



Interview with GYA member Alexander Kagansky

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What was your motivation for doing this documentary on scholars and their perspective on interdisciplinary?

Alexander Kagansky:

I was motivated to do this by my experience as a scientist: When I started to study biology, I was a bit naive. I planned to become a biologist – in very general terms: I wanted to go out to the woods, to do field trips and experiments that include a bit of various disciplines: Physics, genetics, and behaviour studies, to name some. In reality, I was confronted with the barriers between the disciplines. Studying biology, for instance, turned out as a very detailed discipline. It kept you in one track. Having worked as a biologist for 20 years, I sometimes feel as if we are locked in one building – and your key does not even fit the door to the physics building. There is actually very little exchange of knowledge in the academic world. But in using the common language of science we actually can deconstruct the very detailed and sophisticated knowledge structures that detain us from understanding each other. The idea of the film is to highlight different research topics across the university. Thus, the film is a collection of dialogues.

Interdisciplinarity is more than the coming-together of disciplines. What does interdisciplinarity in research mean? What does it not mean?

Alexander Kagansky:

There is little point in fusing research projects for the sake of this. Interdisciplinarity is a process which allows us to widen our academic

horizons and to test our hypotheses in different systems of thought. My expectation is that this will create a sum that is greater than its parts. In addition to cross-pollination of ideas, there is a naturally low potential for conflict of interests within an interdisciplinary team. The need for keeping the union and mutual understanding in the academic family is dictated by the necessity to communicate our research to society, and to thereby help solving its burning problems. Interdisciplinarity can also be understood as a metaphor for science diplomacy: It promises to establish dialogue between different people, languages and systems of knowledge and thus helps to create inclusive measures on the way to global peace and justice.

What role does and can the Global Young Academy play in the promotion of interdisciplinary research?

Alexander Kagansky:

The GYA has the potential to become a global leader in interdisciplinarity. By the way GYA membership is formed, it aims not only at a global scope regarding the countries of residence of its members, but – and it is equally important – to gather the top early-career talents from every possible academic domain. GYA selects international experts in all fields, also from Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. In collaboration and jointed projects, the early-career researchers can actively take part in shaping up future academia. In a rapidly changing world, we can hope that the GYA will become the key contributor in peace-building and keeping processes, supported by scientific evidence coming from the best scientists around the world and from all disciplines.