

Transcript | Speech by Lisa Anderson

Inauguration of President Henrik Enderlein | 6 September 2018

Hertie School of Governance

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure and honor to be here upon this auspicious occasion.

The Hertie School has made remarkable progress in its short life. From the first degree, the Master of Public Policy, designed for “individuals who want to... help shape tomorrow’s world,” to the newest Master of International Affairs, which offers “a profound understanding of today’s global policy challenges...” the School has taken on the prospect of the twenty-first century with both energy and wisdom, and it is a great credit to the vision of the Hertie Foundation—I well remember a mere fifteen years ago: it seemed so audacious an idea!—and the leadership of Helmut Anheier, who has made so much of it a reality. I congratulate him, and his successor, Hendrik Enderlein, for their courage and conviction in taking on these challenges.

There is much to be said about the challenges, and the need for both vision and tenacity in confronting them. Helmut Anheier himself has contributed comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the future of the public policy school and I hope we may hear of his satisfactions in a job well done. And, as you will learn shortly, Hendrik Enderlein has thought deeply and wisely about what the Hertie School will do to meet the tests of the coming years. As you anticipate this transition—and for those of you joining the School now, as you embark on this journey—you can be confident that you are in extraordinarily good hands.

Ours is a world of disruptive innovation. There was a time, at the dawn of the public policy school, when tradition was powerful and the correct policies were rarely ambiguous; all that was needed was better administration. Public policy schools were to provide efficient administrative processes and skilled administrators. Then, with the unleashing of mid-century high modernist ambitions, policies themselves were to be invented, designed and developed: we would end war—remember

the Kellogg-Briand Pact? —we would eradicate inequality—recall the promise of socialism? —and eliminate poverty—remember Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty? —and conquer space—remember Sputnik? All we needed was a well-constructed plan, and we could do anything. Policy schools were to envision the scheme and provide the skilled professionals to design and implement it.

That era of limitless optimism slowly receded. As command economies faltered and high-tech mega-projects went awry—remember the Soviet Union? remember The Challenger space shuttle or Fukushima? —we began to lose confidence in well-constructed plans, or even plans of any kind. We were no longer sure we knew “all that was needed.” At the same time, teenagers in garages and university dormitories who seemed to have had no plan, only time and a bit of unruliness, tinkered and fiddled their way to changing our world: from Microsoft and Apple to Google and Facebook. Yes, of course, the internet itself is a product of the American high modernist military-industrial complex, and the founders of Apple, Google and Facebook all went to good public high schools. But they were non-conformists just as conformity itself seemed to be coming to a dead-end. The rules, it appeared, were for fools.

We have now lived for more than two decades in a world in which disruption reigns supreme and rules, norms, conventions and, increasingly, even laws are suspect. We admire “creative destruction,” we advocate dismantling the regulatory state, we celebrate revolutions—at least if they are far away—we reward libertarian skepticism of authority, we indulge offenses against the etiquette of modern governance, as political figures from US president Trump to former UK foreign secretary Johnson to Philippine president Duterte mock, threaten and bully their political opponents.

But, as I am sure everyone in this room agrees, rules are essential to human society. Whether in the smallest family or the vast “international community” to which we so often appeal today, there need to be norms, conventions and laws to govern our interaction. Hobbes was correct that life in the state of nature would have been “nasty, brutal and short”—but there was actually no

human society of “war of all against all.” Authority and deference, rules and norms are constitutive of that very society.

That is what governance is.

So where does that leave public policy schools? As important sites in which to both uphold the importance of rule-based policy as a principle and to challenge the specific rules that prevail today. Defending the importance of rules and conventions, of the essential role that governance plays in making our social lives possible, does not require that we defend any particular rules and conventions; indeed, in the current climate, it may require that we rethink and amend particular rules. We should be careful to make the distinction. Two quick examples illustrate the difference.

Let us look at governance of modern information and communications technologies. We’ve been celebrating the staggering access to information, the remarkable speed of transactions, the almost frictionless communication these technologies have enabled. But, of course, what travels on these powerful media is not necessarily good for our political and social comity, even as they may have enriched our individual lives and private interests. After all, this technology is also used to spread falsehoods, mobilize mobs, provoke violence and threaten the peace and security of millions of people. Facebook was repeatedly asked to delete incendiary posts across South Asia, only to claim fidelity to free speech as riots claimed Muslim lives in Sri Lanka and violence against Rohingya broke out across Myanmar; in Libya “Facebook warriors” routinely pinpoint opponents for attacks by rival militias. As Max Fisher recently observed in the New York Times,

Facebook — and many Westerners — have long treated those issues as safely “over there,” meaning in countries with weaker institutions, lower literacy rates and more recent

histories of racial violence.... But chillingly similar Facebook-linked problems are becoming increasingly visible in wealthy, developed countries like the United States.¹

And, I might add, Germany.

Fake news, incendiary posts, on-line bullying and provocations to violence require rules; as Fisher put it, “When does speech become unsafe? When can it be limited?” And, perhaps most importantly, “Should those decisions be up to a private company at all?” Good questions. There need to be rules to govern digital communication but—and this is important—they do not need to reflect traditional (and overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon) normative commitments to expansive free speech or our abiding faith in the free market.

The Hertie School of Governance is a perfect place to debate not *whether* rules should obtain—of course, they should—but *which* rules. How should the world—our beloved “international community”—address the urgent need for new rules to govern the unstoppable mobility of ideas, information and misinformation?

And that suggests a second arena in which what happens “over there”—in “countries with weaker institutions, lower literacy rates and more recent histories of racial violence”—may also be telling us more about the need for new rules than we acknowledge. While we celebrate the accelerating mobility of ideas across these information and communications technologies, and of capital, applauding increasing foreign direct investment, growing sovereign wealth funds, multiplying international financial transactions, we shrink before the mobility of labor—that is, people.

Much of the “fake news” and conspiracy-peddling is about ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants and other social groups that threaten the ascendancy of a dominant majority. But just who are

¹ Max Fisher, “With Alex Jones, Facebooks Worst Demons Abroad Begin to Come Home,” New York Times, August 8, 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/10/technology/facebook-banned-infowars-now-what.html>

these minorities, these migrants? Or, put differently, how do we define difference, and particularly deserving and undeserving difference?

As Ibrahim Awad and Usha Natarajan write in a recent article in the *Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, “despite cries of refugee crises from rich countries in recent years....countries of the Global South host 84 percent of the world’s refugees.” Who are these people? “The dominant discourse on migration,” they tell us, privileges

certain types of individual suffering—discrimination, persecution, torture—as worthy of international notice and protection.... We treat political persecution and religious persecution as intolerable, but we see drought and famine as natural. We see war and conflict as terrible evils, but we see the millions of preventable and unnecessary infant deaths from unsanitary water or malaria as normal. We see ethnic strife as a serious threat to international peace and security, but we treat widening inequalities in power and wealth as natural.²

Yet it is unlikely that the costs of our willful refusal to consider why people move will be born only in the Global South. After all, the very same information technologies that spread lies and hatreds, also spread hopes and dreams. The possibility of clean water, law and order, public health and education is increasingly visible, and desirable, to those who don’t have them. If they can’t get them where they are, they will move—or the bacteria and germs, the bludgeons and bombs, the resentment and anger that fester where such simple features of a decent life are absent will move, to infect our placid world of industrial democracies.

² Ibrahim Awad and Usha Natarajan, “Migration Myths and the Global South,” *Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, Summer 2018, <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/migration-myths-and-the-global-south/>

Mere refusal—building walls, bribing human traffickers, insulting people from what Trump calls (excuse me) “shithole countries”—will not work; we need new rules—new categories of person, of rights, of citizenship—to manage the unstoppable mobility of labor.

Here again is where policy schools really matter. We must ensure that the prospect of decency is available to all. The rules of the games we play now are obviously inadequate but that does not mean that a world without rules would be better—or even possible. Schools like Hertie have both an opportunity and a responsibility to both advocate for rule-based order and to lead in the design of the new order, the new system of rules, that will protect and expand the realms in which not just wealth and power but truth and justice are the measure of politics, economics and policy-making. Whether in digital governance or international security, changing conception of rights and democracy, economic sustainability, Hertie promises to play a pivotal role in reimagining the challenges, designing the policies and staffing the administration of the twenty-first century.

Thanks again to the Hertie Foundation for its visionary support of this essential project and to Helmut Anheier for having set the School on such an auspicious path. Best wishes to Hendrik Enderlein as he steers it forward.