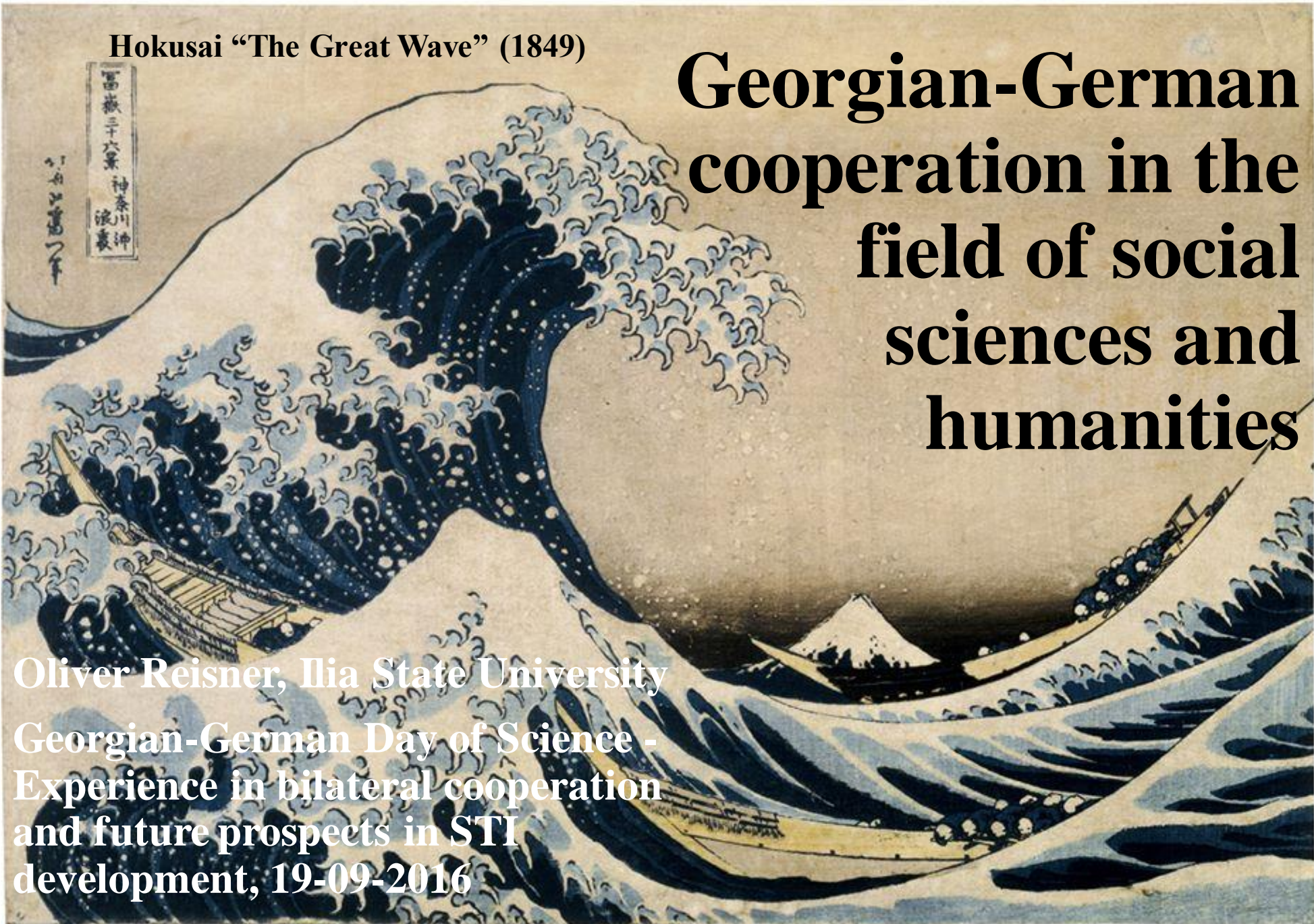


Hokusai “The Great Wave” (1849)

# Georgian-German cooperation in the field of social sciences and humanities

Oliver Reisner, Ilia State University  
Georgian-German Day of Science -  
Experience in bilateral cooperation  
and future prospects in STI  
development, 19-09-2016



# Overview

- Preliminary note on research
- Traditions: university partnerships & Georgica
- Conceptual challenges in Georgia & Germany
- Institutional challenges in Georgia & Germany
- Instead of a conclusion: Opportunities in Georgia & Germany

# **Added value of humanities and social sciences: How do we know, what we know ?**

**“We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.”**

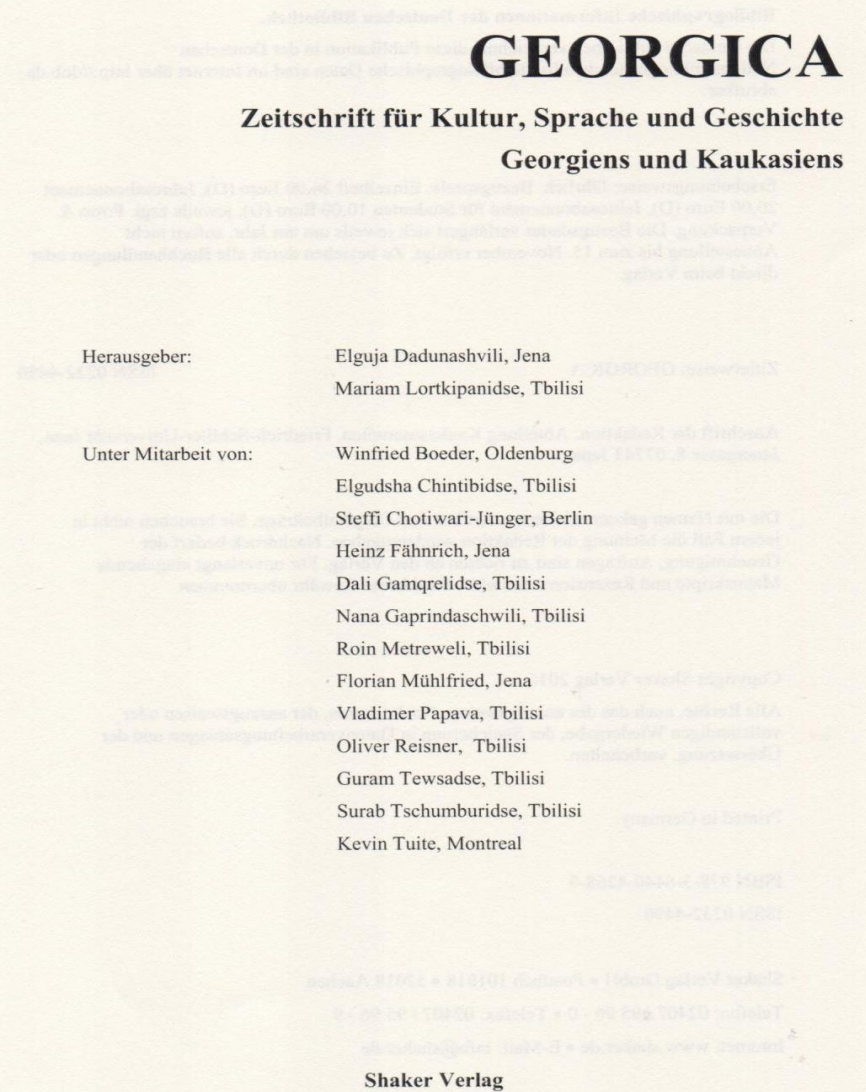
Werner Heisenberg *Physics and Philosophy* (1958)



# Traditions: university partnerships & GEORGICA 1978 – 2015ff.

„Journal for Culture, Language & History of  
Georgia & the Caucasus“

- Humanities: linguistics, history, art & literary studies, philosophy, archeology;
- **THE** only German regular **scholarly** annual publication on **Kartvelology & Caucasiology** (37 issues in 37 years)!
- **Joint editorial board**, first TSU & FSU, then broadened to other universities;
- Process of rejuvenating & elaboration of new concept underway;
- **Importance of long-term institutionalized cooperation!**



# Innovations outside the academia

Overcoming path dependency in the academic field from outside?

- Heinrich Boell Foundation: **sur-place post-doc scholarship scheme** in contemporary history (Soviet past), urban studies & ecology;
- Non-governmental organisations like Centre for Social Sciences producing reflective studies and new study programmes;
- Robert-Bosch-Foundation guest lectureship programme;
- Next to VOLKSWAGEN Foundation, important “Academic Swiss Caucasus Network” & “Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region” with an interdisciplinary research agenda (<http://caucasus-mt.net/>)

# Conceptual challenges

## Georgia

- Still **seeking orientation** in/for social sciences & humanities – how & whereto?
  - **No narratives about society etc.**, nation state & nation main perspective;
  - **Gap** between ‘big’ theories & applied research **on middle-level, need for own development of new concepts**;
  - **Static description** instead of analysis of dynamic social interactions & change;
  - **No social groups acting**, no elites!
  - **Self-Reflectivity** – quantitative, not qualitative approaches, politicization.
- Synthesis?**

## Germany

- Georgia in geopolitical terms, e.g. EU studies (MAXCAP/FU), security (CASCADE/FSU) follows **political demand**;
- Improvement in ethno-/anthropology (Voell/Marburg, Mühlfried/Jena);
- Linguistics well represented (Frankfurt, FSU and to a lesser degree others);
- German philology backbone of cooperation;
- History of Georgia almost inexistent, only Stalinism (Junge/RUB) - conflict;
- German Scientific Council recommended to **secure area studies & minor subjects** in humanities, impact?

# Institutional challenges

## Georgia

- **University leadership & strategic management to create competitive & enabling environment for scholars!**
- **Empowering horizontal communication:** disciplinary associations, scholarly journals to identify quality standards in research;
- **No interdisciplinary research practice & teams**, e.g. PhD schools on int. level;
- Alignment with **donor driven** funding schemes instead long-term **research** agenda;
- **No public outreach to society:** evidence-based policies, debates, economy/business;
- How to establish open, competitive research sector through cooperation?

## Germany

- **De-institutionalisation** of Georgia-related fields of studies (LMU – Christian Orient, Bonn – linguistics, FSU – Caucasiology?) due to economic pressures & student demand at HEI;
- Increased limited term research projects in disciplines (PhD, Habil) as political science, sociology;
- Europeanisation of research funding requires transnational consortia & research approaches;
- **Asymmetric relation:** how to enhance sustainable change in Georgian research through cooperation?

# Opportunities

## Georgia

- Increased **academic exchange** (DAAD, ERASMUS+) empowers future **research networks**;
- Georgia's **bi- or multilateral research cooperation** increases opportunities for individual scholars to become members of int. research teams (HORIZON 2020);
- **Allows for conceptual learning** by critical re-assessment of inherited research, grand narratives, context of knowledge production;
- **Creating international & interdisciplinary** projects will stimulate different & new perspectives IN Georgian HEI, but require enabling environment.

## Germany

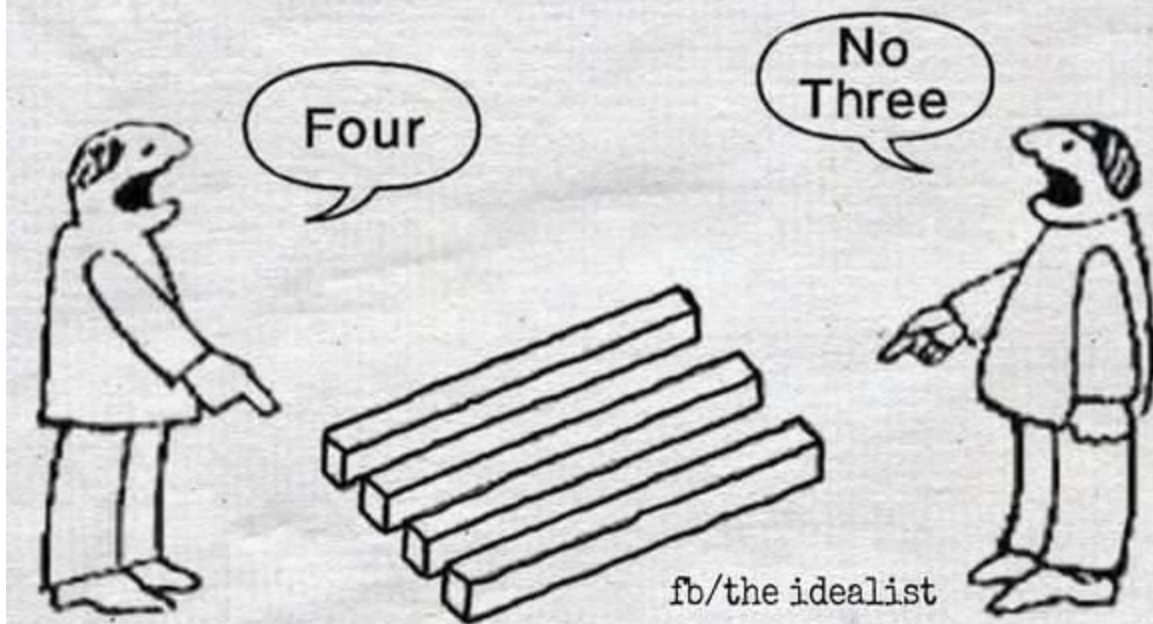
- Research cooperation partnership with Georgia (baseline study?);
- New institute for East European research (ZOIS) to provide regional expertise in the long-term;
- Disciplinary grounded long-term research teams based in both countries a possibility?
- Support to long-term “embedded” scholars from Germany in Georgia?
- Allowing for participation in German academic discourses (Leibniz Ass.);
- Dialogic research?



# Thank you for your attention!

"Everything we hear  
is an opinion, not a fact.  
Everything we see  
is a perspective, not the truth."

- Marcus Aurelius



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