

tures during the *hajj* or tertiary education, such new alignments are often seen in a critical light. In a region characterized by a high degree of structural diversity from the outset, this obvious lack of cohesion may also impede attempts to keep external forces at bay and to strengthen its global position.

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Scales of Knowledge: Zooming In and Zooming Out

7th Annual Conference of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”

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The Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” held its seventh Annual Conference *Scales of Knowledge: Zooming In and Zooming Out* at Heidelberg University from 7 to 9 October 2015. The conference was organised by the Cluster’s Research Area C “Knowledge Systems” and revolved around the much discussed phenomenon of scales of knowledge. In an opening keynote lecture, four morning and nine afternoon sessions, 13 panels comprising 48 senior and junior researchers considered knowledge observation and production from multitudinous vantage points. Convinced of scales’ importance and versatility, the participants explored their use in the analysis and narration of history, anthropology, medicine, geography and other fields.

Framed by the Taiwanese ensemble *3peoplemusic*’s journey through musical scales of East and West, past and present, indigenous and global, George Marcus (Irvine) opened the conference with a challenging keynote lecture. A noteworthy suggestion was to not only zoom in and zoom out, but to dare and stop in the middle of a zoom. This idea resonated well with the conference’s outspoken goal to scrutinise scales’ potential to overcome lingering dualisms such as “global and local” and “macro and micro”. While not all elements of his speech found a strong echo, he certainly set one recurring theme of the conference by stressing the importance of zooms into the micro level.

On the second day, Pablo Blitstein (Heidelberg) showed how important insights into argumentative practices were to be gained by zooming in on specific discursive moments. By investigating the writings of Kāng Yǒuwéi,

he established that the “Chinese nation” could inversely be conceived as being based on either cultural or racial identity in early 20th century China. This difference was shown not only to depend on whether the argumentation scaled to the various peoples of China or to foreign political powers, but also disclose global discursive trends. Simon Partner (Durham) expertly deconstructed the mesh of spaces and times that intertwined in the peculiar world of Yokohama in the 19th century. By studying the life of Shinohara Chūemon, who went from the countryside to the city, from peasant to merchant, and ended in bankruptcy, he retraced how events on a global scale conditioned the lifeworld of one specific individual. By aligning the global with the local, he made a strong case for the factitiousness of the seeming polarity of both concepts.

From a medical vantage point, Ananda Chopra (Heidelberg) retraced the changing scales behind the Ayurvedic diagnosis of depression. His analysis of modern Ayurvedic practice led him to distinguish between a traditional perception and a more recent one approximating modern bio-medicine. However, the fact that contemporary practitioners of Ayurveda also rely on the influential religious text *Bhagavadgītā* led him to suggest that there is a third, sociocultural dimension to nosological scales. He effectively cautioned against a simplistic view of medical diagnosis that single-mindedly prioritises bio-medical diagnosis and therapy. Similarly critical concerns were raised by Stefan Ecks (Edinburgh), who surveyed the World Health Organisation’s changing definitions of depression and the globally scaled effects of the organisation’s recommendations.

In the afternoon panels, Kathrin Kohle (Heidelberg) retraced the resourceful blurring of scales between local megachurches and global media ministries. She analysed how individual leaders were able to cater to both scales equally well by contrasting “real” elements of identification in the events at the local level with the potentially supra-regional and international appeal of anonymised televangelist media events on a global scale. Esther Berg (Heidelberg) analysed the two-facedness of the Singaporean City Harvest Church by contrasting the scales of the government and the adherents. The church’s politics were shown to overemphasise its concern for social services in its struggle for governmental recognition, but to shift its slogans’ focus to affirming late-modern and neo-liberal messages when recruiting and exploiting its members.

Dominik Berrens, Katharina Hillenbrand, Sonja Gerke and Simone Gerhards (all Mainz) presented an exceptionally homogeneous panel on problems of emic and etic perspectives. Berrens opened the field by exploring “das nächste Fremde” as an adequate description of our relationship with Greco-Roman texts. He traced how we were neither able to adopt an

emic nor a properly etic perspective due to historical entanglements, but were instead rather uncomfortably left between the two. Hillenbrand picked up on this idea and warned against feeling too close a familiarity with Greco-Roman texts. She cautioned against reading either scientific or literary texts from a naively assumed emic perspective, as this could lead to blindness towards conceptual variation and the subsequent substitution of wrong concepts. Gerke departed from the Greco-Roman sphere and explored how “inside” and “outside” views were differently applied in dealing with ancient Egyptian texts. She explored phenomena surrounding Egyptology as an active scale in conditioning specialists’ approaches to source materials. Gerhards took another step back and reflected on the limits and opportunities that zooming in and zooming out presented in dealing with ancient texts. As opposed to Hillenbrand, she warned not against the risk of feeling too close to a text, but of blindly applying etic analytical categories to it.

The last day kicked off with two panels on scales of environmental knowledge. Julia Poerting (Heidelberg) presented her research on organic agriculture in Pakistan. Her analysis established that the transfer of knowledge about organic agriculture not only needed to be spread on a lateral, geographical scale, but also in a bi-directional movement along a vertical scale. She illustrated that for the successful spread of agricultural techniques it was not enough for them to be translated from scientific research into practical action, but that farmers and knowledge brokers also needed to scale up their involvement in those techniques. From a different angle, Marcus Nüsser (Heidelberg) talked about the tensions between local and global views on glaciers. He explained that in certain valleys glacier melt water was the sole source for irrigation and showed how indigenous people adapted to that challenge by building a unique infrastructure to secure irrigation over longer annual periods. He contrasted this local knowledge with the fairly recent worldwide polemic about the alleged disappearance of glaciers and showed that that panic was not only potentially unfounded, but that glaciers have become imbued with a political meaning that potentially shrouds the interest in practical knowledge. Ravi Baghel (Heidelberg) explored the political and military tensions around the Siachen glacier between India and Pakistan. He showed that the imprecise formulations of an original treaty were due to a lack of cartographic knowledge and thus allowed both countries to claim the Siachen glacier. He then retraced how the scale of the conflict changed from confusion to “cartographic aggression” when Pakistan took as fact a straight line that the US air force had added to a map as a guideline for their pilots. Although that “border line” did not appear on differently scaled maps at the time, Baghel argued that it has

come to weigh on both countries' diplomatic relations, force harsh living conditions on many soldiers and politicise the cartography of the Siachen glacier on a global scale.

In the last round of afternoon panels, Andrea Bréard (Heidelberg/Lille) presented a work in progress on mathematical modernity and explored Xià Luánxiáng's thoughts on conics. By closely reading Xià's work, she was able to discern that in a vain attempt to come up with a unified calculus for the four basic types of curves he worked along different epistemological lines. She demonstrated that Xià thought the Western system of mathematical knowledge inferior to his own, which he scaled to a cosmological rhetoric and developed within a structurally different organisation of knowledge. Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg) returned to the writings of Kāng Yōuwéi and explored the topic of epistemic ruptures. By turning to an unpublished draft for a *Comprehensive Book on Substantial Principles and Universal Laws*, he showed how already in the early 1890s Kāng was tormented by the decline of argumentative validity that the Confucian classics had once possessed and struggled hard to come to grips with metropolitan science. Kurtz draw a vivid picture of the bewildering results Kāng had come up with as he juxtaposed Euclid and the five cardinal relationships and analysed this along various scales, from Kāng's personal biography through inter-textual relations to national and international politics.

During the concluding round table, William Sax (Heidelberg) recalled the importance of letting go of the big narrative to scale down and check the manifold personal stories. Sophie Roche (Heidelberg) on the other hand called to mind that scaling is not just something we do, but that we are also inevitably subjected to. Duncan Paterson (Heidelberg) cautioned against a deflationary use of scales and warned against holding on to a polar view of micro and macro. The present observer feels that the conference was highly successful in displaying a wide range of productive applications of scales in both knowledge observation and knowledge generation. He agrees with most of the participants that we are still in dire need of all the micro studies we can get in order to overcome our attraction to untested macro narratives. However, there are a number of points that beg further investigation. First among these is the practical concern of what scale to choose in addressing specific problems. Second is the problem of correctly scaling one's own position in relation to the object of study. Last but not least, there is the question particularly specific to the Cluster of Excellence, namely of just what the relationship between scales and transculturality actually is.

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