

ResourceCultures – Theories, Methods, Perspectives. International and Interdisciplinary Conference of the Collaborative Research Centre ResourceCultures (SFB 1070). Sonderforschungsbereich 1070
ResourceCultures, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, 16.11.2015–19.11.2015.

Reviewed by Beat Schweizer

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From November 16th to 19th 2015 the Second International and Interdisciplinary Conference of SFB 1070 ResourceCultures took place at the Eberhard Karls University Tübingen. The focus of SFB 1070 is on socio-cultural dynamics in connection with the use of resources. Resources are defined as the tangible and intangible means by which actors create, sustain or alter social relations, units or identities. This definition abolishes the opposition between ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ resources because even raw materials extracted from natural environments are subject to cultural constructions. Further, it is assumed that resources in general are part of ‘resource complexes’, which often are combinations of things and representations, individuals or social groups, knowledge and practices. Based on this approach, ‘resource use’ not only refers to the exploitation and processing, distribution and utilisation of socially relevant resources or resource complexes. Instead, it leads to certain dynamics, i.e. multidimensional processes of change, which may affect parts of or even entire societies (<http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/en/research/core-research/collaborative-research-centers/sfb-1070.html>).

The aim of the Conference ‘ResourceCultures – Theories, Methods, Perspectives’ was to discuss and advance these concepts and theories in collaboration with respected scientific experts and to identify future perspectives. Correspondingly, the

lecture programme has been structured into six sessions, covering the wide spectrum of interdisciplinary research within the SFB. Each session was opened by a SFB member’s talk, and followed by lectures of scholars from varying disciplines. In order to generate interdisciplinary exchange and methodological transfer on the different topics, moderated discussions were held at the end of each session.

MICHAEL MEYER (Berlin) started the conference with an evening lecture about research on resources in the Excellence Cluster 264 ‘Topoi – The Formation and Transformation of Space and Knowledge in Ancient Civilizations’. After describing similarities in the structure and approach of interdisciplinary networks he gave examples for ongoing research. These ranged from water management in different societies and geographical contexts, investigations of the quantity of labour and costs, the construction of monumental buildings, to the beginning of wool production, as well as to early iron smelting and usage. Meyer pointed out that space and knowledge, used as categories and their interrelation can be fruitfully applied to analyse resources in a wider sense.

As an introduction, the session’s spokesperson MARTIN BARTELHEIM (Tübingen) and scientific coordinator ANKE SCHOLZ (Tübingen) gave a short overview on both, SFB 1070 ResourceCul-

tures in general, as well as on the conference programme.

For the first session 'ResourceCultures – Definitions, Concepts, Perspectives' an anthropologist, a historian and a prehistorian had been invited to evaluate and extend the SFB resource concept. ROLAND HARDENBERG, Anthropologist and vice spokesperson of the SFB (Tübingen), reflected on different approaches of anthropology and archaeology in general. Concerning 'value', he concluded that anthropologists might rely too much on the spoken word. Things not consciously valued nonetheless might still be essential resources. If meanings are not considered as shared, but as contested and negotiated, there might be an interrelation between anthropology and archaeology. The contextual arrangement, the dialectics between actors and things might give insights into the ways in which meaning is produced. Applying this perspective, he emphasised the interaction of tangible and intangible resources in processes of valuations.

Historian HARTMUT LEPPIN (Frankfurt am Main), spokesperson of SFB 1095 'Discourses of Weakness and Resource Regimes', presented theoretical considerations of his research unit. From an historical point of view, he considered 'Discourses of Weakness' as part of the rhetoric of weakness, which might also be seen as narratives on resources. In SFB 1095 the concept of 'Resource Regimes' has been introduced in order to cover the aspect of agency. Different, but connected resources were conceptualised as part of these resource regimes in practices of power on one hand, on the other as resource configurations, if their spatial availability is concerned.

Prehistorian BRIT SOLLI (Oslo) examined reindeer as a resource in Norway in a time span of 4.000 years. In prehistoric and pre-modern times (domesticated) reindeer was important as hunting and draught animal. Different types of hunting, in 'harmony' with nature or labelled as massacres, were identified. In this respect, Solli

contradicted theories of trusting relationships between human and animal and emphasised mastery, control and profit. In modern times, reindeer became part of Norwegian identity formation (Peer Gynt) and subsequently and partially contradictory, of entertainment industry (Coca Cola, Disney) and therefore of tourism industry.

The second session was dedicated to the 'Variability of Tangible and Intangible Resources' and saw the participation of an historian and of a social anthropologist. In his talk on the monastic communities in medieval Germany, Medieval Historian STEFFEN PATZOLD (Tübingen) focused on the key role played by monasteries in the transformation of donations and goods into intangible values, i.e. on the transformation of 'tangible' into 'spiritual' resources. In this way, the corpus of earthly life is transformed into spiritual salvations and eternal life of the *anima*, land property and human labour is transformed into prayers, alms, masses and intercessions, and *exterioria* are transformed into *interior*.

The second talk, given by Anthropologist HANS PETER HAHN (Frankfurt am Main) analysed the valuation of resources. Raising questions such as: 'Who defines the value of a resource?' 'How is such value approved or socially confirmed?' The importance of attaching stories to objects, materials and places in order to turn them into valued resources was affirmed; the 'selection' and valuation of resources as a cultural specific process was discussed in depth and the role of scarcity *versus* abundance in the valuation of resources was assessed.

In the third session 'Resilience to Resource Change and its Influence in Movement and Resettlement Processes' Prehistorian NICHOLAS CONARD (Tübingen) presented findings and interpretations to different strategies of resource use by populations of Neanderthals and early modern humans in Southwest Germany. While Neanderthals were big game hunters living together in small groups of individuals, early modern hu-

mans seemed to base their diet on a diverse pool of resources that was easier to acquire, such as fruits, fish and smaller animals. Furthermore, it was argued that larger demographic units supported the connections between different groups. This increase of communication in turn brought about a transfer of knowledge, e.g. hunting practices, useful plants, use and control of fire, figurative art, as well as the further diversification of tools. All these new developments and the rapidly growing knowledge might have been step-stones in the success of modern humans.

Physical Anthropologist GISELA GRUPE (München) discussed the benefits and limits of isotopic mapping for studies of migration in archaeological contexts. While ‘non-local’ individuals can be identified in the osteological record, attempts to further specify the ‘non-local’ origin of these individuals is highly problematic and usually presents more questions than answers. The interdisciplinary DFG Research Unit ‘Transalpine Mobility and Culture Transfer’ was given as an example, to reconstruct mobility within and between human networks in former times by using state-of-the art data mining algorithms to identify major unknown relationships within big datasets related to the isotope mapping method. One of the most serious shortcomings of the isotope mapping is the redundancy of the geological defined proportions of stabile isotopes, a problem still not solved by the research unit.

In the fourth session new insights into the topic ‘Exchange of Resources – Exchange as Resource’ were gained by the contributions of two archaeologists and a social anthropologist. The first speaker, Medieval Archaeologist JÖRN STAECKER (Tübingen) gave a talk on ‘knowledge’ as a resource. Using Viking Age iron artefacts from Scandinavia as an example, Staecker underlined the importance of the complex set of knowledges required for their production and distribution. Especially the production of swords demanded a high knowledge about different types of steel

and their characteristics. A second example, the Franks Casket, served to illustrate strategies of narratives and ways of deciphering them, thus emphasising the importance in the *longue durée* of knowledge as a resource in itself. Additionally analysing motives from antique texts, Christian traditions and Scandinavian sagas, the ‘artefact’ was redefined as a complex setting of a typological structure of meaning. Staecker constructed a narrative reaching over almost three thousand years, a kind of world-encyclopaedia in miniature.

Historian and Near Eastern Archaeologist DANIEL T. POTTS (New York) focused on the connection between the internal development of the societies inhabiting the shores and islands of the ‘Lower Sea’ and trade and distribution of exotic goods towards South Mesopotamia during the late fourth and third millennium BC. Based on archaeological and philological data, Potts criticised centre/periphery models. Instead, he demonstrated how the societies in the Persian Gulf region acted as mediators or organisers within an exchange network that soon became a major stimulus for their flourishing and development.

Social Anthropologist TIMUR DADABAEV (Tsukuba) demonstrated that memory always was a key resource in Central Asia. ‘Official’ ideologies in the interpretation (and construction) of social memory during the soviet and post-soviet periods were identified and subsequently contrasted with the perception and responses of the public. The distinction between local narratives and metanarratives finally was exemplified by the analysis of the dynamic semantics in different case studies of public buildings, monuments and open spaces. The activities of relocating, demolishing and rebuilding, improving or restyling in connection with major political and social changes were used to show the relevance and the effects of ideology on social memory.

In the fifth session on ‘Creating Identity – Symbolic and Metaphoric Meaning of Resources’

Social Anthropologist GABRIELE ALEX (Tübingen) scrutinised the connections between artefacts and the construction of cultural identity in a recent museum and exhibition project in the very centre of the German capital Berlin. After describing the former Ethnological Museum and its approach towards artefact presentation, she identified three different discourses concerning the integration of ethnological artefacts in the Humboldt-Forum. Besides the dominant discourse in support of the project, there are also postcolonial and academic discourses. The crucial role of artefacts as media for political and social ideas in disputes within public and political spheres were explained and analysed with respect to the project and its counter project (Humboldt-Forum and *humboldt* 21).

Medieval Archaeologist ULRICH MÜLLER (Kiel) contributed archaeological examinations of spatial dimensions connected to the social dynamics of slavery, partially challenging common views based on written or pictorial documents. Different shapes of buildings, roads and the landscape of Monticello, the primary plantation of Thomas Jefferson, were analysed in their material, temporal, and social dynamics reflecting historical processes in a wider sense. With his second example, the French colony of Mauritius, he demonstrated how a landscape was transformed into a medium of power and ideology. Slaves managed to seize remote but fertile areas, turning the landscape into a reflection of the social and cultural space of the island. These developments continued up until modern times, bringing its own social and cultural dispositions, including tourism as a key factor of spatial changes and reorganisations.

During the sixth session 'The Use of Resources in Forming Complex Societies', Near Eastern Archaeologist PETER PFÄLZNER (Tübingen) gave a lecture based on data recently retrieved by two projects of the SFB 1070 in Iraqi Kurdistan and Iran. He shed light on inter-regional exchange of resources during the late 4th and the 3rd millen-

nium BC and criticised asymmetrical exchange models such as the 'World System Theory'. A multilateral and symmetric exchange network of both natural and cultural resources, cheap and precious goods as well as ideas was postulated, in which various patterns were identified, serving to ensure equal profits and growth.

Prehistorian TOBIAS KIENLIN (Köln) critically scrutinised the use of supra-regional economic based models to explain social structure and social change of Bronze Age Europe. Following a general overview on the numerous World Systems models applied on Bronze Age economy and society (Sherratt, Wallerstein, Earle, Kristiansen) he referred to frequently emerging problems of definition and the use of terms such as *trade* and *exchange*. He suggested that exchanges should not be viewed as asymmetrical processes. In fact, ethnographic analogies demonstrate a wide range of examples for political, social and economic relations within social communities or local groups and the variability in trade-off interactions with others. Such complex and variable phenomena are often inadequately relayed by archaeological records. Ethnographic studies should be used to provide a variety of alternative interpretations, instead of using them as one to one explanations fitting into general theories.

Using Arjun Appadurai's ideas about the cultural construction of locality and identity, Classical Archaeologist ERICH KISTLER (Innsbruck) reflected on how *Archaika* were used by the Iron Age community of Monte Iato (Sicily) as a connection with their local past in a colonial context. Kistler reviewed the widespread metanarrative of a cultural superiority of Greek colonizers in Sicilian communities and concluded that the concept of Hellenisation is hardly suitable to explain these cultural contacts. Instead, he argued that the material culture of the Iron Age settlement reflects a more differentiated and complex web of interaction with different social actors. By contextualising pottery assemblages, Kistler reconstructed dif-

ferent consumption practices and demonstrated how these practices were used to express social identity.

Due to the high standard of the papers presented and the productive atmosphere during the discussions following each talk, as well as in the panel discussions, the conference allowed for a most vivid and stimulating transdisciplinary exchange. Especially the PhD-candidates of SFB 1070 profited and will further profit from an ongoing intensive exchange with experts from various disciplines.

Conference Overview:

Welcome and opening remarks

Peter Grathwohl (Vice-President for Research, University of Tübingen)

Martin Bartelheim (Spokesperson SFB 1070, University of Tübingen)

Evening Lecture

Michael Meyer (Freie Universität Berlin): Space and Knowledge. Research on Resources in the Excellence Cluster 'Topoi'

Introduction

Martin Bartelheim & Anke Scholz (Spokesperson & Scientific Coordinator SFB 1070): Introduction to SFB 1070

Session I: ResourceCultures – Definitions, Concepts, Perspectives

Roland Hardenberg (University of Tübingen): ResourceCultures: A Model for Comparison across Disciplines

Hartmut Leppin (University of Frankfurt): Discourses of Weakness and Resource Regimes

Brit Solli (University of Oslo): The Reindeer as Resource in Norway during 4.000 Years

Session II: Variability of Tangible and Intangible Resources

Steffen Patzold (University of Tübingen): Variability of Tangible and Intangible Resources: the

Example of Monastic Communities in Medieval Germany

Ingo Schrakamp (Freie Universität Berlin): Resources and Resource Management in Sargonic Mesopotamia

Hans Peter Hahn (University of Frankfurt): Kinds of Resources and Ways to Perceive them: Anthropological Reflections on a Contested Category

Session III: Resilience to Resource Change and its Influence in Movement and Resettlement Processes

Nicholas J. Conard (University of Tübingen): The Danube Corridor Hypothesis and the Arrival of Modern Humans in Southwestern Germany

Martina Neuburger (University of Hamburg): Geographical Approaches on Territorialities, Resources and Frontiers

Gisela Grupe (University of Munich): Isotopic Mapping and Migration Research based on Bioarchaeological Finds: the Interdisciplinary Project 'Transalpine Mobility and Culture Transfer'

Session IV: Exchange of Resources – Exchanges as Resource

Jörn Staecker (University of Tübingen): Knowledge as a Resource

Daniel T. Potts (University of New York): Resource Origins and Resource Movement in and around the Persian Gulf

Timur Dadabaev (University of Tsukuba): Transforming Soviet Cultural Resources: Selectivity in Reconstructing Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia

Session V: Creating Identity – Symbolic and Metaphoric Meaning of Resources

Gabriele Alex (University of Tübingen): Artefacts and their Power to Shape Cultural Identity: the Role of Possession, Place and Power

Ulrich Müller (University of Kiel): Contested Places, Contested Spaces: the Spatial Organization of Slavery as a Cultural Resource

Session VI: The Use of Resources in Forming Complex Societies

Peter Pfälzner (University of Tübingen): Symmetrical Networks of Resources in 3rd millennium BC Western Asia

Tobias Kienlin (University of Köln): Space vs. Imports – On Limits of Political Economy Approaches in Supra-Regional Comparison

Erich Kistler (University of Innsbruck): Archaika as Resources: the Production of Locality and Colonial Empowerment on Monte Iato (Western Sicily) around 500 B.C.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/>

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