

Pacific Geographies

Research | Notes | Current Issues from the Asia-Pacific Region



The Colonial Heritage:
Objects from the Pacific in a German Museum



The Colonial Heritage: Objects from the Pacific in a German Museum – 04



Introduction to Research Project:
CAMaRSEC - 18



Book review:
Wish Lanterns - Young Lives in New China – 22

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| 04 | The Colonial Heritage: Objects from the Pacific in a German Museum
Stephanie Walda-Mandel | 20 | Introduction to research project: CRISEA Competing Regional Integrations in Southeast Asia – New approaches and interdisciplinary dialogues
Oliver Tappe |
| 13 | Viewing the non-governmental organisation Pazifik Netzwerk e.V. from a postcolonial perspective
Annkathrin Löffler & Mats Garbe | 22 | Book review: Wish Lanterns - Young Lives in New China
Britta Schmitz |
| 18 | Introduction to research project: CAMaRSEC: Climate-adapted Material Research for the Socio-economic Context in Vietnam
Dirk Schwede & Yuanchen Wang | 24 | Advertisement of regiospectra publishing house
Eva Streifeneder |

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

We are delighted to present you a new issue of Pacific Geographies with contributions about the colonial heritage in German museums, postcolonial perspectives of a German NGO and an introduction to two research projects in Southeast Asia.

The first article focusses on the 250,000 Oceanic objects stored in German museums today. Because museum collections are made up of relations as much as they are made up of things, Stephanie Walda-Mandel (Übersee-Museum Bremen) discusses how, why and by whom artefacts are collected. She argues that museum curators aim to show contemporary topics such as current and historic migration, climate change, and other processes of change. Objects should be embedded in a wider context of their provenance.

The second contribution by Annkatrin Löffler and Mats Garbe, analyses the work of an intercultural NGO, Pazifik Netzwerk e.V, from the viewpoint of postcolonial theories. The authors argue that (European) NGOs are not outside of power-relations and have their own dynamics.

Two introductions to research projects and a book review complete the present issue of Pacific Geographies. Dirk Schwede and Yuanchen Wang (University of Stuttgart) present their project on climate-adapted material research for the socio-economic context in Vietnam, while Oliver Tappe (University of Hamburg) discusses the project "Competing regional integrations in Southeast Asia – new approaches and interdisciplinary dialogues". Britta Schmitz finally reviews the book "Wish Lanterns - Young Lives in New China", published by Alec Ash.

We sincerely hope you enjoy your readings of this issue.

The managing editors,
Michael Waibel & Matthias Kowasch

Pacific Geographies

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COVER PICTURE

Two bed legs, Lou Island, Admiralty
Islands, Collection Ludwig Cohn, 1912.

Source: © Übersee-Museum Bremen
Photo: Gabriele Warnke





Source: © Übersee-Museum Bremen, photo: Matthias Haase.

Figure 1: Atrium of the Übersee-Museum Bremen during an event.

The Colonial Heritage: Objects from the Pacific in a German Museum

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Abstract: Ethnological museums in Germany, with their entanglements of colonial history and the not always unproblematic emergence of their collections, have not only become the focus of the public since the media attention on the Humboldt Forum in Berlin: long before that they have been criticised for their neglect in addressing the colonial heritage of their collections and the lack of information on the origins of the objects. This background also applies to many of the estimated 250,000 Oceanic objects (Buschmann 2018: 198) that are stored in German museums today, which will be the focus of this article. Since the beginning of these discussions and in provenance research of ethnological museums it has mainly been the Africa collections that were at the center of attention; more and more the territories in the Pacific and the collections stemming from German colonial territories in the Pacific are now being explored.

Keywords: Oceania, Pacific, museum, colonialism, provenance research, Ludwig Cohn, Übersee-Museum Bremen

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The *Übersee-Museum Bremen*, located in the North of Germany, is among the significant museums holding large collections from different regions in the Pacific. It opened as “*Städtisches Museum für Natur-, Völker- und Handelskunde*” in 1896 based on the already existing collections of different institutions in Bremen. The motto for the museum by the founding director, Hugo Schauinsland, was “The whole world under one roof” (“*Die ganze Welt unter einem Dach*”) (Rentrop 2001: 1). His goal was to present humans and animals in their natural environment and to inspire non-professionals as well as scientists with these exhibitions.

Following Schauinsland’s interdisciplinary concept for the museum, the three departments – cultural anthropology, natural history, and commerce – continue to develop their permanent exhibitions in a collective effort. The museum holds interdisciplinary collections from the regions of the Pacific and Australia, Asia, the Americas as well as Africa. In sum, there are an estimated 1.2 million objects, of which not even three percent are on display. Most of these derive from colonial contexts and were collected during a rather limited period of time. 80,000 of these are objects from the cultural anthropology department, of which 16,000 are ceremonial and everyday objects from Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia, as well as from Australia (Figure 1).

The majority of the collections (around 11,000) come from Melanesia, around 2,000 stem from Polynesia. The rest is distributed among Micronesia and Australia. This distribution of the Oceanic collections in Bremen is in line with other German collections where about 70 % of all acquisitions derived from the colonial territory of former German New Guinea (Buschmann 2018: 197). The oldest entry for the Pacific in the books of arrivals at the *Übersee-Museum* refers to four wood carvings from the Easter Islands from 1879.

The majority of the objects in the collections were collected in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in German colonial times (1884-1919) and mainly in the former German colonial territories in the Pacific. Great contributions to the collections came from Bremen trade companies, the Bremen shipping company *Norddeutscher Lloyd* and the *Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft* (North German missionary society), which had branches in the Pacific. However, there were also individuals such as scientist Ludwig Cohn (Admiralty Islands, Northern Solomons, Northeast coast of New Guinea), cultural anthropologist Erhard Eylman (Australia), astrophysicist Otto Tetens (Samoa) or Carel Fabricius (Sepik, New Guinea) who were collecting objects in the Pacific and giving them to the *Übersee-Museum*. The collectors had different backgrounds and intentions: some were collecting objects on behalf of the museum, others happened to bring objects back from their trips to the Pacific and then later decided to donate them to the museum.

The collections are a testimony to an era in the South Pacific when the European impact on the territories

was witnessed strongly for the first time. They also mirror the attitudes and interests of the Europeans during the colonial expansion when they were confronted with indigenous people. Therefore, the objects don’t only tell something about the so-called source communities, but they also tell a lot about the different collectors, the times they were living in and the *Zeitgeist*. Therefore, we can ask: “What was collected, where, why, how and by whom?” and “How do these aspects combine and interact?” According to Thomas and Kahanu (2018: 19), “(...) collections are made up of relations as much as they are made up of things.” (Figure 2).

German ethnological museums and colonialism in the Pacific

In 1884, Germany became a colonial power. Otto von Bismarck was the first Reichskanzler of the German Reich from 1871 to 1890 and he established the so-called protected areas (“*Schutzgebiete*”). His main intention was to protect the trade interests of Germans in the Pacific against the interests of other colonial powers operating in the region. Initially, the German Reich was interested in African territories before expanding to the Pacific area. New Guinea was annexed by Germany in 1884 and in 1899 the majority of Spanish Micronesia was added to the territory. The colonies were remote from one another and one had to travel great distances to reach the Pacific territories which were: Bismarck Archipelago, Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, Palau, the Carolines, the Marshall Islands with Nauru and Samoa. Bremen’s merchants sailed far and spent long periods of time in the colonies. They also established new

(and sometimes friendly) contacts with the local population and began to collect items while living there. When we look at these collections today we need to ask: “How exactly were they acquired (barter, purchase, gift or were they stolen)?” According to Thomas (1991: 126), we also need to think about why these objects were acquired and what their collectors thought they were doing. This means we need to take a very close look at our museum collections when it comes to how they found their way into the museum, how the hierarchy of powers worked and how equal the relationships between collectors and Pacific Islanders really were.



Figure 2: Two figures, Siar, Astrolabe Bay, Papua New Guinea, around 1900.

© *Übersee-Museum Bremen*, photo: Yoker Beinhorn



Figure 3: Malanggan carving, New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, around 1900.

In the case of the Pacific collections of the Übersee-Museum Bremen, the method of acquisition is directly linked to the economic and colonial history of the city of Bremen as a trading town. At the end of the 19th century, Bremen's merchants were not only active in the German colonies but also in the global free trade. Many trading houses had branches overseas and benefited from the colonial administrative structures and the existing infrastructure. As such, they had networks and contacts to support collectors and scientists with collecting objects for museums. The ethnological collections from the former colonies in Samoa and German New Guinea include about 10,000 items of the traditional cultures, including full size outrigger boats, adorned tapa (bark cloth), ceremonial objects such as Malanggan carvings created for mortuary rites in New Ireland and Baining masks from New Britain, as well as everyday items (Figure 3).

Provenance research

The initial impetus to take on the topic of the provenance of the collections didn't simply arise with the current discussion around issues

of colonialism. Museum employees have long been working on the origins of the objects in their collections as well as inviting representatives from the source communities to give their interpretations, add their knowledge and take home the knowledge and awareness of the existence of the collections abroad.

Provenance research in Germany initially focused on identifying Nazi-looted objects. Now it also addresses ethnographic objects that communities or individual persons have lost by looting, wars, as a result of colonisation or by illicit trade. Unfortunately, provenance research in museums is very often only project-based, embedded in a new temporary exhibition or in the wake of a request for the return of an object made by members of a source community. Following such a request, extensive research needs to be done to return the requested objects accompanied by conclusive documentation. Such was the case in the recent restitution of Maori and Moriori human remains from the Übersee-Museum Bremen. Provenance research is often very complicated since objects can change

hands and therefore context more than once. Provenance can become blurrier with every step and raise new questions.

When it comes to the return of objects collected in colonial contexts to their original home the questions of ownership are often difficult to answer since Western individual understanding of property sometimes differs from ownership concepts in the source communities. It is necessary to find representatives of the state, clan or family that is authorized to sign the contracts. In many cases there is also no documented proof of acquisition. In all cases the museums need to find today's legitimate contact persons in the source communities since it is not only important to return an illicitly acquired object, it is equally important to return it to the entitled person, family, institution or nation. In addition, traditional knowledge is not set out in writing but in many cases passed down orally. The knowledge can be linked to gender, age or descent.

Moreover, culturally different forms of courtesies and forms of communications can lead to misunderstandings (Rein 2017: 27).



© Übersee-Museum Bremen, photo: Jörg Oberheide

Figure 4: Handover ceremony of human remains from Maori and Moriori at the Übersee-Museum Bremen.

However, requests for the return of objects are still very rare and are usually made for specific objects, especially when it comes to objects from the Pacific. At the Übersee-Museum Bremen, for example, currently there is only one restitution claim for human remains from Hawai'i. However, people from the source communities often enquire about what museums have in their collections. Unfortunately, most of the German ethnographic museums are still at the beginning in the digitizing process and, in many cases, they only have little information on the objects, and can't provide all the details they would like to give.

Collected things: Human remains and other sensitive objects

Human remains are one example at the Übersee-Museum Bremen for returning objects successfully. From the second half of the 19th century on, numerous human remains were collected against the will of the surviving dependents and were included in the European natural history and ethnological collections.

On May 18th, 2017 the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen and the Übersee-Museum Bremen returned human remains of 44 Maori and Moriori (from the Chadham Islands). The human remains had been held by the Übersee-Museum for 120 years until they were restituted to the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand in a solemn handover ceremony (Figure 4).

Prior to the return of the human remains there was a claim for restitution by the Te Papa museum, years of provenance research as well as a deaccessioning by the Senate of the Hanseatic City of Bremen.

In the case of the human remains of the Maori and Moriori it was not only according to our current moral standards, but even according to moral values at the time that it was unacceptable to take them. At the turn of the 20th century the founding director of the Übersee-Museum, Hugo Schauinsland, excavated them surreptitiously at the burial ground by the beach at night without even asking. He wanted to do a service to anthropological research and proudly presented them in an exhibition in Bremen, since for him scientific findings had higher priority

than morals and values.

In cases like these, museum representatives are seeking a solution in cooperation with the descendants. Restitution will be implemented when it is demanded and when ethics require it. However, restitution without a request from the source communities is seen by some source communities as paternalistic (Thode-Arora 2018: 103). In case of the Maori, they made clear that that is not wanted. According to exchanges with representatives from Maori and Samoan communities, they let museum employees at the Übersee-Museum know that they want to hold the reins and actively approach European museums. This way, they are not put into the role of victims again. This shows how complex the process of restitution can be.

However, it is not only human remains that we consider sensitive objects. There are also so-called secret/sacred objects, those that are only allowed to be seen by certain selected people, and need to be stored in a certain way, that are also considered sensitive objects. An example is the Tjurungas, from Australian Aborigines, which are secret/sacred objects and



Figure 5: Dr. Ludwig Cohn (1873-1935).

generally withheld from women. In 2016, a delegation of Aborigine representatives traveled to Germany to see the Tjurungas in various German museum collections. Their visits took issue with some museums where women are responsible for the collections as curators and restorers. How do museums want to deal with these questions when envisaged gender equality in Europe clashes with the needs of the representatives of the source community?

The term “sensitive” does not only refer to the contextual significance of objects or the materials used to make them. It can also refer to the provenance or the distribution. In the Pacific, there had been punitive expeditions, and objects might have been acquired by collectors in this manner. Or the collectors exploited the circumstances, or objects were simply taken against the will of the local population. In all these contexts the people involved did not deal on equal terms. Today, ethnological museums would like to contribute to the discussion of how to handle collections from colonial times. In this process they have a strong responsibility both to the source communities and the collection history. This especially applies to handling human remains and secret/sacred objects.

Collecting actors: Ludwig Cohn in German New Guinea

The terms of trade of the acquisition

for many museum objects often are unknown to us. However, in the case of objects from the Pacific it is not reasonable to assume that they were all stolen or that the former owners have been deceived. The assumption that the “superior” European meets “inferior” people in the Pacific region who they can outsmart feeds the sweeping culprit-victim image. This mindset would continue the wrongs committed and a eurocentric neocolonial approach.

An illustrative example of collecting objects for the collections and the exhibitions of the Übersee-Museum is Dr. Ludwig Cohn (Figure 5).

Ludwig Cohn, born in 1873 in St. Petersburg, came to the Übersee-Museum in 1904 as a zoological assistant. For the purpose of collecting natural history specimens and ethnographic objects on behalf of the museum, he undertook two well-documented collecting and fieldwork trips to German New Guinea in 1908/09 and 1912/13, what was then a German colony.

The museum’s collecting trips were generously supported by the Bremen-based shipping company Norddeutscher Lloyd which guaranteed the museum “free travel and free carriage of goods on all the world’s oceans”. The company did not only help with donations; it also gave what was later to become the Übersee-Museum a competitive edge over other museums, as its collectors were able to ship large

objects, such as complete models of houses, to Bremen. It was even possible, for example, to ship objects for inspection and to have indigenous experts travel to Bremen to set up models of houses the way they were done in Papua New Guinea.

Sourcing of good suppliers for objects was especially attributable to the Norddeutscher Lloyd ship captain Karl Nauer (1874-1962). Nauer was captain of the coastal steamer Sumatra, running regular roundtrips between the main port cities of German New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. He supported Cohn’s search for excellent objects with his great knowledge of people, geography and his language skills of that region (Rentrop 2003: 81). Nauer didn’t only have networks with the local population, but also with plantation owners, missionaries, and colonial officers (Müller 2003: 92). Therefore, ethnological museums in Bremen, Leipzig, Munich, and Obergünzburg, where Nauer comes from, benefited from Nauer’s collection trips (Buschmann 2000b: 94) (Figure 6).

As a natural scientist Cohn collected systematically and applied high scholarly standards. Among other items he collected, he wanted to study series of bed legs that he got from the inhabitants of different villages in the Admiralty Islands. In everyday life in the Admiralty Islands, cots not only serve as beds for sleeping, they are also used in ceremonies such as rituals held for the dead and – festively decorated – for carrying a bride to the house of her future husband. Such cots, or beds, consist of a wooden frame, a set-in board, four extensions of the frame, a neck support, as well as four inserted bed feet (Figure 7).

The shape of all four legs belonging to a cot, or bed, is usually identical. At least the two pairs on the narrow sides always feature the same motif: a figure standing on a base, with a tenon on its top to plug it into the frame. The bed legs are decorated with carved figural representations, often very stylised, of humans or animals, sometimes also of ancestors.

The collectors at the time often worked under great time pressure. Purchases were delegated to committed collectors who knew the place. Local contact persons also received instructions in the form of lists. Cohn followed the lists from the museum in Berlin and his aim was to find equivalent

or even better objects than the ones that were found in the collections in Berlin. Many of the objects from the Bismarck Archipelago were acquired by means of barter, which in some cases was carried out in a very professional and organized way. Here they also had so-called trade boxes. These included barter items that collectors used for the direct purchase of ethnographic objects, such as cotton fabric, knives, axes, white porcelain bangles, American tobacco and clay pipes (Welsch 2000: 172). These trade boxes could be bought at local stores in New Guinea as a packaged selection and were used by the collectors to receive everyday tools, local pottery, and wood carvings from the local population.

Another way of trading items happened when local men came with their outrigger canoes to the NDL coastal steamer *Sumatra* and offered everyday objects such as bags, obsidian weapons, spatulas and oil vessels made from coconut shells for barter. The *Sumatra* often landed only for a short period of time at the trading posts and therefore the disadvantage of this kind of acquisition, when the crew didn't leave the boat, was that only objects the locals brought along could become part of the barter (Müller 2003: 91) (Figure 8).

Collecting objects at the time was not only a race against other museums it was also a hasty race against the changing conditions in New Guinea, which was seen as a last refuge of the so-called endangered "Naturvölker". Houses with wood carvings, as well as other interesting objects made from stone, shell and wood diminished. The fear of the extinction of these objects, people and their distinct cultural heritage is a worldview that displays an evolutionist idea of cultures combined with a European sense of superiority.

The lists given out by Cohn to locals living in the region to support the museum collecting objects also posed problems since, as laypersons, they were not trained to do proper scientific documentations of the objects. In some cases, museum employees later tried to do some follow-up research by writing letters to find out more about provenance, use and function of specific objects. However, that kind of research was very laborious and often didn't lead to satisfying results.

It soon became clear that only scientists and not laypersons should

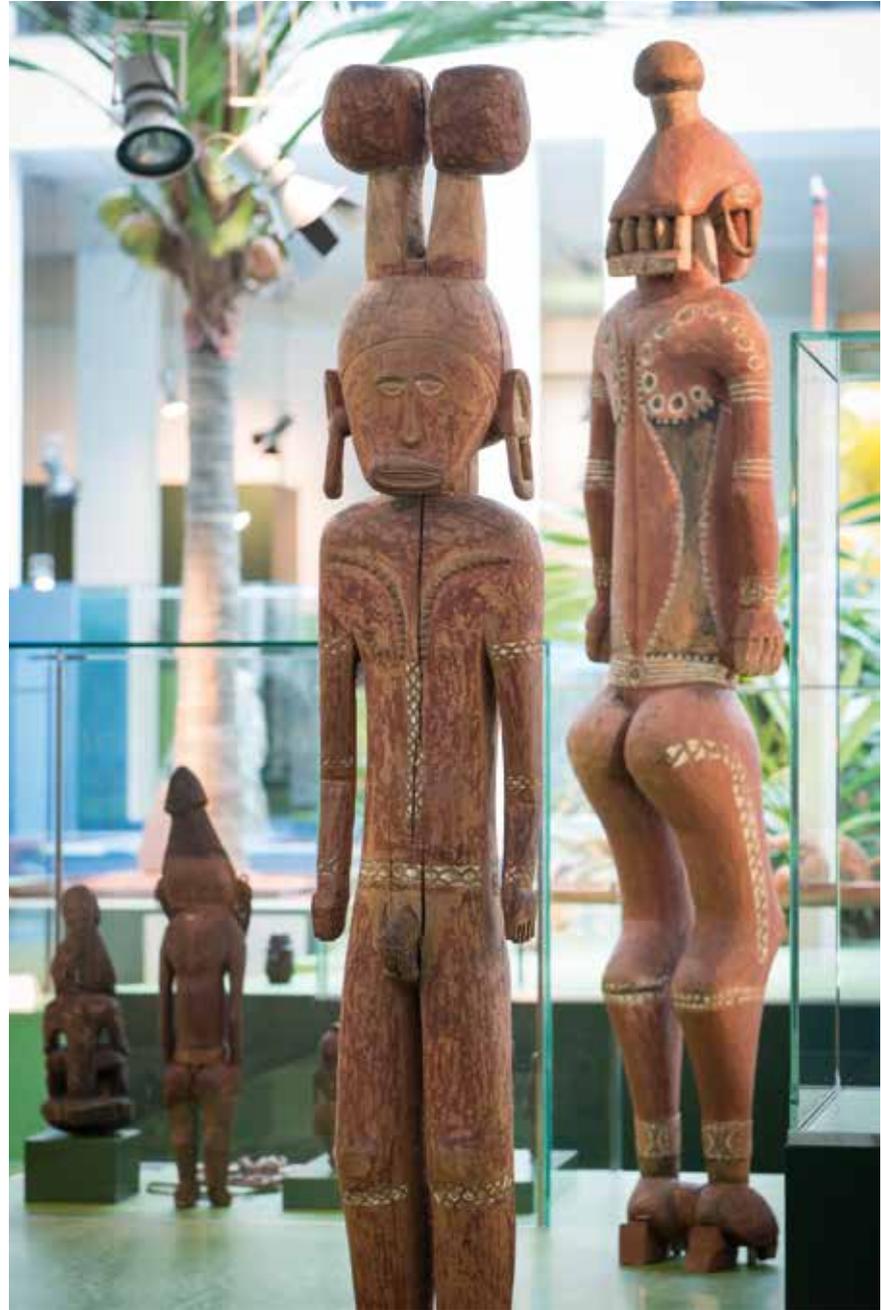


Figure 6: Figure from the Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea, Collection Karl Nauer, 1912.

be the ones collecting objects. Oskar Haesner, director of the Bremen Lloyd agency in Simpsonshafen (today called Rabaul) therefore wrote in a letter to Hugo Schauinsland, the founding director of the Übersee-Museum in 1907: "(...) hence, you need to hurry; if you don't, it will be too late to get hold of good things."

When Cohn traveled to the Northeast coast of New Guinea in 1912 the sellout was in full swing and, for Cohn and his contemporaries, the conditions under which objects were acquired were even more difficult than at his first trip to New Guinea in 1908/09 (Rentrop 2001: 21). Cohn wrote to Schauinsland: "At the rate the locals give up their culture, one can only find sad leftovers, particularly as all the valuable and beautiful old things had already been bought up by the local population." The then-governor of

New Guinea, Albert Hahl, summed it up in 1912: "The Admiralty Islands are already fully grazed."

Other obstacles during this research trip were insufficient equipment and supplies as well as distrust among the local population who had bad experiences with Europeans who came as constabularies, recruiters or German officials who forced the local population into some kind of *Fronddienst* (compulsary labor for the German administration as an extra tax they were supposed to pay). At first glance the local population didn't see a big difference between these people and the European collectors. On this trip Cohn also didn't have as much time as on the one before and he also had less contacts with local people, which made finding good objects for his collections harder. That is why Cohn acquired objects through intermediaries.

© Übersee-Museum Bremen, photo: Volker Beinhorn



Figure 7: Two bed legs, Lou Island, Admiralty Islands, Collection Ludwig Cohn, 1912.

However, the attributions then were often not verifiable and the details on the provenance of the objects sometimes were questionable. Sometimes vague terms for the regional origin of objects such as “Festland” or “Hinterland” were passed from the first collector to Cohn (Rentrop 2001: 70). Often they are not verifiable or do not exist at all. In some cases they were noted down by ear and are the source for a considerable number of errors. At the time, this type of field-note information was sufficient, while today there are much higher standards for object documentation. In addition to that, the regional trade relations were not being sufficiently reflected while collecting. According to Richard Neuhauss (1911: 467), a doctor and researcher in German New Guinea,

many items had not been produced where the local people were using them but had come through trade they had with distant regions. This way, they gave an incomplete impression of the material aspects of the culture of the people. Intensive follow-up research had not taken place later in the museum. However, in some cases, on the basis of stylistic criteria, researchers were able to identify the origin of certain objects that differed from the one initially assumed and they corrected the geographic origin in the database.

Another potential source of error was the specific production of objects for the collector or souvenir market by the local population. Some masks, sculptures and boat models were only produced for barter (Rein 2018: 15). Collectors and professional traders who

were travelling through were quickly seen by the locals as a good source for imported tools and consumer items and were provided with the desired commodities. They became aware of the European collecting trips and the increasing market potential of their products. In these circumstances, according to Buschmann (2000a: 5), many collectors for German museums became “suppliers of innovations” within Pacific arts. The rivalry of museums inspired indigenous locals to make new specimens of coveted objects and to offer them for sale claiming that they were “old”. These multilayered dynamics show the complexity of the motifs and the players on both sides: the collectors looking for objects and the local population aware of the market potential of their objects. We need to have a sophisticated look at these contexts when we are researching the provenance of objects from the Pacific.

Exhibition practise in museums characterized by colonialism

Museum employees were not only collecting objects and producing knowledge by doing research and writing for exhibitions and catalogues for example, they were also responsible for the transfer of this knowledge. Often the communities represented in the exhibitions were shown as inferior or primitive – intentional or not. This way, museum visitors were confirmed in their idea of cultural superiority (Grimme 2018: 97). Another practise was to idolize Pacific Island cultures influenced by ideas from philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. According to these ideas, Pacific Islanders were pictured as “carefree, gentle people living close to nature, in a state of innocence, surrounded by an abundance of food, enjoying sexual freedom and obtaining cultural satisfaction from their exotic dances and art” (Kahn and Wilke 2007: 295).

Even today, in some cases, exhibition practise does not avoid exoticising when presenting cultures thereby reproducing European stereotypes on Pacific Islanders and (unintendedly) contributing to inequality.

Very often historical exhibitions, and how the people from the source communities were represented, were also moulded by colonialism. An example is the way the permanent

collection at the Übersee-Museum staged, until 2001, human figures and houses in the “Oceania exhibition”. From 1911 onward, at the Übersee-Museum Bremen, models of houses “inhabited” by human figures were a key feature of the presentation of the Pacific region. They were also popular eye-catchers in various stagings. When the permanent exhibition on the Pacific reopened in 2003 with a new concept, the houses with their ensembles of figures were no longer displayed. Inspired by ethnic shows, they had long served to illustrate the lives of foreign peoples. By the early 2000s, however, they had become anachronistic. The mock-up character as well as the scaled-down size of the houses gave a distorted impression of the real conditions. Together with the figures – many of them naked – representing indigenous people frozen in time in the style of colonial ethnic shows (“Völkerschauen”), the houses contributed to the consolidation of and created an exoticized, nostalgic, and idealised image of life of Pacific Islanders (figure 9).

In this context, postcolonial activist groups today are seeking answers to questions regarding the social conditions in which these objects were collected, brought to Europe and how they were and are displayed in exhibitions, such as with the example of the Humboldt-Forum in Berlin. By asking these questions, these groups are a catalyst for museums looking for new ways to redefine their identity as well as their role in our society. In this process an important step for museums is to include experts from the source communities of their collections in the conception of their new exhibitions. It is highly important to cooperate with people from the communities the objects stem from in regard to conceptualizing exhibitions and research collections.

Conclusion

Today, museum curators endeavour not only to discover unjust contexts, they also research biographies of the collectors and objects as well as the different strategies of collecting items based on inventory books, databases and material in the archives (correspondance, restoration files, acquisition documents). However, in many cases the provenance researchers struggle to investigate the object



Figure 8: Locals approaching the “Sumatra” with objects for barter.

biographies in their entirety. One reason is the missing or very vague indications of source or very unfavourable sources in general. Furthermore, the cultural meaning of an object can change over the course of time (Andratschke 2016: 307-308), so that one needs very comprehensive (insider) knowledge for interpretation.

The museum employees have realized that due to the colonialist entanglements of their collections they now need to become active, and that a new handling of collections from colonial times is necessary. Therefore, they are on the job to investigate the provenance of the often-enormous collections in cooperation with specialists from the Pacific without any fixed expectations regarding the results. They now actively seek solutions with representatives of the source communities when problematic conditions of acquisition come to light. We are required to find answers for the respective circumstances of acquisition and be transparent towards the source communities who cast a critical eye on the activities in European museums about the objects in the collections.

However, it is not always the case that people from the source communities want all their objects to be restituted. Especially considering that about 80 percent of the items in our collections are everyday objects from the source communities. The discussion of restitution deals more with the other 20 percent which are culturally sensitive objects.

Often the question of restitution is complicated and there are different opinions on these topics in the heterogenous source communities. In my own fieldwork in Micronesia, where I did research on the people from Sonsorol, one of the Southwest Islands of the Palauan archipelago, (Waldamandel 2016) my interview partners told me that they are happy that their objects are shown at the other end of the world in German museums where they can tell their stories, their history and culture. Other Pacific Islanders such as representatives from Samoa let us curators in Bremen know that they would like us in Europe to use objects from their islands to raise awareness for topics such as climate change. Just sending objects back doesn't free us from our responsibility and doesn't help anybody understand how they got to Germany in the first place. This needs to be examined so that as museum representatives we have the chance to come to terms with our past and the past of our objects. Alternatives to restitutions are sometimes conceivable solutions for the source communities, such as permanent or long-term loans, shared property, joint research projects or exchange for other equivalent objects (Ahrndt 2013: 321). In many cases it is not about restitution of collections, but rather about the dialogue between museums in Europe and source communities and about availability of the cultural heritage by digitising collections, known as digital restitution. This way, not only people from the



Figure 9: Model of a pile house from Toboroi, Bougainville, in the permanent exhibition, before 1945.

source communities but people all over the world can work with these objects. For the purpose of the sustainability of the relationships and for the reciprocal knowledge transfer, it is possible to make different worldviews and knowledge systems transparent.

Today, museum curators aim to show contemporary topics such as the repercussions of former colonial structures, current and historic migration, climate change, social transformations and questions of cultural identity in the exhibitions – issues that also play an important role in European societies. Another important goal is to make the results from provenance research visible in the exhibitions, so that the objects are embedded in a wider context of their provenance. This way, the historic Oceanic collections are put in a new context and show their importance for present societies. To include the perspective from Pacific Islanders we need to have cooperation and invite specialists from the source communities to work with us on the collections and the exhibition concepts. These cooperations can mirror the views of Pacific communities on their society, their colonial history, their interpretation of colonial collections as well as the circumstances of their acquisition. At best a respectful dia-

logue will develop between German museum employees and members of Pacific communities, so that museum employees and visitors here can learn and reflect their standpoints, since no one knows the stories behind the objects better than the people and specialists in the Pacific from where they originate.

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RESEARCH NOTE

Viewing the non-governmental organisation Pazifik Netzwerk e.V. from a postcolonial perspective

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Abstract: This article embraces a postcolonial view for analyzing the German NGO Pazifik Netzwerk e.V. In doing so the authors shed light on the critical awareness that an intercultural NGO should have, and thereby contributes to the political commitment many associate with postcolonialism. The NGO Pazifik Netzwerk e.V. is engaged in making the political, economic, ecological and cultural situation of the Pacific island states known to a broad public in German-speaking countries. Firstly, relying on different postcolonial theorists, four criteria of postcolonialism are carved out that are then matched against the NGO. Overall, the analysis shows how the NGO does not sit outside power relations, sometimes contributing to inequality and stereotyping, even though it aims to do otherwise and tries to counteract this. While some cases affiliated with 'othering' can and should be avoided, others prove to be more difficult given the NGO's western foundation.

Keywords: postcolonialism, post-colonialism, postcolonial, Pacific, NGO

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Postcolonial studies are currently among the most influential of critical interventions because the colonial period had such major impacts on cultures, societies and economies. Postcolonialism is concerned with representations, power relations and exploitation, often focusing on discourses and their impact. This article examines the work of an intercultural NGO, Pazifik Netzwerk e.V, treating it as an 'object' of postcolonial inquiry. The conception and activities of the NGO will be appraised. Pazifik Netzwerk (translated: Pacific Network) is a German non-profit organisation that aims to make the political, economic, ecological and cultural situation of the Pacific island states known to a broad public in German-speaking countries. There are two main reasons for this analysis. Firstly, "[t]he development of richer theories of nonprofits must include a sustained focus on how communication and organizing are inextricably linked with power" (Dempsey, 2012) because NGOs are not outside of power-relations and have their own dynamics. And postcolonialism is specifically attentive towards intercultural power-relations. Secondly, postcolonialism provides a framework which can (help to) dig up constraints or disclosures of traditional Western analysis as postcolonialism is critical of "[...] conceptual mastery and complete understanding typically desired by Western inheritors rationality and scientific searches for knowledge [...]" (Hanchey, 2018). Additionally, the authors hope to shed light on the critical awareness that an intercultural NGO should have from a postcolonial point of view, and thereby contribute to the political commitment many associate with postcolonialism.



Figure 1: Celebration Publication "All just Savages": 20 years of Pazifik-Netzwerk, 1988-2008.

Method and Approach

Methodologically, the article is a theoretical analysis utilizing some of the criteria of postcolonial theory to examine the principles and activities of one NGO. The aim is to offer a perspective on the Pazifik Netzwerk from the standpoint of postcolonial theory. Empirical data on Pazifik Netzwerk is mainly based on sources from the NGO itself, and therefore is limited in scope. Likewise, it should be kept in mind that the authors are German and one of them is part of the Pazifik Netzwerk.

For this postcolonial examination, firstly a brief understanding of postcolonial theory is provided, naming four criteria of postcolonialism. The understanding of postcolonialism and the criteria we use have been debated, but this is not addressed. These criteria are then matched against the NGO, but with a certain degree of generalization, enough to develop a reasonable base for carving out a postcolonial perspective on the Pazifik Netzwerk.

Understanding of post-colonialism

Postcolonial theory is a collective

term for a large number of theories that deal with historical and current power and knowledge relations that are related to colonialism and its ongoing influence to this day (Mignolo, 2005). It therefore helps us understand the network of relationships between the past and the present. The concept of postcoloniality contains three dimensions: the description of historical situations after the end of colonialism; how knowledge is shaped by colonialism; and an analysis of the aftermath of colonial power - among the colonized and the colonizers (Messerschmidt, 2007). Postcoloniality is not limited to the period following the end of colonialism, but marks the persistence and presence of the colonial experience (Ha, 2004).

Edward Said's study "Orientalism" (Said, 1978) is often considered the founding document of postcolonial theory, concerned with the impact of representations on power relations between the colonized and colonizers, as well as their interdependence. Since then postcolonial theory has, on the one hand, combined a multiplicity of dissonant voices and perspectives, and on the other, it counteracts the stan-

dardization and unification of scientific theorizing (Ha, 2011). Nevertheless, four central concerns can be formulated, which will be the basis for the analysis of Pazifik Netzwerk:

1. The analysis of the construction of othering, meaning the personal and external representations of people and cultures in a historical process characterized by structural inequality (Amos and Parmar, 1984; Mohanty, 1997; Said, 1978). Othering describes the process of positively highlighting oneself or one's social image by branding another or something else negatively and classifying it as different, i.e. 'foreign', be it because of race, geographical location, ethical position, environment or ideology. In this differentiation lies potential hierarchical and stereotypical thinking to legitimate and improve one's own position (Spivak, 1985).

2. The study of power relations, exploitation and hierarchies stabilized by cultural representation and political control (Bhabha, 1994; Hooks, 1989; Spivak, 1988, 1994). Within postcolonial theory, the importation of Western knowledge into the former colonies, and its significance, is considered. Beyond that, the interdependence of knowledge production and imperialism as well as the destruction of pre-colonial knowledge are problematized (Conrad, 2008).

3. The analysis of colonization as a violent process of subject constitution, that creates the 'domesticated other' through pedagogical and performative practices (Hooks, 1994; 2003; 2010). For example, development assistance and charitable acts conceal economic and geopolitical interests. Here, within the framework of a Eurocentric epistemology based on the modernization approach of development theory, the origins of the wealth of the countries of the 'First World' are detached from the conditions of colonialism and instead linked to discourses of progress and rationality, as products of European enlightenment. 'Those' people, following 'our' example, experience 'development' (Kapoor, 2008).

4. The transformation of colonial concepts that construct the colonial subject as an object incapable of action into (self-)empowering action concepts (Bhabha, 1994; Hooks, 1989).

Furthermore, it should be noted that many postcolonial authors consider their theoretical view is also a political commitment, and they demand practical interventions and show commitment to overturning colonial language, discourses and hierarchies.

Introduction of Pazifik Netzwerk

Pazifik Netzwerk is a German non-profit organization which was founded in 1988 and consists of Pacific groups joining forces from all over Germany. It is secular and politically independent. The Pacific groups of which the Pazifik Netzwerk consists are mainly groups of German and Austrian citizens with some Pacific Islanders migrants among them. The groups operate independently, engaging in different activities from political and educational to cultural and leisure focused.

It has set itself the task of making the political, economic, ecological and cultural situation of the Pacific island states known to a broad public in German-speaking countries. It supports non-governmental organizations in Europe and Oceania to promote a nuclear-free and independent Pacific. Promoting international understanding and respect is an important part of its work, along with supporting the right to self-determination of the peoples of Oceania, and counteracting environmental degradation and its impact on the Pacific Islands (Pazifik Netzwerk e.V., 2019a).

The organisation's main foci are: Nuclear tests and their consequences, climate change and sea level rise, rapacious mining, conflict management and peacebuilding, the endangerment of biodiversity, clearcutting of forests, and the sinking and burning of industrial and nuclear waste (op. cit., 2019a).

Pazifik Netzwerk and Othering

We begin with the first characterization of a postcolonial view above, comparing it with Pazifik Netzwerk's work.

The organization clearly addresses the traditional myths of a Pacific paradise and barbaric savages, as well as newer external representations of Pacific peoples as underdeveloped, poor, small, isolated and insignificant. In the mission statement: "It is at the heart of the Pacific Network's work to contribute to the deconstruction

of biased perceptions and to promote a more realistic and comprehensive view, through vivid connections to this area of the world and through public outreach" (Struck-Garbe and Garbe, 2008).

An example of work relating to this is the conference "Alles nur Wilde" (all just savages) which aims at countering the stereotypical views of savage and barbaric Pacific islanders (Fig. 1) (Pazifik Netzwerk e.V., 2019b).

However, the Pazifik Netzwerk does not always make counteracting these prejudices its primary objective. It sometimes uses stereotypes to make its activities catchy and to reach a less critically aware audience. For example, the romanticized representation of a Pacific paradise is used for an advertisement stating "Westpapua – zerstörtes Paradies" (Westpapua – destroyed paradise) (Fig. 2) (Pazifik Netzwerk e.V., 1994; Kleiner, 2003). Other images used include include women dancing on Pacific beaches, and Tahiti music and hula dancing. Also, Pazifik Netzwerk does this while being part of structural inequality as a German organization, dominated by German citizens in contrast to the Pacific Islanders and hence, responsible for the curation and display of 'othering' imagery. Admittedly, this is an advertisement trying to *disclose* external representations and therefore fighting the othering process. Perhaps the cause therefore justifies the means. Nevertheless, it still has to be acknowledged that this type of imagery of 'wildness' contributes to external representation.

Pazifik Netzwerk, Power Relations and Exploitation

The second aspect of a postcolonial view is more concerned with the perpetuation of power inequalities. Pazifik Netzwerk fights nuclear testing in the Pacific, clarifying its consequences, and it strongly opposes the USA's and France's continued exploitation of the Pacific Islands. Exploitation was supported by cultural representations and political influence and control, which Pazifik Netzwerk tries to counteract. The misconception that Pacific nations are small, isolated and insignificant was a big contributor to the efforts of the hegemonic powers to test nuclear weapons in the Pacific. For example, Henry Kissinger, US National Security Advisor 1969, said:

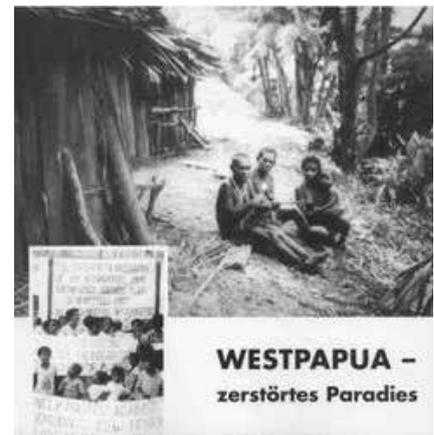


Figure 2: West Papua: destroyed paradise.

"There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?" (Henry Kissinger, cited in Pazifik Netzwerk, 2011). The Network exposes this quotation (Pazifik Netzwerk, 2011; Göbel 2007). An activity relating to this is "Kein Bravo für Bikini – 50 Jahre Atombombentests im Pazifik" (No bravo for Bikini – 50 years of nuclear testing in the Pacific) (Fig. 3) (Pazifik Netzwerk, 2011). This is just one of several cases where the Network challenges exploitative assertions of hegemonic power.

However, there are further complexities. Consider the concept of "giving a voice" that is significant in representations of the Pacific. Every time the Pazifik Netzwerk publicizes the Pacific Islanders, it speaks for them. This is partly because there are hardly any Pacific Islanders active in German speaking media. So, it is a Western organization that takes their place. Even if Pazifik Netzwerk goals may be about equality and justice, they are still a German organization trying to give a voice to Pacific islanders. The NGO only has a few Pacific Islander members, and it has difficulties involving them in campaigns and activities. From a postcolonial perspective, more change is needed, or at least 'owning' and making the issue of inequality transparent. As Varela and Dhavan wrote, the critical intervention must not end at national borders and an analysis that operates with hegemonic categories should at least demonstrate deconstructive vigilance. Political strategies and tactics require the most precise analyses possible of historical social inequalities and lack of freedom. These must at the same time be context-specific, and provide opportunities for political resistance (Varela and Dhavan, 2015).

Source: <http://www.pazifik-infostelle.org/publikationen/39883.html>

Kein Bravo für Bikini



50 Jahre Atombombentests im Pazifik

Zwischen dem ersten Test „Able“ der USA am 1. Juli 1946 in der Lagune des Bikini-Atolls und dem letzten französischen Test am 27. Januar 1996 auf Fangarouff fanden im pazifischen Ozean über 300 Atomversuche statt.

Inseln und Menschen wurden dem Mitleid der Atom-mächte anheimgelassen.



Pazifik
NETZWERK
www.pazifik-netzwerk.org
www.pazifik-infostelle.org

Diese Ausstellung wurde gefördert vom Kulturbüro Paris, der weltwärts AG und verschiedenen Programmen der Öffentlichen Hand, München, und von der Aktion Bildung Publika (ABP) des Evangelischen Entwicklungsdienstes e.V. (EED), Bonn.
Konzept und Erstellung von Mitgliedern des Pazifik-Netzwerks e.V.: Christian Albus, Kaija Göbel, Maja Prosser, Beatrix Pöschel-Freund, Angelika Regel, Ingrid Schäfer
Grafik und Layout: Heide Schärer, München

Source: <http://www.pazifik-infostelle.org/publikationen/ausstellungen/4162108.html>

Figure 3: Exhibition poster of the touring exhibition "No bravo for Bikini: 50 years of nuclear testing in the Pacific".

Pazifik Netzwerk and Subject Constitution

The analysis of colonization as a violent process of subject constitution that creates the ‘domesticated other’ focusses on the recasting of subject identities.

Pazifik Netzwerk thematizes the consequences of climate change and how Pacific people are affected by

it. This comes with some degree of victimizing and dramatization. In Western media there has been a tendency to portray the Pacific islanders as the first “climate change victims”. Some people in the Pacific have adopted this persona and view themselves as victims, while others like “The Pacific Climate Warriors” say: “We are not drowning we are fighting” (350.org

Pacific, 2015). As with many other issues, Pazifik Netzwerk is aware of problematic victimization and tries to counteract it. Nevertheless, it deploys this victimization and dramatization in its publicity. An example is the touring exhibition “Landunter im Pazifik! Die Folgen des globalen Klimawandels für die Pazifischen Inselstaaten” (Sinking Pacific Islands! The consequences of global climate change for the Pacific Island States) (Pazifik Netzwerk e.V., 2008). Therefore, there is some problematic forcing of that representation onto Pacific islanders, although they do address this problem extensively elsewhere. Again, it could be argued it is a means to an end, but problematic.

Pazifik Netzwerk and Transformation to Self-empowerment

Lastly, the postcolonial view transforms colonial representations of defeat and subjugation into (self)empowering action concepts. Pacific Netzwerk e.V. invites and supports Pacific islanders to speak for themselves and tries to provide them with opportunities in the German speaking media. Furthermore, it provides unbiased translations of news and information from the Pacific. An example would be the “Der pazifische Weg” (The Pacific Way) (Pazifik Netzwerk e.V., 1992). The term refers to the development of a transpacific identity in the 1990s, and it has been discussed by postcolonial thinkers. On the one hand it has been categorized as an important historical concept for decolonizing Pacific Islanders’ identities (Mishra 2005) and on the other hand it is has been assessed as a discourse of the elite and thus seen critical for embracing indigenous hegemony (Lawson, 2010). Lawson (2010) points out:

“Although the Pacific Way acquired some ‘postcolonial’ characteristics in subsequent years, it was evidently anything but in its original formulation. Rather, it was a conservative discourse embracing notions of class hierarchy common to elites among both colonizers and colonized. This brings into question the status of the Pacific Way as a postcolonial discourse, and whether postcolonialism’s ‘anticoloniality’ is in fact hospitable to indigenous hegemony, thus undermining its general anti-hegemonic credentials.”

Another example is the support for contemporary modern art from Oceania. Through Pazifik Netzwerk, artists from the Pacific Islands have a platform for exhibiting in Europe. The artists decide themselves how they exhibit. Network assistance enables them to earn money without the usual market obligations, thereby providing opportunities for self-empowerment.

Conclusion

The German NGO Pazifik Netzwerk was analysed from a postcolonial perspective, and we find, as in other cases, that non-profits like these are not removed from power relations, sometimes contributing to inequality.

The ambitions and actions of the organisation generally align with counteracting 'othering'. The organisation is aware and addresses prejudice in western representations of the Pacific islanders. Nonetheless, it can use stereotypes in representing islanders, thereby magnifying 'othering'. It opposes exploitation, as its fight against nuclear testing illustrates, but it is still a developed world organisation and involved in "giving a voice" to Pacific islanders, placing them in a dependent position.

The dramatization of sea level rise and the victimization of the people affected requires media exposure, but Pazifik Netzwerk has to capture the interest of the German speaking public, for which it sometimes relies on expressions affiliated with 'othering'. The Network's publicizing of contemporary Pacific art is valuable.

The cases in which Pazifik Netzwerk chooses to use stereotypical external representations to attract people and advertise should be avoided, in accordance with the postcolonial rewriting of intercultural relations. This is a moral issue. There is, however, no obvious way to avoid appropriating unequal and sometimes hierarchical imagery and representations, given its western funding base and audience. Greater reflexivity is needed, even though a lot of Pazifik Netzwerk's operations are successful at transcending colonial and unequal relationships with the Pacific.

This short article can only begin to expose these issues as topics for wider

debate and reflection. Nevertheless, a postcolonial lens is useful in scrutinizing the actions of any organization.

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INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT

CAMaRSEC: Climate-adapted Material Research for the Socio-economic Context in Vietnam

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DOI: 10.23791/521819

Abstract: As a result of the rapid economic development in Vietnam, lifestyles and the needs of residents have been changing in new building typologies. Materials, constructions, and supply systems that were not previously common, are now used. This development leads to far-reaching issues with structures and building physics, especially under the demanding local climatic conditions. These get in the way of energy-efficient and sustainable construction.

The German-Vietnamese CAMaRSEC project is a project within the CLIENT II program "International Partnerships for Sustainable Innovations" funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). CAMaRSEC supports the implementation and further development of energy-efficient, resource-efficient and sustainable construction practices. Based on interdisciplinary problem analysis and fundamental research, effective infrastructures for research, characteristic value determination, training, education and the transfer of scientific results into Vietnamese construction and planning practices are developed.

Keywords: Vietnam, sustainable building materials, building energy efficiency, socio-economic context

As demands for comfort and convenience change, the indoor climate in the buildings changes, too. This is accompanied by the fact that materials are exposed to new climatic indoor conditions, while the outside climate is extremely warm and humid. At present, the materials and building systems used in the Vietnamese construction industry change. As example, unfired bricks such as concrete and cellular concrete blocks are promoted as a replacement material for the construction of modern residential towers.¹ This is done to reduce the energy demand as well as the environmental impacts of producing and consuming farmland for clay extraction. However, such new materials require both adapted technologies and processing as well as the integration into building design to work as a permanent and sustainable replacement for the construction methods established in the market. In particular, the moisture properties of new materials are substantial in this context.² A failure of these new building techniques, such as cracks in the plaster or moisture ingress, will bring the new construction practice into disrepute. At present, there is insufficient knowledge in the Vietnamese construction industry regarding the physical building properties and regarding the ability to use these materials. CAMaRSEC therefore addresses issues that hamper the effective application of the necessary tools for energy-efficient and resource-efficient construction in Vietnam and, in particular, the successful application of the new National Technical Code for Building Energy Efficiency.³

Inspection Aspects and Project Goals

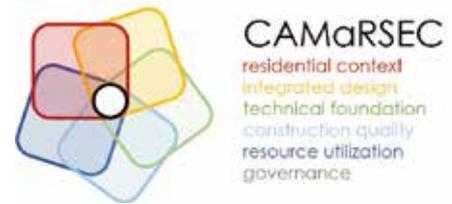
The project examines the issues from five perspectives, jointly illustrating the life cycle contexts of new residential buildings: living context, integrated design, technical fundamentals, quality of execution, and use of resources. All these topics are designed to establish an effective governance framework to promote sustainable construction

in Vietnam. In order to achieve this, CAMaRSEC works with a transdisciplinary German-Vietnamese consortium. The German partners are: University of Stuttgart, Fraunhofer Institute for Building Physics, University of Hamburg, Bau Bildung Sachsen e.V. and TAURUS Instruments AG. The Vietnamese partners are: Vietnam Institute

of Building Materials, National University of Civil Engineering, Ton Duc Thang University and College of Urban Works and Construction.

Currently, extensive socio-economic surveys and engineering audits of the building physical performance are conducted in parallel.

The climatic conditions in terms of



construction practices and the current construction practices themselves will also be analysed. Based on this interdisciplinary problem analysis and fundamental research, a core result of the project will be the development of a building physics research infrastructure for scientific materials research and the determination of building material characteristics. Specifically, an implementation plan for a building physics laboratory and an outdoor testing area for material weathering will be created. This will support the introduction of an advanced regulatory framework for energy-efficient and sustainable construction practices. In addition, skill building measures will be implemented in different phases of the building life cycle.

A Contribution to Sustainable Construction

CAMaRSEC promotes the effective implementation and further development of construction standards and will therefore effectively contribute to energy-efficient, resource-efficient and generally sustainable construction practices in Vietnam. A survey will be conducted among 500 households in Hanoi and among 500 households in Ho Chi Minh City, mainly apartments in modern high-rise buildings. The aim of the household survey will be to analyse the living context, living conditions and lifestyles in new residential high-rise buildings. The survey covers demographic, social and economic data and apartment-specific characteristics, the perception of the living contexts, detailed questions on behavioural patterns, as well as the recordings of energy consumptions and costs. The project activities are closely linked with plans for setting up building physics test facilities by the project partner

Vietnamese Institute for Materials, linked to plans from the National University of Civil Engineering and Ton Duc Thang University for the development of study programmes for energy-efficient and sustainable building as well as linked to the development of training of construction workers through the College of Urban Works Construction.

CAMaRSEC also contributes to complementary projects of other actors (e.g. UNDP, IFC, GIZ) for the introduction of resource-efficient construction methods and the implementation of the new national energy standard.

CAMaRSEC therefore opens up great potential for far-reaching effects. The project contributes, in a practice-oriented approach, to the global energy and resource transition in the construction industry beyond Vietnam in the tropical region with its continuously rapid socio-economic development.

First Insights

Since a new building energy standard was introduced in Vietnam, calculation tools, checklists and other support for architects and engineers are currently developed.³ The Ministry of Construction (MoC) of Vietnam compiled a list of "energy-saving materials" that currently consists of around 1200 relevant materials. However, the values of essential properties for energy saving and other building physical assessments are missing and not available from local sources in Vietnam. Through a strategic implementation plan for research and testing facilities, the CAMaRSEC project will develop locally adapted measures, to determine the relevant material properties for the use in the Vietnamese construction industry. The project partner Vietnamese Institute for Building Materials (VIBM) cur-

rently plans to set up a laboratory for testing building physics properties, supported by MoC.

VIBM also develops a labelling system and catalogue of property criteria for building materials to be included in the list of MoC's building materials. In addition, VIBM has a test area outside of Hanoi, which is to be expanded to a similar test facility like the one operated by the project partner Fraunhofer IBP in Holzkirchen, Germany.

CAMaRSEC's research includes transdisciplinary measures of awareness rising and capacity building. By thus, the project contributes to the implementation of sustainable building practice.

Acknowledgement

The CAMaRSEC project is funded within the CLIENT II programme "CLIENT II – International Partnerships for Sustainable Innovations" by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) under the funding support code 01LZ1804.

Endnotes

¹ Homepage: <https://www.bmbf-client.de/projekte/camarsec> The research project is funded by the "CLIENT II - International Partnerships for Sustainable Innovations" in the framework programme FONA - Research for Sustainable Development of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

² UNDP, "Promotion of Non-Fired Brick Production (NFB) Production and Utilization in Viet Nam", 2015-2019 (online, accessed 09.09.2019) http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/operations/projects/environment_climatechange/non-fired-bricks-project.html

³ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, QCVN 09: 2017 / BXD "National Technical Code for Building Energy Efficiency", Hanoi 2017.

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INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT

CRISEA: Competing Regional Integrations in Southeast Asia – New approaches and interdisciplinary dialogues

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DOI: 10.23791/522021

Abstract: *The ASEAN and its member states are facing diverse institutional and geopolitical challenges. Of further concern are environmental and social issues as well as new economic dynamics (including China's Belt-Road-Initiative). The interdisciplinary EU funded research project Competing Regional Integrations in Southeast Asia (CRISEA) investigates current developments in Southeast Asia, using a broad array of topics, perspectives and approaches.*

Keywords: *Southeast Asia, ASEAN, Economy, State, Regionalism*

What are the main political, economic and sociocultural dynamics shaping Southeast Asia today? How does the increasing influence of China in Southeast Asia play out on national and local levels? What are the key institutional and geopolitical challenges for the ASEAN and its member states? The interdisciplinary research project Competing Regional Integrations in Southeast Asia (CRISEA) addresses these and other questions through investigating the multiple forces that affect regional integration in Southeast Asia.¹ Bringing together global level analyses in international relations and political economy with socio-cultural insights from the grassroots methodologies of social sciences and the humanities, the project aims at a macro-micro dialogue that will shed light on the challenges, crises and opportunities of the peoples of Southeast Asia and its regional institutional framework, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

More than 80 researchers from several European and Southeast Asian institutions address a broad array of topics to study the multiple internal and external forces that drive regional integration in Southeast Asia and compete for resources and legitimacy. The project has identified five key arenas where these dynamics play out: Environment, Economy, State, Identity, Region. These keywords indicate the five interdisciplinary work packages that form the core of the research framework. Migration, gender and security constitute another three cross-cutting themes which inform all work packages.

The Environment: Securing the Commons

Research in this work package explores environmental problems and nature-society relations from the vantage point of contestation over „commons“ (land, seas, rivers, air) as well as

problems of ecological governance and the potential crisis of legitimacy of the ASEAN concerning transnational environmental challenges. Individual research projects address topics such as sand mining in Indonesia, contested marine resources in the South China Sea, and hydropower dams on the Salween and Mekong rivers. Moreover, researchers discuss questions of energy efficiency and the transition to a low-carbon economy.²

The Economy: Competing Models and Practices of Capitalism

This section studies different development models adopted in ASEAN economies. Researchers investigate the impact of locally- as well as globally-driven economic change on the legitimacy of these models and their underlying political frameworks. Among the topics under scrutiny are Special Eco-

nomie Zones (SEZ) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), competing models of developmental capitalism, and variants of labour mobility. Assessing the impact of China's Belt-Road Initiative (BRI) in Southeast Asia will be one main topic within this work package. Research in this work package contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex economic developments in Southeast Asia. Case studies including the disciplines of economics, political economy, anthropology and history, investigate processes of industrialisation and rural transformation from a comparative perspective, with the developmental state only one actor of many.³

The State: Contesting the Liberal State

The states of Southeast Asia show a great diversity of regime forms, institutional capacities, and ideological orientations. This diversity implies different



questions of political legitimacy and authority, and calls for fine-grained research on questions of (il)liberalism and (un)democracy. The research projects in this work package adopt different vantage points to studying the state in Southeast Asia: ideology and religion, civil society and institutions, and the limits of liberalism. This approach is aimed to offer a wide array of answers to the overarching question: How is the character and legitimacy of the Southeast Asian state contested, and with what consequences?⁴

Identity: Forging Regional Belonging

Is the ASEAN integration an elitist project, only framed in economic terms? From the backdrop of this one-sided perception this work package looks at the role of non-state actors in fostering alternative regional identities. Research projects investigate alternative regionalist projects, different perceptions of belonging and interrelatedness, and the implications for transnationally relevant issues. How do different sets of national, ethnic, religious, and other Southeast Asian identities contribute to specific regional identities related to ASEAN? Factors such as age, ethnicity, religion, and (memory of) violence constitute key aspects of research to address this and other questions of regional identity. In addition, the single case studies in this work package provide gendered perspectives on these issues and highlight transnational connections and identities.⁵

The Region: ASEAN's Contested Centrality

Research projects in this work pa-

ckage focus on the ASEAN project within the global geopolitical and geo-economic context. The Association's legitimacy is under particular scrutiny. Question of (dis-)integration, specific norms, and competing regional projects inform the research in this complex field. For example, research projects investigate the enlargement of ASEAN from a comparative perspective through a comparison of Myanmar (a recent member) and Timor Leste (a candidate). More generally, this work package discusses ASEAN's centrality in a wider global context, taking other regional constructions in Asia into account.⁶

Outlook

With the overarching goal to assess the future of ASEAN, the different work packages and corresponding research projects within the CRISEA framework explore the manifold forms and challenges of regional integration in Southeast Asia from a comparative perspective. CRISEA offers an innovative framework to investigate urgent questions and challenges of the ASEAN and its member states within a global context. The unique interdisciplinary approach engages micro-studies specialists in dialogue with analysts of macro-phenomena. The programme aims to generate a deeper understanding of key political, economic and sociocultural dynamics in Southeast Asia, and encourages productive discussions between scholars and decision-makers.

Endnotes

¹ Homepage: <http://www.crisea.eu/home>. The research project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework

Programme and coordinated by the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). The consortium includes a dissemination team and an ethics board in order to guarantee high scientific standards, efficient dissemination of research findings, cross-institutional dialogue, and public outreach.

² For more details on this work package, see Kaminski, Tomasz et al. (2019), *Contested Knowledges of the Commons in Southeast Asia*. CRISEA Working Paper Series N° 1.

<http://www.crisea.eu/publications/wp1-working-paper-the-environment-contested-knowledge-of-the-commons-in-southeast-asia>

³ See Gomez, Terence; Pietro Masina and Silvia Vignato (2019), *Development & Transformation in Southeast Asia: The Political Economy of Equitable Growth*. CRISEA Working Paper Series N° 2.

<http://www.crisea.eu/publications/wp2-working-paper-the-economy-development-transformation-in-southeast-asia-the-political-economy-of-equitable-growth>

⁴ See WP3 Team Members (2019), *Contesting the Liberal State in Southeast Asia*. CRISEA Working Paper Series N° 3.

<http://www.crisea.eu/publications/wp3-working-paper-the-state-contesting-the-liberal-state-in-southeast-asia>

⁵ See Grabowsky, Volker; Jayell Cornelio and Medelina Hendytio (2019), *Shaping Alternative Identities in Southeast Asia: Youth, Violence, and Transnationalism*. CRISEA Working Paper Series N° 4.

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⁶ See Boisseau du Rocher, Sophie (2019), *The ASEAN Conundrum: Facing Competing Regional Constructs*. CRISEA Working Paper Series N° 5.

<http://www.crisea.eu/publications/wp5-working-paper-the-region-the-asean-conundrum-facing-competing-regional-constructs>

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BOOK REVIEW

Wish Lanterns - Young Lives in New China

Author: Alec Ash

Britta Schmitz

DOI: 10.23791/522223

Abstract: Roughly 320 million people in mainland China are in their teens and twenties - nearly as many as the total population of the USA. They are the ones who will shape the future of the potential superpower. Still, their voices are rarely heard in the West. In *Wish Lanterns*, author Alec Ash opens a window to the reality of the everyday life of young Chinese and lets the reader take part in their hopes, dreams and fears. The book outlines the biographies of six Chinese millennials in a collection of short, but gripping narratives which demonstrate how China's fast-forward development in the last 30 years shaped a whole generation.

Keywords: China, young Chinese, lifestyles, consumerism, post-materialism

“Wish Lanterns” is in keeping with a number of other creative nonfiction works about China which were published during the last few years. Best known are the works of American writer and journalist Peter Hessler, whose work has earned him acclaim and has even been translated into Chinese. The genre “creative nonfiction” or “literary nonfiction” is a category of writing which is rooted in accurate facts. But contrary to other nonfiction texts, its authors make use

of literary styles or techniques, so their works read like fiction and have therefore the potential to reach a wider audience.

What is special about “Wish Lanterns” is that the author himself was still quite young when he started to work on this book; a fact that probably helped him to bond with his Chinese peers and encouraging them to open up to him. Alec Ash is from England and moved to Beijing, China when he was only 22, just after graduating from university, in 2008, the year of the summer Olympics. He explains that he was drawn in by the special “dynamism of the country” and fascinated by the “diversity of its people”. He first started to write on blogs, then for newspapers, and in 2012 he began his research for this book about China's young generation.

The protagonists in “Wish Lanterns” are six young women and men, all born between 1985 and 1990, the so-called post-80s generation - the first generation to be born after the introduction of the one-child policy and who have only known post-reform China. It is a generation which is said to be consumption-oriented and nationalistic while at the same time quite liberal and open to the West.

But as always in life, generalizations show only a part of the picture and the reality is much more heterogeneous. Such is the diversity among the

characters in “Wish Lanterns”. There is Dahai, a military child and one of China's many opinionated netizens. Xiaoxiao, a dreamy young woman from China's industrial North-East and the owner of a small clothes-shop. There is Fred, the privileged daughter of a party official, who studies political science in search of an ideology to fill China's post-reform value-vacuum. And Snail, a boy from a small farmer's village who is the first from his family to attend university, but who has trouble adapting to his new life. We meet Lucifer, a wannabe superstar with a big ego, leaving no measure untried to become famous. And, last but not least, there is Mia, a nonconformist girl from Xinjiang in the far West of China. She gains admission to the prestigious Tsinghua University and works hard for a career in the pitiless fashion industry.

Of course, it could be said that these portraits don't capture the whole landscape of this generation. There are no kids from China's nouveau riche families (富二代 Fù'èrdài, the rich second generation), nor are any of the protagonists a typical migrant worker. But a writer's research work has its limits and this is especially true for China. Or as Alec Ash expresses it in an interview “ I did take pains to find and follow six people from different locations and backgrounds, so as to bring out that diversity”

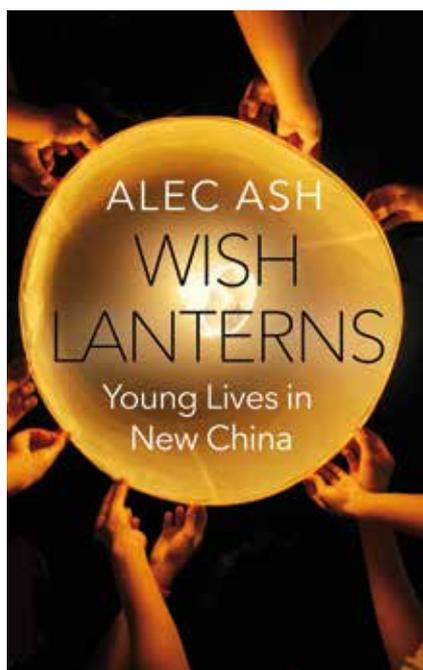


Figure 1: book cover



Source of all pictures: © Picador - Macmillan Publishers.

Figure 2: Mia, the fashion designer (illustration of paperback book cover)

(<http://www.youngchinawatchers.com/featured-young-china-watcher-alec-ash-founder-of-the-anthill/>).

In a note to his readers, Ash explains that his aim is not “to tell” his readers “what it means to be of a particular generation of young Chinese.” Instead he wants “to show” them which he does through vivid descriptions of the living environments in China and it is in these observations of everyday details where Ash’s prose really shines. The reader feels drawn into the lives of these six people and gets a feeling of how hard it must be to be a rebel in a society which still sees 孝 xiào (“filial piety” or showing one’s respect to the older generation) as a very important virtue. Even the rock star Lucifer – however eccentrically he might behave – is, in the end, only fighting for the approval of his parents and trying to

make them proud.

But what about the next generations which already start to gain influence? Ash is aware of this and states that one problem with writing “about real lives is that they keep going on” and that with the post-90s and post-00s there is already “a new texture of young China”. Still, despite the fervor for change, some facts about being young in mainland China stay true for the subsequent generations.

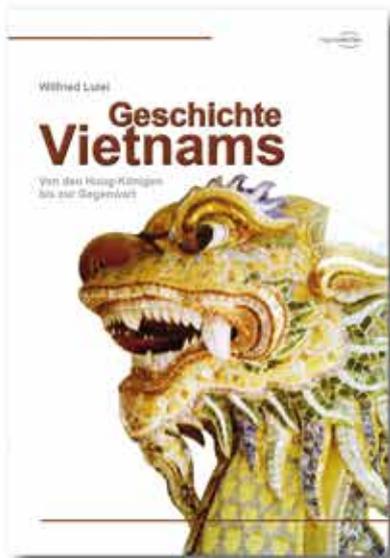
I recommended this book to a Chinese friend in her early twenties. Her approving reaction to seeing the book cover (which shows Mia, the fashion designer) was that “the girl on the cover does not look like how the government wants young people to look. It rather shows how we want to see ourselves”. In this way “Wish Lanterns” might be even

more political than it first seems to be. I also want to recommend “Wish Lanterns” to all Western readers who want a thought-provoking, and at the same time entertaining, read about contemporary China. Alec Ash still lives in mainland China and I am curious to see whether we can expect some more fascinating insights about China from him soon.

Bibliographic information

Wish Lanterns: Young Lives in New China, by Alec Ash, Picador, ISBN: 1447237951 (Hardcover), 144723796X (Paperback)
A German translation has been published by Hanser Berlin under the title “Die Einzelkinder”, ISBN: 3446252924

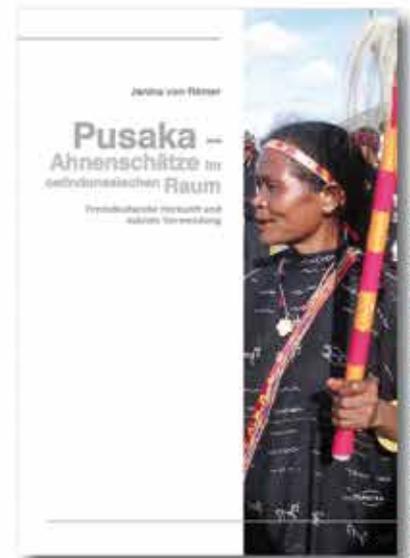
Corresponding Author: Britta Schmitz [brittabrittanika@gmail.com] has a Master in Modern China Studies as well as a degree in "Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language". She has been living in different cities in mainland China and is always happy when she discovers books which might have the potential to get more (and especially young) people interested in China.



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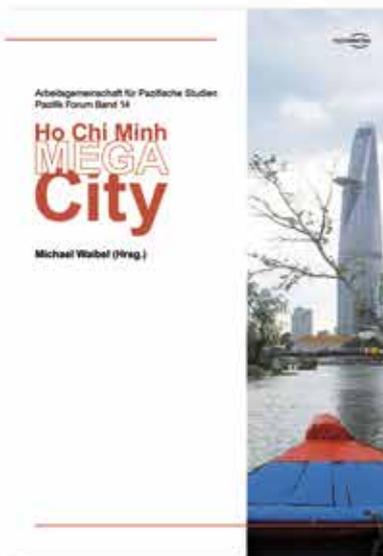
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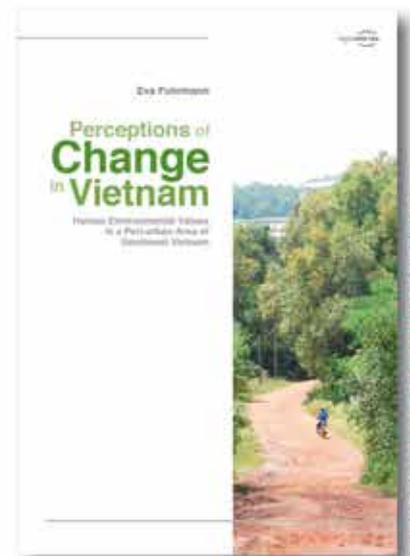
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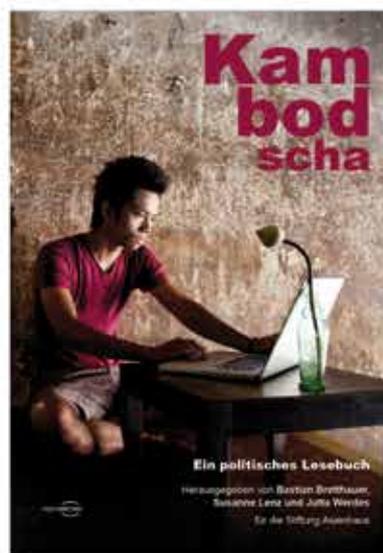
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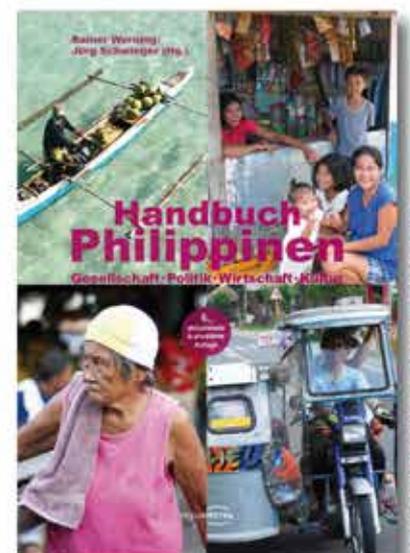
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