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Investing in the Behavioural Dimensions of Transnational Cooperation

A Personal Assessment of the Managing
Global Governance (MGG) Programme

Thomas Fues

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Governance (MGG) Programme

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Abstract

This text sums up the author's personal experiences and insights as former staff member responsible for the Managing Global Governance (MGG) Programme, funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development / Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and implemented by the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE). The overarching goal of the MGG Programme is to enhance transnational knowledge cooperation for global sustainable development, based on a behavioural theory of change. As the extensive collaboration under the MGG umbrella demonstrates, partner countries share with the German side a preference for the global common good, despite the predominance of domestic concerns for poverty reduction and growth on their side. Over the years, MGG has generated a broad canvas of joint activities in knowledge creation, policy dialogue and training by engaging with a diverse set of actors from governments, think tanks, academia and, to a lesser extent, civil society and business. Two independent evaluations commissioned by DIE, as well as numerous statements by partners and alumni, provide ample evidence that the MGG Programme has fulfilled the defined goals. With an increased number of activities and integration of new sectors, it seems advisable to consolidate MGG by introducing formal arrangements for membership and governance through a memorandum of understanding to be signed by interested institutions.

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As senior researcher, the author headed the MGG team at the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) from July 2005 to December 2017, except for the years 2007 and 2008, when Regine Mehl had the lead. The achievements of the MGG Programme are shared by DIE colleagues. The following persons have been or were part of the MGG team (in alphabetical order): Bettina Beer, Axel Berger, Johannes Blankenbach, Andrea Cordes, Zeljko Crncic, Rita Klüwer, Jeanne Laett, Asiye Öztürk, Regine Mehl, Sabine Middecke, Miriam Nobs, Melanie Nohroudi, Hannes Oehler, Tatjana Reiber, Johanna Vogel and Verena Zehe, plus numerous student assistants and interns. The author is grateful to all of them for their valuable contributions. Other DIE colleagues also contributed to MGG, too numerous to mention individually. The author's successors are Wulf Reiners as head of the MGG Programme and Sven Grimm, co-chair of DIE's Programme on "Inter- and Transnational Cooperation, Training", of which MGG is a part.

Dirk Messner, Director of the DIE, has been the driving force behind MGG since its inception. The author wishes to thank him and Imme Scholz, DIE Deputy Director, for their continued support and manifold contributions to MGG. Ever since the start of the Programme, BMZ officials have been highly supportive of MGG. He also wishes to recognise the important role of colleagues at InWent (Capacity Building International, Germany), which, after merging with GtZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit) in 2011, became GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit). During the first phase of the Programme, Inwent and later GIZ partnered with DIE in implementing MGG. In 2015, BMZ handed the sole responsibility for MGG to DIE.

The author also thanks officials at the Federal Foreign Office, in particular late Ambassador Sommer and Ambassadors Peter Gottwald and Gerd Westdickenberg, for their important contributions to the MGG Programme.

May 2018

Thomas Fues

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Abbreviations

BCE	Before Current Era
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development / Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
CANGO	China Association for NGO Cooperation
CIIS	China Institute for International Studies
CIPOD	Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DIE	German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik
ENAP	Escola Nacional de Administração Pública / National School for Public Administration (Brazil)
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
G20	Group of 20
G77	Group of 77
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
GtZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit
InWEnt	Capacity Building International, Germany
IR	International Relations
ITC	International Trade Centre
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGG	Managing Global Governance
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NeST	Network of Southern Think Tanks
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RIS	Research and Information System for Developing Countries
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIIS	Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
T20	Think 20
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UZBonn	Umfragezentrum Bonn
VENRO	Umbrella Organisation of Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations/Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe deutscher Nichtregierungsorganisationen
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards

Executive summary

This text sums up the author's personal experiences and insights as former staff member responsible for the Managing Global Governance (MGG) Programme, funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ) and implemented by the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE). The assessment is primarily based on his perceptions, but also draws on comments by MGG partners and alumni as well as two independent evaluations. The paper describes and interprets the contributions of the MGG Programme to transnational cooperation for the global common good. It does not represent a rigorous evaluation, since measuring the impact of MGG activities suffers from incomplete information on causal chains and from attribution gaps. When conceiving MGG in 2005, leading officials in BMZ and DIE anticipated the tectonic power shifts in the global system and recognised the need for new avenues in transnational cooperation, which would see rising powers in the South as co-architects of inclusive global governance. On this basis, the Programme has successfully created an innovative platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration between Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, designated as "Global Development Partners" by BMZ, on the one hand and Germany on the other. Irrespective of differences in the domestic political, economic and social systems of participating countries, the MGG Network has found a shared normative foundation in two path-breaking documents by the international community – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change – which can be considered a new global ethical code.

The overarching goal of the MGG Programme is to enhance global sustainable development by addressing systemic risks for world society. As the extensive collaboration under the MGG umbrella demonstrates, partner countries share with the German side the preference for the global common good, despite the predominance of domestic concerns for poverty reduction and growth on their side. Over the years, MGG has generated a broad canvas of joint activities in knowledge creation, policy dialogue and training by engaging with a diverse set of actors from government, think tanks, academia and, to a lesser extent, civil society and business. MGG fosters capacity development at the individual and the institutional level, and has turned into a collective "think-and-do-tank". The theory of change underlying the design of the MGG Programme builds on insights from behavioural science. Its core element is the cooperation hexagon by DIE Director Dirk Messner and colleagues, which encompasses the essential dimensions of transnational cooperation with a focus on relational, rather than transactional or instrumental purposes. The results of MGG are relevant for different audiences. The evidence on behavioural factors provides relevant insights for the academic discipline of International Relations, while the training component relates to the discourses on Education for Sustainable Development.

The MGG Network has maintained a high degree of flexibility and informality in order to integrate new stakeholders and to respond to thematic proposals of partners and interested parties from outside the Network. A diverse set of around 70 organisations from the six partner countries constitutes a stable base, evenly split between governmental and non-state institutions. Capacity development through the MGG Academy plays a central role by strengthening the human resources of participating organisations, while consolidating the Network and facilitating individual skills acquisition by future change agents. The yearly

training format at DIE is directed towards young professionals in the Network, welcoming a group of around 20 persons for each course, with a total of 306 participants in 15 courses so far. As part of the Academy, the Federal Foreign Office conducts a two-week long seminar, “International Futures”, in Berlin, which introduces participants to the views of German diplomacy. Lately, MGG has begun exploring new training formats with the national schools of public administration from all partner countries, which are aimed at capacity development for civil servants focused on implementing the 2030 Agenda. Bringing together research and policy dialogue, knowledge collaboration within the MGG Network has addressed important dimensions of global governance, such as the international architecture of development cooperation, the 2030 Agenda, sustainability standards in international value chains, the United Nations system and the G20. A highlight of the Network’s advisory work for policy-makers was the participation by many MGG partners in task forces during the Think(T)20 process under the G20 presidencies of China and Germany in 2016 and 2017 respectively, and the co-authoring of policy briefs.

MGG has made significant contributions to collective efforts for global sustainable development, and has strengthened the individual and institutional capacities of participating institutions in Germany and partner countries. By emphasising the global common good, MGG represents a future-oriented investment of the German government that does not disregard national interests but rather embeds them into a transformative strategy for the world. The behavioural foundations of the MGG Programme have facilitated the formation of collective intentionalities in the Network, for example regarding the founding of National Platforms for Voluntary Sustainability Standards in India, Brazil and China, with preparations for similar initiatives running in the remaining MGG countries. At the multilateral level, collective contributions of MGG partners have shaped the work of the UN Forum for Voluntary Sustainability Standards. MGG partners were also instrumental in setting up the T20-Africa Standing Group, which has set out to influence the intergovernmental process within the G20 and between the G20 and African regional organisations.

Two independent evaluations commissioned by DIE, as well as numerous statements by partners and alumni, provide ample evidence that the MGG Programme has fulfilled the defined goals. The following factors explain the success. The German side has demonstrated a long-term commitment to invest in collaborative relationships with Southern powers on shared global concerns, moving beyond a narrow understanding of national interests. DIE has been able to put the main elements of the cooperation hexagon into practice by creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the MGG Network, which, in turn, has fostered the emergence of we-identities and collective intentionalities. Partners appreciate the horizontality of relationships and the shared responsibilities, facilitating a dense web of South–South relationships within the Network. The diversity of governmental and non-state actors in the Network creates added value in cognitive and emotional terms by promoting a better understanding of the worldview and value system of others.

Having opted for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as shared normative foundation, all members of the MGG Network have committed to an agenda of fundamental transformation at home and in the world. This implies that the present structures of dominance and rule need to be challenged in case they stand in the way of progress on these goals. Diversity and inclusivity as critical prerequisites of transnational transformation also relate to domestic conditions. On the basis of mutual trust and respect, MGG partners should

be ready to engage in difficult conversations and provide the space for uncomfortable questions on shortcomings and implementation gaps in all countries. This works best if participants first address deficits in their own society rather than pointing the finger at others. With an increased number of activities and the integration of new sectors, it seems advisable to consolidate MGG by introducing formal arrangements for membership and governance through a memorandum of understanding to be signed by interested institutions. The formalisation of MGG must include modalities which allow for broad participation in formulating the Programme's strategy and implementation plan, for example by organising biennial partner conferences as in the initial phase. Attention should be paid to larger participation of German and European institutions in the MGG Programme, particularly the Academy, in order to strengthen the horizontal interaction at peer level. MGG should take care not to fall into the major-powers trap but, rather, recognise the concerns of all developing countries, as is already happening in the T20-Africa Standing Group. Despite considerable co-financing from partners in the South, the funding structure of MGG remains asymmetrical, depending on substantial grants from BMZ. In order to strengthen joint ownership and the long-term viability of the Programme, it is desirable that partners from the South and third parties bear an increasing share of total costs. The group of, at present, 306 Academy alumni is a remarkable asset, which deserves nurturing, for example through a fund for collaborative projects. Considering its successful track record in transnational knowledge creation, MGG should make an important contribution to research on global knowledge communities under Southern leadership, thus staying ahead of the curve and confirming its leading role in transnational cooperation.

“Although many may believe that selfishness is the essence of the human condition, this is not so: in a world where we depend on each other ever more, cooperation is clearly the winning strategy.” (Rand & Nowak, 2016, p. 130)

1 Introduction

This text sums up my personal experiences and insights as former staff member responsible for the Managing Global Governance (MGG) Programme, funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development / Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) and implemented by the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE). As such, the assessment is primarily based on my subjective perceptions and interpretations. I also draw extensively on comments by MGG partners and alumni, which I selected from a vast depository of interview transcripts, video clips and messages posted on social media. Due to time and resource constraints, I could not validate these statements through a process of data triangulation, for example by questioning employers, colleagues or uninvolved third parties. I also present key findings from two independent evaluations commissioned by DIE.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the contributions of the MGG Programme to transnational cooperation for the global common good, as defined by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is not meant to be a rigorous evaluation exercise, since measuring the impact of MGG activities suffers from incomplete information on relevant causal chains, thus being subject to significant attribution gaps. Relying on plausibility considerations and on reasonable assumptions in understanding the evolution of the Programme since its inception in 2005 is, therefore, unavoidable.

When BMZ and DIE conceived MGG 13 years ago, most mindsets in the West remained comfortably wedded to the now eroding “US-led liberal international order” (Ikenberry, 2018). Early on, the MGG architects anticipated the tectonic power shifts in the global system and recognised the necessity of inclusive approaches in transnational cooperation. They designed the Programme as a strategic initiative to bridge the historic North–South divide. Based on this premonition, they created an innovative social space for multi-stakeholder collaboration between Southern powers, namely Brazil, China, India, Indonesia¹, Mexico and South Africa on the one hand and Germany² on the other hand.

Over the years, MGG has generated a broad canvas of joint activities in knowledge creation, policy dialogue and training by engaging with a diverse set of actors from governments, think tanks, academia and, to a lesser extent, civil society and business. Filling critical gaps for more effective transnational cooperation, MGG fosters capacity development at the

1 By the decision of BMZ, Indonesia was added to the original five MGG partner countries in 2008 and has stayed with the Programme since then. Egypt joined in the same year but membership was terminated by BMZ at the end of 2013 when the ministry concluded that the country did not qualify as global actor any longer due to domestic circumstances. Due to similar considerations, BMZ limited the participation of Pakistan in the MGG Academy to the period from 2010 to 2014.

2 German participants in the MGG Programme have consistently striven to include the perspectives of the European Union (EU), for example by including Brussels in the study trip of the Academy and by inviting EU member states into the Academy.

individual and the institutional level. In certain strands of work, MGG has widened its role by turning into a collective “think-and-do-tank”. Over the course of little more than a decade, the MGG Programme has thus evolved into a microcosm of global governance, where participants explore and practise new “normative and cognitive heuristics” (Messner & Weinlich, 2016c, p. 34).

The nature of this transnational network can be assessed differently. Some observers have (mis)interpreted MGG as a case of orchestration, in which one particular orchestrator (the German side) would engage intermediaries in the South with the aim of affecting the policies and behaviour of target groups, e.g. developing countries or international organisations. As I will show, this concept does not adequately capture the intentions and interests that drive MGG dynamics. The theory of change underlying the design of the MGG Programme by the German founders builds on insights from behavioural science. Its core element is the cooperation hexagon that encompasses the essential dimensions of transnational cooperation with a focus on relational, rather than transactional or instrumental purposes.³

This assessment covers achievements as well as shortcomings of the Programme. The final section presents conclusions and formulates recommendations for the future design of MGG, including the contours of a possible meta-study on transnational knowledge communities under Southern leadership. The results of the MGG Programme are relevant to different audiences. The evidence on behavioural factors provides relevant insights for the academic discipline of International Relations (IR), while the training component relates to the discourses on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). I will return to these aspects in the concluding part.

2 Information on the MGG Programme

2.1 Structures and activities⁴

As co-founder of MGG, DIE Director Dirk Messner can best describe how the vision of horizontal partnership has come true:

MGG has become a lab for global cooperation: together we try to imagine a globally connected world, driven by cooperation, respect and joint visions. Imagination, joint knowledge, diversity and creativity will be the key drivers of a global culture of cooperation – MGG can make a difference in all these regards. (Messner, 2017b, p. 5)

As it stands today, the MGG Programme has structured its activities into three synergetic and mutually reinforcing strands of work: training, knowledge production and policy dialogue (see Figure 1). At the start, in 2005, the main task for the founding institutions, DIE, InWEnt and BMZ, consisted of identifying and approaching suitable organisations in partner countries. The diversity of participants has been a key feature of the Programme. The MGG Network includes governmental bodies, preferably at the national level, knowledge institutions from academia and the world of think tanks, and organisations from civil society

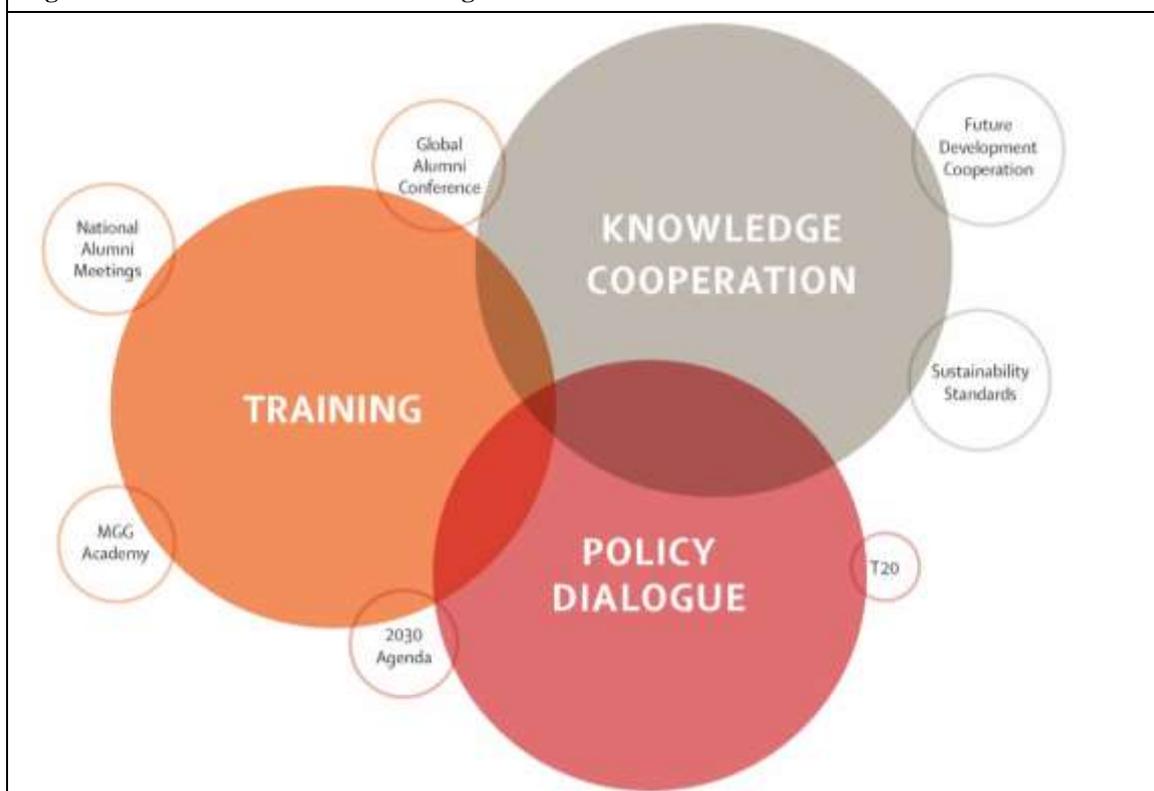
3 The concept of the cooperation hexagon was formally published by DIE Director Dirk Messner in 2013 (Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2013). He anticipated the critical importance of behavioural factors for transnational collaboration when he co-designed the MGG Programme eight years earlier.

4 Further details are available at <https://www.die-gdi.de/en/training/managing-global-governance/>.

and the business sector. Due to resource constraints on their side, the latter two categories are poorly represented so far. Staff of non-governmental organisations typically need to fulfil specific terms of reference linked to their funding. While corporations and industry federations are financially better situated, they do not easily see how collaborating with the MGG Network could benefit them.

The MGG Network has maintained a high degree of flexibility and informality in order to integrate new stakeholders and to respond to thematic proposals of partners and interested parties from outside the Network. Up to now, membership and governance structures are not fixed. The Network acts in a malleable and open way, always ready to welcome new entrants wishing to join ongoing activities. A diverse set of around 70 organisations from the six partner countries constitutes a stable base, evenly split between governmental and non-state institutions. Often, Network members are simultaneously active in several MGG clusters.

Figure 1: Main areas of the MGG Programme



Source: German Development Institute / Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) (2017, p. 7)

Training

Human capacity development through the MGG Academy plays a central role by strengthening the human resources of participating organisations, while consolidating the Network and facilitating the acquisition of skills by future individual change agents. During the early period, from 2007 to 2010, the Programme was mainly focused on the Global Governance School, as the Academy was called at that time. The yearly training format is directed towards young professionals in the Network, welcoming a group of around 20 persons for each course (Blankenbach & Reiber, 2012, 2013; Reiber, 2017). Partner institutions must formally endorse the participation of their staff. As a form of cost sharing, employers cover air tickets to Germany and continue paying local wages. Generally, individual applications from outside the Network

are not accepted. But individuals from institutions matching the MGG profile are encouraged to motivate their employers to join the Network. Thus, the MGG Academy and the Programme, in general, represent a semi-open club for a wide range of organisations that meet the basic condition of addressing global challenges in their work.

Many of the partners demonstrate their appreciation of the Academy by repeatedly sending staff members. In contrast, German institutions find it difficult to delegate their juniors. This also applies to DIE⁵, BMZ⁶, GIZ and other public sector entities, which have felt that they cannot grant a leave of absence for a long period.⁷ Until 2014, the Academy covered a span of six months, including a 10-week stay as visiting expert with an institution in Europe that matched the professional profile of the individual participant.⁸ Due to financial considerations, as well as in response to requests from some organisations concerning the duration, the Academy was shortened to four months in 2015. The curriculum encompasses academic modules on key challenges of global governance⁹, sessions on personal development and social competencies, and work by small groups on self-designed projects (see Figure 2). As part of the Academy, the Federal Foreign Office conducts a two-week long seminar, “International Futures”, in Berlin, which introduces participants to the views of German diplomacy.¹⁰ Up to now, DIE has conducted 15 courses of the Academy with a total of 306 participants.¹¹ Most of the alumni stay engaged with MGG by attending events at the national and international level and by contributing to other MGG spheres. The Programme has consistently achieved the intended alumni share of 25 to 30 per cent in all activities.

Lately, MGG has begun exploring new training formats beyond the Academy by launching a new process with the national schools of public administration from all partner countries. It aims at capacity development for civil servants concerning the implementation of SDGs. The initial activity in February 2018 was a four-day seminar at Brazil’s School for Public Administration (ENAP) for mid-career representatives of national schools and MGG think tanks involved in training public officials.

5 Until now, one DIE employee has participated in the MGG Academy at peer level.

6 So far, no BMZ staff have attended the full MGG course. However, numerous BMZ officials joined one of the four-day academic modules. In an important development, BMZ offered their staff the opportunity to participate in the whole Academy for the first time in 2018.

7 Two doctoral candidates from Germany and Switzerland, respectively, were part of the first Academy. A further German doctoral student joined the second course. In 2016, a master’s student from a German university participated in the Academy. The first regular employee of a German institution outside DIE, the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, joined the Academy in 2017.

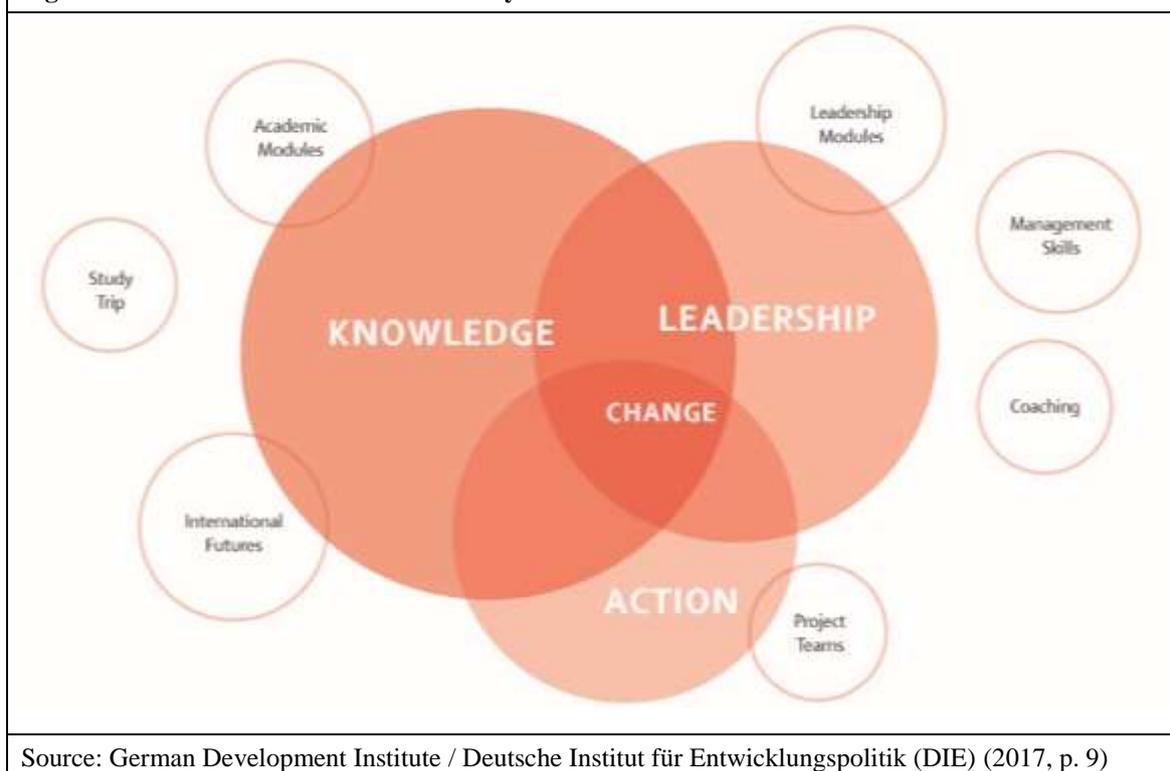
8 Participants often went to international organisations, such as UN agencies, institutions of the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. While research-oriented course members could easily join German think tanks, more practically inclined participants found it hard to be accepted by German host institutions since internal documents are usually in German. In addition, German industry federations and ministries articulated security concerns about Chinese participants.

9 Usually, four academic modules are included in each Academy. They are a combination of standard subjects, such as theories of global governance, global economic governance and environmental policies, and highly topical themes, such as the refugee crisis, migration or violent conflict.

10 In addition to the MGG participants, the Foreign Office invites one junior diplomat from each MGG partner country plus two or three representatives of German institutions to “International Futures”.

11 During the initial phase, 2007 to 2010, two consecutive courses of the then six-month-long Academy took place each year. As had been decided from the outset, the frequency was reduced to one course per year in 2011.

Figure 2: Elements of the MGG Academy



Source: German Development Institute / Deutsche Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) (2017, p. 9)

Knowledge production and policy dialogue

Transnational cooperation in multi-stakeholder settings represents the core of the MGG Programme. The focus on collective knowledge creation builds on the insight that concepts developed in one particular region, such as the global North, often fail to gain support from other constituencies, for example the global South, due to a perceived lack of legitimacy.¹² From the outset, joint research and policy dialogue have been integral parts of the MGG Programme, albeit at a low level until 2015. For the current phase, 2016 to 2018, BMZ increased significantly the funding for these areas with an overall thematic focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

MGG knowledge collaboration has addressed salient international topics, such as South–South, triangular, and North–South development cooperation¹³, the 2030 Agenda¹⁴, sustainability

12 As DIE Director Dirk Messner puts it: “Joint knowledge creation is a precondition for joint action and legitimate global governance initiatives.” (Messner in Knoblich, 2015, p. 5)

13 MGG publications on international development cooperation include Chaturvedi, Fues and Sidiropoulos (2012); Besharati (2013); Fues (2013); Fues and Klingebiel (2014); Fues (2015); Sidiropoulos, Pérez, Chaturvedi and Fues (2015); Abdel-Malek (2015); Bracho (2015, 2017); Fues (11 April 2016a); Fues et al. (2016); Li (2017a); Fues (2017c, d).

14 A bilateral research project between DIE and the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) on the 2030 Agenda emerged from MGG activities in this field (Fues & Ye, 2014a, b). The Chinese version of the resulting collection of papers was published by Shanghai People’s Press in 2014.

standards in international value chains¹⁵, the G20¹⁶ and global governance¹⁷. The involvement of the MGG Network in policy dialogue usually comes about in tandem with projects of knowledge creation. In an ideal-typical manner, MGG facilitated the amalgamation of research and advisory work for policy makers in the Think(T)20 process under the G20 presidencies of China and Germany, in 2016 and 2017 respectively. A wide range of MGG partners contributed to the work of various T20 task forces. The policy briefs authored by these groups were presented to “Sherpas” (representatives of government leaders) and G20 working groups, often in face-to-face meetings. In addition to the G20, the MGG Programme also collaborates with a wide spectrum of international institutions, mostly from the United Nations system (see Table 1).

Table 1: MGG collaboration with international organisations (without study trip of MGG Academy to Geneva/Brussels and without former-practice phase)	
Institution	Area of collaboration with MGG
United Nations Development Cooperation Forum	International development cooperation ¹⁸
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	International development cooperation
Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation	International development cooperation
United Nations Forum for Sustainability Standards (UNCTAD, FAO, UNEP, ITC, UNIDO)	Global value chains and sustainability standards
International Labour Organisation	Global value chains and sustainability standards
Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion	Global value chains and sustainability standards
United Nations System Staff College	Capacity building for public sector on the 2030 Agenda
United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs	Capacity building for public sector on the 2030 Agenda
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	Capacity building for public sector on the 2030 Agenda
G20	T20 and T20-Africa
African Union	T20 and T20-Africa
Economic Commission for Africa	T20 and T20-Africa
United Nations SDG Action Campaign	Support to project team of MGG Academy
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Presentations to MGG Academy
South Centre	Presentations to MGG Academy
World Economic Forum	Presentation to MGG Academy
Source: Author	

15 Negi, Pérez and Blankenbach (forthcoming) have edited a volume of articles by MGG alumni on sustainability standards. Fues and Grimm (2017) provide a short overview of the MGG process on sustainability standards. Hampel-Milagrosa (2016) reports on related research at DIE. The following MGG publications are focused specifically on the relevance of sustainability standards for small and medium-sized enterprises in individual partner countries: Sommer (2017a, b); Cao (2017b); Coelho and Nunes (2017); Kathuria, Goldar and Jain (2017); Jain and Ashok (2017); Damuri and Santoso (2017) and Draper and Ngarachu (2017).

16 The Group of 20 (G20) is an informal club of 19 influential powers from North and South plus the European Union (Fues and Messner, 2016a, b; Fues, 2016b, 2017a, b).

17 The first MGG publication covers a wide spectrum of global governance issues authored by senior scholars in the Network (Kumar and Messner, 2011). Resulting from MGG collaboration, DIE and the Chinese Institute of International Studies (CIIS) conducted a two-year research project comparing European and Chinese approaches to global affairs (Fues and Liu, 2011).

18 A DIE team headed by Stephan Klingebiel has in the meantime taken the lead in collaborating with MGG partners on international development cooperation.

In order to understand the perspectives and intentions of the German initiators of MGG, it is necessary to go back to the global power shifts unfolding at the turn of the millennium. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution 200 years ago, the South was able to challenge the dominance of the West in the world system (Stuenkel, 2016; Acharya, 2017a, b, 2018; Ikenberry et al., 2018; Parmar, 2018).

2.2 Genesis and rationale

The original conception of MGG drew on work by DIE researcher Andreas Stamm, who had studied the growing clout of the global South (Stamm, 2004). Translating analytical insight into policy in 2004, BMZ designed a new strategy for so-called “anchor countries”, meaning rising powers in the developing world (BMZ, 2004). The paradigmatic shift in the document was to move from supporting the domestic development of a particular partner country towards joint problem-solving at the global level.

After changes in government, BMZ leadership rephrased the target group, now speaking of “global development partners”, but kept most of the original substance of the concept (BMZ, 2011, 2015). Few developing countries qualify for the elevated status, namely Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa. Following BMZ stipulations, MGG targets the select group.¹⁹ The concept of “anchor countries” or “global development partners” builds on the argument that industrialised countries cannot effectively address growing global risks on their own. In the latest version of its strategy, BMZ provides the following rationale:

Global challenges demand global solutions. More and better cooperation between countries and regions is key. All the more so in a world in which the centres of economic and political power are shifting. Countries like Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa are both able and willing to play a part in shaping global agendas while self-confidently defending their own interests. (BMZ, 2015, p. 3)

While the ministry emphasises the global common good purpose, there may be more behind the strategic reorientation. Emma Mawdsley of Cambridge University alludes to the significant expansion of South–South cooperation as a possible factor motivating members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), such as BMZ, to look for innovative approaches in North–South collaboration.

(I)t is clear that the non-DAC actors are profoundly unsettling long-standing axes of power. Strikingly, this rupture is revealed as much by the current efforts of many DAC donors and international institutions to collaborate, co-learn and partner with Southern actors, as it is by competitive or hostile commentaries and stances. (Mawdsley, 2017, p. 108)

There could also be a further motive for BMZ’s realignment, namely inter-ministerial disputes. It is an open secret in Berlin that the Foreign Office would like to claim sole competence for relations with middle-income developing countries. Such a move would shrink the BMZ into an anti-poverty department with a primary focus on Africa. By

¹⁹ Judging from public information, MGG is the only programme funded by BMZ that engages exclusively with the six “global development partners”. Its funding draws on a special BMZ budget line, “International Cooperation with Regions”, which supports transnational, cross-sectoral activities, not listing specific developing countries as partners.

adopting the anchor country concept in 2004, BMZ was able to play a pioneering role in the Federal government regarding relations with rising powers, thus legitimising its independent status. It speaks for the strategic foresight of BMZ that Chancellor Merkel later used the rationale of the anchor country concept when she invited Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa to the G8 summit of 2007 in Heiligendamm.²⁰

It took the Foreign Office a while to catch up with BMZ by formulating its own strategy paper in response to global power shifts, which was then approved by the German cabinet in 2012 (Federal Foreign Office, 2012; Kappel, 2014; Kappel & Reisen, 2015; Flesmes & Ebert, 2017). While the document also emphasises the link between domestic interests and global challenges, it aligns more closely with national perspectives than the rather globalist BMZ concept.²¹

In a parallel, but not directly related, development, the European Union (EU) has established strategic partnerships on a country-by-country basis (Grimm, Humphrey, Lundsgaarde, & De Sousa, 2009; Humphrey, 2010). Today, the EU counts five of the six MGG countries formally as strategic partners: China (bilateral agreement in 2003), India (2003), Brazil (2007), South Africa (2007) and Mexico (2008). Indonesia belongs to the group of “de facto strategic partners” (Pallasz, 2015, p. 4).²² This means that all six MGG partner countries enjoy a privileged relationship with the European Union. In contrast to BMZ and the German government as a whole, the EU does not possess an integrated conceptual framework for shaping strategic partnerships. Thomas Renard of the Egmont Institute in Brussels observes that

the selection was not the result of any strategic reflection at the European level. This was rather the outcome of various circumstances, which led to an “accidental” more than “strategic” list of partnerships. (Renard, 2015, p. 38)

In order to fully appreciate BMZ’s early perception of the impending global power shift, we can also refer to the scheme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for privileged relations to “key partners” (OECD, 2018). All five countries that fall into this category are part of MGG. The sixth MGG country, Mexico, has been an OECD member since 1994. It is, therefore, not surprising that the OECD was the most welcoming institution for participants of the MGG Academy when the 10-week practice phase was still part of the curriculum.²³

While MGG is a response to the newly gained power of the South, its intentions transcend narrow national interests by focusing on the global common good. By providing public resources for transnational knowledge cooperation at eye level, the German government has demonstrated an enlightened self-interest that takes into account the planetary scale of manifold interdependencies. This globalist orientation shows clearly in the MGG objectives.

20 The country group was called Outreach(O)5 (Fues and Leininger, 2008). MGG can claim to have anticipated the outreach effort, as the first Academy had been running since January 2007 when the leaders of MGG countries were invited to Heiligendamm in June of that year. Later, MGG directly engaged with the O5 process by placing one Mexican participant of the Academy (2007) and two Chinese participants (2008) for the then 10-week-long practice phase at the Heiligendamm Support Office, hosted by OECD.

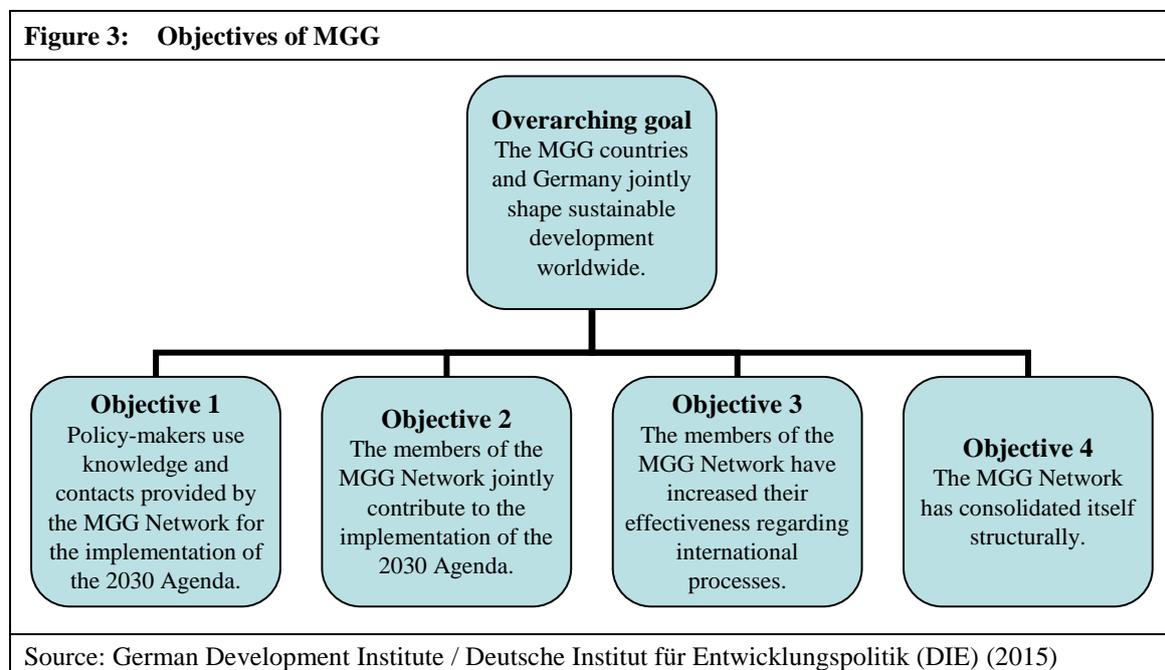
21 Together with several other ministries, BMZ was consulted in the drafting process of the Foreign Office strategy.

22 The other formal strategic partners are Canada, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States, while Australia and Turkey are considered de-facto strategic partners.

23 The OECD accepted up to six of out of around 20 participants of each Academy cohort.

2.3 Objectives

For the current phase, 2016 to 2018, the MGG Programme encompasses one overarching goal and four primary objectives, consistently focused on global sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. The set of objectives is complex and highly ambitious (see Figure 3):



The Programme operates under the premise that institutions in partner countries share with the German side a similar preference for the global common good. Considering the predominant concern for domestic development in the South, that was and still remains a daring proposition. Another constraining factor for Southern partners comes into play as a consequence of global power shifts. In light of new strategic options and increasing material resources, Southern interest in partnerships with the North can no longer be taken for granted. However, it is precisely the rich menu of opportunities for South–South dialogue that represents a major attraction of MGG. As Philani Mthembu, former participant of the Academy, and now Executive Director of South Africa’s Institute for Global Dialogue, confirms:

The uniqueness of MGG is that it is Germany facilitating contacts with all of these countries, but through the network is also facilitating South–South cooperation. (Mthembu, 2017)

Exchanges with institutions from advanced countries on an equal footing are still an appealing proposition to many in the South. Ye Jiang, long-time MGG partner and senior scholar at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), finds that “MGG is a knowledge bridge between North and South” (Ye, 2017).

It certainly helps that DIE is a renowned think tank with proven achievements in global studies.²⁴ The fact that the German government entrusted DIE to co-lead the T20 process in 2017 has further boosted the Institute's international reputation. Interest among Southern partners in the unique experience of European integration has faded lately due to the internal problems of the European Union. However, the growing political and economic weight of Germany as a leading middle-power has increased the attractiveness of MGG for many.

Assessing the attainment of MGG objectives suffers from incomplete information and attribution gaps. It is not easy to link the decisions of policy makers to specific MGG activities, as postulated in the overarching goal and the first objective of the Programme. Still, two external evaluations and numerous statements of partners and alumni point to solid progress across all MGG activities.

2.4 Outcomes and impact

In 2018, DIE commissioned an external evaluation with a focus on the current MGG phase (2016–2018), to provide empirical evidence for the design of the next stage. After numerous interviews with senior representatives in all partner countries and Germany (BMZ, Foreign Office, GIZ and DIE), the independent experts came to a positive result (Kompetus, 2018). Using the OECD evaluation principles for development cooperation (OECD, 2010), the experts rated three analytical categories as “very good” (the highest mark): “relevance”, “achievement of objectives” and “efficiency”. They graded the development impact and future sustainability each as “good”, justifying these more cautious ratings mostly with systemic unknowns and inherent attribution gaps. With regard to the behavioural elements of cooperation, their report appreciates that the programme

does not strive for a purely cognitive knowledge transfer. It employs intervention methods that take into consideration the emotional and social dimensions of (knowledge) cooperation [...] The evaluation team considers this methodology as one of the key reasons why most of the participants have a (very) positive attitude towards the MGG programme and particularly why a high level of trust has been achieved among individuals within the MGG network. (Kompetus, 2018, p. 4)

In order to strengthen the impact of joint efforts, the MGG Programme has aimed at enhancing the institutional capacity of Network members. This has not happened in the vertical style of (traditional) development cooperation, but rather as a horizontal process of mutual learning. BMZ has benefited in multiple ways from interaction with MGG. Ministerial staff attended modules of the Academy at the peer level. Other BMZ colleagues presented their work to the Academy and gained from better understanding the perspectives of partner countries on critical policy issues. BMZ officials often use the discussions in the Academy for ministerial initiatives, for example presenting the strategy towards “global development partners” and the purpose of the German Textile Alliance. In addition, BMZ

24 The latest ranking of think tanks by the University of Pennsylvania places DIE in sixth position for the category “Top International Development Think Tanks”, putting the Institute in the same league as international benchmarks, such as the Asian Development Bank Institute, the British Chatham House and the US-American Brookings Institution (McGann, 2018). Furthermore, DIE performed well in a series of other categories. In the general category “Top Think Tanks in Western Europe”, which is dominated by foreign, security and economic research institutes, DIE was placed in the Top 30.

staff based at German embassies in partner countries often call on alumni and partners to explore new avenues of bilateral cooperation. A convincing demonstration of the added value of MGG to BMZ is the fact that the ministry's human resources department, for the first time in 2018, allowed their staff to attend the Academy throughout the entire duration. This was a crucial first step; ensuring participation of BMZ staff for the entire duration of the programme, however, will still be difficult in practice.

Germany's Foreign Office has gained from engagement with MGG by experimenting with new formats of capacity building. The seminar "International Futures", which is an integral part of the Academy, is the first training offered by the ministry that is open to non-diplomats. It acts as an innovation lab in which the ministry experiments with non-traditional avenues for relating to the outside world. DIE has also benefited significantly from MGG. Connecting with the Network and hosting the Academy has helped the Institute to internationalise on an unprecedented scale. The results of this opening-up are evident in the increased participation in international networks and events, as well as in joint research and publications.

Box 1 provides impressive anecdotal evidence for institutional advancements of Southern partners over the years of their engagement with MGG. Linking these to the MGG Programme is necessarily based on plausibility assumptions and outside observation rather than unequivocal attribution.

Box 1: Anecdotal evidence of institutional capacity building by MGG partners

After scholars from the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) had participated in the first two Academy courses, SIIS, in 2008, established a new Institute for Global Governance Studies. At that time, the term "global governance" was not part of the official discourse. It was feared that it would make the country more vulnerable to Western insistence on human rights and weaken its claim on unconditional sovereignty. A short while later, however, policy makers started using such wording. The conceptual shift can be interpreted as demonstration of SIIS's intellectual leadership and influence in policy advice provided to the central government.

In 2013, SIIS again assumed a pioneering role by initiating joint knowledge creation with the MGG Network on the Post-2015 framework of the United Nations, later called the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Fues & Ye, 2014a, b). This happened at a time when no other think tank in China had addressed the topic. The early start enabled SIIS to become a leading source of knowledge and policy advice on a global issue, which later evolved as the top priority of the Chinese government.

Through the collaboration on sustainability standards in the MGG Network, SIIS has built up new analytical capacity on global value chains, which is used by China's Platform for Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) (Cao, 2017b). Similar effects have come about in Brazil (Coelho & Nunes, 2017), India (Kathuria et al., 2017; Jain & Ashok, 2017), Indonesia (Damuri & Santoso, 2017) and South Africa (Draper & Ngarachu, 2017), where MGG think tanks have expanded their expertise and now provide advice to national VSS platforms and standards bodies.

MGG supported the formation of multi-stakeholder VSS platforms in Brazil (May 2017) and China (June 2017). Standards bodies and ministries in Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa, which are part of the Network, are engaged in setting up similar institutions. In a complementary move, MGG has strengthened the UN Forum for Sustainability Standards by facilitating the interaction of national platforms and other relevant actors from partner countries with the UN system.

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) in India used the MGG Programme to acquire expertise on the development cooperation modalities and experiences of OECD countries. This benefited the institution's subsequent analytical and advisory work on South-South and triangular cooperation. In hosting international forums on this topic, together with India's Foreign Ministry, RIS draws widely on partners from the MGG Network.

The Mexican think tank, Instituto Mora, strategically engaged with MGG to broaden its knowledge on international development cooperation. Based on such progress, the institution became an influential source of advice for the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the sidelines of an international conference in Mexico, April 2014, MGG partners created the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST). The new grouping has grown into an important voice for Southern providers of development cooperation, still maintaining close links with MGG.

Starting with the first course in 2007, Brazil's ministry of environment has employed the Academy as an instrument of strategic human resource development. Based on a highly competitive internal selection process, the Ministry sends one staff member to each course.

On a scale never seen before, MGG was instrumental in bringing Southern think tanks into the T20 process during the German G20 presidency in 2017. This led to the formation of specialised G20 expertise for a significant number of participating institutions. MGG partners experienced further institutional progress by assuming roles as co-chairs in five out of 10 T20 task forces.

The MGG vision of inclusive global governance led to the founding of the T20-Africa Standing Group, which serves as a platform for knowledge institutions from G20 countries and Africa. The involvement of the UN Economic Commission for Africa in the Standing Group ensures a strong connection to Pan-African institutions.

By sending their staff to the Academy and participating in several MGG work strands, China Agricultural University has strengthened its position as a leading knowledge hub in the country on development cooperation. The institution also plays a key role in the China International Development Research Network, which it links up with the MGG Network to strengthen international exchanges. The University strengthened its knowledge on development cooperation of the European Union by collaborating with MGG partner China Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation and DIE in a study on China-EU cooperation (Fues, et al., 2016).

National Schools of Public Administration and think tanks from all MGG partner countries have begun applying knowledge gained at the seminar of ENAP and MGG in February 2018 by establishing training formats for the public sector on SDGs, opening up a field where they had not been active before.

An MGG alumni helped Brazil's supreme audit institution to expand its assessment work regarding the SDGs.

Source: Author

With a focus on the MGG impact in human capacity building, DIE regularly commissions a consulting firm, Umfragezentrum Bonn (UZBonn), to survey the developments of all Academy alumni in tracer studies. The independent experts have conducted interviews with participants at the end of the course as well as six months and three years after returning home. At the occasion of the 10-year celebration of MGG, DIE requested UZBonn to produce a comprehensive evaluative report. The external assessment confirmed the consistently positive results delivered since the start of the Programme.

The capacity for "dialogue and cooperation (in networks)" is a further area of competence, which the MGG program enables its participants to improve in remarkably. Combining the responses, 96 per cent of the respondents thought that their participation in the MGG program had improved these abilities at least to a certain extent while 62 per cent thought this to be the case unreservedly [...] The results of the online surveys show that MGG has the potential to improve its participants' abilities to work in a team as well as to improve in the previously mentioned areas of (intercultural) communication and capacity for dialogue [...] (The interviewees pointed out that through their intercultural encounters they had developed a more holistic view of the world and had become more aware of global problems. (UZBonn, 2017, pp. 3-4)

Box 2 lists anecdotal evidence for the career development of selected MGG alumni. The information shows that significant advancements of young professionals can have a gestation period of up to 10 years or more.²⁵ It cannot be claimed that participation in the MGG Academy was the overriding factor for professional progress. However, the argument can be made that the MGG Programme has been successful in selecting promising individuals, many of whom later validated the trust placed in them.

Box 2: Anecdotal evidence for career development of selected MGG alumni

A participant of the very first MGG Academy, in 2007, became the operating head of the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development at the Confederation of Indian Industry in July 2017 (Sachin Joshi).

A member of the first course from South Africa excelled in her career to become Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Home Affairs (Qinisile Delwa).

A participant of the second Academy was recently promoted to a high position with the government of the State of Puebla (Mario Riestra).

A Mexican participant in the third course (2008) has gained prominence as the current Minister of Education in the State of Puebla (Patricia Vázquez).

A member of the fourth course (2008) took over the position of Executive Director at South Africa's Institute of Global Dialogue in 2017 (Philani Mthembu).

A Chinese participant of the first Academy advanced to the influential level of Director of the Office of Research Management at the China Institute of International Studies (Hu Dawei).

An Indian scholar in the second course, who was then Assistant Professor, was later appointed as Associate Professor at the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament (CIPOD) of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (Archna Negi).

An economist from Indonesia's Financial Services Authority evolved into the architect of the country's regulations on green financing, based on knowledge gained at the Academy in 2010 (Edi Setijawan).

A participant of 2008 became the head of Instituto C&A, which is responsible for the textile company's philanthropy policies in Brazil. She also belongs to the leadership of C&A Foundation at the global level (Giuliana Ortega).

After joining the Academy in 2013, a Mexican scholar quickly rose to the influential position of Research Director at Instituto Mora (Carlos Domínguez).

A participant of the fourth course, 2008, from the Indian Ministry of Finance was granted a leave of absence by his government after completing the Academy so that he could become the first Indian national to be regularly employed with the OECD at the Global Tax Forum (Sanjeev Sharma).

A member of the third course, 2008, was later appointed Chairperson of the Department of International Relations at the South Asian University / Delhi (Siddharth Mallavarapu).

After participation in the 2014 Academy, an official of Brazil's Ministry of Environment was promoted to Director of Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, recognised as UNESCO world heritage site and core area of a biosphere reserve (Fernando Tatagiba).

A member of the third MGG Academy (2008) returned to Germany at a later time to earn a PhD degree and was later promoted to head the Department of International Relations at her home institution, Indonesia's Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Shafiah F. Muhibat).

25 The German Academic Exchange Service speaks of a period of 10 to 12 years after which significant career advancement happens, and uses this metric as yardstick to measure success (DAAD, 2013, p. 39). A recent external evaluation of the organisation's scholarship programme for developing countries found "that the qualifications gained [...] qualify those supported and the alumni as change agents, because the great majority of them are employed in responsible positions after their period of support and their careers benefit from the programmes." (DAAD, 2013, p. 55)

It can be assumed that many employers support the application of their staff in pursuit of the institutional human resource strategy. In these cases, MGG serves the dual purpose of individual and organisational capacity building, as the external evaluation revealed:

The most positive findings concerning the impact of the program on the sending organizations are that, after their return, graduates are able to raise the awareness of their employing organizations in regard to the goals of sustainable development and in the field of global governance. Combining answers, 82 per cent of the surveyed alumni claimed that this was possible at least to a certain extent. (UZBonn, 2017, p. 3)

After introducing MGG, I will now turn to an analysis of the Programme and its methodological and normative foundation. The section concludes by exploring the relevance of historical memory and emotions for transnational cooperation.

3 Explaining the achievements of MGG

3.1 MGG – the “quiet institution”

The theory of change underlying the MGG Programme is grounded in the behavioural understanding of global governance and international cooperation (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Buchan et al., 2009; Messner & Weinlich, 2016a; Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2016a, b; Bosworth, Singer, & Snower, 2016; Grimalda, 2016; Stein, 2017; Buchholz & Sandler, 2017). Scholars and practitioners in economics, business administration and public policy have extensively adopted behavioural perspectives for a number of years (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Kahneman, 2011; Thaler, 2015; Lewis, M., 2017). In contrast, the academic discipline of International Relations has been slow to open up to the “behavioural revolution” (Hafner-Burton et al., 2017). But there seems to be a growing recognition now that transnational cooperation and global problem-solving cannot afford to ignore the insights of behavioural science. During the German G20 presidency, a T20 task force persuasively argued that

global action should take into account the complexity of human psychology and exploit scientific evidence coming from behavioural psychology and economics [...] (D)ivisive narratives emphasizing “us” vs. “them” divisions should be replaced by inclusive narratives emphasizing similarities and the commonality of the goals facing humankind. (Grimalda et al., 2017, p. 2)

In the initial phase of MGG, some interlocutors in partner countries reacted sceptically, since they assumed that the intention of the founders was to exploit the Network for their own purposes. This would have meant that BMZ and DIE use Southern partners to promote German interests at the global level. International Relations theory has developed the orchestration concept to capture the essence of such interactions (Abbott & Hale, 2014; Klingebiel & Paulo, 2015; Abbott & Bernstein, 2015). Orchestration presumes that an orchestrator reaches out to intermediaries to influence target groups, such as developing country governments and international organisations. By contrast, the behavioural model would understand MGG as a social space for transnational knowledge cooperation on equal terms, oriented towards the global common good.

The diverging implications of the two conceptual frameworks for transnational cooperation become clear by looking at South–South cooperation, a topic of key importance for the evolution of the Network. MGG partners have jointly authored numerous publications in this area²⁶ and organised a wide range of events, for example under the umbrella of the United Nations (UN) and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). In a classic case of orchestration, DIE would have addressed Southern partners with the aim of getting them to align with the practices and perspectives of traditional donors and, eventually, join GPEDC. However, this would not have worked out as some MGG partner countries, particularly Brazil, China, India and South Africa, insist on the fundamentally different nature of South–South cooperation and reject GPEDC, which they perceive as OECD-dominated. Contrary to the orchestration approach, the behavioural model assumes horizontal processes of equal collaborators, which take into account the perspectives and interests of all parties involved.

It is obvious that the behavioural framework aptly reflects the intentions of the German founders. In the case being considered, the MGG Programme has acted as platform for joint knowledge creation where scholars, policy makers and other stakeholders reflect on and respect the specific characteristics of South–South and North–South cooperation and search for joint approaches in support of the 2030 Agenda. The achievements in this and other fields of the MGG Programme could only come about because German founders were able to turn the behavioural principles into reality. Numerous partners at the senior level have attested to the neutrality of DIE and joint ownership as critical success factors for MGG. A partner of the first hour, Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), which is linked to India’s Ministry of External Affairs, validates the claim that MGG works for the global common good:

I have been associated with MGG since its pre-conception meeting and have seen its evolution. I can confidently say that though it is funded by the Government of Germany, it has emerged as a truly independent and neutral programme. This is an impressive global public good created by Germany and it should be further nurtured with more support. (Chaturvedi in German Development Institute, 2017, p. 18)

Rathin Roy, Director of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy associated with India’s Finance Ministry, and co-chair of the T20 task force on tax in 2017, shares the view of MGG as a non-partisan space, fostering a partnership of equals:

The Managing Global Governance Network is a very good example of a quiet institution that performs an immensely useful role. Here is an institution that brings together developed and developing countries in a fashion that is cooperative. It is able to do so because it does so quietly and without publicity. That is exactly the kind of cohesive institution that we need. Its contribution has been invaluable. (Roy, 2017)

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, National Executive Director of the South African Institute of International Affairs, expresses her commitment to MGG by – rightly – claiming co-ownership of the Programme.

We have built up an exceptional network of partnerships and outputs, bridging what has historically divided North and South, establishing understanding where previously

26 See footnote 13.

there was ignorance [...] or disinterest. The world needs more engagement of this type. (Sidiropoulos in German Development Institute, 2017, p. 15)

Li Xiaoyun, Professor at the China Agricultural University and Chairman of the China International Development Research Network as well as of the Network of Southern Think Tanks, points to the paradigm shift in development cooperation, which MGG represents by aligning with global ethics. He recommends that Chinese support to developing countries should follow a similar approach.

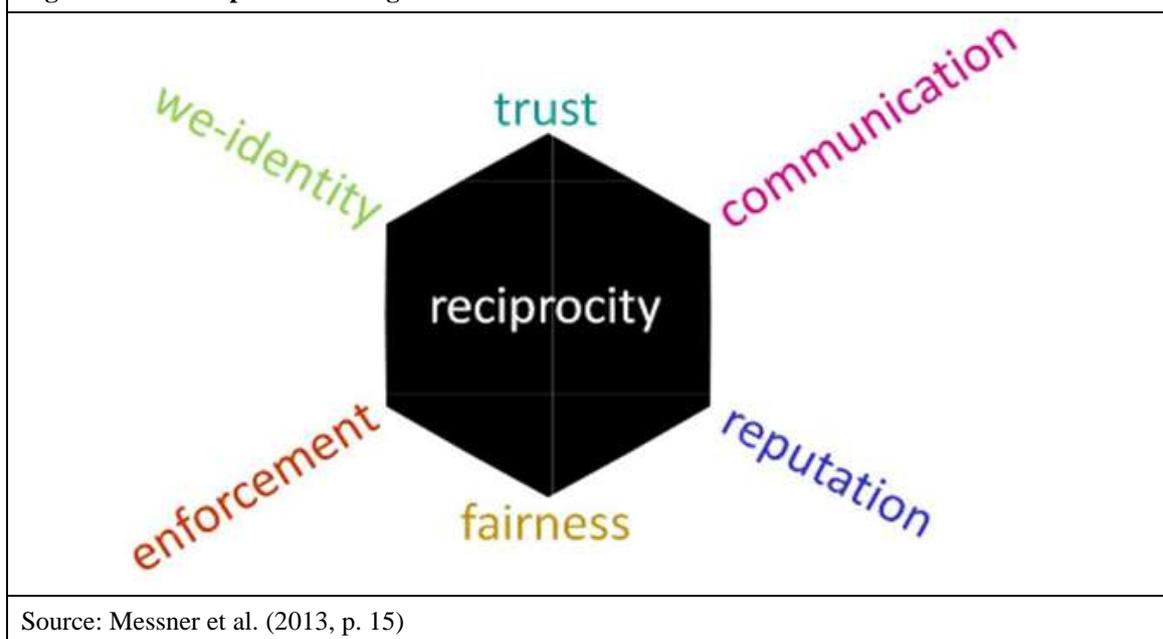
We need to move from national interest to global interest in the new era of global governance. MGG looks universally, thereby promoting convergence and reducing international conflict. (Li, 2017b)

The positive responses of many partners in the South to the German offer of transnational knowledge cooperation under the MGG Programme prove the success of the behavioural philosophy employed by DIE. By emphasising the global common good, MGG does not disregard German concerns but rather embeds them into a transformative strategy for global sustainable development. Seen from this perspective, MGG is a long-term investment by the German government, which serves enlightened national interests by addressing “international cooperation challenges in terms of the underprovisioning of the basic mechanisms of cooperation” (Messner et al., 2016b, p. 140).

3.2 The cooperation hexagon

DIE Director Dirk Messner and collaborating scholars at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research, attached to the University of Duisburg-Essen, have applied the interdisciplinary insights of behavioural science to the study of global governance (Messner et al., 2013, 2016a, b; Messner & Weinlich, 2016a, b, c). One important source for them was the empirically grounded work of the late Elinor Ostrom, a winner of the Nobel Prize in economics, on the success factors for governing the commons (Ostrom, 1990, 2005). Building on her insights, Dirk Messner and colleagues identified seven mechanisms of critical importance for the extent, quality and impact of transboundary collaboration: we-identities, trust, communication, reputation, fairness, enforcement and reciprocity. These represent the constitutive elements of the cooperation hexagon, in which reciprocity assumes a central role as underlying determinant for all modes of interaction (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: The cooperation hexagon



David G. Rand and Martin A. Nowak, leading scholars of cognitive science, have validated the explanatory power of the cooperation hexagon in light of theoretical research on the evolutionary dynamics of human cooperation and the rich evidence generated by experiments.

Rather than examining mechanisms per se, the hexagon of cooperation explores factors that are important for the successful functioning of mechanisms involving reciprocity [...] Thus the hexagon can provide a useful set of guidelines for those trying to use reciprocity to promote human cooperation [...] (C)onsistent with the hexagon of cooperation [...], we may see an ever greater emphasis on reciprocity as our world becomes increasingly complex and interdependent. (Rand & Nowak, 2016, p. 130)

In a similar vein, Neumann (2016) confirms the relevance of the hexagon in his study of evolutionary diplomacy. Other scholars are sceptical about the possibilities of large-scale cooperation by *homo sapiens*, the “ultra-social animal” (Tomasello, 2014a). Elke U. Weber and Eric J. Johnson, decision scientists at Columbia University in New York, point to evolutionary constraints for human judgement and behaviour in the high-tech world of the 21st century.

A “glass-half-full” perspective suggests that human evolution towards our current ability to cooperate is remarkable, as indeed it is. The “glass-half empty” perspective [...] suggests that our ability to cooperate may be adequate to solve the types of problems typical of the time and environment under which this ability evolved, but that the complexity and timescale of current individual as well as societal challenges severely challenge the human ability for cooperative and proactive problem solving. (Weber & Johnson, 2016, p. 139)

The German political scientist Lothar Brock articulates another important caveat. He emphasises the prevalence of ontological antagonisms among human individuals and communities, which, however, does not preclude the possibilities and benefits of cooperation under conditions of conflict.

Cooperation may change conflict, but it will never overcome it. To the contrary, because of its entanglement with conflict, cooperation will always be limited and insufficient. (Brock, 2016, p. 73)

Bosworth, Singer and Snower (2016) emphasise the interaction between personal behaviour and the social environment, which is particularly relevant for higher scales of cooperation. The more the behavioural mechanisms of cooperation are ingrained socially, the more people will be motivated to join hands in problem-solving.

Some social settings encourage prosocial motives; others discourage them. Changes in social settings may lead to changes in motives. Thus preferences are not located exclusively in the individual, but rather become the outcome of the interplay between the individual and her social environment. (Bosworth et al., 2016, pp. 72-73)

Bayram (2017) finds that cosmopolitans can be assumed to be more inclined to observing international law than non-cosmopolitans. Similarly, Grimalda, Bucher and Brewer (2015) present empirical evidence that

(1) Increased participation in global networks is associated with increased propensity to cooperate at the global level. (2) Likewise, heightened identification and belonging to the global community is also associated with increased global-level cooperation. (Grimalda, Bucher, & Brewer, 2015, p. 20)

However, the experience of we-identities, so widely shared by MGG partners and participants of the MGG Academy, should not blind us to the reality of counter-forces. Morgan Brigg from the University of Queensland points to the ontological preference for difference, which naturally limits social convergence towards a common identity.

(I)t is necessary to be wary of overstating sameness, or of the temptations of a universal “we-identity”. While much political thought in the western tradition tends to see some level of shared-ness, sameness or unity as the basis for political community and as necessary for cooperation, difference may be more important than we have previously allowed [...] (T)hat which human beings and human groups share at a very fundamental level may be our desire – and processes – for creating difference; differences which continually re-form in dynamic relation. (Brigg, 2014, pp. 15, 20)

Another limiting factor for the application of the cooperation hexagon in International Relations is the fact that (inter)personal attributes of social dynamics cannot be easily transferred to larger communities or even to the global space (Kertzer, 2017). Empirical evidence on this critical aspect is only slowly emerging. A recent study of interstate relations supports the notion that interpersonal mechanisms find a functional equivalent at a higher scale. Based on a large number of country pairs, Frank et al. (2018) present results on the role of direct reciprocity in (bilateral) interstate relations. This matches with the predictions of stable reciprocating (interpersonal) behaviour by evolutionary models, thus refuting the view of the impossibility of cooperation in an anarchic “G-0 world” (Bremmer, 2012). In a forthcoming DIE study, Max Högl (forthcoming) analyses the impact of behavioural factors in a comparison of the global climate conferences of 2009 (Copenhagen) and 2015 (Paris). Based on interviews with negotiators, he finds that the high level of trust and transparency in communication nurtured by the French government are important explanatory variables for the positive outcome in 2015, while the 2009 conference failed miserably due to deficits in this regard.

One important success factor of MGG lies in creating an environment that fosters all elements of the cooperation hexagon except enforcement.²⁷ As a voluntary association, MGG has no means to sanction Network members or partners. The only feasible coercive instrument would be the withholding of funds by the German side. Any attempt in this direction, however, would endanger the whole Programme since it would violate the basic principles of horizontality and joint ownership.

Closely linked to the work on behavioural dimensions of cooperation, the research on human intentionalities has attracted considerable interest (Tomasello et al., 2012; Jankovic & Ludwig, 2018). Building on the work of Tomasello (2014b), Dirk Messner and Silke Weinlich (2016c, pp. 26-7) develop a four-phase scheme for the evolution of human cooperation. The period starting with the ancestors of human beings 5 million years ago until around 400,000 years ago only knew individual intentionalities. The first phase with nascent joint intentionalities began 400,000 years ago, when humans needed collaborative arrangements for hunting larger animals. Around 200,000 years ago, in response to competition and conflict with other groups, within-group cooperation strengthened, leading to collective intentionalities.

The next evolutionary step, the third phase, was characterised by joint intentionalities between groups, for example between cities around 5,000 years ago and between modern states since the 17th century. A forward projection of this model would imply that humanity could be on the verge of entering the fourth phase and beginning to create collective intentionalities on a global scale.

The big question at the beginning of the 21st century is whether a *fourth phase* (original italics; T.F.) of human development on the basis of a global culture of cooperation can arise. Can humans develop “global we-identities” based on collective intentionalities? That would lead to global viewpoints, norms, rules, institutions, system, and cultures. (Messner & Weinlich, 2016c, p. 28)

As will be shown below, the MGG Programme has by now reached the evolutionary stage of joint intentionalities. The progress was made possible by the consistent application of behavioural insights. Numerous statements of partners and alumni (implicitly) refer to the cooperation hexagon when they describe the meaning and impact of MGG for themselves and their organisations.

3.3 Behavioural dimensions

In their introduction to an early MGG volume, co-editors Ashwani Kumar from the Tata Institute of Social Studies in Mumbai and DIE Director Dirk Messner illustrate the distinctive nature of equal, multi-stakeholder collaboration, made possible by the Programme’s behavioural framing.

27 The absence of enforcement in MGG corresponds to the fact that developing countries reject enforcement in international agreements, for example the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Accord, as will be pointed out below. This could indicate that the cooperation hexagon needs modification in historically loaded constellations involving actors from advanced and developing countries. The relevance of historical memory will be addressed below.

The book is not a typical or usual academic exercise, but reflects more of an outcome of a fruitful, joyful and productive network of scholars and researchers linking north and south, governments and civil society actors, researchers and policy makers. One of the major goals of this publishing project is to recognize the significance of extending the boundaries of “institutionalized cooperation” and exploring the possibility of setting up a new epistemic community at the global level. In fact, the book is an acknowledgement of a collective spirit of cooperation and understanding beyond borders. (Kumar & Messner, 2011, p. 27)

At a later point in time, the co-directors of an MGG alumni knowledge project on global value chains and sustainability standards, Archana Negi from India’s Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jorge Pérez from Anáhuac University of Mexico and DIE’s Johannes Blankenbach confirm the exceptional spirit of collaboration in the Network.

The unique nature of this book requires a brief introduction to the making of this project. We believe that it represents a unique experimentation in “knowledge creation” that involved a coming together of scholars and practitioners from the global South and North to jointly ponder upon the conceptual aspects of the project and to bring in empirical insights from the “emerging economies”. (Negi et al., forthcoming, p. 6)

Many participants of the MGG Academy have assessed the impact of this training format by referring to behavioural categories. As one of many similar statements, we can take the farewell speech at the end of the MGG Academy 2013 by the group’s speaker, Carlos Domínguez, now Director of Research at the Mexican Instituto Mora.

(W)e have surpassed our differences in terms of gender, nationality, language, political ideology, and even religious beliefs to build a space for debate and creative thinking. We have demonstrated that it is actually possible to use our differences and disagreements as the point of departure to travel together; to use them as the seed, from which the big and strong tree of trust, tolerance, and love can grow and flourish. (Domínguez, 2013, p. 1)

The notion of we-identities, a key category of the cooperation hexagon, has evolved as a powerful unifying concept for the MGG Programme. A key prerequisite for the creation of we-identities is the competence of individuals to transcend the limits of their own worldview (Shannon, 2012; Sennett, 2012; Reus-Smit, 2017). Accordingly, Messner & Weinlich (2016c, p. 36) posit that “a transition to multiple perspective takings is a necessary condition for global cooperation in the 21st century.”

Numerous statements from MGG partners and alumni underline how strongly the Programme facilitates the understanding of the diverging realities and values of others. In their theory-based master’s theses, Lisanne Riedel (2013) and Stefanie Sieloff (2013) present empirical evidence on the MGG Academy, which supports this finding. Their interviews with alumni, conducted in South Africa and India respectively, illustrate the challenges of diversity that participants have to face in the “global classroom” (Riedel, 2013). Box 3 presents exemplary alumni statements on how they learned to understand, address, navigate and integrate widely different perspectives of participants in the Academy.

Box 3: Testimonials of alumni on differences in perspectives²⁸

One of the strengths of the MGG Academy is facilitating dialogue, not just North–South but among Southern representatives in a multi-disciplinary perspective. The greatest experience for me as participant was to learn to understand different perspectives, not just look through my own lens. (Atmavilas, 2011)

I think the strongest experience was really the multiculturalism, the diverse composition of the group and the intense opportunity we had to reach out to each other. This was very important to me, because I started to change perspective and to understand that people think differently in different parts of the world. (Ortega, 2017, p. 18)

I think it is important for us to find ways of better understanding other persons and other perspectives. And I think this has spread into my action and my development as well, a willingness to put yourself in the shoes of others and also think about the world from another vantage point. I think increasingly from multiple perspectives and there are tangible benefits from such an engagement. It was not that we were merely passive consumers of knowledge being shaped in Europe, but it was the other way round as well. We were contributing, I thought, to widening the perspective of the global North as well vis-à-vis the global South. The other element is the element of cosmopolitanism which comes in with this exposure. You learned to look at the world in much more collective globalist terms. (Mallavarapu, 2017, pp. 3, 8, 18, 20, 23)

This is the first, the most important result: We learned about the different cultures. We understand that we are from different languages, body languages etc. (Hakim, 2017, p. 3)

I think from a cultural understanding perspective I learned a lot while I was there. Understanding how to interact with people of very different backgrounds, ethnicities, language groups. (Chevallier, 2017, p. 23)

I changed in many ways, in terms of how I deal and how I interact with people. The respect I give other people and understand them for being who they are. (Gutshwa, 2017, p. 10)

One week after the course starts, you are no longer Lilia de Diego from Mexico, you are just Lilia. You just take off your country mask and you become an international person, like a global citizen. (De Diego, 2017, p. 22)

We even have discovered we can communicate in languages we were not able to understand. That's MGG, developing the core competence of sharing values and gain mutual understanding. (Bunyard & Mendoza, 2014, p.4)

The experience of being in this multi-cultural environment was very remarkable for me. Learning about the other cultures, because we have people from different cultures, from different nationalities, from different professional background, from different education. The program brings us to this international reality, so we are not thinking only about our country and about our institution, we start thinking more globally. (Oliveira, 2017, pp. 3, 4)

The experience of collaborating with your peers, with your colleagues from different countries, with different cultural backgrounds, this is a new experience for me and also helped me to understand different perspectives. The very positive characteristic of the MGG Programme is to promote intercultural understanding and to help exchange perspectives from different countries with different political systems, different languages, religions and cultures. I am ready to take responsibility and to promote sustainable development as a global agenda. (Cao 2017a, pp. 17, 19)

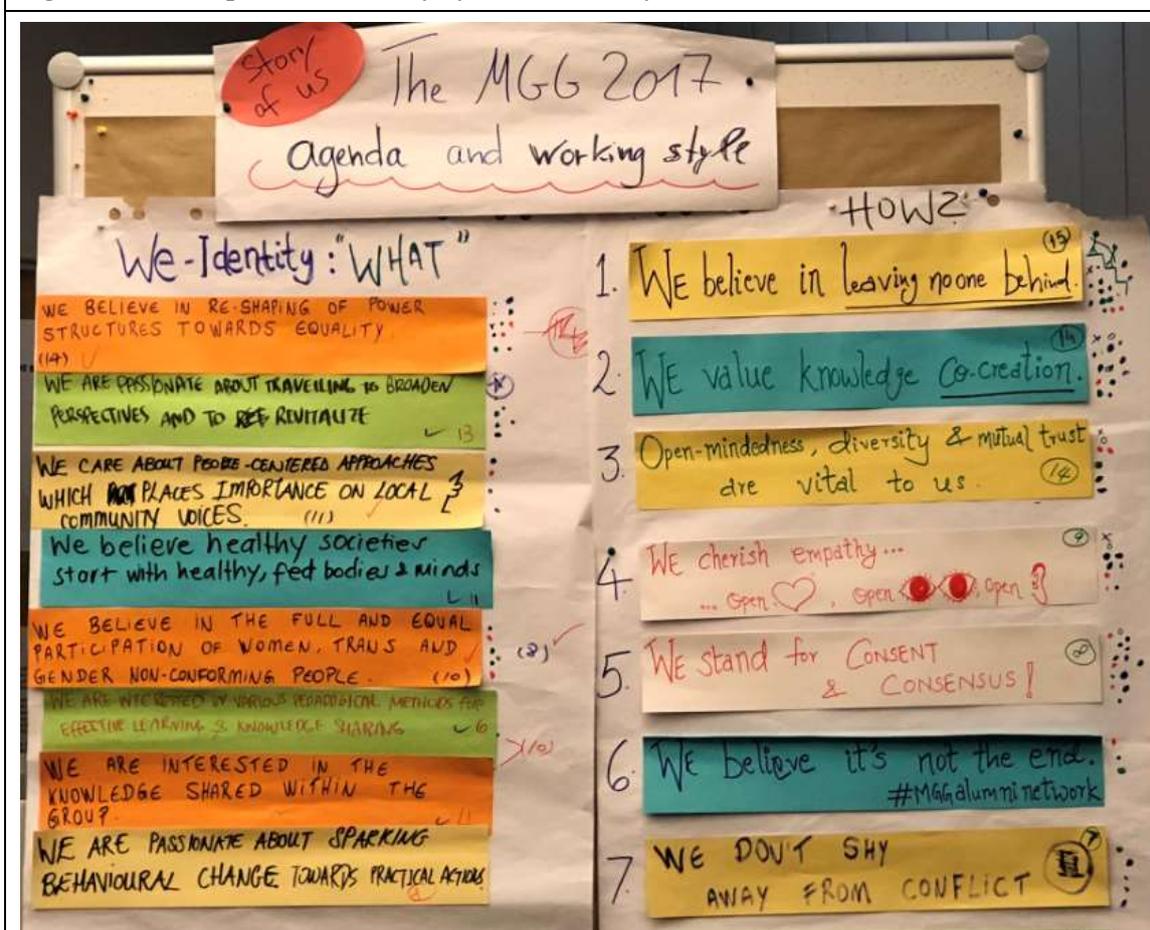
We created a trustful relationship with people in the Academy. I think the mix of the people that we had is definitely a strength of the programme, bringing in different people with different backgrounds, not only different nationalities but different backgrounds altogether. That way you are adapting to all other cultures that you have in your room with you, respecting those cultures and those perspectives. People don't only have a different view on things because of their background or their political fields but also because of their culture and their life story. (Hebling, 2017, pp. 27, 31, 33)

I developed this empathy and this capability of understanding others. You have to be in the context of international perspectives and ideas and education. I think that you have just two choices – being more sensitive about it or just not care about it. And the MGG programme made me more sensitive about it. (Vázquez, 2017, pp. 3, 32)

28 All statements in this table are quotes. Those dated 2017 originate from transcribed interviews, which were conducted for an independent evaluation (UZBonn, 2017).

A compelling example of constructing we-identities in the MGG Programme occurred with the Academy 2017. In a self-directed process at the end of their four-month long course, the participants developed “a common narrative of trust and reciprocity” (Messner & Weinlich, 2016c, p. 36). They agreed upon a set of principles, which represents the core of their collective identity (see Figure 5). The group’s core values (“What”) centre on equality, inclusion, diversity, cultural openness, local perspectives, gender equity and practical action. The “How” addresses knowledge sharing and co-creation, mutual trust, consent and consensus, while not shying away from acknowledging conflict. Referring to positive emotions, they “believe that art, music and humour can make a change” (eighth point, not shown in Figure 5). The group’s cognitive innovation expresses the spirit of togetherness and cosmopolitan purpose that bound together the 23 young professionals from all six MGG partner countries plus Hungary, Afghanistan and Germany. Such an outcome confirms the value of behavioural framing in human capacity building for the global common good.

Figure 5: Principles of we-identity by MGG Academy 2017



Source: Author

It is clear that the MGG Academy enhances the cosmopolitan identity of participants and opens new horizons of international networking. This, in turn, heightens participants’ commitment to global aspirations, presumably lasting for a long time after their stay in Germany. Garth le Pere, South African scholar of International Relations and close associate of MGG, observes:

Its (MGG's; T.F.) current alumni thus make up a tightly knit epistemic community whose future impact is bound to be profound and far-reaching. (Le Pere in German Development Institute, 2017, p. 19)

Medelina Hendytio, Deputy Executive Director of the Indonesian Centre for Strategic and International Studies, underlines the link between participation in the MGG Academy and global awareness.

When the young participants become leaders or thinkers or policy advisors in their country besides putting national interests and agendas as priority they still preserve and respect the international principles. This is partly an answer to the current problem of nationalist movements that destroy the international system. (Hendytio, 2017)

The behavioural foundations of the MGG Programme have also facilitated the formation of collective intentionalities in the Network, which has begun to shape real-world processes as a “think-and-do-tank”. The MGG Programme is, thus, part of the global transition process towards a higher level of human collaboration, as envisaged by one of the founders:

New joint narratives and we-identities, emerging in transnational networks, are cornerstones of global cooperation and of global intentionalities, which create the preconditions for transnational problem-solving. (Messner, 2017a, p. 9)

Thomas Coggin (2017), a former participant of the Academy from South Africa, is convinced that MGG has already advanced in this regard: “In many ways, MGG embodies collective intentionality. That’s probably its most beneficial aspect.” Prominent examples of collective action by the MGG Network are listed in Box 4.

Box 4: Examples of collective intentionalities by MGG Network

Key MGG partners founded the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) that provides important contributions to research and policy dialogue on South–South cooperation and future architectures of international development cooperation.

The MGG Network has provided influential contributions to the evolution of the Global Partnership for Effective Development (GPEDC) in the form of analytical insight and procedural input through organising meetings and structuring discourses.

The MGG Network had a formative role during the German G20 presidency when the T20 became a respected partner for governments in shaping the official agenda.

MGG partners were instrumental in setting up the T20-Africa Standing Group that has set out to influence the intergovernmental process within the G20 and between the G20 and African regional organisations (Hackenesch & Leininger, 2017a, b; Hackenesch, Leininger & Sidiropoulos, 2017; Gobbelaar et al., 2017; Leininger & Hackenesch, 2017).

The engagement of the MGG Programme has supported the founding and evolution of National Platforms for Voluntary Sustainability Standards in India, Brazil and China. Relevant actors in Mexico, Indonesia and South Africa are preparing similar steps (Fues & Grimm, 2017).

At the multilateral level, collective contributions of MGG partners have promoted the work of the UN Forum for Voluntary Sustainability Standards.

Source: Author

A critical factor for the evolution of collective intentionalities in the MGG Network is the recognition of significant differences among states in capabilities, such as material resources

and public sector capacity (Bracho, 2015; Bracho, Hackenesch, & Weinlich, 2015). Francisco Gaetani, President of Brazil's School of Public Administration, reiterates this aspect.

MGG is an important asset. It's not a trivial agenda. MGG network will push all its members to achieve sustainable development under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. (Gaetani, 2017)

Burden sharing in joint efforts towards the global common good raises the issue of ethical norms, defining fairness and equity. The MGG Network has been able to establish common normative ground in key documents of the United Nations.

3.4 Normative foundations

The cooperation hexagon does not explicitly refer to values or ethical considerations. However, it can be taken for granted that there must be a minimum of shared norms among collaborating partners so that key behavioural mechanisms like we-identity and trust can flourish. One key impediment to transnational cooperation for global problem-solving is precisely the lack of shared ethics. As Dirk Messer and Silke Weinlich observe, the world society is still far away from normative convergence on global governance.

At the beginning of the 21st century it is now about developing an ethic, a global-commons morality, a "global social contract", and establishing this as a (global) social norm aimed at protecting global cooperation. The global discussions on the universal Sustainable Development Goals [...] can be interpreted as an effort in this direction [...] The Earth system is becoming humanity's most comprehensive global commons. Humans have to take responsibility for the Earth system and therefore establish new orders, common rules, institutions, and behavioral patterns. (Messner & Weinlich, 2016c, pp. 22, 33)

Amitav Acharya, a Southern voice at the American University in Washington, D.C., speaks out for a synthesis of normative orders from all civilisations.

An alternative to particularistic universalism is pluralistic universalism. This recognises the diversity among nations, respects it and yet seeks to find the common ground among them. (Acharya, 2017a, p. 78)

Clearly, the global moral order is yet to be built. In a polycentric world, it must go beyond the specific achievements of the European enlightenment and encompass core norms of other civilisations (Fues & Liu, 2011). The Indian scholar Siddharth Mallavarapu enumerates the prerequisites for the formation of universal ethics.

It is essential in the interest of legitimacy that we get back to regional or local sources to find global values. In India, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore [...] are excellent exemplars of locally anchored cosmopolitan beings. Why always refer only to [Immanuel] Kant when we think of cosmopolitanism? [...] In my view, regional references are essential in order to find a global consensus on values and norms. The archive must be opened up to include thinking available in both past and present in Africa, Latin America and Asia. This has to be done with genuine interest, rather than merely as token gestures of goodwill. (Mallavarapu in Lätt, 2010, p. 11)

For this to occur, the West needs to show humility and recognise the ideational contributions and practical experiences of normative order-building in other parts of the world. To highlight this point, we can turn to India's history. The U.S. environmental scholar-activist Bruce Rich studied the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka (born in 304 BCE) and Kautilya, chief minister of Ashoka's grandfather. To him they are

unquestionably two of the most extraordinary and, at least in the West, unappreciated figures in world history. Ashoka and Kautilya provide a powerful focus and metaphor [...] for the need to found a civil and international order on principles that transcend the goals of pure economic efficiency and amoral realpolitik [...] Here is the example of the ruler of the greatest nation on earth at the time who [...] put into practice a vision of global citizenship, non-violence not just towards humans but towards other sentient beings, responsibility and justice. (Rich, 2008, pp. xiii, 261)

The religious leader Dalai Lama supports Rich's argument.

It is often suggested that the idea of democracy has its roots in the West, but by insisting that citizens be treated as equals, protected under law, and that he and those who served him should regard the promotion of people's welfare as their highest duty, Emperor Ashoka seems to have anticipated some of democracy's key ideals. (Dalai Lama, 2008, pp. 271-2)

Sachin Chaturvedi of the Indian think tank Research and Information System for Developing Countries also points to the millennia-old philosophical roots of India's foreign policy, which Mahatma Gandhi and others revived in the 20th century. He emphasises the universalistic moral compass of his country.

The idea essentially was that foreign policy should work towards ending imperialism and the domination of one country over another, promoting peace and cooperation with the ultimate aim of achieving global peace and amity; a concept summed up in the term "one world". (Chaturvedi, 2016, p. 4)

Amitav Acharya points to the active role of the South in institutional innovation and norm-creation at the international level. He proposes to

give due credit to the contribution of non-Western actors to the marketplace of ideas for global cooperation. Latin American countries championed human rights before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and had developed a tradition of regional norm and institution building before the EU was conceived. The East Asian countries, led by Japan, pioneered a path out of postcolonial dependency and underdevelopment. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea had much to do with the leadership of Southeast Asian diplomats. The ideas of human development and human security were conceived by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, while the Responsibility to Protect concept was to a large extent an African contribution. (Acharya, 2017b, p. 12)

In her case study of negotiations at the Bretton Woods Conference 1944, Archana Negi, alumna of the MGG Academy and professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, provides evidence of India's active role at the historical event, three years before independence.

The Indian delegation began to show its effective presence in international negotiations at Bretton Woods. Even though on many substantive issues, the Indian delegation may not have achieved the outcomes it aimed for, it certainly made its presence felt as a confident negotiating team with a clear view on what it wanted out of the conference. (Negi, 2017, p. 143)

Recognising the contribution of developing countries to the creation of the international order calls for a parallel effort in theory-construction (Acharya, 2018; Paul, 2017). In this (MGG) spirit, Academy alumnus Siddharth Mallavarapu strives to create non-Western theories in the academic discipline of International Relations (IR). His aim is to

democratize the discipline of IR by introducing into the global episteme, figures and archives from the global South (not merely from Asia but also South America, Africa and the Arab world) that have not received their due at least until now. (Mallavarapu, 2018, p. 143)

Meaningful steps towards global ethics, which recognise non-Western values and cultures, are bound to run into resistance by those still clinging to the “US-led liberal international order” (Ikenberry, 2018). Christian Reus-Smit at the University of Queensland addresses such cultural concerns in the West.

There is widespread anxiety among Western policy-makers and commentators about the future of the modern international order. This is not just an anxiety about shifting material capabilities, however. It is a cultural anxiety: a fear that as power shifts to the East, non-Western great powers will seek to reshape international order according to their own values and practices. (Reus-Smit, 2017, p. 879)

While universally accepted ethics are not yet in sight, the MGG Network has found a shared normative foundation in two path-breaking documents, adopted by the international community in 2015: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (Crncic, 2017). Since these programmatic texts were agreed upon consensually under the umbrella of the United Nations, they can be considered a new global ethical code. In practical terms, the documents provide a useful taxonomy for structural transformation at all levels. Lothar Brock supports this viewpoint in arguing that

the UN sustainability negotiations can be addressed as the emergence of a normative order which slowly gains in importance as frame of reference for national policies and politics. (Brock, 2017, p. 69)

The normative convergence in the Network was made possible by the strong sense of ownership in the South for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs as well as the Paris Climate Agreement. This attitude is much different from the Southern position towards the preceding Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were seen as products of the North. Rory Horner and David Hulme from the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester explain the conceptual and political breakthrough achieved by the UN General Assembly in 2015:

The establishment of the SDGs highlights more prominently than ever a need to consider (sustainable) development as a test that has relevance everywhere. Rather than a group of experts from one place telling a subordinate group from another what to do, a charge often raised within and against international development, such a perspective opens opportunities for mutual learning, and associated collaborative action, across and within the Global North and South [...] In a highly significant departure from the MDGs formed at the culmination of two centuries of “divergence, big time”, the process of formulating the SDGs was much more inclusive of actors from the Global South than was the case for the MDGs. The G77, and Brazil in particular, played prominent roles in creating the SDGs. (Horner & Hulme, 2017, pp. 32, 39)

The affinity of developing countries to the SDGs and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Climate Agreement flows, to a large extent, from the fact that these represent voluntary commitments, thus aligning with Southern preferences.²⁹ With reference to the Paris Accord, Amitav Acharya observes that

the agreement avoided the traditional Western legalistic sanction-based approach in favor of a softer, voluntaristic approach that is characteristic of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (Acharya, 2017b, p. 11)

The normative convergence within the MGG Network focuses on joint efforts for the global common good, irrespective of the fundamental differences in the domestic political, economic and social systems of participating countries. It is obvious that legal standards and value systems in the MGG countries vary widely. The interpretation and realisation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law can turn out quite differently across the MGG spectrum. In the MGG Network, all partners are free to articulate their specific understanding of political norms and ethical principles, recognising that this does not necessarily match the opinion of others. The German partners express their value judgements but do not use MGG as a space for advertising Western concepts. In the Academy curriculum, potentially contentious subjects like human rights are approached by referring to implementation deficits in every country. In Germany, this perspective could, for example, point to the strong correlation between social status and educational opportunity which has led to criticism in the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The German side also needs to take into account historical facts which separate the formerly colonising Western societies, including Germany, from developing countries.

3.5 Historical memory

Due to historical and cultural factors, actors from developing and industrialised countries approach transnational cooperation from different vantage points. Establishing a partnership of equals across the North–Side divide has to acknowledge the tortured history of colonialism, slavery and imperialism, which continues to encumber international relations up to the present day. Against this backdrop, Dirk Messner and Silke Weinlich admonish us to recognise the asymmetrical power structure of the contemporary world order.

Western states [...] must move away from defending their hegemony in the international system in what is a losing battle. They must accommodate “new” cooperation partners and be ready for fair cooperation on an equal footing. (Messner & Weinlich, 2016c, p. 36)

This seems like a good starting point for industrialised societies. However, does this self-reflective attitude, which basically flows from an instrumental perception of shifting power relations, go far enough? The Indian scholar Siddharth Mallavarapu, an early participant of

²⁹ Michèle Roth and Cornelia Ulbert point to the “Nationally Determined Contributions” of the Paris Agreement as evidence for the growing importance of flexibility in international cooperation. “The underlying consideration is that countries will set themselves achievable goals and tailor their commitments to what they are able – and willing – to deliver domestically. Furthermore, this specific institutional design opens the possibility to accommodate national interests in a multi-level bottom-up approach where each country shapes its climate policy according to its own national preferences.” (Roth & Ulbert, 2018, p. 25)

the MGG Academy, reminds us that transnational scripts do not start from zero, but are, rather, historically embedded.

If global history is seriously factored, we also have to contend with a potpourri of colonial wounds, injustices from the past, periodic allegations of reconfigured neo-imperialism, and/or less forcefully articulated claims of the retention of privilege by traditional powers at the expense of others. (Mallavarapu, 2016, p. 246)

In order to overcome past violence and suffering, he invites the descendants of perpetrating and victimised societies

to revisit what could allow us to alter these “framings” and make us more willing to encounter each other with a greater degree of confidence and belief in a common “we” project [...] (E)ven a non-specialist’s foray into the world of cognitive neuroscience reveals the urgency and need to acknowledge that language, memory, and affect might lie at the heart of any meaningful reconciliation towards genuinely global “we” identities shorn of distrust and assorted inhibitions. (Mallavarapu, 2016, pp. 246-7)

These words resonate strongly with a German audience, which understands that (West)-German foreign policy after the Second World War was (and still is) contingent on acknowledging the pain inflicted by the country during the Nazi era, particularly on European nations. Coming from an historically victimised society, Mallavarapu’s offer of “reconciliation” carries a hopeful message for former colonising powers. However, it is the victims who have to decide if and when they might be ready for reconciliation. The perpetrating side can never initiate the process of healing. Still, rather than sitting idle and waiting for an initial move from the other side, the offending party can show remorse and admit historical guilt. As an organisation working in the shadow of German atrocities during the Nazi era, Action Reconciliation Service for Peace shares Mallavarapu’s perspective on the need for historical awareness in any (collective) interaction between descendants of offenders and victims.

The interrelation of past and present is perceived as difficult to understand in public debate and especially in discussions about historical memory. Precisely out of this background, active involvement is an important and symbolic contribution. Such an involvement is productive because it requires a deep understanding of others, and is aware of its own limits. [...] When we hear the term reconciliation, we think about conflicts between persons. However, if we meet people who have suffered under Nazism we better understand that even historical guilt needs reconciliation. (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace, 2018)

The MGG Programme has taken such insight to heart by acknowledging the historical responsibilities of industrialised nations and recognising the enduring impact of Western domination on global structures of power and wealth (generation). The MGG vision rejects the present configuration of global governance as unjust and exclusionary. By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as overarching normative foundation, MGG commits to a transformative agenda of global justice and to a new moral world order. The recognition of historical responsibilities needs to be accompanied by an awareness of present-day shortcomings and injustices in the German society. Critical self-reflection increases the willingness of participants from other societies to explore similar phenomena at home. Box 5 lists anecdotal evidence of historical memory and critical self-reflection in MGG on the German side.

Box 5: Anecdotal evidence of historical memory and critical self-reflection

When addressing issues of African relevance in the Academy, DIE staff will highlight Germany's historic responsibilities as colonial power, with a particular emphasis on the first genocide of the 20th century: in Namibia under German rule. Reference is also made to current provenance research in Germany, which explores the circumstances under which artefacts from the South ended up in German museums (e.g. Humboldt Forum Berlin).

During the T20 conference in May 2016, MGG organised a guided tour of the Topography of Terror Documentation Centre in Berlin, which informs about persecution in the Nazi era.

MGG Academy 2017 included a session on present-day racism in Germany with an expert who draws on personal experience ("critical whiteness" approach).

Encouraged and supported by DIE, working groups of various Academies have addressed the (disadvantaged) situation of immigrants and refugees in Germany through self-directed field visits and interviews.

MGG groups visit the German Historical Museum in Bonn, which exhibits achievements and challenges of the two German states after the Second World War.

During the seminar "International Futures" hosted by the Federal Foreign Office, the Academy group participates in a "political-historical" tour of Berlin.

DIE staff use social networks to communicate on Germany's colonial past and present social challenges.

Source: Author

After touching on historical memory, let us turn to Mallavarapu's two other critical factors for reconciliation and intercultural communication: affect and language. The discipline of International Relations has recently discovered the crucial role of emotions for interstate and global dynamics (Nussbaum, 2013; Sasley, 2013; Carillo, 2018). Robert Jervis of Columbia University comes to the conclusion that

people have emotions as well as cognitions, and indeed, the two often are inextricably combined... Fear, anger, and pride – and perhaps love – are central to international politics. (Jervis, 2017, p. 5)

Emma Hutchinson at the University of Queensland, Australia, underlines the centrality of sentiments for political science.

Emotions do not, in fact, exist in opposition to rationality but are an intrinsic part of the cognitive processes that enable political understanding. Emotions are in one way or the other embedded within all political perceptions, standpoints, behaviors and even policies. (Hutchinson, 2016, p. 281)

The MGG Programme has embedded emotional experiences into the curriculum of the Academy and other activities, as indicated by the anecdotal evidence of Box 6.

Box 6: Anecdotal evidence on the role of constructive emotions in MGG

Each Academy starts with a “Global Village”, at which national groups of participants give presentations on their countries, using culture, food and drinks in addition to cognitive content.

Role plays and simulation exercises during the Academy link emotive and cognitive processes.

The curriculum of each Academy includes a two-day workshop on producing digital stories, individually or in small groups, where course members often reveal deep emotions relating to their life story and their stay abroad.

MGG conferences and the Academy often include cultural events, such as concerts and museum visits.

DIE offers weekend excursions to tourist sites near Bonn for the Academy.

Participants of the Academy organise a wide range of activities for the whole group, such as festivities, potluck dinners and group trips.

Group dynamics can evoke family-like bonds, encompassing all members. A speaker at the Academy 2013 disclosed collective emotions in her farewell speech: “Leaving husband and two kids back in Brazil, I was afraid of being lonely and unattached in the Academy, just to find out I got 21 other kids. What a trade! At first, it was a bit awkward to hear big Shakeel calling me Mama. I felt so old! But I must confess that it was a real pleasure being considered the mother of this group. Such a special group – after all, we are the best MGG ever!” (Oliveira, 2013, p. 1)

On their own initiative, participants of the Academy organised cultural events, such as an exhibition of photos by a member of the group. Participants of one course produced a feature film, in which most of the group took on acting roles.

Source: Author

Siddarth Mallavarapu also alerts us to the relevance of linguistic diversity for transnational cooperation. This refers to the dominant position of English as lingua franca in the world, a fact that is also true of the MGG Programme. Speaking of the discipline of International Relations (IR), Bertrand, Goettlich and Murray find that

restricting scholarship to a specific language limits the scope of our imagination. Considering the connection between language and the ability to think [...] it is unsurprising that a restriction of IR to English limits our ability to think and to understand the politics of others. (Bertrand, Goettlich, & Murray, 2018, p. 94)

However, there is a difference between International Relations scholarship and the communicative regime of MGG. Whereas native-speakers heavily dominate the academic field, (almost) all participants in the Programme are non-native in English. Starting from a uniform position of imperfection, everybody modulates the language based on their cognitive maps and linguistic socialisation. Out of the different speech patterns, the MGG community constructs a unique synthesis. Carlos Domínguez, speaker of a past Academy, describes the process:

If you have the chance to see how the participants of MGG Academy 2013 communicate with each other, you will witness a strange phenomenon. If someone from Pakistan or China speaks with someone from Egypt or Mexico, you will notice that we do not speak Urdu, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, or English. Like a family, we speak our own language; we have developed our own codes, our own unique expressions. It is a language that sounds to say the least, beautiful and magical. It is like a lot of appreciation, singing, dancing, filmmaking, and love, all together at the same time. (Domínguez, 2013, p. 2)

Similarly, Messner and colleagues emphasise the essential role of language in a technical, but also relational sense as prerequisite for the formation of collective identities.

A we-identity is not just externally determined: through language we learn and build joint narratives that reinforce our sense of belonging – to religions, political parties, nation-states or football teams – that expand our common ground. (Messner et al., 2016b, p.137)

The MGG Programme has achieved notable success since its inception in 2005. The concluding section will assess the results and formulate suggestions for measures, which could enhance its efficacy.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Assessment of results

Success factors

MGG has successfully forged a community of institutions and individuals from governments, international organisations, science, think tanks, civil society and business, which are committed to joining hands for transformative change at the global and domestic level (WBGU, 2016). The success of the Programme in bridging the North–South divide can be attributed to the behavioural theory of change applied by the German founders. The following factors have been of critical importance for the progress achieved so far:

- The German side has demonstrated a long-term commitment to invest in collaborative relationships with Southern powers on shared global concerns, moving beyond a narrow understanding of national interests. BMZ has been ready to shoulder a large share of total costs without exploiting its dominant position through imposing its values and perspectives. Instead, the ministry has opted for a normative framework grounded in global ethics by aligning MGG to the universally accepted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Accord. Looking back, it shows that the decision by BMZ against the orchestration approach has paid off. A key explanation for MGG success is the fact that it acts as an impartial platform for horizontal collaboration and non-hierarchical networking.
- As implementing partner for MGG, DIE has been able to put the main elements of the cooperation hexagon into practice, with a relational rather than a transactional script in mind. Statements from partners and alumni as well as independent evaluations show that the non-cognitive, behavioural dimensions of the MGG Programme have been important success factors. The Institute's leadership and its staff have contributed to an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the MGG Network, which, in turn, has fostered the emergence of we-identities and collective intentionalities. They are aware of fundamental global power shifts, and acknowledge the need for a new world order, which is sustainable and inclusive. Attitudes at DIE are shaped by the historical memory of colonialism and racism and the awareness of the persisting effects of past injustices.

- The offer of joint knowledge creation and collective action on global challenges, irrespective of differences in the domestic political, economic and social systems, has proven to be an attractive proposition for a large and growing number of Southern partners. They appreciate the horizontality of relationships and the shared responsibilities on a wide range of joint activities. The manifold possibilities of South–South cooperation add to the appeal of MGG. Since the MGG Programme respects the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, Southern partners are ready to engage in joint efforts for global problem-solving. They also value the outreach of MGG to other developing countries, as demonstrated by the T20-Africa link.
- In the face of ever growing global interdependencies and complexities, the possibilities of human and institutional capacity building through the MGG Programme have been a compelling reason to join MGG for many Southern institutions and young professionals. The diversity of governmental and non-state actors in the Network creates added value in cognitive and emotional terms by promoting a better understanding of the worldview and value system of others. Trust in MGG is strengthened as partners experience how the acquired competences of Academy participants enhance the human resource base and contribute to institutional development. Alumni realise that continued interaction after completion of the course brings significant professional and personal benefits, such as career advancement and global networking.

Implications for international relations

The outcomes of the Programme can be interpreted as an achievement of Germany’s diplomacy³⁰ which has come about through a close collaboration of BMZ and the Foreign Office, not necessarily normal practice in interactions between the two ministries. In their innovative design of the MGG Programme, the ministries have realised an exemplary transformation of foreign policy by embedding national interests in an inclusive strategy for the global common good. Thus, MGG carries important lessons for the theory and practice of International Relations. Investments in the behavioural dimensions of transnational cooperation can bear fruit in a relatively short period of time, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled. First, the actors understand that their national interests are best served by creating non-hierarchical spaces for equal participation and joint ownership of activities. Second, the normative foundations of such collaboration are grounded in consensual decisions of the international community, as represented best by the universal United Nations organisation. Third, countries are ready to engage in collective efforts on global challenges, irrespective of differences in their political, economic and social systems. Fourth, the Network encompasses a wide diversity of actors and functions on the basis of relational horizontality, despite asymmetrical funding structures.

30 Anecdotal evidence of the interest aroused by MGG among Western donors is the attendance of representatives from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the British Department for International Development (DFID) at various MGG events. JICA invited this author together with a key partner, Li Xiaoyun, Professor at the China Agricultural University, to a high-level seminar in Tokyo, exclusively focused on MGG. JICA gave the following explanation for organising the event: “The program (MGG; T.F.) is attracting attention as a successful example of development cooperation between developed and emerging countries.” (JICA-RI, 2017)

Contribution to Education for Sustainable Development

Human capacity building through the Academy and other formats is a key activity of the MGG Programme. With the overarching focus on transformative change and the 2030 Agenda, learning in the Network follows the guidance provided by the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and the subsequent Global Action Programme (UNESCO, 2018; De Haan, 2010). By creating a “global classroom”, the Academy and other MGG training sessions foster the formation of we-identities and collective intentionalities in settings of intense cultural and sectoral diversity. The MGG Programme, thus, acts as a laboratory for ESD, where South–South exchanges and the North learning from the South play a central role (Lewis, D., 2017). Looking ahead, a more systematic integration of ESD experiences, and connecting with partners in the global ESD community, could benefit the contents and didactics of MGG training, while enhancing mutual learning in larger networks. In order to enhance the progress and efficacy of the Programme in the next phase, the following additional recommendations could be considered.

4.2 Recommendations for (incremental) improvement

Sharpen the transformative message

Having opted for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as shared normative foundation, all members of the MGG Network have committed to an agenda of fundamental transformation at home and in the world. This implies that the present structures of dominance and rule need to be challenged in case they stand in the way of progress on these goals. Diversity and inclusivity as critical prerequisites of transnational transformation also relate to domestic conditions. On the basis of mutual trust and respect, the MGG Network should be ready to engage in difficult conversations and provide the space for uncomfortable questions on shortcomings and implementation gaps in all countries. This works best if participants address deficits in their own society rather than pointing the finger at others. Responding to the above-mentioned caveat from India, the dimension of historical memory should take a prominent place across the MGG Programme. This would imply allocating more time in the Academy’s curriculum to address experiences of colonialism and imperialism and their enduring effects on collective memories as well as on the present world system. Germany’s role in colonial rule and in the holocaust should be given broad attention in the Academy and other MGG formats to allow for “reconciliation” between the descendants of perpetrators and victims, as suggested by Siddharth Mallavarapu (2016). In a similar vein, participants from other countries should be invited to express their views and sentiments on the historical trajectories of their societies and present-day domestic and foreign policy challenges.

Formalise membership and governance

The informal and fluid structures of the MGG Network were a success factor during the initial phase of the Programme. With multiplied activities and the integration of new sectors, e.g. national standards bodies and schools of public administration, it seems advisable to consolidate MGG by introducing formal arrangements for membership and governance. The membership issue could be addressed by introducing a memorandum of understanding

which any institution interested in collaborating with the Network would have to sign. The document's content should be kept to the minimum to allow for low barriers of entry. Relevant points could be the general willingness to collaborate for the global common good, as exemplified by the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Accord. Joint responsibilities for the long-term evolution of the Programme could be captured by a commitment to provide co-funding and other kinds of support in accordance with available resources. Network members should also encourage staff exchanges and be open to hosting alumni as guest scholars. They should undertake to participate regularly in partner meetings and strands of work aligned to their interests.

The formalisation of MGG must necessarily include modalities that allow for the broad participation of partners in formulating the Programme's strategy and implementation plan. Some years ago, the German side considered establishing an advisory board of eminent partners. The idea was discarded, however, since it was feared that organisations not represented in the board would feel excluded and terminate the cooperation. The appropriate step now could be to return to the previous MGG practice³¹ of convening biennial partner conferences of three days, at which current activities are assessed and future steps are discussed. As in the past, the conference should include one day of substantive debate on a current challenge of global governance with high-ranking policy makers and external experts. Preferably, such meetings would take place in partner countries and in close collaboration with local partners. Regular partner conferences could also be an effective instrument to attract new members to the Network.

Formalising cooperation through a common memorandum of understanding could also consolidate the institutional engagement of DIE with the MGG Network and deepen its process of internationalisation, regarding the diversity of its staff and co-authored publications with partners from the South (Kloke-Lesch et al., 2014). The Institute could engage more closely with MGG partner institutions for its postgraduate course and ministerial training formats.

Strengthen diversity and outreach

From the outset, the MGG programme has followed a multi-stakeholder approach. While the inclusion of public sector and knowledge institutions has worked well, civil society organisations (CSOs) and private business are underrepresented. One possible avenue for overcoming this gap could be to reach out to national federations of CSOs and industry rather than to individual organisations. This approach has already worked well in India, where the Confederation of Indian Industries has joined work on sustainability standards and participates in the MGG Academy. To name but one example for civil society representation, the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO) could be invited into the Academy.

Additional attention should also be paid to the participation of German and European institutions in the MGG Programme in order to strengthen the horizontal interaction among peers. With regard to the Academy, it is hard to accept that the German side expects partners

31 Three-day MGG partner conferences were convened in Bonn in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012, always in spring time. As part of the partner conference in April 2012, the one-day segment with external guests was the first international multi-stakeholder event on international development cooperation after the historic High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan.

to cope with a long absence of staff while their own employees are considered indispensable. DIE should now follow the example of BMZ, which for the first time, in 2018, offered its staff the possibility of joining the Academy for the entire length. The inclusion of civil society and business federations from partner countries could also increase the incentive for similar German institutions to join the Academy, e.g. VENRO, the umbrella organisation of non-governmental organisations in development and humanitarian aid, and BDI, the Federation of Germany Industries. Considering the participation of Europe, MGG should no longer address individual countries,³² but instead look to the level of the European Union. Here again, CSO and industry federations, but also other European institutions, could be interested in the Academy. Broadening the Network by the inclusion of further German and European institutions could also help MGG to act as a collective advisory body for German ministries beyond the BMZ and for the European Union.

MGG should take care not to fall into the major-powers trap but, rather, recognise the concerns of all developing countries (Jüngling & Mallavarapu, 2018). The aspiration of inclusiveness has already become a reality in the T20 process, during which MGG was instrumental in setting up the T20-Africa Standing Group. In a complementary manner, the MGG Academy should continue emphasising global development topics and invite speakers from non-partner developing countries. The approach should also be emulated in strands of work, e.g. sustainability standards and development cooperation.³³ Expanding the role of non-MGG developing countries in the MGG Programme could possibly offer new funding opportunities through programmes of BMZ and other donors.

Broaden the funding basis

The cooperation hexagon emphasises the critical role of reciprocity for horizontal cooperation. The principle also applies to the financing of joint programmes. MGG partners have already provided significant resources to the Programme, for example in the form of air tickets and continued local salaries for participants of the Academy. Many members of the Network support MGG events in their countries by assuming local costs, such as paying the bills for facilities, accommodation and catering. However, the funding structure of MGG remains asymmetrical, depending on substantial grants from BMZ. In order to strengthen joint ownership and the long-term viability of the Programme, it is desirable that partners from the South and third parties bear an increasing share of total costs. This could come about by establishing a common pool of resources for specific strands of work, e.g. sustainability standards or training for the public sector. The German side should, however, bear the costs for the Academy since the format takes place there and serves the country's enlightened self-interest.

Expand alumni and virtual networking

The current network of 306 Academy alumni is a remarkable asset, which deserves close attention and nurturing. Regular national alumni meetings could play an even stronger role

32 After intensive outreach of DIE to Central and Eastern Europe, a civil servant from Hungary joined the Academy in 2017.

33 Past MGG publications on South–South cooperation included chapters on non-partner developing countries like Thailand, Colombia and Turkey.

in fostering bonds among alumni and partners, and stimulate collaborative work on issues of relevance to the respective country. By providing resources for collective alumni projects across countries and courses, MGG could further incentivise and strengthen the Programme. The money could be distributed through a special fund in a competitive process on the basis of submitted proposals. In order to strengthen co-ownership and impartiality, senior partners and elected alumni representatives could be included in the selection process. The fund could also contribute financially to the placement of alumni as guest scholars in partner institutions. Social networking and self-directed collaboration among alumni and partners will benefit from setting-up a protected virtual space for MGG. A comprehensive data bank, which contains basic information on individuals and institutions active in the Network, would be of considerable value to all members. The virtual platform could also act as repository of documents and other material related to MGG activities, facilitating interactive online processes. Besides the closed area, the virtual platform could also provide spaces for public information and communication with the outside world.

Analysis of global knowledge communities

Considering its successful track record in transnational knowledge creation, MGG could make an important contribution to research on global knowledge communities under Southern leadership. As the ambitions and resources of Southern powers grow, they begin investing in new networks of think tanks and academic institutions. Examples of these are the Global Research Consortium on Economic Structural Transformation headed by Justin Lin of Peking University, the New Asia Forum initiated by India's Research and Information System for Developing Countries, and the umbrella initiative South–South Global Thinkers established by the UN Development Programme and the UN Office of South–South Cooperation. A study on this topic would address a critical gap, since knowledge generated in the South does not yet get appropriate recognition at the global level (Klingebiel, 2017; Benabdallah, Murillo-Zamora, & Adetula, 2017; Rochmyaningsih, 2018; Grimm & Klingebiel, 2018; Grimm et al., 2018).

Exploration of the following questions could generate valuable insights into how transnational knowledge networks under Southern leadership operate, and how they could serve the global common good more effectively:

- How do the behavioural mechanisms of the cooperation hexagon manifest themselves and unfold their effects in transnational knowledge networks led by the South?
- Which (other) factors determine the success (and failure) of such transnational knowledge cooperation?
- What are the incentives and disincentives for joining and contributing to transnational knowledge networks?
- Are there systematic differences in the objectives, behaviour and performance of actors in transnational knowledge cooperation based on the region of origin (e.g. Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, North America) and if so, what effects do these have?
- Which concepts and metrics can transnational networks use to monitor and measure performance and impact?

- How can transnational networks strengthen the impact of their collective advisory work towards governments, international organisations and societies, and enhance knowledge diffusion for the global common good (supply side)?
- What pertinent factors influence governments, international organisations and societal actors to request the advisory work of transnational networks (demand side)?
- How can transnational networks manage diversity (regarding geographic, gender, professional/social status, and state vs. non-state characteristics) and facilitate normative convergence?
- How do internal factors within transnational networks influence their functioning and performance (e.g. governance; organisational structure; diversity; resolution of conflict; administration and management; financing arrangements; definition of vision, mission and objectives; strategy development; enforcement)?
- How can public policies shape the environment for transnational networks in order to enhance their effectiveness, innovational strength and inclination for broader alliance building?
- How can transnational networks address the risks and exploit the chances of the digital age?

With joint efforts on this and related fields, the MGG Network could stay ahead of the curve and confirm its leading role in transnational knowledge cooperation.

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