

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The coming months will mark an important phase for SCRIPTS. In the fall, our new research projects will get underway, while our internationalization activities will take us to Asia for a series of meetings and exchanges with partners across the region. At the same time, we are welcoming a number of visiting scholars who will bring new perspectives and strengthen interdisciplinary and international exchange across our research community.

Beyond our research activities, we are also continuing to create opportunities for dialogue beyond academia. Our participation in Berlin Science Week and the next Short Talks are among the events that will bring SCRIPTS research into conversation with wider audiences. In this newsletter, we highlight a selection of upcoming activities and look forward to an autumn of research, exchange, and discussion.



Warm regards

Tanja A. Börzel

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NEWS

SCRIPTS-PIs Contribute to DFG Paper on Academic Freedom

SCRIPTS PIs Kathrin Zippel and Christoph Möllers contributed to a new position paper by the German Research Foundation (DFG) on strengthening academic freedom and resilience. The paper examines current threats and vulnerabilities and outlines recommendations for strengthening self-regulation, communication, funding structures, institutional preparedness, and solidarity within academia. Read the Paper [here](#).

Genia Kostka Shortlisted for Falling Walls Science Breakthrough of the Year 2026

We are delighted to share that Genia Kostka, Principal Investigator at SCRIPTS, has been shortlisted for the Falling Walls Science Breakthrough of the Year 2026 in the category Social Sciences & Humanities.

RESEARCH

SCRIPTS Welcomes New Visiting Professors & Researchers

Starting in October, SCRIPTS will host Visiting Professors Esteban Buch, Sokhna Rosalie Ndiaye, and Matthias vom Hau, as well as Visiting Researcher Shuyu Chu. We look forward to an inspiring exchange of ideas and perspectives and to their contributions to our research community. More information on their research and activities will follow on our website. Find all visiting researchers [here](#).

Visiting Researchers at the SCRIPTS Forum

This summer and autumn, four researchers are joining the SCRIPTS Forum to explore questions around digital technologies and political order:

Linette Lim (University College Dublin, mid-July–mid-September):

China's AI-driven TikTok communication in diaspora politics.

Dastan Jasim (Paris Dauphine University, August): Kurdish language technologies and governance of low-resource digital orders.

Nikita Khokhlov (University College Dublin, mid-August–mid-October):

Digital infrastructures and authoritarian learning in Eurasia (China/Russia).

Eddie Yang (Purdue University, October–November): Social media, AI, and the marketplace of ideas.

We look forward to their contributions.

Connectivity and the Resilience of the Liberal Script

From 14-22 September, SCRIPTS will bring together scholars in Tokyo, Shanghai, and Seoul to explore how connectivity shapes the resilience of the liberal script in Asia. Together with partners from Waseda University, Fudan University, Seoul National University, Ewha Womans University,

and other institutions across the region, we will examine geopolitical, societal, and technological perspectives. Read more about [Connectivity](#).

PUBLICATIONS

New Publications

SCRIPTS researchers have recently published new work addressing key questions surrounding contemporary contestations of the liberal script. Their latest publications explore Russia's hard right, the politics of objects, Latin American neoliberalism, postcolonial educational theories, and growing global divides in threat perceptions. Together, these contributions offer fresh perspectives on how political ideas, institutions, and social practices are reshaping the contemporary liberal order. Find all publications [here](#).

New Working Papers

New SCRIPTS Working Papers explore nation branding in authoritarian states, and populist attitudes toward state responsibility for providing public goods in France, Germany, and the US. Find all Working Papers [here](#).

SCRIPTS Publishes Special Issue on Cultural Restitution

The SCRIPTS project "Objects from Afar" has published a peer-reviewed Special Issue on the politics of cultural restitution in the International Journal of Cultural Policy. Edited by Philipp Lepenies and Rouven Symank, the issue brings together nine research articles from scholars across three continents. The contributions examine restitution as a political struggle over history, identity, power, and competing normative orders. Read the Issue [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Short Talks on AI and Digital Conflict

Digital platforms are transforming contemporary conflicts. Short Talk #2 with Anita Gohdes will take place on 21 September as part of the series "Democracy Between Freedom and Algorithms." The Short Talk explores the role of digital platforms in war, propaganda, and political escalation, as well as the implications for democratic societies and civil liberties. The event will take place at the Humboldt Forum and will be held in German. More Information [here](#).

Berlin Science Week

During Berlin Science Week, taking place from 1-10 November, SCRIPTS will host three events exploring how AI and digital technologies are reshaping politics and society. Discussions will address AI, disinformation and digital power, the role of algorithms in democratic

societies, and how digital platforms shape conflict and violence. Researchers and practitioners will discuss these challenges from different perspectives. Find the Programme [here](#).

Final Workshop of SCRIPTS Forum 2026

From 19–20 November 2026, the SCRIPTS Forum will conclude its first cycle with a final workshop bringing together scholars from different disciplines to discuss how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are reshaping political order in liberal and authoritarian contexts. The SCRIPTS Forum 2026, “Emergent Digital (Dis-)Orders: AI Governance between Liberal and Authoritarian Scripts,” led by SCRIPTS PIs Genia Kostka and Anita Gohdes, brings together leading experts and emerging scholars in AI governance, international relations, and digital politics. The Programme will be published [here](#).

Book Talk: Russia – A German Invention

On 13 October 2026, SCRIPTS-PI Gwendolyn Sasse will discuss her new book “Russia – A German Invention” at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The book examines how perceptions of Russia have developed in East and West Germany and how they have shaped German Russia policy. Together with guests from politics and culture, Sasse will discuss how these perceptions continue to influence debates today. Find more information [here](#).

3 Questions for: Pascal Walther

How would you describe your position?

I have just finished my first year as a PhD researcher at the BGTS. Thus, so far, my focus has been on completing the coursework, refining my research design and getting to know the other PhDs. Now, I am ready to explore more of the SCRIPTS universe.

What interests you most about your work?

How can democratic societies achieve social cohesion through conflict? As a volunteer rhetoric coach at high schools, I became fascinated by the power of constructive debate to bring about mutual understanding – and made it my dissertation topic.

What projects are you currently working on?

I am working on a chapter that explores what we can learn from Aristotle’s Rhetoric on how to argue in public. I am also writing a paper on what it means to form good political judgments – and why exactly social media is not a good place for this.

Pascal Walther is part of the 2025 PhD cohort at the BGTS. He studied political science in Berlin, Paris and Nancy. In his thesis, he develops a

*political theory of debate as an
alternative to deliberative and
agonistic approaches to public
speech.*



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