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Workshop Series "Reflexive Area Studies", Part III: Space and Area Studies in a Post-Territorial Age? Centre for Area Studies Leipzig: Centre for Area Studies, University of Leipzig, 04.09.2012-04.09.2012.

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Workshop Series "Reflexive Area Studies", Part III: Space and Area Studies in a Post-Territorial Age?

The workshop "Space and Area Studies in a Post-Territorial Age?" held under the auspices of the Centre for Area Studies at the University of Leipzig, is the third workshop in the Reflexive Area Studies series that seeks to provide a platform for discussion on the methodological challenges to Area Studies in a post-colonial and post-Cold War world, which is now often described as "global." Without asserting that there is necessarily something new about the interconnectedness that characterizes this "global age," this approach to Area Studies amplifies alternative spatializations that had previously been overshadowed by conventional, territorially-contained geographic regions. Therefore, the workshop encouraged the participants to reflect on space and areas through the lenses of Atlantic Studies, Material and Human Flows, and Urbanity, Connectedness and Separation. The participants were invited to reflect on how these categories may help to overcome the challenges to Area Studies, but also to be cautious of producing new forms of essentialism.

MATTHIAS MIDDELL (Leipzig) commenced the workshop by briefly remarking on the institutional development of Area Studies and ideas scholars now face regarding how to reconceptualize Area Studies as an approach. He stressed the need to understand not only the aspect of flows and cultural transfers but also to concentrate on controls and the competition for political order and power. Following his remarks, GEERT CASTRYCK (Leipzig) introduced the specific workshop at hand and highlighted the results of the previous workshops in the series. The first workshop was held as a roundtable discussion at the end of the inaugural CAS Annual Conference in 2010 and addressed Area Studies in the age of globalization. There, scholars discussed the need to focus on connections rather than strictly comparisons in order to overcome disciplinary boundaries and discover transregional ties. The second workshop in July 2011 centered on institutionalization and positionality of Area Studies. This workshop was particularly reflective as it stressed the implications of reproducing areas through teaching and research and the connection between certain fields in Area Studies and power.

The 2012 workshop was organized in an effective way that promoted interdisciplinarity and discussion. Each of the three panels was balanced by the approaches of two panelists from differing disciplines and/or areas whose papers reflected varying approaches to the panel topic. The paper presentations were followed by a response from a commentator. There was ample time during each panel session for the panelists and the attendees to discuss the topic at length, ask questions, and exchange perspectives. By focusing on only three panel topics, the discussions and presentations stayed true to the overall theme of the workshop, Space and Area Studies, while also allowing for interdisciplinarity. Thus, the organization facilitated effective communication across disciplines and areas.

The first panel, "Atlantic Studies," chaired by STEFFI MARUNG (Leipzig), discussed the possibilities and the problems associated with Atlantic Studies as a lens through which to investigate connections. SUSANNE LACHENICHT (Bayreuth), a historian, explained the background of Atlantic History and Atlantic Studies and focused on the possibility for Area Studies approaches to learn from the benefits and pitfalls of the Atlantic Studies experience. She highlighted the strengths of Atlantic Studies as a way to focus on connections, knowledge transfer, and comparisons while also emphasizing other forms of areas reflected in maritime space rather than territory. However, she noted problems in the oversimplification of the Atlantic as a coherent space. Firstly, Atlantic History is seen by Atlanticists as a coherent space from 1500-1830, which oversimplifies the complexity of the Atlantic during that time while simultaneously disregarding the challenge of dealing with change in the Atlantic after this period. Secondly, she noted that schol-

ars should acknowledge the presence of multiple "Atlantics" like the "Black Atlantic," the "Spanish Atlantic," etc. She suggested a focus on port cities and vessels to deal with multiethnic/religious societies, cultural flows, and change. Next, the geographer, JAMES SIDAWAY (Singapore), discussed maritime spaces mostly through the lens of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean by referring mainly to Portuguese examples. When discussing the Indian Ocean, he noted this space as a challenge to national and continental territories as containers, as a study in the Indian Ocean necessarily includes the interactions of empires, older networks, as well as trading companies and merchants. He continued the discussion on the multiple "Atlantics" adding the geopolitical Atlantic, e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The strengths of these maritime approaches, he continued, are that they overflow their boundaries and provoke scholars to consider additional connections. In the following discussion, these additional connections were questioned: what is the difference between Atlantic History and Global History when "outside" connections are taken into account? And, do the "multiple Atlantics" interact and connect? A vivid insight near the close of the discussion was introduced by CASTRYCK: Atlantic Studies scholars do not consider themselves part of Area Studies as this approach is a reflection of the study of the self rather than a study of the other, as is conventional in the origins of Area Studies. The discussion on how to reconcile the differences remained open.

Panel Two, "Material and Human Flows," chaired by SARAH RUTH SIPPEL (Leipzig) sought to investigate how scholars studying commodity chains and migration/diasporas conceive of space and spatial containers in their research on flows. In the first presentation, historian MICHAEL ESCH (Berlin/Leipzig) used a micro perspective to analyze how East European migrant communities in Paris constructed and used space in their struggles and strategies to cope abroad. Through the lens of four fascinating stories, he demonstrated police and civil servant networks, links between migrants and their homelands, as well as the conception of more than one "Paris," as migrants carved out space(s) for themselves accepted inside and outside as "theirs." In his paper, historian and anthropologist PATRICK NEVELING (Bern) discussed the (new) international division of labor as an entry point to redefine Area Studies, uncoupling cultural areas from geographical areas. The social formations resulting from the effects of capitalism can represent a new conception of cultural containers which are usually manifested in Area Studies as regions. In this sense, NEVELING invited the workshop attendees to rethink notions of sameness and difference which typically constitute "areas." In the following remarks, the participants discussed, among other aspects, whether research on flows or research on places was more fruitful. It might seem more promising to accept that different approaches may be methodologically necessary depending on the topic at hand and object of research. However, overall, both approaches were acknowledged as integral to explaining human connections and redefining cultures and areas.

The third panel, "Urbanity, Connectedness, and Separation," chaired by CASTRYCK, emphasized research on "global cities" and "border towns" as approaches that highlight the transcending nature of global connections that, while linking distant cities in the world, may also lead to local inequalities and exclusion. Africanist PAUL NUGENT's (Edinburgh) talk on port cities, national capitals, and border towns in Africa highlighted an inspiring approach to the current domination of the nation state as the main way to engage with space in African Studies. As a quarter of capital cities in Africa are located near or on the border (not to mention port cities), research on the gatekeeper functions of border towns and port cities provides a new insight into new and old actors who may be implicitly involved in cross-border/regional integration from below, such as traders, smugglers, border police, diasporas, as well as the Chinese and Indian presence. NUGENT encouraged the attendees to think of history as cyclical rather than as a linear progression, but this challenge was unfortunately not taken up in the discussion. In the final presentation, geographer DAVID BASSENS (Ghent) reviewed world city research as a possible replacement for Area Studies. By connecting world city network research with commodity chain analysis, more connections could be established. Similar to NEVELING's suggestion, BASSENS proposed that we may be able to think of "areas" as spatially discontinuous. Both panelists questioned the notion of cities as containers, mentioning what can be considered the gateway and the gatekeeping functions of cities, which reflected a reassessment of how space is produced.

Reflecting on the workshop, the participants generally agreed that transcending the basic approaches of Area Studies is important, but replacing it with a new model may be just as problematic as what it is trying to replace. Therefore, new or alternative approaches should be undertaken cautiously, as new methods may reveal new actors while hiding others. However, MARUNG rightly reflected that describing the varying spatial conditions of "areas" could help Area Studies researchers to identify actors, agencies, their resources, and power, which may be considered a major contribution of the spa-

tial turn to Area Studies. The participants might have left the workshop with more questions than they had when they began the day, which is perhaps an indication of a successful workshop in Reflexive Area Studies. Indeed, the workshop fostered interdisciplinary communication and collaboration across various areas, which led to fruitful, stimulating debates, analyses, and questions. With anticipation, the discussion can be continued and will lead to a fourth workshop in the Reflexive Area Studies series.

Program

Welcome and General Introduction: Matthias Middell, Leipzig

Panel One: Atlantic Studies
Chair: Steffi Marung, Leipzig
Susanne Lachenicht, Bayreuth
James Sidaway, Singapore
Commentator: Matthias Middell, Leipzig

Panel Two: Material and Human Flows
Chair: Sarah Ruth Sippel, Leipzig
Michael Esch, Berlin/Leipzig
Patrick Neveling, Bern
Commentator: Katja Naumann, Leipzig

Panel Three: Urbanity, Connectedness, and Separation
Chair: Geert Castryck, Leipzig
Paul Nugent, Edinburgh
David Bassens, Ghent
Commentator: Christof Parnreiter, Hamburg

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:
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