

March 2005
Nr. Zero, Concept

WORLD_DRIVES

The International Centre for Practice and Social Research

*This zero-number contains the purposes of **WORLD_DRIVES** association according to Swiss law - Handelsregisteramt Zurich*

WORLD_DRIVES

➤ *Addresses questions and problems as articulated by firms, state agencies, and NGOs.*

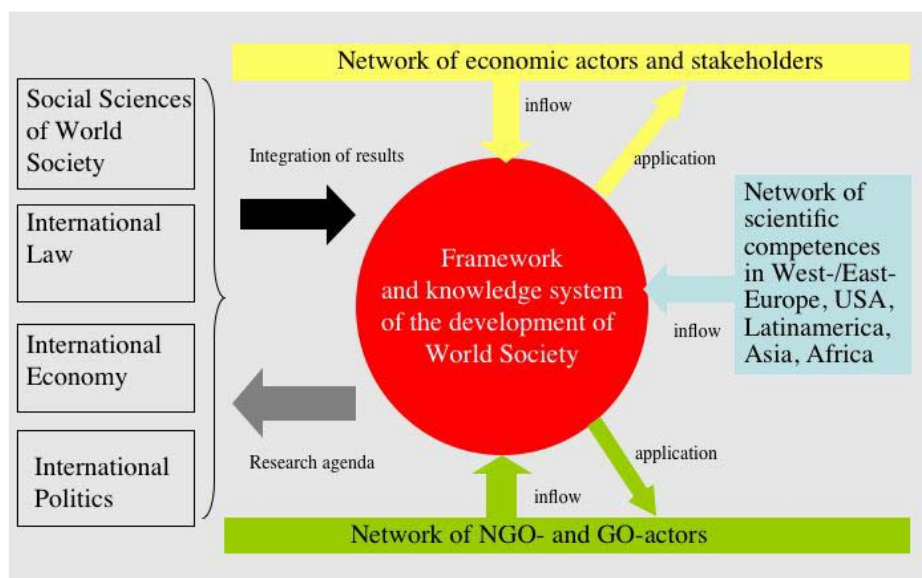
➤ *Initiates research projects and offers evaluations of practical solutions and applications.*

➤ *Shows the mutual interrelation between local and global developments.*

General Idea

The term 'globalisation' has become a common point of reference not only for politicians, but also for economic leaders and social movement activists all over the world. Most of the challenges they face can be conceived of as challenges to world society as whole. 'Globalisation' has thus been the keyword in their search for adequate solutions. The International

Competence Centre for Social Research and Projects seeks to help them find answers and solutions to these challenges. Based on the principles of transnational exchange and interdisciplinary communication, its research and counselling activities aim at building bridges between scholarly research and political as well as economic praxis.



General Idea 1

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The Centre was founded by and is rooted in, as well as institutionally related to, the World Society Foundation, Zurich. The Foundation started promoting research on world society as early as 1982. Thanks to its initiative, many renowned scholars have contributed to

understanding the significance of transnational social relations and the forces creating them. Their analyses show that global social processes are complex, exhibiting more facets than the short-lived catch-all term 'globalisation' can possibly capture.

➤ *Deepens transcontinental cooperation between the partners of the research network initially established by the World Society Foundation.*

➤ *Invites NGO, state and business representatives to discuss and further our understanding of the global world as seen from different local and regional perspectives.*

➤ *Creates opportunities for dialogue and new relations between internationally oriented enterprises and actors in their host-countries.*

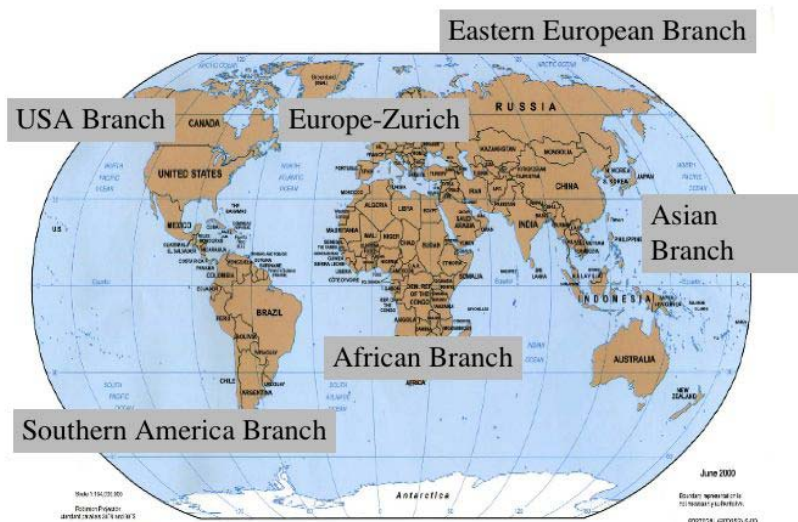
Globalisation produces chaotic trends. It is hardly to subsume them under scenarios. The network observes them at place.



International Cooperation and Networks

Switzerland is becoming an interesting case of a 'globalised' country, for it has been integrated into transnational production and knowledge chains. In their everyday life, the Swiss have learned that important components of their clocks, machines, or power generators are increasingly produced abroad, in neighbouring countries as well

as on other continents. The same is true with respect to ideas and perceptions. Swiss world-views are increasingly influenced, and enriched, by perceptions developed abroad, while practical solutions to local problems are often inspired by ideas and resources imported from elsewhere.



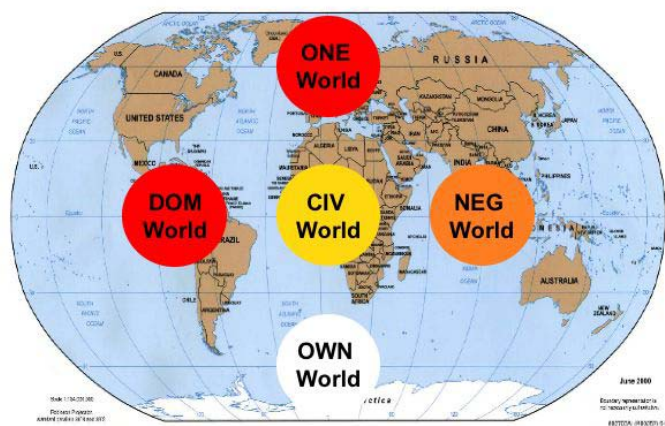
Having affiliations and branches in South America, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia, the Centre cooperates with network partners and research institutions from all over the world. It can also count on the collaboration of renowned researchers in the United States, who have made

important contributions to the world-systems paradigm. The Centre thus builds new bridges between North and South, East and West, and it enables dense exchanges between advanced research and new research initiatives in the hitherto underprivileged regions of the international scholarly landscape.

Developments, Trends, Scenarios

What are the social consequences of foreign direct investment flows to less-developed countries, both for the country of origin and the host country? As producers, consumers, and political activists based in the rich nations, which global social and cultural transformations do we create? What is the nature of global trends we contribute to, and how can we

most effectively make them change? With its research activities, the Centre helps understand complex relations and thus provides the intellectual tools for well-informed decision making. It also provides the necessary means to reflect on our practices in a rapidly changing global environment.



World society is subject to constant change. Different dynamics clash and melt, and by doing so, they create sudden changes and new trends. But, what do these trends look like? Processes of global convergence and the spread of homogenous social patterns, resulting from the globalisation of communication and consumption, have not only awakened euphoria but also created fears (One World). At the same time, civil values and democratic norms have reached almost every corner of the world (Civil World). These values again enable and inform negotiations about solutions to geopolitical challenges, the Kyoto Protocol being an informative example (Negotiating World). However, in all

parts of the world, though with notable cross-regional differences, there have been two important counter-tendencies. For some countries, the pursuit of national interests and strengthening their geo-strategic advantages over other countries seem to have had great political appeal (Domesticating World). In other cases, old and new identities are activated to respond to increasing uncertainties, thus defining the own against the other, the nation or supranational regions (Own World). The management of diversity is top on the agenda of multinational companies and of actors challenged by international contexts.

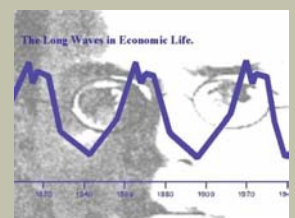
WORLD_DRIVES

➤ *Addresses practical problems and issues.*

➤ *Stimulates the understanding of diversity in cultural contexts and social settings in foreign countries.*

➤ *Provides theoretically informed inputs and knowledge for short-term decision making and long-term strategy building.*

➤ *Compares, connects and explains local social situations within the framework of global interactions, trends, and long-term developments.*



Long waves, cycles, linear evolutions or merging of trends?

WORLD DRIVES association

World_Drives is a non-profit organisation open for interested persons, institutions or groups.

You are welcomed as a member.

If you are interested, please send us your message and we will inform you personally!

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**The new website for
WORLD DRIVES
is under construction.**

Projects

Research initiatives and projects

Eastern Europe

LOC_LAB: Dynamics and social impacts of the labour markets on local communities in Eastern Europe accelerated by the EU-integration (INTAS).

GOOD_ELEPHANTS: Transnational companies challenged by diverging societal contexts: social performance between Western, East-Central and NIS areas fo Europe (EU 6th FP).

CAUC_ASIAN: The role of foreign and local enterprises in face of its societal contexts. Azerbaijan, Geogia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in case studies of the Southern NIS area (SCOPES).

WORLD_CAT: The Chernobyl generation. Life situations and perspectives in Gomel, Chernigov, Brjansk (SDC).

Africa

WORLD_PIPE: The Chad-Cameroon pipeline project and the making of World society in Central Africa (SNF-partnership project).

News and Events

WORLD DRIVES

- started with several project initiatives, ideas and projects (see above).
- constituted an initial organisational structure in the form of a non-profit association (according to Swiss law).
- this initial structure will be adopted to the forthcoming developments.
- founded the Branch Culture and Arts; his manager will be Prof. Dr. Uli Rothfuss in Germany (first projects see above).
- decided to publish all relevant communications as series of Newsletters (this is the zero number containing the concept).
- under „How many worlds“ Newsletter VII is published and distributed among the Eastern European network; it contains a guideline for a joint publication.

China

SHANGHAI: Globalisation and sustainable development (conference project).

Culture and Arts

WORLD_NARRATION; A collection, edition and interpretation of narrations on global future (Newsletter 1 in German)

REBUILDING: Rebuilding the past for the future. The cultural heritage in people's mind compared between Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, Aserbajjan, Georgia Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Bulgaria and Poland (INTAS).

WORLD SOCIETY in Zurich:
Presentation of the WSF activities at the occasion of ist 25th anniversary (2007).

- „WORLD_NOVEL“, Newsletter 1 of the branch culture and arts is prepared.
- LOCLAB meeting: 11-13 September 2005 in Suprasl, Bialystok, Poland.
- WORLDCAT: During September the field studies in the 3 Chernobyl regions are carried out; a conference in Kiev will be prepared.
- In LYON at the ADERSE conference (18-19 October 05) the paper: „Facing diversity in Eastern Europe: the challenges for transnational companies“ will be presented.