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HELFSINKI: A CITY OF SURPRISES
The host of the 2019 EAIE Conference has something for everyone

EVENTS CALENDAR
“Regional higher education institutions, and even more so those located at the periphery of the country, are often considered to be second-tier universities”

SIBERIA’S UNEXPECTED APPEAL

“The challenge we face as a civilisation at a planetary scale is one of balancing national interests and common interests”

IN CONVERSATION WITH PAUL ARTHUR BERKMAN

“Getting out of the classroom and into the city necessitates new partnerships between universities, civil society organisations, communities and fellow students from different hemispheres”

URBAN IMMERSIONS

“Students are selected for their motivation to be agents of change, and at the end of the programme they feel empowered to do exactly that”

CULTIVATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AT EARTH
Despite the passage of time and the degree to which I feel so deeply embedded in the dynamics of international education after twenty years in the field, I'm constantly surprised by new developments. Evolving modes of engagement, new patterns of mobility, emerging questions and unintended consequences seem to be constantly stirring the pot. A search for a series of under-the-radar developments is precisely what drew us in this issue of Forum to consider the notion of ‘unexpected internationalisation’.

Of course, what may be ‘unexpected’ or surprising to me may simply be a function of the fact that my peripheral vision is limited. We all wear blinders of some sort, which limits our understanding and awareness of other contexts and realities. Sometimes, these blinders take the form of geography or language, for example. Other times, privilege – one of the most pernicious kinds of obstacles to clarity and understanding – obscures our view. So, our quest for the ‘unexpected’ in this issue was humbly and honestly grounded in a desire to lift our eyes and learn: What’s going on out there that hasn’t been widely reported? What activities are underway that don’t conform to some of our mainstream understandings and experiences of internationalisation? Where can we openly and honestly turn our attention to gain exposure to something new?

I can only speak for myself, but as a result of the articles included in this edition of Forum, I now know more about the approaches geographically remote Siberian universities are taking to advance their internationalisation agendas and activities. I have a sense of the scope of ambitions and potentially remarkable implications for international cooperation along the new ‘Silk Road’ stretching from China to Western Europe. And I’m newly attuned to the fact that Poland exerts a strong pull as a destination for international medical students. There is much each of us can learn about the constantly evolving world around us. Expanding the circle from which we typically draw information and ideas, and listening deeply in the process, is crucial.

On the subject of listening, over the last year or so, the EAIE leadership has itself undertaken a close listening process with members and worked to develop consensus around four core values that frame the work of this association. Collectively, we aim to be collaborative, inspiring, and inclusive, and to aspire toward excellence in all aspects of our work. It is immensely gratifying to see this mission-driven association assert its place on the international higher education landscape with increasing confidence and purpose.

My own sense of purpose is evolving, as well. This marks my last edition of Forum as chair of the Publications Committee. Rather than saying goodbye, though, I’m delighted to report that I’m moving into a new role within the EAIE as Associate Director Knowledge Development and Research. I’ve enjoyed my work on the Publications Committee immensely and look forward to continuing to participate in our collective efforts at the EAIE to learn, grow, and simply make the world a better place.

— LAURA RUMBLEY, EDITOR PUBLICATIONS@EAIE.ORG
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Melvin loves to dance and travel, especially to destinations off the beaten track. A long-term commitment to comparative, intercultural and international perspectives has led Melvin to work in the field of internationalisation.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH

PAUL ARTHUR BERKMAN

Photo: Anne Miller/Tufts University
What exactly is ‘science diplomacy’ and why are international relations important to the scientific community (or why should they be)?

PB: I think the notion of ‘science’ is the study of change. For the benefit of the world we live in, our challenge as educators is to develop the generations of skilled, informed decision-makers. Hopefully the most skilled informed decision-makers will become the leaders of nations, the leaders of societies, leaders in our world. It’s not about whether they make right or wrong decisions, good or bad decisions — it’s about making informed decisions.

A good illustration of this is the Paris Accord. It’s a polarising topic, so one of the skills of science diplomacy is to sit in a neutral position, recognising the science diplomat operates without decision-making capacity. Whenever you have two agendas, you create a political discussion, and part of the challenge is to avoid such political discussions, because they’re largely unproductive and they’re operating on a time scale that is reactive rather than informed.

That’s where the diplomacy comes in, offering options and evidence that can be either used or ignored by decision-makers explicitly, but without advocacy. Part of the idea of an informed decision is that it operates across a ‘continuum of urgencies’ corresponding to the scale of the issue, impact or resources involved. There is a continuum of urgencies at the scale of an individual as well as for our world, operating from security time scales that are immediate to sustainability time scales across generations. Informed decision-making is something that can be taught to an individual as well as to the world at the same time.

The concept of an informed decision is that the whole process starts with questions, and these questions are delivered in an international, interdisciplinary and inclusive manner. When these questions become questions of common concern, then it raises the issue of what the methods are to answer those questions. Those questions of common concern need to be answered with methods from the natural sciences, social sciences and indigenous knowledge, all of which study change, revealing patterns and trends that become the bases for decisions.

Our challenge as educators is to develop the generations of skilled, informed decision-makers

Your work has been focused in many ways on regions of the world that are defined as being beyond sovereign jurisdiction. How does the practice of international relations work in those kinds of contexts?

PB: Excellent, this is one of my favourite things to talk about! Nations account for about 30% of the
earth’s surface, and then we have areas that are beyond national boundaries, that are designated under international law as ‘international spaces’: the high seas, the deep sea, Antarctica, outer space. These are areas beyond sovereign jurisdiction.

After World War Two, it was recognised that a source of conflict in the world was national interests, nationalism, and as a consequence the world agreed to set regions beyond sovereign jurisdictions. In effect, what they were doing was removing sources of conflict: national interests and sovereign jurisdictions involved defence and maintenance of those boundaries, so by designating regions beyond sovereign jurisdictions it was potentially reducing the potential for planetary conflict.

Now if you look at these international spaces, in effect you have on one side national interests defined by nations, and then you have international spaces that are defined in terms of common interests. The challenge we face as a civilisation at a planetary scale is one of balancing national interests and common interests for the benefit of all on Earth across generations.

The challenge we face as a civilisation at a planetary scale is one of balancing national interests and common interests

The EAIE is focused specifically on the internationalisation of higher education. What role do higher education institutions and stakeholders play in the work you do and how important are universities in terms of advancing key science diplomacy objectives?

PB: I think universities actually have a very special role in the world that is not yet developed: they are bastions of objectivity. They are in a place without the agendas of government, without the agendas of industry, and without the agendas of non-governmental organisations. They serve in a neutral place to be able to convene dialogues among allies and adversaries alike.

Universities serve in a neutral place to be able to convene dialogues among allies and adversaries alike

Going back to the Paris Accord, it’s a political lightening rod, yet what underlies the Paris Accord is really very interesting, and it isn’t climate. Climate is a proxy for global human population size and growth, approaching eight billion people on Earth this decade, a nearly 1000% increase just since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The only reason climate is an issue is because there are a lot of us on Earth, reflecting our globally-interconnected civilisation.

Planetary issues operate not on a political time scale, but across generations. If we’re dealing with climate, we have to operate at the time scale of climate changes, which is certainly cross-generational. So if you think about a solution that operates on that scale, it’s not a single agreement – the Paris Accord of 2015 isn’t going to solve things that happen a generation in the future – but rather it’s a moment in that time frame. If you think about what the solution looks like, it’s an iterative process.

Part of the challenge in this journey to balance national interests and common interests is to figure out how to contribute to this process and to stabilise the process itself. I see levels of skill that can be trained at early stages of child development. Starting in elementary school, the ideas of questions, data, evidence, options and informed decisions can all be progressively introduced through students’ educations with all of us as life-long learners.

To ask what a successful education is for any graduate of any university, I would say it means that they’re able to teach themselves. So what are the basic rudiments to do that? It all starts...
with asking questions, recognising that inquiry is the essence of science and understanding change. Questions then reveal methods to answer them in an iterative cascade of learning. As Socrates imagined, we each can grow throughout a lifetime just based on questions, answers and refinement. I think these are the gifts we can give our students.

**PB:** For me the journey started when I was 10 years old or so. I knew at that stage that the dimensions of this journey were international and interdisciplinary. By the time I was 30, I’d been to all seven continents, having spent a year in Antarctica when I was 22 and truly walking off the edge of the earth. So yes – global has always been a core part of my life.

As I’ve mentioned, my perspective is that the characteristics of science diplomacy are international, interdisciplinary and inclusive. The international and interdisciplinary dimensions are easier to grasp, but I think the biggest challenge by far is inclusion – inclusion of different time frames, different sociocultural dynamics, different environmental circumstances, different priorities, backgrounds, histories. What I’ve learned is the hardest part of the puzzle is inclusion. I think for all of us, that’s where the most important contributions will emerge.
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http://ow.ly/Tift30mKEPO

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Facing today’s challenges by facing outward
Sally Kohn discusses opposing hate, defending academic freedom and engaging with society at the EAIE Geneva 2018 Opening Plenary.
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