

Berichte von Studierenden über die Summer School in Irbid

Noemi Kriebisch

Summer School on „Trauma“ (الصدمة)

My name is Noemi Kriebisch, I am 22 years old and I am studying Languages and Cultures of the Islamicate World at the University of Cologne.

At the moment, I am completing my semester abroad at the University of Jordan in Amman. For that reason, it was a great opportunity to take part in the Summer School during my stay in Amman.

This year's Summer School took place at Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan – from the 22nd until the 27th of September. Around thirty students participated, mainly German students from the University of Cologne and Jordanian students from Yarmouk University. Because I am already living in Amman, I just took the bus from there to Irbid. I stayed with three other girls at an Airbnb, near the university campus. The rest of our German group stayed in a hostel, even closer to the campus. The trip was financed by a grant of the German Academic Exchange Services (DAAD), which covered the costs for the flight and the hotel. Because the students, who study for one semester at the University of Jordan are already financed by ERASMUS +, we had to pay for our accommodation by ourselves.

The subject of this Summer School was trauma. The students were placed into working groups (consisting of three or four people), so that every group got the chance to take a closer look at one specific topic within the broader topic of trauma. Every group consisted of both German and Jordanian students. More precisely, the subtopics were divided into the history of trauma, its theories and concepts, trauma in Arabic and German literature and trauma in Jordan and Arab countries, in the Middle East, Europe and in Germany. Every working group prepared a presentation for the wider group and afterwards there was time for questions and discussion. From the beginning it was noticeable that the Jordanian students are really open-minded and welcoming people, who showed a lot of interest in getting in touch with the German students.

The first day started with a general getting to know each other. While introducing ourselves we expressed our hopes and expectations regarding the Summer School. The whole program was held both in English and Arabic. This made it a bit hard to follow at times but since we are studying the Arabic language, it was a great chance to listen to Arabic native speakers and to learn a lot of new, subject-specific vocabulary. The program started at nine in the morning and lasted until four in the afternoon. Because there were a lot of questions and comments after the sessions and because there was so much material for discussion it usually took us more time. The program comprised different lectures, speeches and readings of visiting guests.

After our round of introductions we had the lecture by our first visiting guest Mr. Basel Al-Hamad. He started his talk with asking us to remember our oldest memory we still have in mind. After sharing some of our memories it turned out that most of the Jordanian students remembered events that happened to them when they were at least six or seven years old, while the memories of the German students

went back to earlier ages. Besides, he spoke about the role of trauma in politics and about the way trauma can be exploited.

On Monday morning, Hisham al-Bustani gave a talk. Born in Amman in 1975, Hisham al-Bustani is an author and short-story writer. In this session, he presented and read out two of his short-stories in a very impressive way. Al-Bustani spoke in Arabic as well, which made his performance even more authentic. Another really well-chosen and interesting lecture was the one by Professor Fadia F. Suyoufie. She spoke about her work with female refugees. Because she related her personal experiences and talks she had with the women, it didn't happen on a scientific, but on a really personal and emotional level. Her shared experiences affected me deeply. She asked the escaped women, which kind of objects they took with them on their way. Most of them answered that they brought really simple things with them – a spoon, a thimble, a cup,... – objects, which symbolize and make them remember their regular everyday life before fleeing their homes. I experienced the idea of trauma differently when I thought about the question, what I would take with me if I had to leave my house and everything that belongs to myself and my family behind... She also read out a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, which really fit well into the context.

On Tuesday afternoon, there was some free space for the group to visit the nearby sight „Umm Qays“. The area provides the ruins of the Decapolis city of Gadara, which is now called Umm Qays. From its vantage point, by clear weather, it is possible to have a view encompassing three countries: Jordan, Israel and Syria. Besides you have a wonderful view over the Golan Heights and the Sea of Galilee. It took us approximately 40 minutes to go there by bus. We were free to discover the area by ourselves. We were disappointed that we did not have much time to stay there. However, I think it is a really good idea to integrate trips into the program so that you get a better idea of the place on the whole, in which you are staying during the



Ruins of a temple from hellenistic era



Vantage point - Golan Heights

week. Besides it is nice to do something with the group in order to get to know each other better, which also improves the cooperation at the university. It would have been great if there was some more space to maybe see one or two more things

around the city. In the evenings, we had free time to decide by ourselves what we would like to do.

Furthermore, we visited an NGO and a local center of the Jordanian Women Union (JWU). The NGO is specialized to Family Protection and Childhood. The head of the NGO gave us an insight into their work and we were able to ask him questions about the organization.

The JWU works towards empowering women against gender-based violence. It is also a non-governmental organization that is committed to improving the status of women in society. It is one of the most prominent and influential women's organizations in the Arab world and has established strong networks with women's movements both nationally and internationally. In Amman, there are three operational centers and also several district branches throughout the country, as the one in Irbid we visited. One of their several programs is called the „Women's Shelter“. The JWU shelter provides female victims of abuse and violence with protection, counseling and rehabilitation services, which they would otherwise be denied because of circumstances beyond their control. Another program is the „Health Program“, which provides medical and clinical services for vulnerable and abused women and works towards increasing women's knowledge of reproduction and other health issues through offering training courses.

The women who presented the organization explained to us that sometimes over a hundred women come to them per day.

On Wednesday, we listened to a very interesting presentation by Barbara Hofner. She works as a psychotherapist and spent the whole week with us. Her talk was about trauma therapy with traumatized persons and adult children of traumatized (grand)-parents from a practical perspective. I liked her lecture because it provided us with an insight into her job and in her work with her patients. Besides, we got the chance to ask her questions about her work and the therapy methods.

Our last presentation on Friday was held by Dr. Ayat Nashwan in „The Refugees, Displaced Person, And Forced Migration Studies Center“ of the Yarmouk University. She accompanied us during the whole Summer School. In her presentation, she talked about resilience of the people in the Gaza Strip. Afterwards the Jordanian students gave all of us a small gift with a signed postcard and a little souvenir. I experienced the Jordanian students as really active and highly motivated people. During the talk of Dr. Nashwan it became obvious that her presentation was more like a working together instead of an instruction hold by a teacher. Sometimes it seemed like they had less inhibitions to ask what was really going on in their mind, both shown in their questions and comments. I also got the feeling that most of them really enjoyed doing their group presentations because they did not seem shy or nervous at all while speaking in front of the class. At the very end, one of the Jordanian participants presented his own written poem addressed to the Jordanian professors and to our professor Dr. Stephan Milich in a very lovely, enthusiastic and amusing way.

For me, the participation at the Summer School was a really good choice and I highly recommend it to everyone who is interested in intercultural exchange. It is also a great possibility to travel to a country where you may consider to study for a semester. The workshop gives you the chance to get deeper into a topic and to learn a lot about a new place, a new culture and new people. As already mentioned, the

Jordanian students gave me the impression that they were really happy and glad to have us in Irbid and to get to know us. It was a really nice experience to feel so welcomed and appreciated by them. We learned about a really important social topic – trauma: about trauma itself, trauma therapy and trauma regarding the case of refugees. What I take with me from the Summer School is the awareness for the importance of the subject trauma as a phenomenon, which can persist even throughout following generations. Everyone knows about trauma but what is really meant by suffering from one and its consequences became clear to me only now.

Paying attention to this subject might be a really helpful way when dealing with refugees. It should not be forgotten that these people not only have to face new circumstances, but that they also went through horrible and unimaginable events from which many of them suffer in form of a trauma they carry inside like a deep psychological wound.

In my opinion an intercultural exchange like this is an incredible chance for everyone to broaden their horizon in every regard, both personal and general.



Summer School Group 2018

A throwback to the summer school experience in Irbid

Elene Shubladze

First memory. First fear. Your first happiness. Have you ever asked yourself, what causes your first memory stick in your mind for so long? Or maybe you wondered, what the first memories of others could be? Or what caused us all cling to their memories? As Dr. Basel Al-Hamad, a psychologist who has first taken the stand at our Summer School has said: 'we all have been exposed to an experience that has clicked something in our minds, making us, in a way, more vulnerable and traumatized'. He asked us to step out and tell our very first memories.

"I was 2.5.."

"I was 9 [...] it was a shock.."

"I remember only the feeling...it was this nice feeling... I was three, I think."

A smile appeared on all the faces after listening to this last piece of memory and as one of my colleagues has rightly noticed, it was an 'icebreaker' that helped two groups connect and build trust towards each other, which was crucial for our further discussions. It was on the second day when merged groups of Jordanian and German students have kick-started the presentation series of our Summer School. Followed by Dr. Stephan Milich's insightful lecture about cultural trauma, we have received the first impressions about the history of trauma, its causes and symptoms. This has raised important questions about the importance of recovery and justice; ethics and sympathy; understanding and closure – topics that have been addressed and discussed the following days more thoroughly.

The fact that all the topics were interpreted in two languages, Arabic and English, has been one of the most precious experiences I will treasure for a long time to come. For someone, who has been learning about Arabic language and culture for some time now, it was amazing to hear Jordanian students speak up about these very important topics, to really see them speaking and feel their words. It may sound strange, but it isn't really. Communication as a vital medium for all of us – to speak and be heard, to be able to discuss and come to a conclusion whatever it might be, seems to be a basic and common knowledge, yet so far from reality. Being able to hear opinions first hand and from both sides, was something very symbolic and very refreshing.

The presentations and discussions held at the Yarmouk University where interchanging with our visits to the NGOs. One that I'd like to mention is Jordanian Women Union (JWU) – a non-governmental organization that is committed to improving the status of women. Here we had one of the very interesting, at some points even appalling and confusing experiences that, I believe, has made quite some of us think. Many stories I have read in the past about women abuse were being referred to and brought to life. Well, those were true stories, after all. These Women at JWU – with a capital letter, yes, for they make me feel proud and hopeful for our common future, fighting against despair and horror – who try to help other women get over their tragedies every single day, knowing no radical change can happen but still try, by all available means to make some justice happen, the least relief and recovery, people like them are the light that can and will consequently drive out the darkness.

Relief and recovery was one of the central topics in Prof. Fadia F. Suyoufie heartfelt lecture about Syrian women refugees 'What to pack? The semiotics of be-longing(s) of Syrian displaced women'. She shared with us an emotional story of these women and showed us the pictures of some of the belongings they had decided to take with them when fleeing their homes. 'Each piece has its story and helps them feel at home again,' she said. This lecture raised very interesting questions about the importance of letting go and moving forward (recovery, closure); the 'danger' of staying in the constant state of trauma (isolation, depression); risk of 'encouraging' traumatic experience in children (inadvertent influence) and triggering generational trauma, etc.

It is interesting how blazingly fast the emotions were changing. With every new piece of information disappointment would change to frustration and sadness; the feelings of justice and fairness would predominate and then this helplessness and anger again. Of course, there is a reason to this rollercoaster of feelings. Normally, we tend to shut it down: everything that could slightly bother us, has to be cut out, ignored and overheard. There is no judgment and it is absolutely understandable – at some point we have to do this, in order to protect ourselves. Nobody can take in all the disasters that happen every day, unless one was born in to this and doesn't know any other reality. And here we were, sitting on the seminars exposed to this very sensitive topic. Of course, everyone was reacting differently, but it still has had its impact on every one of us.

...So did Hisham Bustani's moving performance on early morning, as he read his two short stories to us. To understand what will follow, you must know that Bustani is one of those writers who literally make you hear everything you read. Every word was creeping into my mind and made me imagine the horrible things he was describing. The words gained more emotion and reality as he used the *effects* while reading. His voice was rising and sinking as he stood in the dark auditorium, as he told us the story of a murder. His voice was followed by the synchronized English translation that appeared on a white screen. He started walking in pace with his words, while melancholic music playing in the background filled the room. Clearly, his way of presenting the stories on top of its content accelerates one's perception and reaction to it. Culprit and victim, violence and justification, empathy and anger were the least cues popping up in my mind; some of these topics were raised in our following discussions.

While lectures like this would raise our concern about things that are usually so far, making them close and opening our eyes wide, there were others that helped us open up and find some peace. Dr. Med. Barbara Hofner, a psychotherapist, who has spent with us all five days of summer school, has prepared for us a very interesting and interactive session, where we had learned a small bit about *generational trauma*, a topic that we are going to engage with more deeply in the second part of the school. This lecture has created this safe space, where some of us were able to share personal experiences and concerns and raised our awareness about some coping mechanisms and ways of dealing with the post-traumatic experience.

A very big topic for a very small amount of time, indeed, and so interesting. There was so much more to talk about and every time when the clock was close to 16:00, despite our 'information fatigue' towards the end, several hands were still hanging in the air waiting for their turn to ask or express their opinion. It was fascinating to

observe how eager we were to ask more and discuss more. Luckily, there will be a second part of the Summer School in December and yet another chance to get lost in the discussions in search for the answers.

Erfahrungsbericht

Im Folgenden wird über die Erfahrungen sowie die Eindrücke berichtet, die ich während der Summer School in *Irbid* über das Thema *Trauma* gemacht bzw. gewonnen habe.

Im Verlauf der einwöchigen und intensiven Auseinandersetzung mit dem individuellen sowie dem kollektiven Trauma habe ich über die sozial-psychologischen Aspekte dieses Phänomens wertvolle Erkenntnisse erworben. In den Sitzungen wurden unter anderem wissenschaftlich relevante Themen wie „*Trauma Politics*“, *Geschichte und Theorien vom Trauma*, *Kollektives und Intergenerationales Trauma*, *Trauma in deutscher sowie arabischer Literatur* aufgeworfen und tiefgründig behandelt.

Trauma als ein sozial-psychologisches Phänomen – sowohl auf individueller, als auch auf kollektiver Ebene – entsteht vor allem da, wo das Individuum bzw. das Kollektiv einer existentiellen Bedrohung ausgesetzt werden. Falls diese Bedrohung noch von einer Macht- und Ausweglosigkeit des menschlichen Subjekts begleitet wird, dann können möglicherweise die gewöhnlichen, herkömmlichen Sinnstrukturen und Selbstverständlichkeiten des menschlichen Daseins zusammenbrechen. Trauma stellt mit anderen Worten einen Moment des Zusammenbruchs des individuellen psychischen Systems sowie des kollektiven sozialen Systems dar. Daher muss es vorzugsweise mit einer phänomenologischen Herangehensweise verstanden und analysiert werden und gerade deshalb kommt bei einer intersubjektiv nachvollziehbaren Beschreibung dieses Sein-Zustandes der Kunst bzw. der Literatur eine besondere Rolle zu.

Traumatische Erfahrungen sind für das psychische Wohlbefinden der Individuen durchaus folgerichtig. Je nach dem sozialen Kontext (z.B. dem Grad an Eingebundenheit in einem hilfsbereiten, sozialen Netzwerk) und den individuellen Fähigkeiten zur Selbst-Anpassung können die Konsequenzen von einer extremen, pathologischen post-traumatischen Belastungsstörung bis hin zu einem leichten Zweifel an *bis dato* als unbezweifelbare Selbstverständlichkeiten geltenden sozialen Fakten variieren.

Eine der wichtigsten wissenschaftlichen und theoretischen Erkenntnisse, die ich durch die Seminare und Diskussionen gewonnen habe, war die Bedeutung der Kulturpolitik bzw. Kulturindustrie eines Landes (d.h. Literatur, Filmindustrie, offizielle Historiographie usw.) bei der Verarbeitung der im Laufe der Geschichte entstandenen kollektiven traumatischen Erfahrungen. Die Art und Weise, wie Erinnerungen an (mensen-gemachte) traumatische Erfahrungen, wie z.B. Krieg, ethnischer Säuberung, abrupte sozio-politische Umwälzungen, durch narrative, meist literarische Medien intergenerational rezipiert und reproduziert werden, hat nämlich einen wesentlichen Einfluß darauf, ob in einer historisch entstandenen Gemeinschaft sich kollektive Identitäten herausbilden, die auf starke Abgrenzung zu anderen Kollektivitäten bzw. auf Konstruktion von Feindbildern angelegt sind, oder nicht.

Darüber hinaus fand ich das Thema des intergenerationalen Traumas sehr spannend. Dieses Thema ist insbesondere bei den psychotherapeutischen Ansätzen von großer Bedeutung. Denn die Konsequenzen der traumatischen Erfahrungen können unbeabsichtigt von einer Generation an die nächste Generation

weitergegeben werden. Dies geschieht entweder infolge der pathologischen, psychologischen Anomalien der direkt vom traumatischen Ereignis betroffenen Generation und deren Auswirkung auf die Sozialisation der heranwachsenden Generation, oder durch die narrative Selbst-Konstruktion der Individuen sowie der Kollektive, die dazu geneigt ist, über die Geschichte, die Realität und den Sinn des Lebens ein eher düsteres Bild zu malen.

Dem intergenerationalen Trauma soll deshalb beispielsweise bei der sozialen Integration von Kriegsflüchtlingen genügend Achtung geschenkt werden. Das psychische Wohlbefinden der Nachkommen von Flüchtlingen hängt nämlich davon ab, ob die traumatischen Erlebnisse der Eltern-Generation ausreichend angesprochen und behandelt werden.

Exkursionen und außeruniversitäre Unternehmungen

Neben den Seminaren haben wir auch zwei NGOs sowie einen historischen Ausgrabungsort besucht. Die beiden NGOs waren im Bereich der Kinder- und Frauenrechte aktiv und ihr Fokus lag insbesondere auf syrischen Flüchtlingen, deren Zahl in Jordanien auf 1.5 Millionen geschätzt wird. Denn diese Flüchtlinge können leider aufgrund der ungünstigen wirtschaftlichen Lage Jordaniens nicht genügend von wohlfahrtsstaatlichen Maßnahmen profitieren und sind daher besonders von Armut betroffen. Dabei leiden insbesondere die Frauen und die Kinder unter materieller Armut sowie der strukturellen sozialen Benachteiligung.

Neben diesen sozio-ökonomischen Missständen machen die patriarchalen Strukturen das Leben für Flüchtlingskinder und -frauen noch schwieriger. Es war inspirierend zu sehen, wie die AktivistInnen in diesen NGOs teils hauptamtlich und teils ehrenamtlich sich für Rechte der Frauen einsetzten – und zwar trotz den institutionellen Einschränkungen, d.h. sowohl juristische, als auch sozio-kulturelle Institutionen. Der Besuch dieser NGOs hat jedenfalls bei mir einen sehr positiven Eindruck hinterlassen. Bei einem zukünftigen Aufenthalt im Rahmen eines Auslandssemesters werde ich versuchen, bei derartigen NGOs ein Praktikum zu absolvieren.

Auch der Besuch des historischen Ortes *Um Qais*, welcher an vorislamische Geschichte der Region erinnert, war sehr lehrreich. Dabei bin ich auf einen wichtigen, interessanten Aspekt der jordanischen Identität aufmerksam geworden, nämlich: wie eine spezifische jordanische nationale Identität aus einer Synthese zwischen der arabisch-islamischen Narrative und der lokalen, vorislamischen Narrative konstruiert wird.

Interkulturelle Erfahrungen

1. Die Frage der „Translation“

Alle Präsentationen und Diskussionen wurden in beiden Sprachen durchgeführt bzw. übersetzt. Dies hat zwar die Konzentration auf den Inhalt einigermaßen erschwert, stellte für mich aber eine neue Erfahrung dar, die ich als positiv bewerte. Es war beispielsweise interessant zu erleben, wie der Akt der Übersetzung in einer interkulturellen wissenschaftlichen Dialogsituation komplex aber zugleich wichtig und spannend sein kann. Der Zweisprachen-Modus war darüber hinaus für den Ausbau

unserer Sprachkenntnisse sehr hilfreich. Durch die Verfolgung der arabischen Übersetzungen habe ich beispielsweise viele zentrale Begriffe und Redeweisen des Levante-Dialektes kennengelernt und mir angeeignet.

2. Die Frage der Rationalität

Eine wichtige Frage, die mich im gesamten Verlauf der Diskussionen beschäftigte, war die erkenntnistheoretische Frage der wissenschaftlichen Rationalität, nämlich: ob man in der Institution der Wissenschaft (bzw. im Sub-System der Wissenschaft) von einer universalen Rationalität reden kann oder man in einem post-modernen Stil die Möglichkeit einer kulturspezifischen Rationalität anerkennen soll. Dabei war ich auf einen auffälligen Unterschied zwischen der deutschen und der jordanischen Gruppe aufmerksam geworden, nämlich, dass die jordanische Seite (sowohl die Lehrenden, als auch die Studierenden) stark zur "religiösen Rationalität" geneigt war. Diese andersartige Rationalität hat sich beispielhaft in den (strittigen) Diskussionen über die Rolle der Religion bei der Überwindung vom Trauma gezeigt.

Der Gott bzw. der Allah war sowohl in den wissenschaftlichen Diskussionen als auch in den privaten Gesprächen über Politik und Gesellschaft omnipräsent. Aus einer dekonstruktivistischen Perspektive kann man vielleicht die Vermutung anstellen, dass die in Vormoderne vorherrschende, grundlegende Gegensatzstruktur Gott/Mensch bei der Herausbildung der akademischen Kulturformation bzw. des gesamten, hybriden Wissenssystems (bzw. Episteme) und sogar in den "modernen" Diskursen der "empirischen" Wissenschaften der Soziologie und der Psychologie immer noch eine unverzichtbare Rolle spielt.

3. Die Frage der Autorität

Ein anderer Unterschied bzw. kulturspezifischer Aspekt der jordanischen Gruppe war ihre unkritische Einstellung gegenüber (wissenschaftlicher) Autorität. Zum einen war die Beziehung zwischen Lehrenden (d.h. InhaberInnen der Autorität) und den Studierenden vergleichsweise von einem auffallenden Machtverhältnis geprägt. Dies war beispielsweise der durchaus unkritischen und verherrlichenden Einstellung der Studierenden gegenüber den Lehrenden zu entnehmen. Die Entstehung von Machtverhältnissen gegenüber den Autoritätsinstanzen ist vielleicht ein universales Phänomen. Die wissenschaftliche Autorität impliziert schon einen Machtanspruch auf die Festlegung des "wahren" Wissens. Relativ und im Vergleich zu den deutschen Studierenden war dieses unkritische Sich-Unterwerfen der Autorität gegenüber vonseiten der jordanischen Studierenden jedoch wesentlich auffälliger.

Zum anderen war im Allgemeinen bei jordanischen Studierenden ein unzureichender Grad an Reflexionsfähigkeit – vor allem bezüglich des Macht-Wissen-Komplexes – zu beobachten. Beispielsweise blieb die politisch geladene Diskussion über die Zahl der syrischen Flüchtlinge in Jordanien am Ende – und trotz des Weiterverfolgens der Diskussion in persönlichen Gesprächen – unschlüssig, da die jordanische Seite auf einer unkritischen Art und Weise an ihren eigenen Autoritätsquellen festhalten wollte.

4. Abbau von Vorurteilen

Ich war in einer Familie in Iran geboren, die zu einer nicht-muslimischen Minderheit gehörte (Ahl-e-Hagh bzw. Yarsanis). Meine Kindheit war von Erzählungen über die

blutige Unterdrückung und Vertreibung meiner Vorfahren durch muslimische Stämme sowie die osmanische Armee geprägt (etwas, das vielleicht als narrativ tradiertes, intergenerationales Trauma bezeichnet werden kann). Dazu kam die systematische Diskriminierung sowie die politische Verfolgung vonseiten des islamistischen Regimes Irans, die ich in den ersten 23 Jahren meines Lebens persönlich erleben musste.

All dies hat dazu geführt, dass in mir sich ein tiefsitzendes Gefühl des Ressentiments gegen den Islam entwickelt hat. Obwohl ich immer diese negativen Gefühle bewußt zu unterdrücken und abzubauen versuchte, blieb in meinem Inneren dieses Ressentiment latent weiter bestehen (sogar während meines Lebens in Deutschland).

Meine Erfahrungen während der Summer School sind aber in dieser Hinsicht als sehr positiv zu bewerten. In den meisten Begegnungen waren die jordanischen Gesprächspartner mir gegenüber offen und aufgeschlossen, sogar, wenn ich mich als iranstämmig und nicht-muslimisch vorstellte. Trotz ihrer starken Religiosität waren die meisten Jordanier in einem bemerkenswerten und für den Mittleren und Nahen Osten untypischen Ausmaß von humanistischen Werten geprägt und beeinflusst, und nicht von manchen weitverbreiteten, gegenüber den Andersdenkenden menschenverachtenden religiösen Dogmen.