jetschke, who holds the Chair of International Relations. They are part of a wider group of scholars cooperating within the Göttingen Centre for Global Migration Studies (CeMig). The research group **Public health and migration from a global and interdisciplinary perspective** is part of wider initiative 'to establish a new interdisciplinary research area to investigate the relationship between migration and health from an interdisciplinary and global perspective.' The research group is distinctly multidisciplinary, bringing together 'scholars from four different faculties (Biology and Psychology, Business and Economics, Humanities, Social Sciences) and the Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine at the University Medical Centre).' The group aims to focus its research on what it sees as 'one of the central and fundamental yet scarcely-addressed problems of how the "protection of life" and the "right to health" are defined, encoded and implemented in relation to migrant populations and post-colonial minorities, as well as which ethical, social and political questions arise from this practice.' In the

application this ambition is translated into, first, a series of key conceptual, ethical and political questions concerning the right to health in relation to 'migrant populations' and 'post-colonial minorities'. The application argues that in order to make the move from these normative questions to policy making, more knowledge is needed about the specific 'health vulnerabilities of migrant populations'. Filling gaps in knowledge and data is therefore a second key research focus. The third focus is, as the application argues in more detail, on the 'politics of access'.

The proposal for the *second new research group* has been submitted by a group of seven scholars in the fields of literature, cultural anthropology, history and bioethics. Six members of the group have their academic home in the *Philosophische Fakultät*, the faculty of humanities. Their proposal is to set up a research group on the theme of **Infection and Injustice: Narrative Responses to Pandemics**. The group's emphasis is on the 'narrative components of injustice', i.e. the focus is on the narrator, the content of the narration and story of injustice, the style, and the medium of communication. More specifically the group's aim is to study the narratives of injustice in six cases:

- Infections and the Emergence of International Health Organizations: Injustice and Progress? (Richard Hölzl, History)
- Anti-vaccination and anti-public-health: anti-sciences and/or anti-social? (Silke Schicktanz, Bioethics)
- The Anti-Vaxxer Debate, the Public Sphere, and the Emergence of Statistics: Benjamin Franklin and Smallpox (Andrew S. Gross, Literature/American Studies)
- Interpretive Labor within Structural Inequality: Narratives of COVID-Related Injustice in and around Refugee Camps on an EU Border (Čarna Brković, Cultural anthropology))
- Narrating Injustice in Albert Camus' novel *La Peste* (Franziska Meier, French and Italian Literature))
- Narrating Urban Spatial Injustice in Contemporary Protest Movements and Mutual Aid Initiatives (Moritz Ege, Cultural Anthropology)

The third and final proposal is to support the cooperative research project, submitted to the Kolleg by Dominic Sachsenmaier (Department of East Asian Studies) and Irene Schneider (Islamic Studies), on **Global Dimensions of Historical Denialism**. More specifically the proposal is to award a Senior Research Fellowship at the Kolleg to Jie-Hyun Lim, whose research for a monograph that has the working title "Denialist International-A Global History of Dark Memories' is at the heart of the project. More broadly the project aims to contribute to the study of, as the application puts it, 'organized movements that either completely deny or downplay the significance of such traumatic historical events as the atrocities committed under the conditions of colonialism, the Japanese occupation of parts of Asia during World War Two, or the Shoah.' Given this focus there is an obvious overlap with research done within the

Kolleg/Academy research group in Modern Jewish Studies; indeed, there is an obvious link with the Kolleg's project on the *Diaries of Anne Frank*.

All new projects have elements of overlap and synergy – with each other and with ongoing research groups. To study Benjamin Franklin is, to give one example, to study a key figure of the Enlightenment. Perhaps most strikingly the new research groups share an immediate concern with problems arising from the current Covid-19 pandemic and crisis.

5. Planning 2021-2023: Conclusions and Priorities

All in all, to conclude, the proposals to the Academic Advisory Board for the research group for the period 2021-2023 is one of continuity and innovation. The Kolleg seeks to consolidate its research profile in *Enlightenment Studies* and in *Modern Jewish Cultural, Literary and Intellectual History*. The proposal is also to set up new research groups on the themes of *Public health and Migration from a Global and Interdisciplinary Perspective* and *Infection and Injustice: Narrative Responses to Pandemics*.

Two further tasks need high priority in the coming years. First, with colleagues in the university we need to reflect on how the Kolleg's efforts to build 'Bridges' between what C.P. Snow famously called *The Two Cultures* in the human and natural sciences can be revived. Second, given the University of Göttingen's predicament, it is imperative for the Kolleg to strengthen external funding and to reduce the financial contribution from the university.

Martin van Gelderen,

1 November 2020

Appendix 1: Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Fellows, October 2019-October 2020

Name	First Name	Research Group		
Antonini	Francesca	Intellectual History (ECF)	2019	2021
Barb	Amandine	Human Rights, Religious Diversity (ECF)	2019	2021
Broackes	Justin	Philosophy (external funding)	2019	2021
David	Kathryn	Human Rights, Religious Diversity	2020	2020
De Lima e Silva	Caroline	Human Rights, Religious Diversity (ECF)	2019	2021
Erdle	Birgit	Modern Jewish Studies	2019	2020
Gaskell	Ivan	History of Material Culture (Permanent Fellow)		
Gierl	Martin	Enlightenment Studies (external funding)	2016	2021
Jordan	Alexander	History / Humboldt Fellow	2019	2020
Kılınçoğlu	Deniz T.	History, Philip Schwartz/Humboldt Fellow	2019	2020
La Vopa	Tony	Enlightenment Studies (Permanent Fellow)		
Levine	William	Intellectual History (ECF)	2019	2021
Lim	Shiru	Enlightenment Studies(ECF)	2019	2021
Magnusson	Lars	Enlightenment Studies/Political Economy (Permanent Fellow)		
Mampieri	Martina	Modern Jewish Studies (ECF)	2019	2021
Moses	Dirk	Genocide Studies (Humboldt Fellow)	2019	2020
Roick	Matthias	History of Ethics / VW <i>Freigeist</i>	2014	2020
Romanik	Weronika	Modern Jewish Studies (ECF)	2019	2021
Schirrmeister	Sebastian	Modern Jewish Studies (ECF)	2019	2021
Sharma	Jyotirmaya	Political Theory	2019	2021
Storring	Adam	Enlightenment Studies(ECF)	2019	2021
Varouxakis	Georgios	Intellectual History	2020	2021
Whitmer	Kelly	Enlightenment / Humboldt Fellow	2020	2021
Wildmann	Daniel	Modern Jewish Studies (Visiting Fellow, Leo Baeck intitute)	2018	2020

Appendix 2: Academic Activities, 2019-March 2020

Within the context of our weekly **colloquium**, Wednesday 4.15 p.m.-5.45 p.m., we had as guest speakers:

- 8th May 2019 Annelien de Dijn, *The Complacent Enlightenment: Montesquieu on Religion and Politics*
- 22nd May 2019 Liisi Keedus, *Dispelling two or three myths about getting the ERC grant. An applicant's perspective*
- 29th May 2019 Gregory S. Brown, *The Liberal Imagination, Social History and Anglo-American Scholarship on the Enlightenment, 1955-1975*
- 5th June 2019 Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (co-organised by the Zentrum für Theorie und Methoden der Kulturwissenschaften), *Über die narrative Ordnung des Experiments*

For a **book launch** we invited:

- 28th January 2019 Daniel Wilson to introduce his new book *Der Faustische Pakt*

For a **public lecture** we invited:

- 15th January 2020 Thomas Maissen (German Historical Institute Paris): *Britannia and her sisters in the 17th and 18th century. Political representation and iconography*

The following **workshops** were hosted and organised by the Kolleg:

- 31st January/1st February 2019 *Liberalism and its critics. National identities and institutions in transition*
- 5th/6th April 2019 *Social Technologies and global knowledge economies, 1750-1850*
- 9th to 11th May 2019 *The great protector of wits. D'Holbach 1789-2019*
- 16th/17th May 2019 *The Renaissance in Exile: German Renaissance Scholars in Europe and North America (1930-2000)*
- 20th/21st May 2019 *Between Civic Virtue and Civil War: Global Genealogies; first Part: Civic Virtue to Civil War*
- 23rd/24th May 2019 *Between Civic Virtue and Civil War: Global Genealogies; second Part: Between Civil War and Revolution*
- 27th/28th May 2019 *Jews and Jewish Religion in Western Postwar Fiction Film*
- 11th to 13th July 2019 *Intersections of Earth Sciences and Technologies in the long Eighteenth Century*
- 5th December 2019 *New Horizons in Digital Research on Religion, Nationalism and Collective Memory*
- 10th/11th December 2019 *Rembrandt: Lasting Impressions (catalogue of upcoming exhibition).*
- 9th/10th January 2020 *Narrating Injustice: Thinking through performances, presentations, and stories of wrongs and unfairness*

Finally, on 6th December 2019 we welcomed the Renaissance music ensemble *Capella de la Torre*, which gave a **Christmas concert** (*Navidad con los ministriles. Eine Weihnachtsreise durch das Europa der Renaissance*). It was a modest celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Lichtenberg-Kolleg.

Appendix 3:

Financial Overview – Budget 2019-2020

1. Income 2019 and 2020

	Euro	
Gesamt/Total Budget 2019	931.382,59	(Übertrag aus/carry over 2018 + Budgetzuweisung/allocation 2019)
Ausgabe/Expenditure 2019	882.280,12	
Übertrag in/carry over to 2020	49.102,47	
Neuzuweisung/Budget allocation university 2020	747.180,00	
Budget 2020	796.282,47	
2. Expenditure 2019		
Ausgaben/Expenditure 2019	882.280,12	
PERSONAL/Personnel	285.264,47	
Personal wissenschaftl. Dienst	103.993,08	
Personal nicht wiss. Dienst	174.179,87	(Entgelte Mitarbeiter, VBL, AGA, Zuschläge etc.)
Personal sonstiges	6.637,30	(Vergütung Gastwissenschaftler Mark Hutchinson)
Personalkosten sonstige	454,22	(Beiträge Berufsgenossenschaften)
Fellows/Research/Admin Costs	597.015,65	
Hilfskräfte	16.103,85	(WHK/Wilke Brandt, studentische Hilfskraft Kristina Dabernig)
Fellows Vergütung	130.400,00	
Sachausgaben	450.511,80	(Stipendien Fellows, sonstige Personalaufwendungen, bezogene Waren, Energie/Strom, Reparaturen, Literatur, Bücher, Verbrauchsmaterialien, Reinigungsmittel, Lehrmittel, Miete, Leasing, Verwaltung, Reisekosten, Büromaterial, Bewirtungskosten, Telefon, Flugkosten, Fahrtkosten, Steuern, Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Kommunikation, Telefon, Versicherung, Zinsen, Einnahmen/Erträge, Sternwarte Abrechnungen usw. alle sonstigen Kosten)