The Flow of Concepts and Institutions. Annual Conference of the Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context"

Veranstalter: Subrata Mitra / Antje Flüchter / Jivanta Schöttli, Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Heidelberg University
Datum, Ort: 06.10.2010-08.10.2010,
Bericht von: Radu Carciumaru, South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University; Martin Hofmann / David Mervart, Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Heidelberg University

Heidelberg University's Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context" held its three-day annual conference on the theme of „The Flow of Concepts and Institutions", organized by Subrata Mitra, Antje Flüchter and Jivanta Schöttli. The aim of the conference was to explore concepts of governance and religiosity from a transcultural perspective.

The opening keynote lecture by QUENTIN SKINNER (London) focused on the complex history of the concept of liberty, individual freedom in particular. Identifying freedom as Europe's prime „export" concept, Skinner sketched a genealogy of the rival historical definitions of the notion as put forth by the pivotal Anglophone thinkers. In response to questions from the audience he contended that, although admittedly based on European material only, the genealogy as a tree of conceptual opportunities could conceivably be applied to other contexts, including Asian, thus enriching a historian's analytical toolkit. He also gestured toward a more active role for a historian-genealogist, who might recover for his contemporaries the traces of conceptual opportunities buried in the course of past controversies.

On the second day, a full podium discussion continued to unravel the contested deployments of key terms of political theory past and present. BO STRATH's (Florence) conceptual history of „governance" identified the struggles involved in defining concepts which, he argued, is a political process in itself. Crucial to any conceptual history is the need to identify counter-concepts. Replacing most former usages of the term government, the neat, fashionable vocabulary of „governance" partly serves to cover up the fault lines in political discourse past and present and reduce its complexity. Examining views from 17th century Germany concerning governance processes in Mughal India, ANTJE FLÜCHTER (Heidelberg) highlighted the relevance of the then prevalent concept of „gute policey". Flüchter proposed that analyzing the perceptions of religion and the legal system of the Mughal Empire in the light of this concept leads to a new and more historically appropriate picture of European notions of India.

Another podium discussion explored how societies, designated as „traditional", react to concepts and institutions classified as „modern". While reflecting on the idea of conceptual flows, NIRAJA GOPAL JAYAL (New Delhi) showed how the notion of „legal citizenship" travelled the same geographical trajectory over different time periods, acquiring a differentiated quality based on its local appropriations. Jayal demonstrated that legal citizenship holds specific meanings in different institutional settings, being differently appropriated and deployed for different political objectives. RUDOLF WAGNER (Heidelberg) explored the function of metaphors in becoming vehicles of discourse and providing rallying points of public imagination and action. Drawing on Chinese political essays, cartoons and other images between 1870-1930, Wagner reminded the audience of the common metaphor of a „sleeping nation" in Europe and documented its deployments in China's public sphere, from a Chinese nation „asleep" to „awakening", including the equation of being „fast asleep" with being, historically, „dead".

The afternoon session was divided into four separate panels. The focus of the panel „The politics of conceptual change" was the interaction of existing East Asian and newly introduced Western concepts and terminology of government, polity, and religion. The panel „Exhibitions" examined „modern art" and the institution of modern art museums as two entangled concepts that determine the field of art production across Asia and Europe in the 20th century to the present day. The third panel explored aspects of governance in re-

lation to phenomena, notions and institutional forms that traverse national and cultural borders. Finally, the Cluster's IT infrastructure (Heidelberg Research Architecture) featured the projects currently under development, as well as the tools already available to assist the Cluster members in their transcultural research.

The second day of the conference was concluded by the keynote lecture by SOBHAN-LAL DATTA GUPTA (Kolkata), who addressed the impact of Marxism in Asia after the Russian revolution. Taking as examples the communist leaderships in the Middle-East, China, Korea, Vietnam and India, he argued that, since the idea of revolution and the related concepts of social and political change had been defined in the West, Asian Marxists had to adapt them to their own cultural backgrounds. Gupta proposed that the decline of Marxism in Asia, after an initial stage of success, may have been the result of a flawed understanding of these concepts.

Two podium discussions dedicated to the overarching theme of „Conceptualizing religiosity" opened the third day of the conference. The first podium discussion consisted of two papers. VOLKHARD KRECH's (Bochum) presentation raised important questions regarding the state of the field and current challenges faced by the scholars studying religion, both in the historical and present-day perspectives. Among such challenges are the historical dominance of the Western perspective, the difficulty of distinguishing different religious traditions and the question of what exactly constitutes the religious field in different historical and geographic contexts. Krech proposed to strike a balance between the concrete materials and historical context, to consider the processes of formation of regionally-bound religious fields, their continuous abstraction and further emergence of global religious fields, and to identify the meaning of religion and spectrum of basic religious concepts necessary for the formation of such. JOACHIM FRIEDRICH QUACK's (Heidelberg) paper dealt specifically with the flow of deities between ancient Egypt and its neighboring countries. Ancient deities were perceived not only as specific divine entities but also as tangible figures defined by the materiali-

ty of the very objects impersonating or embodying them. In some case studies, the Egyptian deities are perceived and conceptualized as the lords of foreign countries, whereas other findings indicate that it was the foreign deities whose presence and influence had to be acknowledged in Egypt. The investigation of such processes of transfer highlights the importance of migration and flows in the ancient world and offers a useful insight into the workings of religious impetus both within and outside ancient Egypt.

In the second podium discussion on „Conceptualizing religiosity", INKEN PROHL (Heidelberg) proposed „transreligion" as a new analytical category for the study of religion. The advantage of approaching religiosity from this perspective lies in its applicability and its ability to capture recent developments. Moreover, Prohl suggested, this category positions practice, as opposed to theory, in the center of researchers' attention. MARK JUERGENSMEYER (Santa Barbara) portrayed religious violence as a global phenomenon triggered by a loss of faith in secular nationalism. After exemplifying the emergence and the escalation stages of religious violence in different parts of the world, Juergenmeyer highlighted certain common themes and causes characteristic of all religious movements and outlined some strategies to contain such violence.

The afternoon was divided into two sessions with three panels each. The panelists on „Secret intelligence" analyzed the relevance of undercover knowledge-gathering in pre-modern societies, illustrating how concrete pieces of information about practices and institutions were transferred between Asia and Europe. The second panel highlighted the transfer of ideas from an archaeological perspective. It presented case studies that document the existence of „global" interactions within and among pre-modern societies and thus proposed that ideas, symbols and technologies spread throughout the world along with material artifacts. Finally, the panel „The pre-modern reconsidered" analyzed the migration and appropriation of religious concepts within East Asia.

In her acclaimed film, whose screening opened the last block of panels, DEEPA-

LI GAUR SINGH (Heidelberg) explored the multi-faceted lives of the Afghan diaspora in Germany as it attempts to re-build a social identity amid discourses of alienation and assimilation in the host country. The film dealt with the themes of memory, loss, identity, alterity and multiple belongings permeating the individual narratives, lived experiences and collective histories. Exemplifying the variegated types of self-conception, the film challenged the notion of a rigid, singular and homogenized group identity supposedly characterizing the Afghans in Germany.

The contributions to the panel „Governing health in South Asia with European institutions" addressed the impact of Western medical notions and practices on the contemporary Indian health system. The topic of the last regular panel „The pen and the brush" were pictorial representations of the cultural „other" and the motivations for adjustments and the re-contextualization of these depictions.

In the concluding plenary session HARALD FUESS (Heidelberg), Niraja Gopal Jayal, DAVID JACOBSON (Tampa), SUBRATA MITRA (Heidelberg) and MADELEINE HERREN-OESCH (Heidelberg) discussed the relevance of the Cluster's agenda to the concerns of the broader public, as well as the contribution in terms of concepts and methodologies that it can make to the ongoing study of transculturality. While commenting on the diversity of the research at the Cluster, Jayal called for a more cautious and discriminating use of the analytical concept of „flow", one of the hallmark terms of the Cluster's methodological arsenal. Jacobson pointed out that if any methodology is to be universally accepted it must have a multi-operational approach and suggested diversification as a strategy for the pursuit of knowledge. Fuess welcomed the importance given to visual material in the Cluster's research and acknowledged the difficulties in identifying concepts that are truly universal. In conclusion, Herren-Oesch emphasized that a move towards a global history of concepts could help bridge the gap between area studies and related disciplines.

Conference overview:

Keynote lecture
Quentin Skinner (London)

„European visions of liberty: a genealogy"

Podium discussion I – Conceptualising governance
Chair: Markus Pohlmann (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Thomas Maissen (Heidelberg)

Bo Strath (Florence)
„Conceptualising governance: what is wrong with government?"

Antje Flüchter (Heidelberg)
„Conceptualising Indian governance between archetype and antipode: gute policey or oriental despotism"

Podium disussion II – Conceptualising governance
Chair: Madeleine Herren-Oesch (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Subrata Mitra (Heidelberg)

Niraja Gopal Jayal (New Delhi)
„The governance of the other: how religion frames alienage and citizenship."

Rudolf Wagner (Heidelberg)
„Migrating metaphors of the state: visual and textual evidence."

Panel Session I

a) The politics of conceptual change: notions of government, polity, and religion in East Asia´s confrontation with western modernity
Chair & Discussant: Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg)

Ulrike Büchsel (Heidelberg)
„'Nation' in Qing conservative political thought, 1901-1911"

Hans Martin Krämer (Bochum)
„Conceptual change and the boundaries of historical action: policing 'religion(s)' in Japan, 1600-1900"

Michael Burtscher (Tokyo / Harvard): „The subject as sovereign: notes on the terminological conception of modernity in modern Japan"

David Mervart (Heidelberg)
„Talking government without saying liberty: a case for counterfactual history of political theory"

b) Exhibitions - mediating the transcultural flow of art concepts and museum practices
Chair: Melanie Trede (Heidelberg)

Discussant: Carla Meyer (Heidelberg)

Patrizia Kern (Heidelberg)
„Global actors - national museum? The makers and the making of the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art"

Catherine Bublatzky (Heidelberg)
„The display of Indian contemporary art in western museums and the question of 'othering"'

Franziska Koch (Heidelberg)
„The virtualization of Chinese contemporary art: countering the modernist museum and educating a Chinese internet audience?"

c) 'Governance' - a transcultural perspective: insights from the field
Chair: Jivanta Schoettli (Heidelberg)

Roberta Tontini (Heidelberg)
„The juridical language of Islam and its translation in imperial China."

Matthias Liehr (Heidelberg)
„The relationship between environmental governance and civil society in China: a transcultural perspective."

Markus Pauli (Heidelberg)
„Microfinance in India: assessing its impact with the capability approach"

Mareike Ohlberg (Heidelberg)
„The impact of Le Bon and Lippmann on the perception of mass-elite relations in 21st century China."

Lion Koenig (Heidelberg)
„Breaking up the pseudo-community? 'Cultural citizenship' and media empowerment in India: challenges and opportunities."

Poster presentations of selected projects from the cluster

Panel Session II - Heidelberg Research Architecture: developing tools for cluster research
Chair: Joachim Kurtz (Heidelberg)

Panelists:
Matthias Arnold, Christoph Bertolo, Eric Decker, Jennifer May, Anna Mündelein, Jens Ostergaard Peterson, Dulip Withanage

Keynote lecture II
Sobhanlal Datta Gupta (Kolkata)
„Marxism, modernity and revolution: the Asian experience."

Podium discussion III – Conceptualising religiosity
Chair: Rudolf Wagner (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Birgit Kellner (Heidelberg)

Volkhard Krech (Bochum)
„How to conceptualise religion and religiosity in a comparative perspective: some preliminary considerations."

Joachim Friedrich Quack (Heidelberg)
„Importing and exporting gods? On the flow of deities between Eygpt and its neighbouring countries."

Podium discussion IV – Conceptualising religiosity
Chair: Jörg Gengnagel (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Ute Huesken (Oslo)

Inken Prohl (Heidelberg)
„A devastating diagnosis: religion, transreligion, no religion at all? Some further considerations"

Mark Juergensmeyer (California)
„Global rebellions: religious challenges to the secular state"

„Asian cultures of learning"
An Initiative of Oslo University: Mette Halskov Hansen & Ute Huesken & Mark Teeuwen

Panel Session III

a) Secret intelligence
Chair: Sven Externbrink (Marburg/Heidelberg)
Discussant: Adam Shelley (Cambridge)
Rapporteur: Lina Weber (Heidelberg)

Tobias Graf (Heidelberg)
„Renegades to the Ottoman empire and intelligence, 1580-1610"

Barend Noordam (Heidelberg)
„Military intelligence in early modern Eurasia: the case of the europeans in India and China, 1500-1700"

Peter I. Trummer (Heidelberg)
„East meets West: Sun Tzu and Clausewitz on intelligence"

b) The transfer of ideas: an archaeological perspective
Chair: Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (Heidel-

berg)
Discussant: Margareta Pavaloi (Heidelberg)

Sarah Cappel (Heidelberg)
„Lasting impressions: the role of seals and sealings in the transfer of an administrative concept."

Nicolas Zenzen (Heidelberg)
„Hippodamos and Phoenicia: on the relationship between city planning and social order in a transcultural context."

Svenja Nagel (Heidelberg)
„The goddess' new clothes: conceptualising an 'Eastern' goddess for a 'Western' audience."

c) The Pre-modern reconsidered
Chair: Sebastian Meurer (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Gerrit J. Schenk (Darmstadt)

Anna Andreeva (Heidelberg)
„Esoteric Kami rituals in premodern Japan: 'country bumpkins' and the quest for sudden enlightenment."

Dominic Steavu: (Heidelberg)
„Divination and meditation in the context of East Asian curative rituals."

Panel Session IV

a) Film on the Afghan diaspora in Germany by Deepali Gaur Singh (Heidelberg)
Discussants: Alessandro Monsutti (Geneva), Elisabeth Eide (Oslo)

b) Governing health in South Asia with European institutions
Chair: Udo Simon (Heidelberg)
Discussant: William Sax (Heidelberg)

Gabriele Alex
„Primary health centres in South India: transplanting Western ideas of health management and health education to South India."

Sheela Saravanan (Heidelberg)
„Commercial surrogacy in India: objectification of gestational mothers and babies."

Ananda Samir Chopra (Heidelberg)
„Upadeœa to syllabus: traditional Ayurveda and modern medicine in the 2009 syllabus for Ayurvedic undergraduate studies."

c) The pen and the brush: negotiating concepts of alterity between images and text

Chair: Melanie Trede (Heidelberg)
Discussant: Monica Juneja (Heidelberg)

Nicoletta Fazio (Heidelberg)
„A 'transcultural' community? The monastery, H. 2153 fol. 131b, Topkapi Sarayi Muzesi, Istanbul."

Eva Zhang (Heidelberg)
"'The temple of devils': image transfers of religious alterity between early modern East Asia and Europe."

Jule Nowoitnick (Heidelberg)
"'Then will there arise a new Jenghiz Khan': Michael Prawdin's 'Tschingis-Chan und sein Erbe' (1938) in the context of Nazi propaganda."

Plenary and announcement of poster prize
Chair: Subrata Mitra (Heidelberg)
Discussants: Niraja Jayal Gopal (New Delhi), David Jacobson (Tampa), Harald Fuess (Heidelberg), Madeleine Herren-Oesch (Heidelberg)