

A forum for dialogue on methods and disciplines

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In NORDEUROPAforum's last editorial, chief editors Inken Dose and Ebbe Volquardsen laid out the new direction that NORDEUROPAforum has taken since 2013. Although several important pillars remained unchanged (the peer review principle, open access, the general orientation towards the so-called 'Great North', and editorial staff members supporting authors), they are outweighed by the changes and innovations that the new homepage to some extent conveys.

Alongside the changed organisational orientation (continuous publications instead of two yearly volumes, the nature of the medium as a forum, and presence in social networks) and the expansion of the editorial staff by several members, the spectrum of contents and methods featured in this journal, which had been primarily one of social sciences, now has a broad cultural studies basis. For a start, this change has to do with the growing interest in cultural studies in many disciplines (from European ethnology to historical scholarship; from fine arts to theatre arts). Since the movement of humanist studies away from the Humanities towards either 'cultural studies', in the sense of the English Birmingham School, or its Paris-inspired counterpart in the style of Lévi-Strauss or Foucault, cultural studies have developed into a central paradigm of literary or language studies.

Scandinavian studies were first conceived of as a kind of philology – as reflected by the names of its academic chairs, and most importantly the names of its courses of study and institutions. The fact that, since the 1970s, the focal points of the field's linguistics, literary, medieval studies and regional studies had diverged such that they mostly operated separately, went unnoticed in the institutional representation of this field for a long time. This differentiation owes much to (and has accomplished much to substantiate) its high academic aspirations. Since its inception, NORDEUROPAforum has aimed to take this into account, above all by addressing the opening up of the social science discipline (not least towards a Scandinavian studies oriented towards social realities), conducted by the Berlin Institute.

What does it mean now, when this publication, founded under the heading 'Journal for Politics, Economics, and Culture', rebrands itself as a 'Journal for Cultural Studies'? In fact, the journal has always had a varied range of topics which is substantiated by its imposing archives and the multitude of articles contained therein. In the same

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way, the Berlin-based publisher and their staff have persevered over time: everyone previously responsible for the publication has not only continued, but they were the instigators of this new concept. I believe that this innovation owes much more to the methodological developments of recent years, which have adopted as a basis a cultural concept that makes it hard to systematically distinguish between the different disciplines or subject areas.

Not only the concept of culture, but also central, fundamental methodological concepts like discourse, narration and medium are being defined anew, which promotes the convergence of research questions and disciplines, which were driven apart by the last big innovation push. Just to point out a few examples, as a practitioner of literary studies, I experience the dominant trend of my discipline, which is today the relationship between literature and knowledge; the strengthened contemplation of media studies in this age of electronic media defines large parts of medieval studies and has completely rejuvenated philology. The paradigm of narration now plays an ever-increasing role and is consulted in social sciences as well as historiography. Visual studies has established itself as an epistemological instrument of art history. This contemplative drive entails an interdisciplinary orientation on many current scholarly research questions; this tendency has been supported through institutionally stipulated and promoted joint research, as well as a new orientation for degree courses in the framework of the Bologna Process. It remains to be seen what forms disciplines like historiography, linguistics or literary studies will take in the face of the pressure exerted by these newly heightened interdisciplinary methods discussions.

But it's not the task of a scholarly journal to answer these fundamental questions; it should not even pose them. On the contrary, it offers a forum where Scandinavian studies, Northern Europe-oriented research questions and their example cases can take part in this new, interdisciplinary reflection on methods. In this regard, the new, broader orientation of *NORDEUROPAforum* will implicitly lead to a dialogue on methods and disciplines. The aim is for research questions based in Northern Europe to profit from this intended expansion and convergence.