

Introduction of the Austrian South Pacific Society (OSPG)

The Austrian South-Pacific Society (OSPG, Österreichisch-Südpazifische Gesellschaft) and Pacific Geographies Journal are collaborating in a new format, with the aim of increasing the Pacific-related information flow to prospective members and readers. Starting with this issue, the OSPG will regularly contribute to Pacific Geographies with topics relevant for Oceania research, current developments, and debates or input from selected OSPG programme activities. We are looking forward to a fruitful dialogue and exchange with the readers of Pacific Geographies.

The OSPG is a scientific non-profit-association that aims at offering a platform to anyone interested in Oceania, shedding light on current developments and events, new scientific approaches and historical occurrences. Our members come from a wide variety of backgrounds, which makes the exchange particularly diversified.

Currently chaired by Elisabeth Worliczek, the OSPG was founded in 1996 by Hermann Mückler, Ingrid Schütz-Müller (†) and Raimund Pawlik who are / were all members of the Faculty of Social Sciences in Vienna; ever since, the association has had its headquarters at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna. Most of our board members are University of Vienna alumni.

Academic work from an anthropological perspective is a key concern for the OSPG. For over 100 years, there has been a considerable number of academics in Vienna who have contributed to knowledge of Oceania. Nowadays, scholars active in this field of research are members of the OSPG. Alongside academic work, the OSPG considers itself as a forum for information and debate on topics relevant to Oceania - not only for academia, but also open to individuals who are generally interested in the region and its people.

We share not only our passion for the Pacific, but also information on the diversity of Pacific cultures and lifestyles. Knowledge is collected, published and made available to a wider public (in particular through the two publication formats "NOVARA" and "Pazifik Dossier").

In addition, great emphasis is laid on the cultivation of cultural and social contacts between Austria and Oceania through collaborations.

Our activities include a regular lecture series organized by the OSPG with speakers from Austria and abroad, presenting their research on Oceania. We invite internationally renowned scholars as well as young aspiring researchers to present their work and to share and discuss it with our members. The format of the lecture series is interdisciplinary and multimodal. However, our portfolio goes beyond mere lectures; a full list of our activities is listed in the table 1.

We hope to welcome you at one of our upcoming events, and we are always happy about new members joining. You don't need to be based in Vienna in order to become a member of OSPG.

Some exemplary activities held over

the last few years were for example two photo exhibitions "OFA A'TU - love and other gestures" (2016) and "Encounters in the Solomon Islands (2010), symposia like "Human Rights in the Pacific" (2012) and "200 Years James Cook Collection in Vienna" (2006), film screenings that are always followed by a thorough analysis and discussion "Te kuhane o te tupuna" (2019), "Imulal: a land, its roots and dreams" (2016) and "In the wake of the Bounty" (2007) as well as our regular lecture series.

The lecture series draws from a variety of backgrounds. In 2019 for example, our lecturers filled us in on: the nickel mining activities and the process of decolonisation in New Caledonia; climate change and agriculture in Papua New Guinea; oral traditions from Hawai'i and Aotearoa and their use and misuse in contemporary society; and kitsch, cliché and daily life in the Pacific Islands.

2020 has been a challenging year so far, since we had to cancel our lectures and we hope that in autumn, we will again be able to invite scholars to Vienna. So far, we are pleased to announce that we will be hosting a young scholar session at the Vienna Anthropology Days (VANDA) Conference (28 Sept – 1 Oct, 2020) on "More than a cliché and the dream of the South Seas? Young research in and about the South Pacific". We are looking forward to a fruitful exchange with the participating young scholars from across Europe. Currently we are planning to make the session's content available to a broader audience.

Table 1: Overview of OSPG-activities

Regular scientific lectures from lecturers coming from the Pacific Islands, Austria and abroad
<i>The publication series NOVARA and the Pazifik-Dossier</i>
Presentation of scientific works from young scholars
<i>Photo exhibitions</i>
<i>Presentations of movies including panel discussions</i>
<i>Art exhibitions</i>
Organization of international conferences and symposia
<i>Guided visits through exhibitions and museums</i>
<i>Book launches</i>
<i>Invitations to artists and scholars from the Pacific Islands</i>
<i>Lectures, workshops and seminars</i>
<i>Pacific-focused city walks in Vienna</i>
<i>Parties</i>
Networking with scientific initiatives / associations / institutions with focus on the Pacific Islands in Europe and internationally
Events in cooperation with other organizations and associations

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Fig. 1: OSPG members at a joint meeting with the German Pazifik Netzwerk



Fig. 2: Kava session at the joint meeting of OSPG and Pazifik Netzwerk in Passau 2019



Fig. 3: The popular lecture series attracts a wide range of people



Fig. 4: Festivities to celebrate 20 years of OSPG



Fig. 5: Visiting the hidden treasures of Oceania in the storage of the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna