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- Of Dying Machines and Grievable Digital Lives — Framing War and Life in *NieR:Automata*
- Opportunities and Disadvantages: The Institutional Embeddedness of North Korean Defector Entrepreneurs in South Korea
- Taiwan with a Side of New Public Diplomacy — The Gastrodiplomacy of Taiwan's Representative Offices as Served in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna
- Jiang Qing, between Fact and Fiction: The Many Lives of a Revolutionary Icon
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- Exploring Rural Well-Being through an Interdisciplinary Lens — The "Shrinking, but Happy" Research Team at the University of Vienna

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Editorial

Junge Wiener Ostasienwissenschaften

Martin Mandl und Florian Purkarthofer

Einleitung

Die vergangenen eineinhalb Jahre waren geprägt von großer Unsicherheit und verlangten uns allen viel Flexibilität ab. Als Asienforschende war es für uns selbstverständlich, vor Ort Erhebungen durchzuführen, Kolleg*innen zu treffen und aktuelle Eindrücke zu sammeln. Nicht so in den Corona-Jahren 2020 und 2021; auch heute noch spüren wir vielerorts die Auswirkungen auf unsere Arbeit und unser gewohntes Leben.

Konferenzen sind weiterhin in den digitalen Raum verlegt und Interviewpartner*innen vor Ort halten weiter Abstand. Besonders betroffen von diesen Auswirkungen der Pandemie sind die Jungwissenschaftler*innen der DGA. Anders als ihre etablierten Kolleg*innen können sie oftmals noch nicht auf ein dichtes Netz an Kontakten vor Ort zurückgreifen, wenn die Reisebeschränkungen einen Besuch im jeweiligen Forschungsland unmöglich machen. Während sie in Onlinekonferenzen zwar ihre Forschung vorstellen und freundliches Feedback erhalten können, so fehlt doch die tieferführende Diskussion „zwischen Tür und Angel“, und auch der persönliche Anschluss an die eigene wissenschaftliche Community kommt zu kurz. Ohne Rücksicht auf die gravierenden Einschnitte in die Arbeitsrealitäten des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses rücken die Anstellungsenden befristeter Verträge unvermindert näher.

Sichtbarkeit

Unter diesen Aspekten entwickelt die vorliegende Ausgabe zusätzliche Bedeutung. Entstanden ist dieses Heft mit der Idee, den Themenreichtum innerhalb des wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchses der Ostasienwissenschaften an der Universität Wien einem breiten Publikum in der DGA und darüber hinaus zu präsentieren. Gerade in Zeiten persönlicher Distanz erlangt diese Veröffentlichung für den wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs aber zusätzliche Bedeutung. Wird doch die Publikation der eigenen Forschungsergebnisse und -ansätze in Form von Artikeln und Research Notes immer noch als das probate Mittel zur wissenschaftlichen Sichtbarmachung verstanden. Dass die Gruppe der jungen Wiener Ostasienforschenden diese Sichtbarkeit auch über den deutschen Sprachraum hinaus

nicht scheut, beweist die Tatsache, dass sich alle Autor*innen dieser Ausgabe für eine Veröffentlichung auf Englisch entschieden haben. Dies spiegelt natürlich den Forschungsalltag der Ostasienwissenschaften wider, wo neben der jeweiligen Landessprache Englisch unabdingbar ist. Vielleicht kann dies jedoch auch als Denkanstoß über die Situation von Jungwissenschaftler*innen im deutschen Sprachraum generell gedeutet werden, wo internationale Mobilität das einzige Mittel zum beruflichen Überleben in der Wissenschaft darstellt.

Das vorliegende Heft holt also eine Gruppe der „Jungen Wiener Ostasienforschung“ vor den coronabedingt gesenkten Vorhang. Die Gruppe der Autor*innen vereint nicht nur ihre Zugehörigkeit zum Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften der Universität Wien, sondern auch, dass Sie ihr wissenschaftliches Engagement und ihren Wissensdrang nicht von der Pandemie und ihren massiven Auswirkungen auf den Forschungs- und Lehralltag haben schmälern lassen. Die hier vorgestellten Autor*innen haben es geschafft, flexibel und adaptiv auf die Herausforderungen der Pandemie in ihren individuellen Arbeiten zu reagieren.

Die vorliegenden Texte behandeln beispielhaft eine Vielfalt an Themenfeldern, die weit über Ostasien hinaus aktuelle Brisanz und Relevanz zeigen. Die Beschäftigung mit Ostasien ist hier immer auch Spiegel größerer globaler Strömungen. Aber auch der lokale Kontext will verstanden und professionell interpretiert sein. Dazu ist der eingangs erwähnte persönliche Austausch vor Ort unabdingbar. Hoffen wir alle, dass bald nachhaltige „Ruhe“ einkehrt und eine gewisse Rückkehr zur feldforschenden Realität, gerade für den asienwissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs, dauerhaft möglich ist.

Anpassungsfähigkeit

Die hier präsentierten Daten greifen teilweise auf Feldforschung vor der Pandemie zurück, zeigen aber auch deutlich die Adaptionfähigkeit der Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen auf die geänderten Rahmenbedingungen. Eine Fähigkeit, der nicht zuletzt auch von Seiten der wissenschaftlichen Institutionen mehr Rechnung getragen werden sollte. Denn die Pandemie wirkt gleichwohl disruptiv fort. Der Disruption zum Trotz beweisen die Jungen Wiener Ostasienwissenschaftler*innen hier stellvertretend für eine ganze Generation der Asienforschung in hervorragender wissenschaftlicher Arbeit ihr Gespür für relevante Fragestellungen und kreative Herangehensweisen.

Christina Gmeinbauer und Sebastian Polak-Rottmann eröffnen dieses Heft mit einem Ausblick in das Jahr 11945. Ihre Studie zum japanischen Computerspiel *NieR: Automata* als digitaler Raum politischen Philosophierens zeigt Konstruktionen von Menschsein/Nicht-Menschsein und Leben/Nicht-Leben auf und betont, wie die Diskurse des (Post-)Humanismus unser Verständnis über Narrative von Leben und Verletzlichkeit im populärkulturellen Kriegskontext fördern. Marianne Jung bringt uns zurück in die gegenwärtige Realität nordkoreanischer Flüchtlinge in Südkorea. Benachteiligt in ihrer wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Integration, versuchen diese, vermehrt selbstständig wirtschaftlich tätig zu werden. Jedoch zeigt Jungs Studie,

dass das sozio-kulturelle und politisch-institutionelle Südkorea es noch nicht schafft, diese Entwicklung mit positiven Anreizen für die nordkoreanischen Neo-Unternehmer*innen zu unterstützen.

Im Sinne der Gastrodiplo­matie als Ausprägung einer neuen Public Diplomacy untersucht Martin Mandl anschließend die Verwendung von Essen in Aussendungen taiwanischer Botschaften im deutschsprachigen Raum. Er identifiziert dabei nicht nur wiederkehrende Gerichte, sondern erkennt eine Verortung der Speisen innerhalb Taiwans, die weitestgehend ohne Verweis auf die VR China als Bezugspunkt auskommt. Silvia Salino schließt den Kreis der referierten Artikel mit ihrer Studie zu vier verschiedenen Biografien von Jiang Qing. Sie zeigt auf, wie jede*r der Autor*innen spezifische Erzählstrategien nutzt, um ein anderes Bild von *Madame Mao* zu zeichnen, und schließt dadurch auf die Formbarkeit der Biografie als Genre.

In Form von Research Notes erlauben uns drei weitere junge Wiener Ostasienwissenschaftler*innen Einblicke in ihre vielfältige Arbeit. Jiachuan Li greift dazu die Figur der Fuchs-Frau aus der ostasiatischen Literatur und Mythologie auf und untersucht ihre Popularität in der Literatur des 21. Jahrhunderts außerhalb Ostasiens mit unterschiedlichen methodologisch-disziplinären Linsen. Timna Michlmayr evaluiert die Einführung von bodenbasierten Kommunalanleihen in der VR China. Sie kommt zu dem Schluss, dass diese Einführung als Stärkung der Top-down-Kontrolle über die Finanzen der Lokalregierungen interpretiert werden kann. Florian Purkarthofer schließlich nimmt uns mit in die Olympia-Stadt Tokio, wo er divergierenden Konzeptionen des Lokalen nachspürt – eine theoretische Beschäftigung mit den Ebenen, Facetten und Grenzen des Alltagsraums anhand konkreter Beispiele aus der Global City.

In der Kategorie Forschung und Lehre veranschaulichen abschließend Dionyssios Askitis, Antonia Miserka und Sebastian Polak-Rottmann, wie Interdisziplinarität und Methodenmix in einem jungen Forschungsteam funktionieren können. Mit ihrem „Shrinking, but Happy“-Projekt zum ländlichen Wohlbefinden in Japan wurden die Jungwissenschaftler*innen bereits mit dem Doc-Team-Stipendium der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften ausgezeichnet. Sie zeigen auch deutlich auf, wie die Corona-Pandemie die Planung und Durchführung von Forschungsprojekten gestört und kurzfristige Anpassungen im Feld notwendig gemacht hat.

Die hier dargestellte Forschung entstand größtenteils im Rahmen der Dissertationsprojekte der Jungen Wiener Ostasienwissenschaftler*innen. Es ist also in Zukunft noch mehr in diese Richtung zu erwarten. Gleichzeitig darf dieses Heft aber auch als Aufruf an alle Jungwissenschaftler*innen der DGA verstanden werden, ihre Arbeit mit Hilfe der unterschiedlichen Formate bei ASIEN zu präsentieren. Wir hoffen, hier der Redaktion nicht vorwegzugreifen, wenn wir sagen: „Nachahmung herzlich erwünscht!“.

Danksagungen

Unser Dank als Gast-Herausgeber dieser Ausgabe gilt dementsprechend der Redaktion von ASIEN sowie dem Vorstand der DGA, welche die Idee zu diesem Sonderheft von Anfang an wohlwollend unterstützt haben.

Weiters sei an dieser Stelle den internationalen Gutachter*innen gedankt, die ehrenamtlich Zeit und Energie in die Begutachtungsverfahren der einzelnen Beiträge gesteckt haben. Sie seien hier anonym für ihr Ehrenamt gewürdigt. Wir hoffen, Sie lesen die dank ihrer Kommentare gewachsenen und gereiften Artikel mit entsprechender Freude!

In großzügiger Art und Weise unterstützte außerdem das Institut für Ostasienwissenschaften der Universität Wien die Veröffentlichung der vorliegenden Texte durch Finanzierung des Fremdsprachenlektorats. Unser Dank gilt hierbei dem Institutsvorstand, Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Rüdiger Frank, sowie den Vize-Institutsvorständen der jeweiligen Fachbereiche, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Rainer Dormels, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Christian Göbel und Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Wolfram Manzenreiter.

Zu guter Letzt seien jedoch nochmals die Autorinnen und Autoren dieser Ausgabe hervorgehoben, deren Beiträge großteils isoliert im Homeoffice neben verschiedensten persönlichen und beruflichen Mehrbelastungen entstanden sind. Stellvertretend für alle Nachwuchswissenschaftlerinnen und Nachwuchswissenschaftler der DGA verdeutlichen sie, was junge Asienwissenschaft auch in schwierigen Zeiten zu leisten vermag.

Abschließend wünschen wir natürlich den Lesenden besonders viel Freude und interessante Einblicke beim Streifzug durch die Vielfalt „Junger Wiener“ Ostasienwissenschaften. Und natürlich beste Gesundheit, das höchste Gut in pandemischen Zeiten.

Wien, im Sommer 2021

Refereed article

Of Dying Machines and Grievable Digital Lives — Framing War and Life in *NieR:Automata*

Christina Gmeinbauer and Sebastian Polak-Rottmann

Summary

War and death are common topics in popular culture. In war-themed digital games, reflections on armed conflict and its atrocities vary greatly, ranging from games that trivialize the consequences of killing and loss to ones that offer critical perspectives on the player's actions instead. In this paper we analyze the 2017 war-themed game *NieR:Automata* (Platinum Games) which revolves around an endless war between androids and other machines in a distant future. We focus on how the game reflects on war and death, showing that it discusses these topics in complex ways. At the beginning of the game, *NieR:Automata* illustrates how during war enemies are framed as “non-lives” that need to be exterminated. Gradually, however, the game questions these framings and depicts machines as lives that are vulnerable and that may be grieved for. While *NieR:Automata* at first applies genre-typical frames of death and makes the reversibility of the latter explicit in ludic and narrative elements of the game, it later introduces permanent loss of protagonists, antagonists, and — in the end — also the save files. The game therefore discusses the vulnerable and hence grievable lives of machines, offering rich perspectives on life in war.

Keywords: NieR:Automata, war-themed games, war games, death, vulnerability, game-like realism, Japanese games, digital games

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Introduction

The year is 11945. Androids and machine life-forms engage in a fierce battle to decide whether Earth belongs to humankind or to invading aliens. Supported by high-tech weapons and war technology, two androids affiliated with the unit Yoruha¹ descend from their unit's space station to take part in the 14th machine war and protect the remaining humans, who have escaped to the moon. On her way to battle, one of them remarks: "We are caught in a continuous spiral where life and death repeat after each other. I wonder if this is a curse or punishment." (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 1)

The digital game *NieR:Automata* is merely one example of the vast number of pop-culture works that reflect on war. In Japan, given its dual role during World War II as both aggressor and victim, war is a contentious but nevertheless prominent topic in popular culture such as manga or anime. Reflections on WWII, particularly, arise from a victim's perspective (Pellitteri 2009) but may also promote critical or antiwar messages to a broad audience (Penney 2007). Analysis of revisionist or nostalgic frames (She 2020) indicates, on the other hand, that the depiction of war — even if not implicitly referencing WWII or other historical events — is far from uncontroversial in Japan. Thus critical approaches to works dealing with the topic of "war" dissect how it is narrated, negotiated, and constructed in different societies. In this paper we aim at contributing to this understanding by exploring how war is framed and discussed in the Japanese war-themed game *NieR:Automata* developed by Platinum Games and released 2017.

Like other popular media formats, digital games can be considered cultural artifacts that on the one hand are produced in and thus shaped by certain societal contexts and on the other are received by audiences who may interpret their contents differently² depending on their own surroundings. Meaning-making revolving around a text thus needs to be understood as a complex communication process that is shared between producers, receivers, and a product. While focusing on only one of these aspects certainly has its limitations, in-depth analysis of a game itself reveals relevant results regarding these processes. The game text functions not only as a site for negotiation and reflects on society, but also "create[s] vocabulary to talk about such topics, [...] and make[s] certain experiences 'speaking'" (Schubert 2018: 162). The text can thus be regarded as a multilayered construct that plays a significant role in meaning-making processes. While it would certainly be an interesting approach to observe how *NieR:Automata*

1 The game examined in this study was played in Japanese. All names not clearly distinguishable as English or other languages have been transcribed in Hepburn romanization, and all quotes from the game have been translated from Japanese by the authors themselves.

2 As Hall (2019) pointed out, recipients of a media text may understand its messages differently than they were intended by the author/producer, and Jenkins (1992) explored how fans of pop-culture works may productively add personal meanings to them.

is perceived by other players, in this paper we decide to mainly focus on the game in question as a starting point for facilitating further potential research. As Lankoski and Björk argue, it may be “difficult to understand play or player behavior in a game if one does not know what constitutes the gameplay” (2015: 6).

Scholars have demonstrated how digital games can deploy powerful messages and ideas regarding everyday life, politics, and international relations. As Bogost (2007) notes in his writings about procedural rhetoric, political processes can be experienced in serious games such as *September 12*, but also in *America’s Army* — a game used by the US Army as a recruiting tool. He argues that games may show “how political structures operate, or how they fail to operate, or how they could or should operate” (Bogost 2007: 74). But even commercial games have been examined regarding their political potentials — for example by Roth (2017), who analyzed the popular *Metal Gear Solid* series among others. He sees high potential in moments of disruption resulting from unresolved conflicts in gameplay that “might stimulate our imagination of radical alternatives” (Roth 2017: 35). It is this very notion that digital games are “thought-provoking” as “spaces of political philosophy that engage with fundamental questions of how we may best live together” (Roth 2017: 1) that underlines the significance of examining how digital games deal with questions concerning war. In this sense, scrutinizing *how* war is constructed in digital games (Zagal 2017) can help unravel socially shaped lines of argumentation and offer entry points for critique.

Research regarding war-themed digital games has pointed out that war is often constructed in simplifying ways (e.g. Lackner 2014), which is also linked to trivializing and instrumentalizing presentations of “life” and “death” during gameplay. By contrast, *NieR:Automata* illustrates these concepts in complex ways and breaks with various conventions established in other war-themed games: while at first it frames enemies as obstacles through corresponding rules, game mechanics, and narrative dialogues, it increasingly questions these framings and sheds light on the various ways in which war dehumanizes enemies in order to fight them. At the same time, it discusses the emotional and mental consequences that haunt individuals involved in armed conflict and thus takes a critical stance against simplifying depictions of war. Most intriguingly, it applies these concepts in a posthuman environment in which war is nevertheless fought by robotic machines in the name of humankind. Intentionally exploring human concepts without actual humans present (Muncy 2018: n.p.), this game employs a setting permitting critical questions regarding conceptualizations of “life” and “death,” practices framing individuals as “humans” or “enemies,” and, subsequently, the meaning of “war” itself.

In this paper we will analyze how *NieR:Automata* reflects on war especially through its posthuman environment and how its messages are shaped by its qualities as a digital game. We first give a brief overview of approaches to the depiction of life, death, and war in digital games in order to understand how

NieR:Automata may be situated within the broader context. We then proceed to explain the overall plot of the game and how it has been discussed in previous research so far. Thereafter we analyze selected sequences from the game to explore in-depth how war is depicted in it as a whole. We focus on how certain individuals in the game are framed as enemies, and how these framings gradually break apart in the course of the game's progression. Further, we explore how the posthuman environment conditions the mode of warfare described in the game. Our findings show that the game disengages from human concepts concerning bodily vulnerability in war and introduces an approach defining the "data" inscribed in a body as primarily vulnerable. As we are going to show, these messages are transported not only narratively but also by inviting the player to experience concepts concerning "life" and "death" in the course of interacting with this digital game.

Framing life through death: War (in) games

Experiencing war and death in a playful way

With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Butler defines war as a means of applying frames that "divid[e] populations into those who are grievable and those who are not" (2009: 38), emphasizing how what counts as life is dependent on these frames. When, however, lives are portrayed as being something other than life, they are framed as "ungrievable lives." These are "those that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed [...]; they are, ontologically, and from the start, already lost and destroyed, which means that when they are destroyed in war, nothing is destroyed" (Butler 2009: xix).

Butler's approach is based on observations in "real life," but nevertheless shows similarities to the depiction of life and death in digital games revolving around conflict. Death is a crucial part of gameplay not only in war-themed games: Digital games have found numerous ways to visualize the virtual death of the character that is controlled by the player — usually referred to as "player character" — ranging from falling into an endless abyss in platform games such as *Super Mario Bros.* to receiving a deadly wound on the battlefield in shooter games. The death of the player character generally signals failure to fulfill the goals set by the game; however, screen death is seldom permanent and often results in the game taking the player back to the same in-game sequence to complete the battle again (and again, if they should fail once more). Even in games restricting the number of retries, the eventual "Game Over" screen does not represent the protagonist's irreversible death, but at most increases the difficulty of gameplay. Even though older games released in the 1980s or 1990s must be started completely anew at this point, the player character will magically come back to life as though nothing happened in the previous playthrough. This is certainly not only true for the player character, but all characters (including enemies) depicted in a given game. Whereas Butler

criticizes practices framing human lives as something other than life, player characters and enemies in digital games cannot be considered as “alive” — yet they are still described as “lives” subject to “death.” They must be ungrievable lives, however, because when they are destroyed in-game, nothing is destroyed.

Death of the player character as such has been considered a highly instrumentalized function in digital gameplay. As Harrer notes, one’s demise is “potentially hindering but never entirely threatening the player, [with] ‘game over’ [being] yet another moment in an infinite circuit of trial and error, subverting the meaning of death as end of life by using it as a sanctioning mechanism for ill-performed player interaction” (2013: 610). As regards massively multiplayer online games such as *World of Warcraft*, death has been defined as a form of temporary punishment that must yet be considered “a symbolic and cultural event” — not only fueling discussions among players about heroic ways of dying, but also functioning as a convenient strategy for quickly traveling to distant locations (Klastrup 2006). Death in digital games has been criticized as trivializing, as Frasca explains: “[It] is always just a minor detail: it can be fixed” (2000: 4). On another scale, games dealing essentially with loss — such as *That Dragon, Cancer* — offer unique experiences because they dismantle conventional gameplay patterns, most notably in the fact that “there is no win state” (Schott 2017: 8).

Regardless of the various depictions and functions of death, scholars have pointed out the possibilities that emerge from the ideas thereof deployed in digital games. Mukherjee sees the critique regarding digital death as grounded in an accidental bias and reframes it in the context of “reincarnation and immanent existence” (2009: 1), considering death as part of many different “actualizations within a virtuality of events” (2009: 2). For Azuma (2007: 1604–1609), the possibility to “multiply the characters’ lives” or to “reset death” characterizes what he calls “game-like realism” (*gēmu-teki riarizumu*). In restarting the game again and again after each “death” of the player character, a variety of alternative versions of the game’s narrative may be experienced (Azuma 2001: 115). Gallagher, too, calls for a refined look at digital games in this regard, in order to understand how they might contribute to a “revolution in the popular understanding of life and death” (2013: n.p.). As we can conclude from these considerations, digital death is a complex matter, spawning debates with ambiguous outcomes that are concerned with the question of how digital games frame life through the meaning they assign to death.

This becomes especially apparent in discussions regarding games focusing on war, which have attracted much scholarly attention in monographs, anthologies, and special issues (see Harrigan and Kirschenbaum 2016; Payne 2016; Pötzsch and Hammond 2016), mostly from a United States-oriented perspective and in relationship to their qualities as a military-focused form of entertainment. Keogh notes that military-themed shooters mostly reflect on war by deploying dichotomous worldviews, where “good” US soldiers fight “bad” guys on

battlefields without civilians, and violent acts have no consequences for those involved — what he describes as “simplistic, romantic, and jingoistic depictions of the modern, high-tech battlefield” (2013: 2). These games often feature what Allen calls “the unreal enemy,” one deprived of ethnic or cultural markers, “anonymous yet potentially anyone” (2011: 52). Payne notes meanwhile how these narratives promote a “national mythology as the world’s lone and righteous military superpower” (2016: 27). In many games, the distinction between the fighting party of the player and the enemy is clear-cut, suggesting that in defeating the latter, order is restored (Lackner 2014).

However such depictions have been questioned and indeed subverted in serious games such as *New York Defender* or *Kabul Kaboom* (Lee 2003), or even in mainstream shooter games like *Spec Ops: The Line* (Keogh 2013; Pötzsch 2017). While the first two make use of a procedural rhetoric stating that the games cannot be won (Lee 2003: n.p.), *Spec Ops: The Line* reflects on the protagonist’s own activities in a war setting. It does so by framing them initially along the lines of conventions usually employed in military-themed shooters, only to critically question the protagonist’s actions and to show the players something not often presented in war games: civilian deaths and the protagonist’s mental decline (Keogh 2013). As Keogh puts it: “The player does what they have always done, but what they have always done is shown to be something quite horrible” (2013: 14).

In a similar way, Tsujita (2018) argues that some war games on secondary playthrough offer the possibility to play as the nation the player used to fight against in their first playthrough. He sees “inherent potential” (Tsujita 2018: 1935) in this mechanic, as the player’s loyalty to a certain nation is challenged and places them in a double role as “patriot and traitor” (Tsujita 2018: 1994). Reflecting on *Counter-Strike*, Schäfer shows that the “anticipation (and in some instances irreversibility) of one’s death and thus the experience of a dimensional structure of time” (2009: 123) is what makes these games “authentic” or “real.” War in digital games is thus amenable to reframing via thoughtful variations in game mechanics and narrative construction.

As we can infer from these findings, many games focus on life, death, and war in simplifying and trivializing ways. Research has found, however, that these depictions are also critically examined and questioned in a number of other games. As we will see in the following section, their methods to this end can vary greatly in relationship to their sociocultural context.

War-themed games in Japan

When discussing portrayals of war in Japanese popular culture, we may consider WWII an event significantly influencing works that were created in the decades thereafter. Ōtsuka (2013) reflects on how death and war are illustrated in Japanese popular culture after WWII, examining Tezuka Osamu’s manga. He shows how

the author, while using symbolic ways of expression typical of the medium, goes to great effort in drawing “dying bodies” (*shiniyukushintai*) (Ôtsuka 2013: 2930–2933). Ôtsuka (2013: 2936–2942) links this emphasis on the consequences of war to Japan’s experiences during WWII, which differentiates Tezuka’s manga from many Hollywood or Disney productions where “bodies do not die” (*shinananishintai*) or even Japanese pre-war manga, wherein death in war was concealed.

Another frequent aspect of dealing with war in Japanese popular culture is the need to clarify why the protagonists fight, and why war is necessary in the first place (Adachi 2015: 12). Adachi (2015: 13) has explored at length how preserving one’s *kizuna* or “bond” to other people — and consequently to the nation or to humanity as a whole — seems to be the primary reason many characters in anime risk their lives and engage in war. This marks a strong contrast to narratives about prewar Japan, where such fighting did not need to be justified (Adachi 2015: 556–557). With robots, doomsday scenarios, and fears of nuclear disaster prominent in Japanese popular culture of the immediate postwar era, more recent narratives about war have dealt with ways to prevent or reverse tragedies or cope with loss meanwhile (Mori et al. 2020).

With regard to digital games, Hutchinson (2019: 182–184) points out that military-themed shooters are not as popular among Japanese players as they are in the US for example. While strategy games set in Japan’s feudal era, such as *Nobunaga’s Ambition* and *Sengoku Basara*, sell well on the Japanese market, games centered on WWII remain scarce due to Japan’s role in that conflict:

“[L]osing” narratives simply don’t make good games. [...]. We can also talk about the problem in terms of self-censorship, ideological conservatism, or possible compliance with governmental directives. Any scenario set in wartime Japan or the immediate postwar rebuilding period could not help but be political. (Hutchinson 2019: 190)

Japanese game developers therefore use a variety of strategies to talk about war. As Koski (2017) explains about the game *Valkyria Chronicles*, one such strategy may be to transfer the events of WWII to a fantasy world where the nation of Japan does not exist. As Hutchinson (2019) and Roth (2017) have argued, the *Metal Gear Solid* series deals in compelling ways with war, trauma, and the use of nuclear weapons, integrating real-life events into an overall fictitious plot. Similar to Koski’s object of study, *Metal Gear Solid* is remarkable in the fact that Japan is “strangely absent from the visible sphere of action, a victim of history with no bearing on the contemporary political world” (Hutchinson 2019: 213).

War-themed games developed in Japan must therefore be examined in different ways than their US counterparts. While Payne has argued that fantasy war games are more difficult to “meaningfully connect with current events” (2016: 5), we acknowledge — alongside Hutchinson and Koski — that in the case of Japanese games this exact indefinability might be a space for fruitful counternarratives, ones liberated from governmental ideas and agendas.

The lives and deaths of androids and *kikai seimeitai*

In the following section we will explain how *NieR:Automata* makes use of its expressive potential, particularly as a digital game, by looking at it not solely as narration but also with regard to its ludic qualities. In order to respect the game's complexity, we chose the method of play proposed by Aarseth (2003) and acknowledge that this creates the reality of the researcher becoming part of the game text as a player (Keogh 2014: 17; Lammes 2007: 28; Jennings 2015: 10). As both authors are experienced with digital games, we were able to proceed in the game without difficulties; however, this also resulted in intensified immersion while playing. To ensure in-depth analysis we played the game together, placing one researcher in the role of the player and allowing immersive gameplay while the other observed the game events from the perspective of a viewer. Further, we used records of certain sequences and experimented with gameplay to reach a thorough understanding of the game at hand.

“A continuous spiral where life and death repeat after each other”: Rewind mechanics and the plot of *NieR:Automata*

NieR:Automata (2017) is a role-playing game developed by Platinum Games, published by Square Enix, and designed by Yokoo Tarō, who is famous for using controversial protagonists and topics in his games. The game is the sequel to *NieR* (2010), with some of the latter's characters carrying over. *NieR:Automata* had high sales in Japan, becoming the twelfth-most successful game in the national console market in 2017 (Famitsu 2018: 400). Compared to Europe, where it ranks 69th (vgchartz 2021a), or the US, where it reached 66th place (vgchartz 2021b) among the bestselling console games of 2017, *NieR:Automata* was notably more popular in Japan. The world of *NieR:Automata* is narrated not only in the game but also through media-mix productions including for example a stage play explaining events that take place before the actual gameplay narration (Famitsu 2017b).

During gameplay, the player takes on the roles of three androids — 2B, 9S, and A2 — as player characters. The game makes great use of what Kleinman et al. label “designer controlled rewind” (2018: 3): After completing the first playthrough as 2B and reaching ending “A,” players are taken back to the beginning of the story to play it again, but this time from the perspective of 9S. However, when the player again reaches the “end” of the game — this time called “B” — it is revealed that the first two playthroughs were merely an “extended prologue,” as Greene (2020: 15) terms it. This extended prologue serves the purpose of explaining the events that now become playable in the roles of 9S and A2 and that will be concluded in endings “C,” “D,” and “E.” *NieR:Automata* offers an additional 21 endings, ranging from “F” to “Z,” that can be pursued during gameplay and usually result from the player acting differently than how the game tells them to (i.e. leaving the battlefield without fighting). Yokoo has used similar narrative styles in

his other games, causing players “to question their actions across the whole game” (Greene 2020: 17).

War and ideas concerning life and death are a crucial part of the game’s narrative. The overall plot revolves around an everlasting battle between androids and so-called *kikai seimeitai* (“machine life-forms”) fighting in the name of humankind and of aliens respectively. While the protagonists 2B and 9S at first uncritically engage in war, they gradually start to question their roles as soldiers as they discover that humans and aliens have long been extinct. Yoruha’s commander, whom 9S confronts about this conspiracy, explains that this lie is necessary for the war to go on: “No one can fight without reason. We need a God who deserves that we offer up our lives” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 9, route “B”). The de facto meaningless battles continue, leading to the permanent death of the *kikai seimeitai* Adam, whose brother Eve becomes infected with a so-called logical virus (*ronri uirusu*) while grieving for him. He becomes absorbed by the idea of destroying all androids. While Eve can be defeated by 2B and 9S, the spread of the virus shortly afterward leads to the destruction of the android’s main base, Bunker, and to the permanent death of 2B. This, in turn, leads to the corruption of 9S, who seeks to destroy all *kikai seimeitai* as well as the deserted android A2, whom he wrongfully believes to be 2B’s murderer. Depending on player decision-making, the plot of the game ends with either 9S and A2 killing each other, leading to the *kikai seimeitai* leaving Earth, or with A2 sacrificing herself in order to destroy the *kikai seimeitai* network and save 9S.

The game tells a rather gloomy story, with developer Yokoo attempting to demonstrate that humans “cannot flee from conflict and hate. That’s why a videogame imitating the real world [*genjitsu sekai o mohō suru*] can only turn out like this” (Famitsu 2017a: n.p.). This view is also discussed in-game, as Adam utters the belief that “[t]he basic quality of being human is conflict [...]. Fighting, stealing, and killing each other. This is [what it means to be] human!” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 8). In showing the inevitability of loss and the meaninglessness of war in general, Yokoo questions mainstream depictions thereof in popular culture. He would remark in an interview that:

When I hear for example a story ending in a reunion with the heroine, kissing her after killing a hundred hostile soldiers, rather the protagonist seems utterly insane to me. I think that’s why my works are said to be dark, because they are the results of me trying to portray the world the way it really is. (Famitsu 2017a: n.p.)

Previous research on the game states that defeating an enemy in *NieR:Automata* is designed to be simultaneously enjoyable (via the game mechanics) and guilt-provoking (Muncy 2018). During gameplay, expectations that players take for granted are often not fulfilled (Gerrish 2018: 4–5), subsequently leading to a feeling of unease. Due to this complexity, the game has been a frequent point of discussion in academia covering ethical (Jačević 2017), formalist (Gerrish 2018),

postcolonial (She 2020), or theological perspectives (Bosman 2019), to name just a few. Among Japanese players, too, the game is frequently evaluated to have a “rich plot that is worth thinking about” (*kōsatsu shigai no aru nōkō sutōrī*) (Waito 2021: n.p.). Players note that they have been provoked to reflect on whether machines or androids are human (toratugumi293 2019), on the value of life (Genomu 2017), on what it means to live freely (Usagisan@Entamekigyōkikakuman 2021).

Although the player actively engages in destroying or killing the machine life-forms, research found that *NieR:Automata* offers no conclusion or relief as might be encountered in other games. Jačević (2017: 14) explains that in playing the game, the player realizes that the world portrayed there is a “prison” from which they cannot escape. As has also been noted by others, the repetitive nature of the game is a comment on the disturbing nature of the circle of violence and the replaceability of bodies in wartime (Jačević 2017: 2; Greene 2020: 20).

We thus can see that this game has sparked reflection among players and academics alike. As we may already conclude from this brief introduction to the events of the game, *NieR:Automata* discusses war in critical and profound ways. In the following sections we will explore these in greater detail by illustrating the concepts of life and death introduced in its posthuman environment.

“They don’t have a heart”: Framing enemies in *NieR:Automata*

As early as in its opening sequence (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 1), *NieR:Automata* applies enemy frames to the mechanic *kikai seimeitai* that can be described as ones typical of digital games: As the android 2B descends to Earth to battle *kikai seimeitai* and collect information on their behavior, a briefing she receives from her operator reveals to the player that they will face a great number of enemies. As in many other games, *kikai seimeitai* are defined through rules and narration as enemies that need to be defeated to progress. The game’s interface applies conventional information like health bars and numerative information on how the actions the player takes against them reduces their “life.” While the alien life-forms against whom the war is actually directed remain relatively absent in the in-game descriptions, only to be revealed to have been wiped out by *kikai seimeitai* long ago, the game reflects deeply on the definition of the latter. In several dialogues between the androids 2B, 9S, their operator, and 2B’s supporting computer Pod 042, they are termed as “enemies” (*teki*) who need to be “quickly eliminated” (*sumiyaka na haijo*), “simply defeated” (*taoseba ii*), or “annihilated” (*senmetsu*). Further, their mechanical qualities, framing them as nonhuman as well as nonlife, are described by expressions such as “destroy” (*hakai*) or “break down” (*kowareru*), as well as via the possibility to hack and control them. By calling them mainly by their function — “saws” (*nokogiri*) or “weapons” (*heiki*) that are produced in great numbers in factories — they are constructed in a heavily objectified way and also reduced to their purpose in play: a “target” (*mokuhyō*) not only for the android unit Yoruha, but also for the player too.

We can conclude that at the beginning of the game *kikai seimeitai* are framed as enemies in ways very conventional for digital games. However, 2B's fellow Yoruha units are framed in an equally instrumentalized manner. Before players take on the role of 2B as a third-person player character, they start Chapter 1 in control of a spaceship reminiscent of early shoot-'em-ups such as *Space Invaders* and also engage in a similar game style: *kikai seimeitai* appear on the screen and need to be shot before the player can proceed. It is particularly remarkable that 2B flies in a convoy of similar-looking spaceships devoid of any individuality. A short interface note indicates that the spaceships are assigned numbers, but without any previous knowledge of the game it would be difficult to recognize that those are actually the names of Yoruha soldiers like 2B. The idea that, in war, participants resemble not an individual but rather a number is further underlined by the fact that the player cannot move at the beginning of the game and will only find out which of the numerous spaceships they are in charge of once movement is allowed. This view is further outlined by 2B, who coolly remarks that when spaceships are shot, their occupants become "lost" (*rosuto*) units, explaining their function as soldiers rather than individuals. That this function is easily replaceable by other soldiers is powerfully demonstrated when the group's captain is defeated and 2B takes on her role.

These framings of individuals participating in war is reminiscent of Butler's theoretical *Frames of War*, in which she explains that during war a life may be "effectively transformed into an instrument, a target, or a number, or is effaced with only a trace remaining or none at all" (2009: ix–x). Life, in this sense, is not something merely objective, but rather constructed socially and framed continuously; therefore, life may exist that is not counted as such and consequently is addressed differently. Even though human, enemies may not be counted as life — rather as a threat, and thus not the same as the lives recognized through these frames. Intriguingly, in the world of *NieR:Automata* neither the protagonists nor their enemies are human and thus are easily reduced purely to their military functions. We can see that androids and *kikai seimeitai* are both depicted in ways in line with Butler's elaborated framework. They are not recognized as living beings — even though *kikai seimeitai* are called "life-forms" (*seimeitai*) — but rather as machines whose sole purpose is to destroy other machines. In this way the game states that in war not only enemies but all participants become numbers and instruments, regardless of the sides they take.

Since in *NieR:Automata* the protagonists' lives are not, as suggested by Butler in regard to "real world" conflicts, necessarily valued over those of their enemies, other frames are hence employed to differentiate between androids and *kikai seimeitai*. While obviously androids and *kikai seimeitai* are both machines, the androids of Yoruha continuously emphasize the nonhuman qualities of their enemies to frame them in a derisive way. Androids are visually nearly indistinguishable from humans, but *kikai seimeitai* are designed to look more like walking tin cans with eyes. Nevertheless, they adopt human behavior such as

founding kingdoms and religions, eating, or wearing clothes. Whenever *kikai seimeitai* engage in human behavior, the androids remind each other that they cannot be taken seriously; or, as 9S puts it: “Don’t listen to them. They don’t have a heart. They simply imitate human language. We should destroy them” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 3). They are constantly denied the ability to act like or even understand humans, thus framing their actions as meaningless.

On the other hand, androids seem to see themselves as legitimate successors to humankind. While various *kikai seimeitai* clearly state that they take an interest in human behavior, 2B and 9S repeatedly show concern that they look like androids or are “human-like, in other words android” (*hito-gata tsumari andoroido*) — at one point even asking: “Why are they imitating the way we look?” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 4). While 9S and 2B demonstrate that even androids cannot understand all facets of human behavior (for example showing astonishment in response to such things as rollercoasters in Chapter 4 or shopping malls in Chapter 6), humankind seems to serve as an ideal standard for androids — as suggested by the motto of Yoruha, “Glory to Mankind” (*jinrui ni eikō are*). Put differently, as formulated by Braidotti in her critique on humanism, “the human norm stands for normality, normalcy and normativity. It functions by transposing a specific mode of being human into a generalized standard, which acquires transcendent values as the human” (2013: 26). It does not come as a surprise, then, that Yoruha’s androids see a particular threat in human-behaving *kikai seimeitai*. As enemies of humankind, they need to be framed as nonhuman and unable to participate in human lifestyles.

Kikai seimeitai are thus framed in two ways: machine-made entities and, more importantly, nonhuman enemies. It is intriguing that this framing is applied by beings that are equally machine-made and nonhuman, with androids and *kikai seimeitai* thus being similar groups that are at the same time actively framed as different from each other. It may not be surprising then that, as we show in the following section, the adequacy of the frames describing “enemies” and “war” is increasingly questioned by the protagonists as the game progresses.

“It can’t go on like this”: Challenging the frames of war

Butler (2009: 10) tells us that even though powerful, frames of war are subject to change and possibly also destruction as they are socially established and constantly rearranged. *NieR:Automata* provides several examples of how these frames of war that delineate the *kikai seimeitai* as nonhuman enemies are reframed and changed over time. While these frames are especially pronounced in the first section of the game, they are gradually challenged by the events taking place in later parts. Slowly, the framing processes are called into question by a number of characters featuring in the game.

At the beginning of route “B,” the player temporarily switches player characters and begins playing a *kikai seimeitai* that tries to help its brother (*nii-chan*) who lies

destroyed on the floor (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 1, route “B”). In this short episode, the player performs the seemingly meaningless task of pouring oil over the dysfunctional body of the brother. In contrast to the control mechanics applied to the androids, enabling swift movement through the game world, the *kikai seimeitai*’s movements are unwieldy and clumsy, letting players interactively experience what the world looks and feels like from the other side. Here, *kikai seimeitai* are presented as beings in the game world that exceed the state of mere “target” and may be incorporated by the players as characters having distinct relationships and pursuing their own personal goals instead. Similar to what Tsujita (2018) emphasizes in his analysis of war games, by switching the perspective the game offers an alternative view on the game world through the eyes of the protagonist’s enemies.

In the course of route “B,” the perception of the *kikai seimeitai* is continuously challenged when 9S engages with several kinds of machines by hacking them. While the identities of the end bosses were encrypted in route “A,” they now become readable as names of philosophers such as Hegel, Marx, or Engels and thus cease to be enumerable machines. Further, hacking enables 9S to listen to the thoughts of several *kikai seimeitai*, making a simple framing of the machines impossible. This leads to a constant reframing and ultimately to confusion for 9S. Rather than treating them as enemies, 9S begins to acknowledge that the machines are far more complex than he had initially thought.

The preliminary framing of *kikai seimeitai* as nonhuman machines is disrupted when the protagonists first encounter the *kikai seimeitai* Adam in Chapter 3: 9S and 2B stumble upon several *kikai seimeitai* that are imitating sexual intercourse and child-rearing. As the player arrives and engages in combat, they chant: “It can’t go on like this” (*kono mama ja dame*) and gather together to form an enormous womb in the air. Rather than just engaging in combat, the machines seem to be interested in several other activities that culminate in the birth of Adam, a *kikai seimeitai* that has emerged from a machine-made womb. He looks like a human and even bleeds when attacked, thus resembling what humans would call a life: something that is born and may be hurt. The protagonists state that “this is a type we have not encountered until now” (*mita koto no nai taipu*) (Chapter 3), indicating that their perception of *kikai seimeitai* is subject to change. At this point the frames that made the machines appear as “simple enemies to be destroyed” need to be reconfigured, as they fail to recognize an individual who proves to be difficult to typecast (Flatscher and Pistol 2018: 115). While 2B wonders whether Adam could be an android, 9S reaffirms himself that Adam is a *kikai seimeitai* and thus needs to be defeated. The confusion of the protagonists is based on how their enemy suddenly looks similar to them and may thus not be an enemy at all. This is further highlighted as Adam asks 2B and 9S why they fight him (*dōshite tatakau?*), indicating that this life-form is not an enemy initially.

That androids and *kikai seimeitai* are practically “the same” is eventually proved to be true; as 9S finds out in Chapter 15, their cores are made from the same material. As early as in Chapter 8, Adam suggests to 9S that androids and *kikai seimeitai* show strong similarities to one another, causing 9S’s mental and technical breakdown — visualized by the game in a manner reminiscent of a defective computer program. 9S clearly has difficulties with accepting the resemblances between androids and *kikai seimeitai*, although the absurdity of the frames applied to distinguish the two from each other is outlined throughout the dialogue sequences with Adam. Even 2B, who remains somewhat silent during gameplay, reflects at the end of route “A” on the nature of their enemies: “What is it that makes the *kikai seimeitai* different from us androids? We are both robots that have become able to have a will and feelings” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 10, route “A”). *Kikai seimeitai*, who would be framed as mere enemies deprived of any individuality at the beginning of the game, are hence gradually portrayed as complex individuals — and, indeed, recognized as such by the protagonists.

NieR:Automata discusses and dismantles its frames of war primarily via narrative means. The breaking of the frames is signaled by unforeseen events that indicate *kikai seimeitai* cannot be reduced to their enemy function in gameplay. In the first two routes, a space is established in which these environments may be discovered by the players without facing consequences affecting their later gameplay: androids as well as *kikai seimeitai* are explained to be immortal in the game, as their bodies can be reproduced and their memories reloaded from their respective networks. In the closing chapters of routes “A” and “B” — and especially during “C” and “D” — however, the game introduces alternative ways for machines to become vulnerable and thus mortal. As we will now discuss, by presenting machines whose data or bodies may be permanently destroyed the game opens up possibilities for surrounding characters and even the players to grieve over the loss of these machines. We argue that the concepts of “invulnerability” and “vulnerability” emphasize the presented views on life and death, and may be especially experienced through the game mechanics.

“Your present ‘you’ will not come back”: Experiencing (in)vulnerability and the recognition of grievable lives

In the opening chapters of the game *kikai seimeitai* and androids are portrayed as damageable and defeatable, yet not mortal. Both are able to regain “life” from their networks and usually cannot die permanently when defeated in battle. In *NieR:Automata*, we thus find explanations for how the player character will come back to life after we see them die on the screen. This is presumably what causes 9S to engage in risky combat maneuvers to support 2B, resulting in severe wounds that reveal his inner workings of metal and wire (Chapter 1). The game shows the technical composition of his body explicitly, and therefore tones down the effect of him being hurt, emphasizing that 9S’s body can be repaired and that his current

state will have no other consequences besides a loss of memory during the mission itself. At the end of the chapter, these circumstances allow 2B and 9S to accomplish their mission by blowing up the whole environment — including themselves. Overall, in the frames applied to androids and *kikai seimeitai* during the game's initial routes they appear to share not physical vulnerability but rather invulnerability — their deaths turn out to be nonpermanent, and thus they resemble lives that do not need to be grieved for. It seems that the androids' bodies indeed are “bodies that do not die” (Ōtsuka 2013: 2936–2942); when they are destroyed, “nothing is destroyed” (Butler 2009: xix).

During gameplay, players may experience this bodily invulnerability each time their health bars run completely empty. After “death,” the android's body keeps lying on the same spot where it “died” and a new android body, resembling a new version of the player character, walks out of one of the transport facilities in the game. The game applies conventional frames of digital death as part of an “infinite circle of trial and error” (Harrer 2013: 610). Intriguingly, players may visit the dysfunctional body at the point of their previous “death” and can collect the chips they had plugged in at the time. These may be reused and applied to the “new” player character to customize its abilities. The body is thus described as a mere vessel to traverse the game world — a definition reminiscent of early descriptions of avatars in game studies (e.g. Newman 2002) — while the individuality of the character is based on the data that is inscribed in its body.

NieR:Automata actively invites the player to test the boundaries of the so-defined technical body. Further to the adjustments mentioned above, androids are also equipped with a so-called OS chip that controls the general functionality of the body. Like other chips it may be removed, leading to “Game Over” and to one of the many different narrative endings elaborated within the game. Thereby *NieR:Automata* makes the digital-game narrative style of offering multiple endings (Azuma 2007) apparent to the player. At this stage players may experiment with the technical vulnerability of the androids without facing consequences therefrom for the further development of the game.

In later chapters, however, Adam begins to problematize that, under these circumstances, machines cannot experience the relationship between life and death in the same way as humans do. As he explains: “Data that perpetuates without limitations cannot really experience life. It cannot understand the concept of death” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 8). It is this very notion that causes him to disconnect from the *kikai seimeitai* network in order to experience what permanent death feels like when he is killed by 2B. Here, the game discusses how the robots portrayed in the plot so far are not granted the status of actual living beings as they cannot die. It also shows how death that is permanent is different from the common depiction in digital games of bodies that cannot die. Similar to what others have

noted, it is this break with the conventional frames of life and death that makes it possible to affect the players (Azuma 2007; Schäfer 2009).³

In breaking this cycle of death and rebirth, *NieR:Automata* reconfigures Adam as a vulnerable and mortal being whose death will lead to his brother Eve grieving for him. Butler (2006) shows that life which cannot be grieved for is not framed as “life.” Mourning means accepting that one will be changed by the loss of the other (Butler 2006: 21), indicating that the lost life has been recognized as one that is grievable. In this sense, by transitioning to being mortal Adam’s death will now affect other characters, leading to the recognition of him as someone who indeed was alive.

Vulnerability, death, and subsequent grieving become experiences that affect the player characters and therefore gameplay directly with the destruction of Bunker at the beginning of routes “C” and “D.” When 2B is infected with the logical virus, in a last quest players will navigate her through the game world to find a place to die permanently without infecting any other androids. The interface and control mechanics give clear information that 2B is becoming more and more corrupted by the virus. A small panel indicates the infection’s progress in percentages; with the worsening of her status, 2B loses several abilities as a player character — including the ability to move rapidly, attack or defend herself, and, eventually, to see and hear the game world properly. Her decline is starkly contrasted with the hints her assistant machine Pod 042 gives her in his typical manner, such as the suggestion to take a vaccine, back up her data to Bunker, or heal herself. Such options — usually possible in many similar digital games — can no longer be taken up here, as Bunker — the server that enabled a digital-game frame on war — has been destroyed. When 2B finally encounters A2 and asks the latter to kill her, 2B’s subsequent death — like Adam’s — is permanent. Through these changes in the handling of the player character 2B, players experience the vulnerability and the subsequent permanent death in a painstakingly longsome way compared to the previous nonpermanent deaths.

The game further uses visual techniques to underline differences between mortal and immortal beings in the game world. Because androids and *kikai seimeitai* usually do not bleed during gameplay, it comes as something of a surprise when Adam, Eve, 2B, and 9S are shown shedding red blood in their respective death sequences. Blood — and with it, the violence of war — is used as a marker to signal how the characters’ lives have now become vulnerable and erasable. The body ceases to be a machine and becomes mortal, in the sense that now it is exposed to others — who can potentially inflict lethal damage upon it. The red blood signifies the transition from a damageable to a vulnerable body — the transition to life. When 2B and Adam die permanently, lives are lost. In a similar way to how Tezuka managed to show dying bodies after WWII in his manga

3 Especially in the case of 2B’s permanent death later in the game, some players reflected on their emotional reactions (toragumi293 2019).

(Ōtsuka 2013), *NieR:Automata* uses blood to show that this is a body that may be killed — and thus is a living body.

Butler conceptualizes bodily vulnerability as a common ground for life:

The body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence, and bodies put us at risk of becoming the agency and instrument of all these as well [...]. The body has its invariably public dimension. Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. (2006: 26)

Rather than bodily vulnerability, however, *NieR:Automata* illustrates how data plays a central role in the discussion of life and death. At the end of routes “A” and “B,” it is revealed that 9S has become infected with the logical virus and must be killed for the safety of all other androids. Because he now carries that virus, he cannot upload his current memories to Bunker and will be reloaded from an older file. As he tries to comfort 2B with the prospect of reunion, she remarks: “But that way, your present ‘you’ will not come back” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 10). In grieving over the data that will be lost, the vulnerability of 9S is recognized by his companion.

While being exposed to physical violence has little consequence for the androids’ lives — even if their bodies are destroyed —, the digital data may be affected by others in the game. When the networks and databases fail to function or are intentionally shut down, the lives of androids and *kikai seimeitai* become vulnerable. In this way *NieR:Automata* discusses a concept of life that is directly linked not to the body but rather to the digital mind of the characters. Players may experience this data-based vulnerability in the final ending, “E.” At this point in the game, players are given the opportunity to fight the end credits in a scene resembling fixed shoot-'em-ups such as *Space Invaders*. Here, the names of those involved in the production of the game shoot bullets at the player, who now controls a cursor rather than a character. This task proves to be impossible to be fulfilled by the player alone. Consequently, they are offered the opportunity to receive help from other players. At this very end of the game, the player is invited to upload their own gameplay data in order to assist other players in “beating the credits.”

This, however, happens at the cost of deleting their own save files, thus resetting the game completely. In this very sequence the game allows players to relate to each other as human beings rather than as machine characters and offers interactive methods to act responsibly toward each other. Players have to confirm their decision to delete the data several times before their input is executed, further emphasizing the significance of their decision. As Yokoo himself explains, his own experience of losing save files as a child inspired him to make a game about this aspect: “I was so sad, but my parents didn’t understand. So I thought of a game [...] through which anyone in this world would understand the frustration [of losing save files in a game]” (Famitsu 2017c: n.p.). Put differently, the game

discusses the loss of data not only in its intradiegetic narration but also offers an extradiegetic experience by making the player lose their save files.

NieR:Automata explores vulnerability as a condition to recognize grievable lives in a posthuman environment in a number of ways. First, through the game mechanics, players may experience (but also experiment with) the bodily invulnerability that is common to most digital games. Second, the game uses permanent death and red blood as signifiers that individuals have become lives that may be genuinely lost. Third, and most importantly, what is lost in the game is not necessarily the physical bodies of the androids or machines but rather the data that can never be restored once gone.

However, especially in the course of ending “E,” *NieR:Automata* also elaborates the power of its game-like realism and reminds the player of their human bias in theorizing concepts of life and death. In a way, the deletion of the game’s data starts the game anew and thus reestablishes the cycle that constitutes the game-like realism in the first place. Additionally the “beating of the credits” narratively happens for the sole purpose of the resurrection of 2B, 9S, and A2, as their supporting computers Pod 042 and Pod 153 together with the player may decide that they want to find a way for them to survive. After accomplishing the mission the player will be confronted with a dialogue sequence taking place between Pod 042 and Pod 153, regardless of whether they decide to sacrifice their data or not. In this scene Pod 153, in a manner reminiscent of 2B’s opening remarks, posits: “They are caught in a continuous spiral where life and death repeat after each other. However, to struggle within this cycle is the meaning of ‘being alive.’ That’s how ‘we’ think about it” (Platinum Games 2017: Chapter 18). In its very last sequences *NieR:Automata* therefore establishes an understanding of “game-like life” that may be recognized as such by in-game characters. It is us humans who failed to understand that 2B, 9S, and A2 were already considered to be alive *before* we experienced their permanent death.

Conclusion

NieR:Automata explores several aspects typical of digital games revolving around the topic of war. Death is a prominent theme that can be experienced in both ludic and narrative elements of the game. Bodies are replaceable and collectible, but memories and data, once lost, cannot be reconfigured easily. In the course of the game, the consequences of death change from a restart at one of the saving points to a change in protagonists or even the ultimate eradication of data. It is thus not merely a hindrance to the progression of the game or a ludic aspect to make war a trivial consideration, but rather an object of discussion that can be assessed from different angles during gameplay.

In this respect, *NieR:Automata* differs from many war-themed games that fail to depict the complexity of war. Certainly, the game is not able to provide a full picture of the latter; in showing how the framing of enemies operates in a combat

setting, it nevertheless provides a critical perspective on war. Even though fighting is experienced as a playful challenge, as in many other such games, the narrative structure evokes feelings of unease. Enemies cannot be declared as such anymore, and the reason to even engage in war disappears, leaving behind a mess of destruction and confusion. Thoroughly stripping away the many layers of “frames of war,” the game reveals horrifying aspects thereof (such as trauma and mourning) that most games do not explore.

NieR:Automata shares features typical of Japanese war-themed games. For one, references to wars throughout Japan’s history are vague at best. While many dates in the game explain that the current war between androids and *kikai seimeitai* is set exactly 10,000 years after 1945, Japan and its role in WWII is not a subject of discussion. In addition, the player first experiences the game from the perspective of a victim trying to reconquer their lost homeland.

We cannot — at least without difficulties — argue that *NieR:Automata* critically engages with Japan’s wartime history. However what we can say is that this game takes a critical stance against simplistic depictions of war in popular culture, and especially in digital games. It initially applies a game-like realism in its game mechanics and at the narrative level by employing a posthuman setting as well. By destroying this ludic frame on war and introducing the possibility of permanent death, however, *NieR:Automata* enables reflection on the atrocities of war.

Thereby grievable lives may be recognized as such in a setting in which that is initially not the case. In this game, players encounter life and its vulnerability in the form of digital data. The loss thereof signifies a “digital vulnerability” that is not only part of the narrative structure but may be experienced by the players themselves in finishing the game and deleting their save files. However, by returning to game-like realism in ending “E,” even the deaths that were first perceived as permanent are reframed as not so at the end of the game. Considering Pod 153’s notion of “game-like life,” we cannot help but come to the conclusion, then, that *NieR:Automata* uses concrete methods to make us human players understand that even in game worlds we may encounter grievable *life* — and, thus, rich viewpoints on the value of life in war.

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Refereed article

Opportunities and Disadvantages: The Institutional Embeddedness of North Korean Defector Entrepreneurs in South Korea

Marianne Jung

Summary

North Korean defectors struggle with economic and social integration into South Korean society. Facing structural disadvantages in the job market, they are mainly employed in low-wage and undignified jobs that are undesired by South Koreans. A growing proportion of defectors look to self-employment as an alternative. Literature in the research field has shown that those defectors who are self-employed earn notably higher incomes than those defectors who stay in dependent employment, which positively affects their upward economic mobility. Institutional theory has brought to light that opportunity existence and the quality of formal and informal institutions stimulate the formation of enterprises. However, prior research has reported an insufficient start-up system for defector entrepreneurs. This article therefore asks what opportunities and disadvantages North Korean defector entrepreneurs encounter as a result of the formal and informal institutions in South Korea. Using a quantitative and qualitative research design, this article indicates the perceived supportiveness of institutional support for defector entrepreneurs. Results show that while bureaucratic hurdles to establishing a business are kept low, general start-up support is mainly targeted at highly innovative start-ups. As most defectors' businesses are concentrated in low-productive sectors such as service or restaurant businesses, defectors are not eligible for entrepreneurship support. Concerning the Korea Hana Foundation's support for defectors' start-ups, qualitative and quantitative interview results indicate that strict requirements and short application periods limit their perceived usefulness.

Keywords: North Korean defectors, immigrant entrepreneurship, institutional environment

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Introduction

Numerous factors influence a person's decision to become an entrepreneur rather than to accept a job as an employee (Castaño et al. 2015). For North Korean defectors, the decision to start a business is highly influenced by structural disadvantages in the labor market (Y. J. Kim 2019).

Previous research on North Korean defector entrepreneurship has brought to light, that the main motives of the defectors were a "longing for economic stability" and the struggle "for success and acceptance in society" (Y. J. Kim 2019; Yun 2000). Park and Lee tested the influence of the defectors' personal characteristics on their entrepreneurial intention, showing that financial stability and entrepreneurial education has a positive effect on the intention to start a business. However, they found an "insufficient start-up system" an intervening factor for defector businesses (N.T. Park and Lee 2016). This is indeed an important finding since entrepreneurial research also emphasizes the importance of institutional support to create a positive environment for businesses. A cross-national study among 40 economies shows that entrepreneurship thrives where the socio-cultural environment and formal institutions support "performance-based behavior" (Hopp and Stephan 2012: 923).

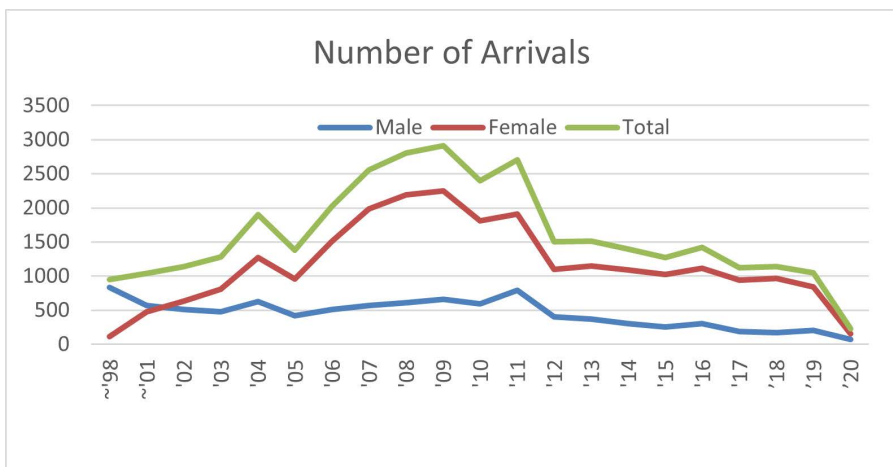
In this study, we apply institutional theory to examine the opportunities and disadvantages for defector entrepreneurs. Thus, the leading research question is: What opportunities and disadvantages arise for North Korean defector entrepreneurs out of formal and informal institutions? On the macro-level we will discuss how informal and formal institutions shape the institutional embeddedness of small and medium businesses to explain the current support program and on the micro-level we discuss the institutionalized support program for defector entrepreneurs. What problems North Korean defectors associate with these support programs will be answered by examining data from a quantitative survey (n=49) and four qualitative interviews. Research on this growing population is needed for two reasons: First, evidence shows that self-employed North Koreans achieve higher average incomes per month compared to those who stay in dependent employment (Lim and Kim 2019). This provides evidence that self-employment is used for upward social mobility and should therefore be encouraged (Rajman and Tienda 2000; van Tubergen 2005). Second, viable businesses contribute to the creation of stable jobs, which foster social contacts and provide a certain status and identity in society (Porter and Haslam 2005). This helps the psychological wellbeing of the defectors, who are often traumatized by prior experiences including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Jeon et al. 2003). Therefore, identifying problems concerning the institutional embeddedness of defector businesses is needed to foster their economic and social integration. By doing so, this study provides an important foundation for subsequent research on the institutional embeddedness of North Korean defector entrepreneurs.

The McCune-Reischauer system will be used to romanize Korean words, authors, and titles with one exception: the names of Korean authors whose papers are published in English are written as they appear in the original paper. The established terms to refer to North Korean defectors are *pukhanit'aljumin* (북한이탈주민) and *t'albukcha* (탈북자), both of which can be literally translated as “North Korean defector.” Therefore, the terms *defector* and sometimes, for variety, *immigrants* are used. Although North Korean defectors receive South Korean citizenship after arrival, they face similar difficulties to those experienced by immigrants to other nation states—therefore they are simultaneously perceived as immigrants, refugees and co-ethnics to South Koreans. (N.H.-J. Kim 2016)

North Korean defectors in South Korea

Since the beginning of the political division on the Korean peninsula, there has been cross-border movement between the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea). According to the Ministry of Unification, the total number of North Korean defectors who have entered South Korea since 1948 is 33,752 persons. Graph 1 indicates a drop in arrivals since 2012, illustrating the impact of tighter border controls since Kim Jong-un (Kim Jǒng-ŭn) took office in Pyŏngyang. About 1000 defectors have immigrated to ROK annually during recent years, however, due to pandemic travel restrictions the number dropped to 229 in 2020. Furthermore, the number of women has exceeded that of men since 2002, representing 72 percent of North Korean immigrants today (Ministry of Unification 2021).

Graph 1: Number of Arrivals



Source: Ministry of Unification, own-graph

Until the late 1980s North Korea had a functioning public distribution system that provided the population with food and commodities. However, this system gradually weakened and finally disintegrated after the loss of Soviet subsidies. What followed was described as one of the greatest famines of the twentieth century (Schwekendiek and Mercier 2016). According to estimates, one to two million people (5–10 percent of the population) starved between 1995 and 1999 (Buzo 2017: 205). During these years, grassroot marketization became increasingly important as a means for survival (Schwekendiek and Mercier 2016). Reportedly, by 1997 as few as 6 percent of all North Koreans were still receiving food from the government, while market activity accounted for upwards of 90 percent of household income (Buzo 2017:209–10).

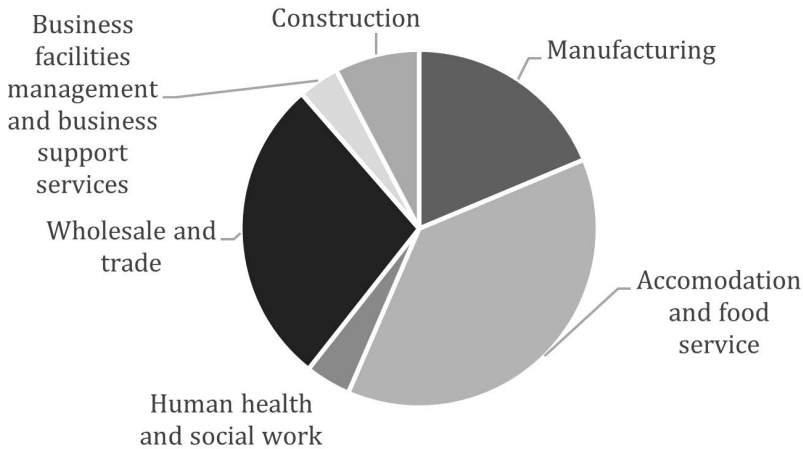
Due to the difficult living situation in North Korea, some decide to cross the Sino-Korean border in search of food and income. However, the People's Republic of China (PRC, henceforth China) and North Korea have signed a secret agreement calling for the return of North Koreans. Therefore, if caught during the defection process or while hiding in China, the defectors are subject to detention and deportation back to North Korea, where they face severe punishment and imprisonment (Lankov 2006: 3). Consequently, North Koreans must find a foreign embassy in China or a safe route through China to a neighboring country such as Mongolia, Thailand, Cambodia, or Laos where they can seek asylum status (Courtland 2010: 16). After crossing the border to a safe third country, the defectors submit themselves to the police and request protection. The ROK embassy then organizes a safe transfer to South Korea (Courtland 2010: 16). The defectors are then interrogated by the National Intelligence Service.

After their identity is verified, North Korean defectors are given South Korean citizenship and receive mandatory social orientation at an institution called "Hanawon." Over the course of three months, the defectors receive education on subjects such as history, society, economy, but also on daily life matters in South Korea (for example how to use the transportation system, how to write a resumé, etc.).

Social integration within South Korean society has proven difficult for defectors over recent decades, influenced by inter-Korean relations and the political environment (Choi 2018). There are currently two discourses in South Korea, which treat North Korean defectors as either "us" or "other" (Bell 2013). One of the consequences of this constructed "otherness" is that North Korean defectors face considerable discrimination in workplaces and receive lower wages. Many defectors therefore consider self-employment as a means to escape their low socio-economic status (Y. J. Kim 2019).

Statistics provided by the South Korean government reflect the rising interest of North Korean defectors in self-employment as a preferred employment option (KHF 2019:57). Furthermore, in a survey among 112 North Korean defectors it was revealed that as many as 74 percent were actually planning a business (B. H.

Cho 2015:162). Many defector businesses are run as small and medium businesses in the service sector (accommodation and food) followed by retail business and manufacturing (see graph 2). Looking at their viability, North Korean defectors have trouble sustaining their businesses in the long-term (H.C. Kim 2015), suffering from lack of information, social networks and an insufficient start-up system (N.T. Park and Lee 2016).



Source: Own graph adapted from KHF 2019: 146.

Unfortunately, there are no official statistics on the number of North Korean defector businesses. We have only projections that there are between 1000 and 2000 businesses run by defectors, mostly small and medium businesses (Y.J. Kim 2019). Only recently have researchers begun to address the issue of self-employment and this has received virtually no scholarly attention outside Korea. This paper thereby contributes to the state of the art in providing an institutionalist approach to defector entrepreneurship.

Immigrant business and the role of institutions

The term *ethnic entrepreneurship* is defined as “a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing common national background or migration experiences” (Volery 2007:30). This definition includes members of ethnic minority groups who have been living in the country for several centuries, such as African Americans in the United States or Jews in Europe. An alternative term is *immigrant entrepreneurship*, which concerns individuals who have immigrated over the past few decades. This definition seems the best fit for the experience of North Korean defectors who have, for the most part, defected and immigrated to South Korea since the 1990s. Additionally, prior research on North

Korean defector entrepreneurship has revealed the resemblances of North Korean defector entrepreneurs with immigrant entrepreneurs (Hyön 2014; Y. J. Kim 2019). Immigrant entrepreneurship has been of interest for scholars in various fields including anthropology, economics, psychology, sociology (Dabić et al. 2020). Explanatory studies have recognized the importance of opportunities and constraints for immigrant businesses (Oliveira 2007: 65). The structural disadvantages explanation has been prominent in explaining immigrant entrepreneurship (Chrysostome 2010; Volery 2007). Others have emphasized the importance and resources of ethnic networks to immigrant entrepreneurs (Bonacich 1973; Dana 2007). Kloostermann et al. (1999) have noted that it is necessary to take a more holistic view and have developed an inclusive framework to combine different determinants of immigrant business. For analysis they suggest combining the micro-level of the individual entrepreneur with the meso-level of the local opportunity structure and the macro-institutional framework. This approach has been labelled the mixed-embeddedness model (R. C. Kloosterman 2010: 27–28). The macro-institutional framework has also been considered a lot in classic entrepreneurship research. Welter and Smallbone (2011) emphasize that entrepreneurial behavior must be interpreted in its institutional context, composed of the cultural, economic and political environment in which it operates (Welter and Smallbone 2011: 107).

By offering various kinds of support, institutional support has a positive influence on the foundation and development of new and small businesses (Scheiner 2009: 134). Researchers consider levels of bureaucracy and formalities, as well as assistance programs for new enterprises (e.g. education, office space, capital or business mentoring) (Tarres et al. 2007, p. 260). Therefore, the socio-cultural and politico-institutional environments are able to generate positive or negative incentives for entrepreneurs (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2020; Welter and Smallbone 2011).

One of the most cited sources in studying institutionalism is Douglass North who, as an economic historian, developed approaches that focus on a higher level of analysis. This includes the origins of cultural, political and legal frameworks that shape present economic forms and processes. North views the institutional frameworks as societal “rules of the game,” where organizations are considered the “players” (Scott 2013: 33–34). North also considers economic development as the central issue in understanding political and economic institutions. Those economies that fail to produce a set of “economic rules of the game” prevent sustained economic growth (North 1991: 98). Institutions are differentiated between formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions involve written rules, such as *laws and regulations* (North 1991), while informal institutions emerge from *socially communicated information* and are part of a cultural heritage (Gimenez-Jimenez et al. 2020: 198).

This article recognizes the government as the formal institution that has the power to shape enterprise policy and thus can either encourage or impede economic activities (Arshed et al. 2014: 642).

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to assess the South Korean institutional environment surrounding entrepreneurship and to evaluate the governmental support system that supports or discourages North Korean defectors. Accordingly, we will use institutional theory to analyze the formal and informal institutional embeddedness of North Korean defector entrepreneurs, whereas the analytical framework is indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Analytical framework

Formal Institutions	Economic development, policies, and measures, administrative formalities. Support programs for assisting North Korean businesses	North 1991, Welter and Smallbone 2011, Scheiner 2009; Tarres, et al. 2007
Informal Institutions	Values and norms indicating supportiveness for entrepreneurship in South Korea. North Korean defectors' positive and/or negative perception of entrepreneurship; perceived usefulness of support programs	North 1991, Hopp and Stephan 2012, Schüler 2020, Gimenez-Jimenez et al., 2020

Source:own table.

The first part of the paper presents the institutional background for entrepreneurship, which includes policies and levels of bureaucracy, but also values and norms indicating supportiveness for entrepreneurship in South Korea. The second part will critically review the institutional support programs for North Korean defectors on the micro-level. Additionally, we present the results of our survey (n=49) and qualitative interviews to show how North Korean defectors perceive the usefulness of the institutionalized support programs. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results and the implications for entrepreneurship research on North Korean defectors.

The following section offers a short review of the macro-institutional environment for entrepreneurship such as the level of bureaucracy and “ease” of becoming self-employed in South Korea.

The institutional environment for entrepreneurship

Economic development and the ease of becoming self-employed in South Korea

During Park Chŏnghŭi’s (Park, Chung-hee) administration in the 1960s, economic development became the highest priority in public policy and strong relationships between state and big businesses were established. Until the mid-1990s South Korea was highly export-oriented and greatly benefited from the effects of

globalization. However, the selective promotion of a few big companies created an unpromising landscape for small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) with lower productivity and innovation capabilities (Engelhard 2004: 305). When the Asian financial crisis hit the economy in 1997–1998, the weak SME sector and the relationship between government and large conglomerates (*chaeböl*), was partly made responsible for the severe impact on South Korea's economy.

The financial crisis also initiated a trend of more and more new ventures entering the market. Today, SMEs form the backbone of the Korean economy, providing 80% of all business-sector employment, the second highest share among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. At the same time, the share of total employment in large companies with 300 or more employees decreased (OECD 2020: 25). Still, the productivity gap between large firms and SMEs in South Korea is the largest among OECD countries. Korean SMEs have a low technology adoption rate and are concentrated in low-production sectors. They offer low wages, have weak job stability, and provide few career opportunities compared to large firms (OECD 2020). The preference of the *chaeböl* to rely on foreign subcontractors has deepened the effect of leaving SMEs behind (Engelhard 2004).

The Moon administration, which assumed power in 2017, has acknowledged weaknesses in the SME sector and has proposed growth strategies that support innovation. The growth strategy is directed at “smart cities” and “smart factory industrial sectors” becoming the main engines of economic expansion, including smart devices, self-driving cars, etc. The Ministry of Science and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) fosters innovative business ideas by supplying funds, grants, accelerators, and more (*Ministry of Science and ICT* n.d.). In terms of administrative regulations, the government has also removed hurdles. The World Bank assessed the relative ease of registering a company in Korea. A company must be registered in order to receive a company seal, which costs only about 30,000 KRW (about 22 euro). To make registration easier, an internet registration office was combined with the local tax payment system (including other systems, such as insurance). The online platform Start-Biz, which was introduced in 2012, allows its users to complete the whole registration process online and it takes less than three days to obtain a certification of incorporation from the system. It is furthermore free of charge to register with the tax office. This makes for a relatively simple process of establishing a business compared to other countries. The World Bank “Doing Business 2019” report therefore ranked South Korea fourth out of 190 economies in terms of ease of starting a business (WBG 2020).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) also provides a rich data source for analyzing the institutional environment. Its most representative indicator for entrepreneurial activity is the Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity rate

(TEA), which is a core metric in the GEM Adult Population Survey (APS).¹ The TEA rate reports the percentage of persons who are either nascent entrepreneurs or owner-managers of new businesses. Nascent entrepreneurs are individuals aged 18–64 who started a business less than three months ago and have not yet paid any salaries or other form of compensation. Owner-managers are business owners who have progressed beyond this state and have paid salaries and wages for more than three but less than 42 months. In South Korea, TEA rates have recently been increasing, from 6.7% in 2016 to 14.9% in 2019 (GEM 2020: 17), a high rate not only for East Asia but also when compared to European economies. A high TEA rate is usually attributed to the absence of alternative income sources.

In 2019, the National Expert Survey (NES)² conducted by GEM also reported on the adequacy of Korean policies in terms of support and relevance to new and growing firms. On a scale of 1 to 10, the overall score for the entrepreneurial environment in Korea was 5.13. Finance, government policies, government programs, and infrastructure were considered to be above average, while education and training were found to be unsatisfactory (GEM 2020:47).

The GEM report also assessed satisfaction with tax and regulations. It found that new firms can obtain most of the required permits and licenses within a week, confirming the effectiveness of Start-Biz. The tax burden for new and growing firms was also not considered to be unduly high. For example, there is a special corporate tax deduction ranging from 5% to 30% depending on firm size, location, business type, and other factors (PWC 2020). It also reported that taxes and other government regulations are applied in an expected and consistent way. Overall, government bureaucracy was found to be supportive of entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, the NES assessed the availability of financing for new and growing firms. Government subsidies were considered the most satisfactory, with equity, debt, and venture capital also receiving scores above five. However, private funding, such as business angels, and IPOs were found most lacking (GEM 2020: 44). Due to the small market size in Korea, the venture capital (VC) market that invests in start-ups and new businesses was reported to be underdeveloped (Schüler 2020).

In Korea, the most common way to fund a business is usually through debt financing. This is the foundation of the so-called joint guarantee system, which holds the founder of a business responsible in case of business insolvency, resulting in creditors seizing all private property from the business founder. In order for a business owner to receive a loan in the first place, a co-guarantor must agree to repay the full debt in case the owner is unable to do so. One consequence

1 The APS is a questionnaire administered to at least 2,000 adults in each GEM country that collects information on respondents' entrepreneurial activity, attitudes, and aspirations.

2 Thirty-six experts collect data on each GEM country's situation in context, resulting in information about each country's socio-economic milieu. The latest results for Korea were published in the GEM South Korea 2019 Report (GEM 2020).

of this system is that failed entrepreneurs are regarded as failed individuals in Korean society, creating a social stigma for failed entrepreneurs (Schüler 2020: 184–185). As a result, the government has gradually relaxed the joint guarantee system, especially for start-ups, thus shifting the financial consequences to Korean taxpayers (Schüler 2020:192).

Schüler (2020) conducted a survey among 171 business students at three different Korean universities to assess the students' perceived institutional environment. She reported that 42% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that the government assists individuals in starting a business, while only one-third disagreed. Furthermore, 45% confirmed that the government helps small or new businesses with administrative procedures, while only 14% disagreed (Schüler 2020: 140). The GEM report concludes: "almost anyone who needs help from a government program for a new or growing business can find what they need" (GEM 2020:51).

In general, most reports show an overall satisfaction with the macro-institutional environment for entrepreneurship in South Korea. We therefore conclude that the general level of bureaucracy in becoming self-employed is low and is thus supportive of entrepreneurship. The following section indicates the informal institutional environment in South Korea.

Attitudes towards entrepreneurship in South Korea

Among the informal institutions are values and norms that indicate supportiveness towards entrepreneurship (North 1991). Although formal institutions in South Korea are found to be supportive of entrepreneurship, a perceived lack of support for entrepreneurship in the socio-cultural environment has been identified (Schüler 2020).

The measure "fear of failure" is a GEM variable that reflects whether potential entrepreneurs undertake ventures, with a lower score being more favorable. In the past, fear of failure was comparatively high in Korea, but it saw a sharp drop from 2018 to 2019 (from 32.8% to 7.1%). While the GEM report (2020) does not provide a reason for the sharp drop, it could be directly related to the relaxing of the joint guarantee system, which shifted the financial consequences of business failure to Korean taxpayers (Schüler 2020:192).

Traditionally, Korean entrepreneurs have a higher rate of fear of failure than entrepreneurs in other developed economies, which may have a cultural explanation. Even though scholars argue that Korea has become more individualistic and less family-oriented in recent years, parents remain a decisive factor in the decisions made by young Koreans, including decisions about their occupation (Schüler 2020: 178). In the start-up scene, young Koreans who defied their parents to found a business often refer to themselves as "undutiful children" (Schüler 2020: 179). Schüler reported that most survey respondents did not agree that their parents or the older generation support their children in starting a

business (Schüler 2020: 145). She also found that among South Korean university students, the norms and values imposed by their parents were the most influential factors in whether they decided to start a business.

Almost half of the students Schüler surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that becoming an entrepreneur in Korea was considered abnormal behavior, although one-third agreed or strongly agreed. Almost 60% agreed or strongly agreed that entrepreneurs whose businesses failed would experience social stigma, but more than half indicated that Korean society respects entrepreneurs for their courage in starting a business. According to the GEM report (2020), satisfaction with cultural and social norms towards entrepreneurship is neutral in Korea. On a scale from 1 to 10, entrepreneurs were somewhat unsatisfied (4.3), while policymakers showed a higher satisfaction level (6.33). GEM also studied whether successful entrepreneurs are considered to have a high status in society, with 86 percent agreeing. These mixed results show that in Korean culture, business failure has a strong negative connotation but entrepreneurial success results in societal admiration (Schüler 2020).

The socio-cultural attitude towards entrepreneurship therefore shows a mixed outcome. While South Korean society praises successful entrepreneurs, taking the risk of self-employment seems to be negatively connoted. Unfortunately, resources on socio-cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship in South Korea are limited and need to be addressed in future research frameworks.

Methodology and data

Doing interviews among North Korean defectors has proven difficult and largely explains why most research in the field is based on qualitative data. Informants for both quantitative and qualitative interviews were identified using snowball-sampling and with the help of the “door-opener” Lee John-ho who manages entrepreneurship education for North Korean defectors at Dankook University (DKU). Using his contacts, we were able to conduct an offline and online survey between October 11 and November 1, 2019. We collected 70 surveys, but had to exclude those that were incomplete or gave misleading information. Online, the number of useful surveys was 35 while offline we were able to collect another 14, equaling 49 surveys useful for data analysis.

It has to be noted that the defectors’ self-reported assessments do not reflect the actual performance or economic impact of governmental support but are intended to deliver evidence on the defectors’ personal opinions of governmental programs, how they perceive the socio-cultural environment in South Korea, and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

We utilized five-point Likert-type scales that reflected the following composite variables: entrepreneurial perception (positive and negative) as well as the perceived supportiveness of governmental programs. To assess the defectors’

positive and negative perceptions we used survey items developed by Kim Young Dae (Y. D. Kim 2019). Self-developed questions for the survey included question on the defectors' perceptions of institutionalized support. We used a panel of professors at Vienna University and Dankook University (DKU) to ensure the content validity of the survey items. The survey outcomes were analyzed using frequency analysis with the program IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The answers were coded "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "neutral" = 3, "agree" = 4, and "strongly agree" = 5.

The survey items are indicated in the following table.

Table 2: Survey Items

Entrepreneurial perception positive	Scale
I think that entrepreneurship contributes to the nation and society.	1–5
I think that the societal perception of entrepreneurship is positive.	1–5
I think there are many respected entrepreneurs in society.	1–5
I think starting a business is another type of job choice.	1–5
I think starting a business will bring self-fulfillment.	1–5
I think starting a business will bring economic wealth.	1–5
Entrepreneurial perception negative	
I think entrepreneurs are perceived negatively in society.	1–5
I think entrepreneurs are rarely respected in society.	1–5
I would object if my family, relatives, or acquaintances started a business.	1–5
I think starting a business does not bring me economic stability.	1–5
I think starting a business does not bring me a sense of accomplishment.	1–5
Institutional support	
To start a business, I want to receive a bank loan.	1–5
It is easy to get a loan from a bank for a start-up.	1–5
The training I received at Hanawon helps me start a business.	1–5
The South-North Hana Foundation provides a lot of support for start-ups.	1–5
There are organizations that help me to get started.	1–5
I will visit relevant organizations for advice on starting a business.	1–5

Source: derived from Y. D. Kim 2019, own-translation.

The survey included 15 male (30.6%) and 34 female (69.4%) respondents. Twenty-one respondents were married (42.9%) and 28 were not married (57.1%); Of the respondents, 36.7% were 30 or below, 51.0% were between 31 and 50, and 12.2% were 51 or older. Most of the respondents had defected from North Korea in the 2000s (73.4%), while 14 percent entered Korea in 2016 or later. Most came from Hamgyongbukdo (42.9%), from Yagangdo (30.6%), or from Hamgyongnamdo (12.2%). Just under half, 44.9%, were high school graduates, and 40.8% were university graduates. The survey included 24.5% self-employed people, while 49% intended to become self-employed and 16.3% were students at the time of survey.

Qualitative interviews

Concentrating on the defectors' issues and problems, the so called "problem-centered" interview method seemed to best fit the research aims. The strength of this method is that it concentrates on a certain area to enable the researcher to unfold subjective perceptions of social reality (Witzel 2000). The first in-depth interviews with North Korean defectors were conducted in the metropolitan region of Seoul in April 2015. The interviewees were not reluctant to be tape-recorded since their identity would be kept confidential. The interviews were transcribed in Korean, except one, which was conducted in English and took place within the Seoul metropolitan area.

Questions used for this article included:

- Do you have any particular expectation from the government for your business? Or are there any special obstacles that must be removed?
- Is there anything that hinders the start-ups of North Korean defectors? Do you expect or wish for something from the government, such as policies or support?
- Have you ever been discriminated against? Have you ever had a hard time getting a loan?

Table 3: In-depth interviews with North Korean defector entrepreneurs

Gender (age)	In SK since	Educational level	Details
Female (38)	2003	University degree in SK	Trading business with gift articles within the metropolitan area. Employing six employees (two from North Korea).
Female (26)	2006	University degree in SK	Farming business, together with three other North Korean defectors. No additional employees.
Male (28)	2010	Secondary school in North Korea	Self-employed, trading commodities, later turning to web design and website development.
Male (33)	2004	University degree in SK	Managing two Social Enterprise Coffee Shops in Seoul. Number of employees varies.

Source: own-table.

For coding, the interviews were transcribed in Korean and translated into English. For content-structuring the program MAXQDA "Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software" was used (Kuckartz 2017). This is a program that helps organize and code files including audio transcripts.

Opportunities and disadvantages

Institutional support for North Korean defectors in South Korea

North Korean defector businesses have reported an “insufficient start-up system” as an obstacle to self-employment (Park 2016). This section will therefore outline several types of support available to North Korean defector entrepreneurs, give a broad overview of the available support programs and discern patterns and similarities.

The first organization usually consulted by North Korean defectors is the Korea Hana Foundation (KHF). It is a governmental nonprofit organization established in 2010 by the Ministry of Unification. Its mission is to contribute to the successful settlement and integration of North Korean defectors. KHF also provides free consulting and information for those who want to become self-employed and notifications of opportunities for entrepreneurial support are regularly published on their website.

Last year’s start-up support link on the KHF home page takes visitors to a notification titled “2020 North Korean defector recruitment companies support.” This offer was not targeted at all North Korean defectors who intended to start a business; those eligible to apply included only enterprises that sought social enterprise status (employing two or more North Korean defectors) and small and medium businesses that employed at least five North Korean defectors. If the CEO was a North Korean defector, they counted as one NK employee. The offer was open for a period of three weeks from October to November 2020 and the businesses selected were scheduled to receive up to 20 million KRW.

KHF also recruited candidates for a start-up commercialization project to support aspiring North Korean defectors with outstanding ideas and innovations in the fields of manufacturing and technology ventures. The application period was open from October to November 2020. Furthermore, KHF offers “management improvement funds” to North Korean defector entrepreneurs. The amount of support is capped at 3.5 million KRW, depending on the business type and size. An external link is available on the website, which leads to a specialized external agency that guides business founders to low-interest loan products such as microcredits, microfinancing, and small business support funds.

KHF also consults with and provides free information to founders of start-ups. Entrepreneurs are only eligible for this support for six months after establishment of a start-up. The KHF links some of their offers to the start-up promotion agency (k-startup.go.kr) to obtain more information. This indicates a cooperation between the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Start-ups, and the Ministry of Unification. The ministry of SMEs also overlooks the Korea Institute of Startup and Entrepreneurship Development (KISED), a governmental agency that provides support to one-person businesses. Hence those defectors not eligible

for the very specific KHF offers (a complete list of which is provided on their website) may turn to this agency.

However, KISED focuses on supporting entrepreneurs “with innovative tech startup ideas,” which is not often applicable to North Koreans who specialize in the food, trade, or manufacturing sectors. If they succeed, however, KISED provides a full package of support, ranging from management practices to business knowledge and commercialization, etc.

Religious organizations also offer assistance through KHF. One such organization, the Caritas Social Enterprise Support Center, is renowned among defectors. Caritas indicates that one of its objectives is to “support startups for vulnerable North Korean defectors” in order to “improve the quality of life for the socially underprivileged” (caritasworld.org). Defectors are offered loans through unsecured and unguaranteed microloan projects, which are based on socio-economic considerations. These loans provide up to 30 million KRW and for those who have repaid an initial loan, up to a further 20 million KRW may be provided.

The loan includes start-up education in areas such as social economy, marketing, publicity, tax, accounting, etc. The loan period is five years at an annual interest rate of 3% and a penalty rate of 7% (Caritas 2019).

Commercial banks are nongovernmental and nonreligious institutions where defectors can request a loan. Among them, the LG Smile Foundation promotes microfinance to support the independence of the financially underprivileged. The loan is up to 70 million KRW at an annual interest rate of 4.5%, and it is possible to apply with a credit rating of 6–10. Application is possible for enterprises with average monthly sales exceeding 30 million KRW per annum and for certain businesses that have been selected for a social enterprise establishment support project, preliminary social enterprise, or farming support project (LG Miso 2020).

A short review of available support shows that general support for start-ups and new enterprises focuses on innovative businesses. Support focusing on North Korean defectors, on the other hand, is often directly linked to the concept of Social Entrepreneurship (SE), with its tight requirements and application periods. In Korea an SE is defined as

an entity certified (...) that pursues a social objective aimed at enhancing the quality of life of community residents by providing vulnerable social groups with social services or job opportunities or by contributing to the communities while conducting its business activities, such as the manufacture or sale of goods and services; (Article 2, Social Enterprise Promotion Act 2012).

Depending on the services, several types of SE are distinguished, one of them being the “job-creation type” that offers jobs to vulnerable social groups such as the disabled, elderly people, North Korean defectors, and others. To obtain certification from the Ministry of Employment and Labor, application procedures include information on accounting, contracts, dates, numbers, people, grants, donations to other organizations and business reports are required. The certification

process involves at least nine steps as indicated on the official website (Social Enterprise, 2021). However, after successful approval by the Ministry of Labor, SEs enjoy financial subsidies for initial capital, various tax benefits, support consulting on business administration, preferential purchasing through public institutions, etc. (Jung 2018). According to Article 19, the term social enterprise refers only to those who are certified SEs and prohibits other organizations from using this term. Bidet and Jeong (2016) indicate that the social enterprise model in South Korea helps the work integration of North Korean defectors. However, others state that the governmental funding of social enterprises has a negative effect on the social services provided to vulnerable social groups (M. Park and Chung 2015). Our interviewees voiced concerns about the Social Enterprise concept, as will be shown in the final chapter. Before that, we will indicate the attitude and values of North Korean defectors regarding entrepreneurship in the following section.

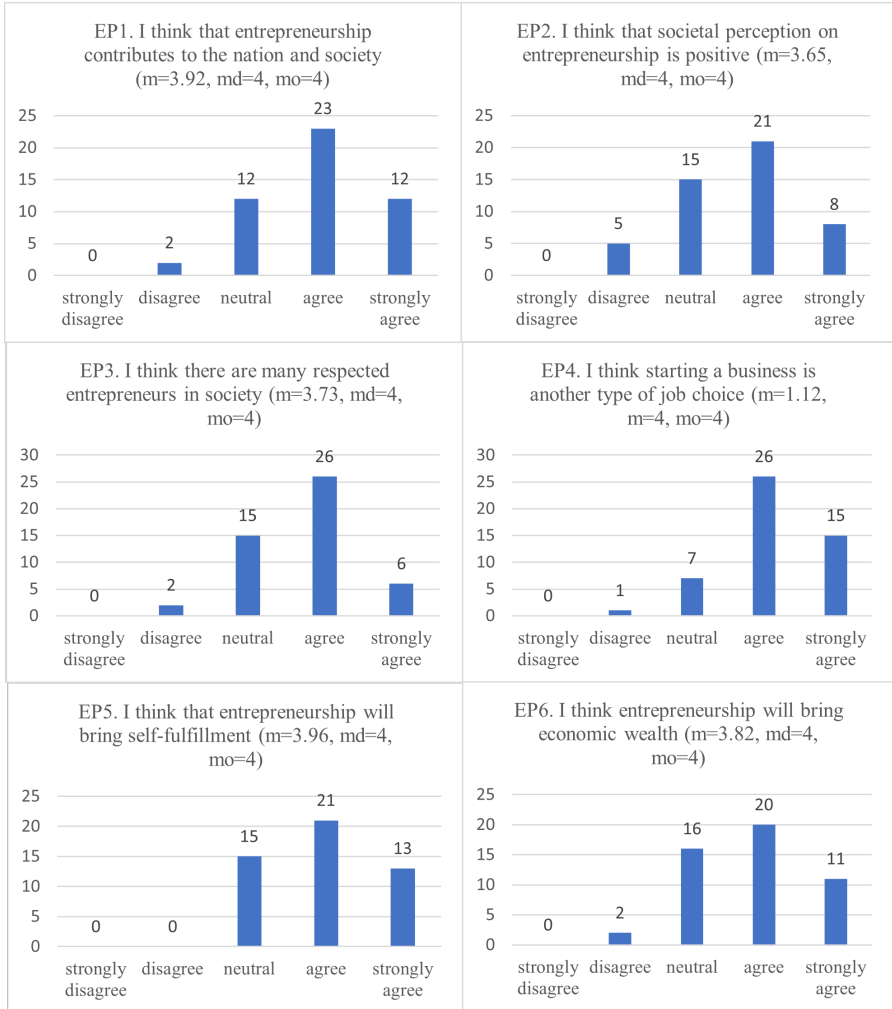
Survey results

North Korean defectors' perception of entrepreneurship and the socio-cultural environment

Our interviewees' perceptions of entrepreneurship are summarized in figure 1.

The majority of respondents had a positive perception of entrepreneurship. 70 percent agreed or strongly agreed that entrepreneurship contributes to the nation and society, while just two respondents disagreed (EP1). Almost 60 percent believed that societal perception of entrepreneurship is positive in South Korea, while only 10 percent disagreed (EP2). More than two-thirds agreed that there are many respected entrepreneurs in South Korean society (EP4). On the question of whether starting a business is another type of job choice, 83 percent strongly agreed. When asked whether entrepreneurship brings self-fulfillment (EP5) and economic wealth (EP6), 70 and 63 percent of respondents agreed, respectively, while a third of respondents remained "neutral" on both questions.

The index "entrepreneurial perception positive," consisting of six items, brought forth a mean of 3.87 and we therefore conclude a positive perception of entrepreneurship. For reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the subscale for positive affect, which consists of six items. The internal consistency of the questionnaire is satisfying, with Cronbach's alpha for positive affect = .84. The mean entrepreneurial perception of women ($M = 3.73$; $SD = 0.55$) was lower than that of men ($M = 4.12$; $SD = 0.58$). The difference was significant: $t(47) = 2.67$, $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1: Perceptions of entrepreneurship among NK defectors

Source: Author's figures based on results from own survey.

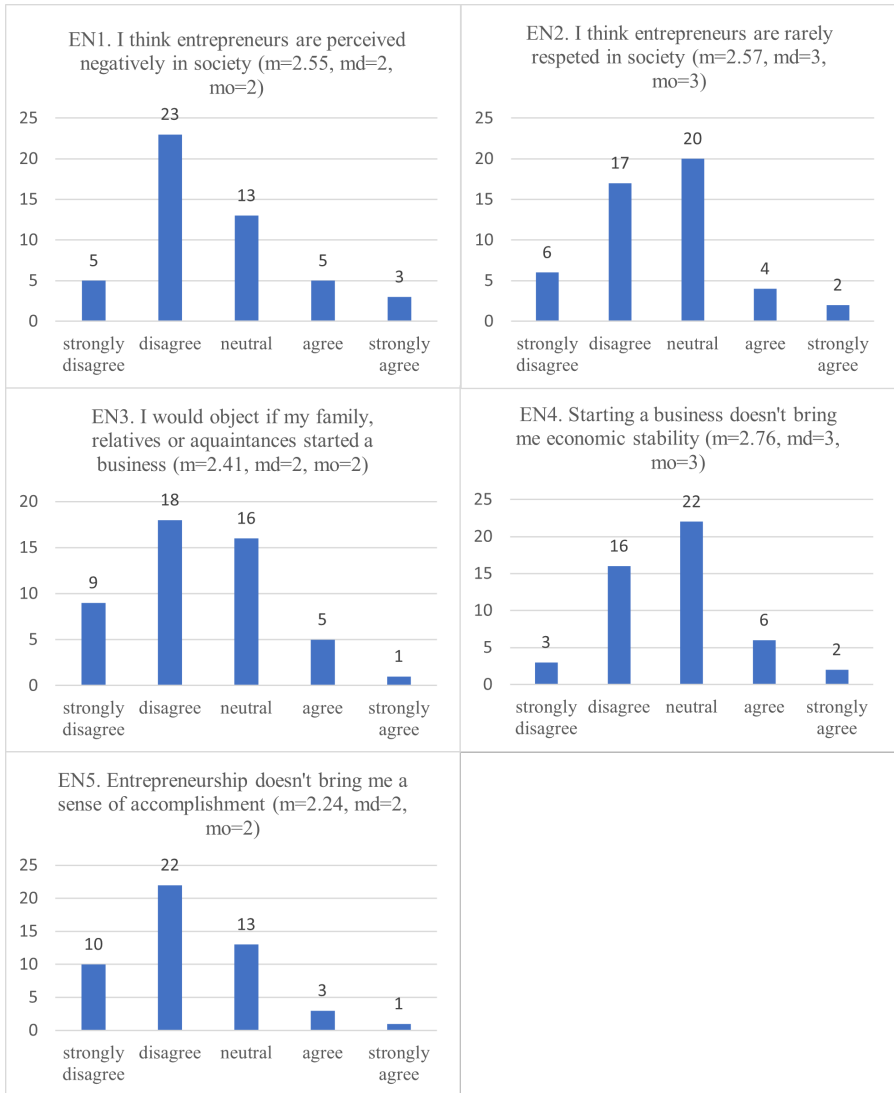
Note: The total number of respondents was 49. The answers were coded "strongly disagree" = 1, "disagree" = 2, "neutral" = 3, "agree" = 4, and "strongly agree" = 5. m = mean, md = median, mo = mode.

We reversed the question to indicate a negative entrepreneurial perception (figure 2), revealing that the majority of respondents do not think that entrepreneurs are perceived negatively in South Korean society (57%), with only 8 people (16%) indicating that they are perceived negatively (EN1) or that entrepreneurs are rarely

respected in society (12%), while 40% gave a response of “neutral” (EN2). Most (55%) indicated they would not object if their family, relatives, or acquaintances started a business, while 12% would object (EN3). On the question of whether starting a business would result in economic stability, almost half of respondents (45) were neutral or did not agree, 39% agreed, and 16% stated that it would not contribute (EN4). Two-thirds (65%) of respondents indicated that entrepreneurship would bring them a sense of accomplishment (EN5).

The index “entrepreneurial perception negative,” consisting of five items, brought forth a mean of 2.51. We conclude that the survey respondents do not have a negative attitude towards entrepreneurship but perceive entrepreneurship positively. For reliability analysis, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the subscale for positive affect, which consists of five items. The internal consistency of the questionnaire is satisfying, with Cronbach’s alpha for positive affect = .83. The mean entrepreneurial perception negative of women ($M = 2.45$ $SD = 0.55$) was not significantly different from that of men ($M = 2.64$; $SD = 1.07$).

In conclusion, the above data suggests that the perception of our survey respondents regarding entrepreneurship is positive with a mean of 3.87. Men indicate a more positive entrepreneurial perception than women do.

Figure 2: Negative perception of NK defectors towards entrepreneurship

Source: Author's figures based on results from own survey.

North Korean defectors' perception regarding institutionalized support

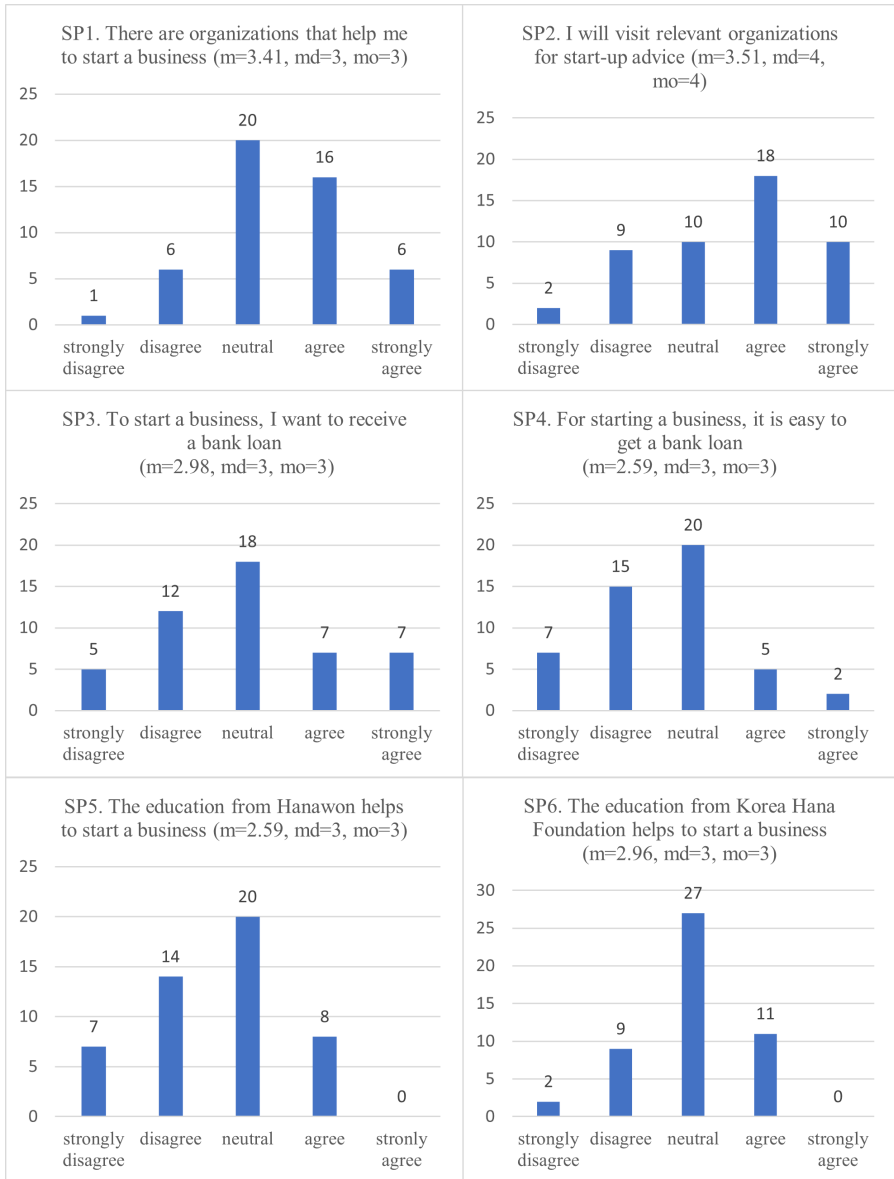
Almost half of the survey respondents (44.9%) agreed that they know where they can turn if they decide to start a business, while 14% disagreed (SP1). Almost two-thirds indicated they would visit the relevant organizations to get start-up advice, while 22.5% disagreed (SP2). If we compare SP1 (whether they know about organizations) to SP2 (if they would visit such organizations), we can discern a bias. Even though support organizations are known to the respondents, not all of them consider visiting the relevant organizations. This bias is also manifested in response to SP5 and SP6. Education offered by Hanawon is not considered helpful for establishing a business, while support provided by the Korea Hana Foundation is considered better in educating for entrepreneurship.

Unexpectedly, just 28.6% indicated that they wanted to receive a bank loan, while 24.7% stated they did not (SP3). Only 14.3% thought that obtaining a bank loan would be an easy task, while 45% did not think so (SP4). Kim Young-ji (2019), who interviewed 20 North Korean defector entrepreneurs for her doctoral thesis, states that most of them established their businesses without a bank loan or government support.

According to one of our in-depth interviewees it is difficult to obtain a bank loan because of prejudice:

receiving a loan is very difficult [...]. There is the prejudice that North Korean defectors don't know how a capitalist society works. (Male, 28, website developer)

Finally, the survey respondents were asked how they perceive the supportiveness of KHF and Hanawon governmental agencies. They did not consider either particularly helpful. KHF was better rated, with 22.4% agreeing that it was helpful (SP6), while 16.3% believed that Hanawon was helpful (SP5). On both questions, no respondent strongly agreed, but 22.5% and 43% respectively disagreed or strongly disagreed that these governmental agencies help in starting a business.

Figure 3: Perception of governmental support and bank loans

Source: Author's figures based on results from own survey.

During the in-depth interviews it was discerned that entrepreneurial support for defector entrepreneurs is associated with stringent requirements as reflected in this quote:

There are organizations, such as the Hanawon, to apply for support. However, if you do not meet their requirements, it is difficult to receive support. But we need support that matches our needs. As I told you before, if you majored in livestock industry, you can receive 400 million won. However, we have majored in business administration, so we could not meet their requirements. (Female, 26, livestock farmer)

Furthermore, it is difficult for North Koreans to apply for social enterprise status, which is strongly emphasized by KHF. To receive this status, there are various obstacles. The most significant issue indicated was that there must be at least one paid employee before an application is made. However, most North Korean defectors who need initial support for their start-up begin as a one-person enterprise. An additional requirement is that at least six months prior to application, the income from business activities should exceed 30% of the wages. This was reported to be a difficult hurdle:

I am preparing for this social enterprise status; however, the business needs a certain qualification, such as the number of employees, to whom we have to pay at least six months of a salary before you can apply. This also costs a lot of money, and we cannot pay for that at the moment. (Female, 26, livestock farmer)

Secondly, respondents indicated that any available support comes in the form of offers that are only available for a few weeks and lack consistency:

If you apply for support, you need perfect application papers, and it is very difficult to match the application period with the business opportunity. Once you finish applying, the business opportunity is gone. I didn't receive any support, it's difficult to receive money from such a support program" (Male, 28, website developer)

In my previous article (Jung 2018), it was furthermore shown that social workers at KHF and at Hanawon centers do not advise North Korean entrepreneurs to become self-employed, but instead stress the importance of working in dependent employment (Jung 2018). This stance is also reflected in governmental support programs with tight requirements and schedules.

Limitations

Our article, which provides first evidence on the institutional embeddedness of North Korean defector entrepreneurs, is not without limitations. First, the defectors' self-reported assessments do not reflect the actual performance or economic impact of governmental support but are intended to deliver evidence on the defectors' personal opinions of governmental programs. Additionally, due to the challenges of locating and studying defectors, we may have oversampled

defectors with higher education levels and literacy rates. With this potential bias in mind, future research frameworks should examine the policy support programs for North Korean defector entrepreneurs involving larger n-studies to make generalizations possible. Finally, the author tried to report the responses to the in-depth questions as closely as possible to the original answers, but subjective biases or translation inaccuracies cannot be excluded.

Conclusion

This study provides first evidence on the institutional embeddedness of North Korean defector entrepreneurs by using a quantitative-qualitative approach.

From a macro perspective, the entrepreneurship ecosystem was found to be supportive of business establishment in general. Within a few decades, South Korea was able to become one of the leading industrial nations worldwide, ranking 15th out of 140 countries in the 2018 Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum (WEF). South Korea's macroeconomic environment has seen above-average positive ratings in terms of size of the market, infrastructure, and strength of innovation, while scores for labor productivity and development of the financial system were lower. The "Creative Economy" policy initiated under Park Geun-hye is being continued under the presidency of Moon Jae-In. It aims to promote young, innovative technologies in the industries of the future. In that context, Moon Jae-In has set up the Ministry of SME and Startups to ensure that innovative start-ups are provided with office space, mentoring, research and development capital, and other services. However, most self-employed North Koreans operate businesses in the service sector, such as lodging and food, followed by retail business and manufacturing business, which are not the target of South Korea's innovation strategy. Thereby we conclude that South Korea has a well-established system of support, regulations, and taxes, as well as low bureaucratic hurdles to establishing a business, although it does not match the needs of North Korean defector entrepreneurs. Regarding the informal institutional context, satisfaction with cultural and social norms regarding entrepreneurship seems to be mixed in South Korea, even though there is a lack of data and more evidence is needed. According to GEM data (2020), satisfaction with cultural and social norms surrounding entrepreneurship in Korea are neutral on average. Successful entrepreneurs are regarded highly, but business failure has a negative connotation (Schüler 2020).

The defectors' perception of entrepreneurship was found to be positive as well. We collected quantitative data via a web-based cross-sectional survey (n=49). The index "entrepreneurial perception positive," consisting of six items, brought forth a mean of 3.87. Therefore, our data allowed us to conclude a positive perception of entrepreneurship. Male North Korean defectors indicated a more positive entrepreneurial perception than female defectors.

Regarding institutional support for North Korean defectors, a literature review showed that institutions such as KHF and Caritas both emphasize the concept of Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship. In South Korea, social enterprises are implemented with a top-down approach, targeting socially vulnerable groups. Bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining the status of certified social enterprise were reported during qualitative interviewing. The support schemes seem to lead to frustration over unnecessary requirements such as having the “right” university major to be eligible for governmental support. Similarly, arbitrary, short application periods were criticized.

Even though institutionalized support exists for aspiring entrepreneurs, our survey respondents were critical about the level of bureaucracy and strict requirements. Therefore, we conclude that the socio-cultural and politico-institutional environment is not yet able to generate positive incentives for defector entrepreneurs. The available support should therefore be amended to fit the needs of aspiring defector entrepreneurs, and to target his or her skills, as well as the particular business project. Additionally, a support scheme should be made available throughout the year, involving entrepreneurship education and practical advice to aspiring defector entrepreneurs. We hope that our research sparks the interest of future researchers to better understand this under-studied but growing population of defector entrepreneurs to assist their businesses’ long-term viability.

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Refereed article

Taiwan with a Side of New Public Diplomacy — The Gastrodiploamacy of Taiwan’s Representative Offices as Served in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna

Martin Mandl

Summary

This paper is about the presentation of Taiwanese cuisine abroad. This is important for two reasons: (1) according to the concept of gastrodiploamacy, a country can use its national cuisine as a form of public diplomacy, and (2) Taiwan’s national identity is described as “contested and largely undefined at home and abroad” (Rawnsley 2017: 991). As one part of the nation’s identity-building process, its national cuisine is undergoing a process of “making and shaping.” The Taipei Representative Offices, Taiwan’s de facto embassies and consulates in German-speaking Europe, function as an important intermediary in shaping Taiwan’s image — including that of its cuisine — among foreign audiences. This paper analyzes the role of food in newsletters sent out by the Berlin, Bern, and Vienna offices in 2017 and 2018. The results of this analysis contribute to our understanding of the roles played by food in public diplomacy in general and in the Taiwanese context in particular. Moreover, it makes a significant contribution to research on the characteristics of Taiwanese cuisine and how it is constructed by political actors in an “attempt to distinguish it from others” (Chen 2011: 316).

Keywords: gastrodiploamacy, public diplomacy, Taiwan, Taipei Representative Offices, Taiwanese cuisine, content analysis

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Amuse-bouche

This paper is about the presentation of Taiwanese cuisine abroad.¹ This is important for two reasons: (1) according to the concept of gastrodiploacy (Chapple-Sokol 2013, 2016; Rockower 2012), a country can use its national cuisine as a form of public diplomacy, and (2) Taiwan's national identity is described as "contested and largely undefined at home and abroad" (Rawnsley 2017: 991). As one part of the identity-building process, its national cuisine is undergoing a process of "making and shaping" (Hsiao and Lim 2011: 329; cf. Copper 2020: 18–24). Therefore, answering the research question — "How are Taiwan's de facto embassies in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna using food to present Taiwan to German-speaking audiences?" — can contribute to our understanding of the use of food in public diplomacy in general and in the Taiwanese context in particular. It also nourishes the discourse on the characteristics of Taiwanese cuisine and how it is constructed by political actors in an "attempt to distinguish it from others" (Chen 2011: 316).

In 2010 President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) declared "taking Taiwan's food to the world a policy priority" (Caltonhill 2011a: 37; Marchant 2010; *Taiwan Today* 2010). The same year, *Taiwan Today* — the newspaper-like international information outlet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) — described a plan to internationalize the nation's food. This was seen as "an opportunity to push its diverse culture into the global spotlight and rebrand the way [Taiwan] is seen in the world" (*Taiwan Today* 2010).

Taiwan's public diplomacy is limited not only by the "One-China principle" (see also, footnote 4 below). Rawnsley (2000, 2012, 2014, 2017) has explored the "disabling environment" (cf. Nye 2011: 99) that limits Taiwan's public diplomacy and soft power outreach both from the inside and on the international stage. Promoting its food may be one possible way of engaging with an international audience beyond the conflictual context of the cross-strait relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC). As a vehicle for cultural understanding, food is an engaging and (politically) comparatively safe topic to discuss and promote (Chapple-Sokol and Maher 2015; Coffin, Dobson, and Portela 2014; Haugh, Inge, and Madow 2014). Directly referencing Taiwan's food, the *Taiwan Today* (2010) article concludes that the push and rebranding are "an essential ingredient in [the Ma administration's] recipe for Taiwan's future prosperity." This represents a

1 The author expresses his sincere gratitude for the input, critical commentary, and overall support received in the preparation of this article, most notably from Professor Agnes Schick-Chen (University of Vienna), Prof. Rüdiger Frank (University of Vienna), Prof. Su Heng-an (National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism), Director Lee Cheng-yu (Foundation of Chinese Dietary Culture), the staff of the respective Taipei Representative Offices, and the anonymous reviewers. This research was supported by the Research Fund of the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Philological and Cultural Studies, University of Vienna.

future that — ten years later — still relies on the degree to which the Taiwanese government is able to overcome its disabling environment and “strengthen its formal and informal ties [abroad]” (Rich and Dahmer 2020).

Ma’s food-centric public diplomacy outreach went together with an economic stimulus plan titled “Gourmet Taiwan” (美食國際化; “internationalization of delicacies”), bringing together key government agencies including the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the MOFA, the cabinet-level Overseas Compatriots Affairs Commission (僑務委員會),² and the Government Information Office of the Executive Yuan (行政院新聞局, GIO). The vision was to inspire “world cuisine to come together in Taiwan (世界美食匯集台灣)” and promote “Taiwanese food that the world admires (讓全球讚嘆的台灣美食)” (NDC 2010b: 12) both locally and internationally, thereby creating jobs and private investment in new restaurants and international brands (NDC 2010a, 2010b; *Taiwan Today* 2010).

The GIO was dissolved in 2012,³ with its key public diplomacy agency, the International Information Service, transferred to the MOFA and thereby under the same authority as Taiwan’s network of Representative Offices. In the absence of official diplomatic relations,⁴ the Taipei Representative Offices (TROs; also: Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices, TECOs) are Taiwan’s alternative diplomatic missions abroad. The Offices and their staff represent and promote Taiwan and offer consular services to its citizens. As such, these *de facto* embassies and consulates are a perfect starting point for any enquiry into Taiwan’s public diplomacy outreach on the ground.

Five years after Ma’s announcement, a poll of CNN’s Facebook audience concluded that the world’s best food was not to be found in France, Italy, or Japan, but in Taiwan. In comparison to the other countries, the actual numbers show a surprising mobilization of *taicai* (台菜; “Taiwanese food”) aficionados. Taiwan secured first place with 8,242 votes. This constituted a 6,714-vote lead over the Philippines, who came in second (1,528 votes). Italy, the famed home of pasta and pizza, came in third with a mere 810 votes (CNN 2015). Taiwanese food fans had mobilized in ten times the number Italy’s supporters did.

Whether this mobilization is directly related to the Gourmet Taiwan plan is beyond the scope of this study. The CNN poll nonetheless exemplifies the potential of food-related messages in line with the call for a *new* public diplomacy (cf.

2 In 2012 first renamed the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission, then, later the same year, the Overseas Community Affairs Council; acronym (OCAC) and Chinese name remained unchanged.

3 For a comprehensive account of the consequences of this, see Rawnsley (2017: 991–998).

4 Following the shift in international recognition during the 1970s, the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) would lose official diplomatic relations with, and *de jure* embassies in, all but 14 United Nations member states. Beijing’s interpretation of the One-China principle does not allow diplomatic recognition of both the ROC and the PRC at the same time. In Europe, Taiwan’s only remaining *de jure* embassy is the Embassy of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Holy See (中華民國駐教廷大使館).

Frederick 1993; Melissen 2005; Nye 2004; Schneider 2006; Sharp 2005; Wei 2017). Gastrodiplomacy can thus be a valuable addition to — though not the sole focus of — Taiwan’s public diplomacy repertoire.

Gastrodiplomacy as a field was defined by Rockower (2012), Chapple-Sokol (2013, 2016), and Pham (2013). The latter positioned gastrodiplomacy as “a government’s practice of exporting its national culinary heritage as part of a public diplomacy effort to [1] raise national brand awareness, [2] encourage economic investment and trade, and [3] engage on a cultural and personal level with everyday diners” (Pham 2013: 5). The conceptualization of gastrodiplomacy inherited a vagueness, though, when differentiating public diplomacy from cultural diplomacy and its own location therein. As such, in an interview only a year later, Pham herself put gastrodiplomacy “under the umbrella of *cultural diplomacy*” (Haugh et al. 2014: 56, italics added for emphasis). Rockower likewise defines gastrodiplomacy as a “concerted *public diplomacy* campaign” but declares it to “combine culinary and *cultural diplomacy*” (2012: 236, italics added for emphasis).

For this author, cultural diplomacy is only one tool in the public diplomacy toolbox (cf. Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010; Ostrowski 2010). Gastrodiplomacy likewise is not limited to cultural exchange and may also include aspects of nation-branding and economic promotion (exports, tourism) as mentioned in Pham’s (2013) definition. Such a conceptualization of gastrodiplomacy is also in line with Leonard, Stead, and Smewing’s (2002: 9–10) four levels of public diplomacy impact: the first level is the creation of familiarity among a foreign audience; the second the fostering of appreciation for one’s own perspective; the third the initiation of engagement through trade, education, or tourism; the fourth level, the eventual generation of influence.

In the analysis of the outward-oriented content of the TECO messages, the conceptualization above holds an additional advantage. Assuming a singular “national culinary heritage” allows us to describe the image of Taiwan’s food as it is constructed in the German-speaking context without delving into the political processes and discussions shaping (and contesting) this image at home. The latter would be part of an interesting line of research in the field of “gastronationalism” (cf. Byrkjeflot, Pedersen, and Svejnova 2013; Cwiertka 2006, 2014; Cwiertka and Yasuhara 2020; De Soucey 2010; Ichijo 2020; Ichijo and Ranta 2016; Kim 2019), but is beyond the scope of this paper.

Pham’s definition as well as Leonard, Stead, and Smewing’s impact levels also hint at the power limitations of gastrodiplomacy. Ultimately, all forms of public diplomacy can only open the door to the targeted audience, inviting them to engage further with the sending country. The power to “accept or decline the message” (Rawnsley 2016: 30) and to engage with the sender remains with the recipient though (Nye 2004; Rawnsley 2016). Here, additional research on the impact of

gastrodiplomacy might close an existing gap in the public diplomacy literature; however, this is beyond the scope of this particular study.

Taiwan's cuisine

Rockower (2010a, 2010b, 2011), in addition to defining the field of gastrodiplomacy, also described Taiwan's particular gastrodiplomatic efforts and potential. What his analysis is missing, however, is an examination of what constitutes Taiwan's cuisine. Or, in other words, what is actually being promoted and exported here?

Chen (2008, 2011) identifies distinctive periods in the formation of Taiwan's national cuisine closely related to the ethnic politics of the respective eras. Hsiao and Lim (2011) build on Chen's periodization to compare postcolonial developments in the cuisines of Malaysia and Taiwan. During Japanese colonialism, class distinctions were reflected in the respective categories used for Taiwanese dishes: "Taiwanese cuisine" (臺灣料理) was the category for local (as opposed to national, which was Japanese) banquet and high-class restaurant dishes. "Taiwanese food" (臺灣人家庭的食物), however, was what ordinary people ate (Chen 2008; Hsiao and Lim 2011: 314–319). A similar distinction prevailed under early Kuomintang (國民黨) rule: "Jiangzhe cuisine" (江浙料理) — referring to the culinary traditions of Jiangsu (江蘇) and Zhejiang (浙江) Provinces — became the new national standard. "Taiwanese dishes" (臺菜) were again downgraded to describe the local, unsophisticated foods of street vendors and home cooking (Chen 2008: 174–179; Hsiao and Lim 2011: 319–321).

Political change from the 1980s initiated the third and current wave of the conceptualization of Taiwanese food. Particularly after the year 2000, "Taiwanese cuisine became a symbol of nationhood" (Chen 2011: 328) through the proliferation of ethnic cuisines and a localization of what is regarded as "haute cuisine." Prominent dishes became recognizable as belonging to regions, counties, and cities in Taiwan, along with a new national identity and in response to globalization (Chen 2011; Hsiao and Lim 2011: 321–327). The menus of the 2000 and 2004 presidential inauguration banquets most prominently reflect this: "Every one of the dishes on the menu has a story to tell [...] about its ethnic origins (Hakka or aboriginal) or local [Taiwanese] origins" (Hsiao and Lim 2011: 323).

The discourse introduced above highlights recent changes within Taiwan. Can we assume that this form of localization and indigenization also prevails in the ways that Taiwan presents its cuisine abroad then? The German-language Taiwan Tourismusbüro (Taiwan Tourism Office) webpage on Taiwanese specialties confirms this:

Travelling in Taiwan, you definitely have to try the numerous *local* delicacies and specialties. Culinary specialties showcasing the *native* character of the island are a new trend in Taiwan. The use of *local* ingredients is a special feature

of *Taiwan's new cuisine*. (Taiwan Tourismusbüro 2019; author's own translation, italics added for emphasis)

At the same time, however, it does so only on a subpage titled *Regional Specialties* and together with introductory texts on (a) *Tea*, (b) *Northern Chinese Cuisine*, (c) *Eastern Chinese Cuisine*, (d) *Western Chinese Cuisine*, and (e) *Other Culinary Styles* (Taiwan Tourismusbüro 2018; author's own translation). So even for an agency trying to promote Taiwan through its cuisine, there appears to be no clear definition of what constitutes “Taiwanese cuisine” exactly. This observation is in line with Taiwan's initially described “contested and largely undefined [national identity]” (Rawnsley 2017: 991) in general, and the continuous “making and self-shaping and even self-resaping [of its national cuisine]” (Hsiao and Lim 2011: 329) in particular.

Interestingly, despite the “indigenization” (Chen 2011: 317–321) of Taiwan's food, a distinction between “cuisine” and “snacks” still prevails. The English-language *Tastes of Taiwan* webpage of the Taiwan Tourism Bureau (2018, 2019), for example, still separated out “Gourmet Cuisine” and “Taiwanese Snacks,” listing a number of examples of each.

Table 1: *Tastes of Taiwan*

Gourmet Cuisine	Taiwanese Snacks
Dongpo Pork (東坡肉)	Danzai Noodles (擔仔麵)
Meat Rice Dumplings [zongzi] (粽子)	Shrimp Pork Soup (肉羹)
[Xiaolongbao] Dumplings (小籠包)	Coffin Board (棺材板)
	Taiwanese Meatballs (肉圓)
	Steamed Sandwich (刈包)
	Stinky Tofu (臭豆腐)
	Oyster Omelet (蚵仔煎)

Source: Author's own compilation, based on Tourism Bureau (2018).⁵

To the best of this author's knowledge, no comprehensive attempt to categorize the food-related messages generated by Taiwan for international audiences has yet been made. In answering the research question — “How are Taiwan's de facto embassies and consulates in Berlin, Bern, and Vienna using food to present Taiwan to German-speaking audiences?” — this paper contributes to filling this gap.

5 The 2018 list of “Taiwan Snacks” would be expanded to 23 dishes in 2019, also including “braised pork rice” (Tourism Bureau 2019) with a picture depicting the common “minced pork rice” (魯/滷肉飯) rather than actual “braised pork rice” (焢/爌肉飯). In 2020, the website was again updated and renamed *Food*, but still distinguished between “Gourmet Cuisine” and “Taiwan Snacks” (Tourism Bureau 2020).

Representation of Taiwanese food in TRO publications

About the publications

As the country's de facto embassies and consulates, the TROs function as an important intermediary in Taiwan's relations with the world. Many of these Offices publish periodical newsletters, distributed electronically to recipients in local governments, the media, universities, cultural institutions, nongovernmental organizations, as well as to interested individuals, embassies, and Taiwanese expats and exchange students. Some of the content is adapted from Taiwanese government sources like *Taiwan Heute*, the German-language edition of *Taiwan Today*, and Radio Taiwan International. Local embassy staff research and write additional content, particularly when there are local events and specific focal points.⁶ These periodicals are therefore an insightful window into how authorities represent Taiwan — or want it to be represented — in the wider world. In order to provide a fully comprehensive analysis, this paper limits itself to the representation of Taiwanese food (and drink) in the periodicals of Taiwan's TROs in the capital cities of the German-speaking countries in Europe.

Taiwan maintains eight Offices in these particular countries: four in Germany, one in Austria, and three in Switzerland. Of the three Swiss Offices, two are located in French-speaking Romandy and service the international institutions in Geneva. The main Office in each country, and seat of the de facto ambassador (representative), is located in each nation's capital city: Berlin, Bern, and Vienna respectively. During the focus period of this paper, 2017–2018, all three of these offices published periodicals in German titled either *Taiwan Newsletter* or *Taiwan Nachrichten* (*Taiwan News*). Table 2 below lists the relevant publications, initial publication dates, frequency, approximate number of pages per issue, number of issues, and number of articles in these issues respectively. The geographical focus on German-speaking Europe provides two research benefits: (1) the language and cultural target area of these periodicals is predefined, and, at the same time, (2) German-speaking Europe comprises three independent countries.

The predefined cultural and language target area allows for a clearer distinction of the intended audience. English-language websites, for example, are accessed internationally and therefore do not allow for such a clear distinction of the target demographic. With the focus on the German-language circulars, big international centers of diplomatic attention (like Washington, D.C., and Brussels) are hence excluded. Therefore the results of this study are more representative of Taiwan's widespread diplomatic efforts. The three German-speaking capitals are likewise not renown "culinary trendsetter[s], such as Paris, London, and New York" (Cwiertka and Yasuhara 2020: 8), where culinary promotion might normally be prioritized.

6 Interview with two independent TRO press officers, June 2019.

With the practical advantages outlined above, German-speaking Europe is also representative of one large, one small, and one non-European Union country. All three diplomatic missions are staffed by MOFA employees, with a single de facto ambassador heading the respective delegations and (multiple) Offices in each country. The conclusions of this study are therefore not limited by the peculiarities of one individual country, nor by one individual representative's sphere of influence. The latter are the ones who ultimately approve each newsletter before distribution.⁷ Overlapping findings, on the other hand, thus allow for conclusions beyond the individual representative's sphere of influence.

Table 2: Capital city TRO German-language periodicals

Office	Publication Title	Since	Frequency	Pages	No. of Issues	No. of Articles
Berlin	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	2013	Weekly	1	102	431
Bern	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	2017	Monthly	2	12	69
Vienna	<i>Taiwan Nachrichten</i>	2017	Biweekly (2017), Monthly (2018)	3–6	36	194

Source: Author's own compilation.

An additional temporal limitation for analysis is set by the publications themselves. As the Bern and Vienna Offices did not begin distribution until 2017,⁸ the representative corpus is limited to the years 2017 and 2018. The temporal limitation offers additional implications for the results: any foreign-targeted messages from this period can be linked to the first President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) administration.⁹ This clear-cut timeframe thus allows for potential later comparison with other administrations too.

Method

Using content analysis (Mayring 2015; Rössler 2017), this paper examines the above-defined sampling unit for the representation of food and drink therein. In a first step, each periodical and its articles are given a unique identifier in the form of a three-letter code for the issuing Office followed by a two-digit year, two-digit issue number, and a consecutive number for the respective article (e.g. DEB 17-14-3 identifies the 3rd article in the 14th issue of 2017, Berlin Office).

⁷ Interview with two independent TRO press officers, June 2019.

⁸ TECO Vienna ceased publication in early 2019 “to focus manpower on other projects” (email message to the author, April 2019).

⁹ President Tsai, member of the Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨, DPP), assumed office in May 2016 and was reelected for a second term in 2020. Her party suffered a major defeat in nationwide local elections in November 2018. This study is therefore also linked temporally to a period of political power consolidated in the hands of the DPP.

Each article is put according to its prevailing general topic into one of ten categories based on typical newspaper sections. This step allows for a detailed overview of the structure of the periodicals themselves. It also makes it possible to link food messages to broader topics. The full list of categories and the descriptions applied is available in Appendix A. The entire corpus is then scanned for articles that include references to food. In a second step, individual food-related sentences (including image descriptions but not actual images) in each identified article are highlighted and allocated a consecutive number¹⁰ (e.g. DEB 17-14-3/2 referring to the second food-related statement in the article example used above).

Table 3: Food occurrences in TRO periodicals 2017–2018

Office	Publication Title	Food Actual			Food Related		
		I	A	S	I	A	S
Berlin	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	9	9	17	23	25	35
Bern	<i>Taiwan Newsletter</i>	3	5	5	6	8	11
Vienna	<i>Taiwan Nachrichten</i>	28	34	224	7	7	19

Notes: I = Issue; A = Article; S = Sentence.

Source: Author's own compilation.

Two types of food references are found in the corpus: (1) food actual and (2) food related. “Food actual” is where *actual* dishes and ingredients are mentioned. “Food related” are instances where the TRO authors found it worth mentioning that, for example, President Tsai made a statement at a particular *lunch* or *dinner* (DEB 17-06-2; DEB 17-22-1) or that the ambassador invited Swiss members of parliament to a *banquet* (CHB 17-01-3). Thus, the respective events were food related without the individual sentences actually talking about food itself.

The food-related messages might be interesting for a study of culinary diplomacy in the original sense of closed-circle, official-to-official exchange, like state dinners and national day banquets, or for an analysis of the meaning of food in relationship-building. For this paper, the further analysis intentionally excludes this content. What is of interest here is the former type of sentences (“food actual”) referencing Taiwanese cuisine.

To make sense of these food-actual references on both dimensions under scrutiny here, the sentence-level recording units as described above are further categorized into an inductive coding cycle. Initially, 18 codes were created based on a

¹⁰ Since these two formal coding units do not allow for subjective interpretation, a second coder and an interrater reliability test were omitted at this stage.

25 percent sample of the material corpus. These were necessary to organize the material and gain initial understanding. The codes were then further refined and applied to the entire corpus with the help of Atlas.ti software. Not all of these are mutually exclusive, and for this reason sentences usually have four or more labels. Of the original 18, seven codes proved significant to answering the research question and thus form the basis of the discussion below.

Table 4: List of significant codes

Code	Description	Grounded ¹¹
Contrasting Taiwan with China	The sentence contrasts Taiwan (or an attribute thereof) with China (however defined).	6
Culinary Arts as/and Culture	Food as a form of culture/art in itself or as part of a larger cultural and arts context. Food in relation to culture/arts.	61
Dish-Specific	The sentence refers to a specific dish or ingredient.	148
Food as a Highlight (of Taiwan)	Taiwan's food is explicitly depicted as a highlight of (a possible trip to) Taiwan. For implicit depictions, see "Taiwan as a Culinary Destination."	77
Local/Ethnic Reference	The sentence connects food with a reference to a particular locality, ethnic group, or minority (as opposed to "Reference to Taiwan" as a whole).	85
Reference to Taiwan	The sentence connects food with a reference to Taiwan as an (national) entity. For local/ethnic/minority reference, see "Local/Ethnic Reference."	47
Taiwan as a Culinary Destination	Taiwan is depicted favorably as a culinary destination; also implicitly (thus including "Food as Highlight (of Taiwan)" above).	140

Source: Author's own compilation.

All coding was done by the author himself. A second coder received a random sample of 25 percent of second-level records (sentence-level) for interrater reliability testing. The results show an interrater agreement of 85 percent (356 out of 420 yes/no decisions). This is significant, since the probability of randomly reaching the same or a better agreement is below 0.01 percent ($p < 0.000001$).

With the approach outlined above, this paper attains the two initially discussed insights: (1) an understanding of how Taiwan's cuisine is used to familiarize, generate appreciation among, or engage foreign — in this case German-speaking — audiences, and (2) comprehension of whether the outlined indigenization of Taiwanese cuisine also prevails in this particular construction established for an international audience.

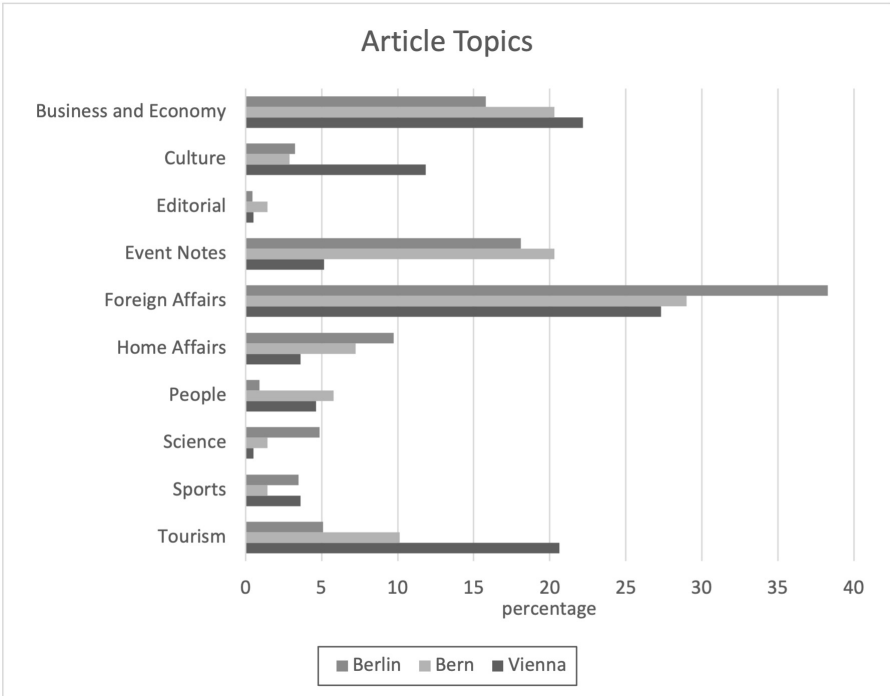
11 "Grounded: Code frequency or 'groundedness.' It shows how many quotations are linked to a code" (Friesen 2018: 38) in Atlas.ti.

Findings

Where food is used

Table 2 above illustrated the heterogeneity of the publications in terms of size and frequency. This becomes even more telling when we look at the general topics dealt with in the various articles.

Figure 1. Share of article topics for each office

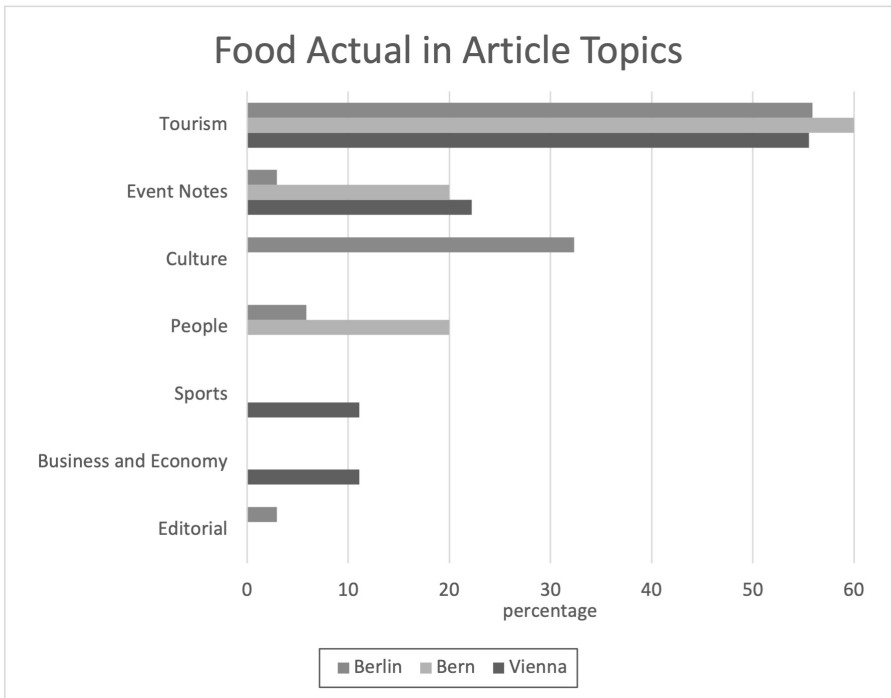


Source: Author's own compilation.

Figure 1 shows that “Foreign Affairs” (including cross-strait relations and international organizations) is the topic most frequently addressed in articles by all three Offices. Berlin, however, appears to place particular emphasis on the topic: 38.3 percent of articles are concerned with foreign affairs, as compared to 29 percent in Bern and 27.3 percent in Vienna. “Business and Economy” is the focus of 16.6–20 percent of articles, and in Berlin and Bern a comparative number feature events held by the embassy or participated in by the ambassador. In this aspect, the Berlin and Bern Offices are doing much more in-house promotion than Vienna, where only 5.2 percent of articles reported on events in Austria in which the de facto ambassador participated.

“Tourism” is a category highly relevant to this study. As shown in Figure 2 below, the majority of food-related information is found in these articles. In Berlin only 5.1 percent of articles are on tourism, compared to 20.6 percent in Vienna. One possible explanation for this is the existence of a separate TRO in Frankfurt, focused on serving the tourism and airline industries and running the German-language tourism webpage mentioned earlier. This possibly allows Berlin to focus elsewhere. However, the Frankfurt Office did not start distributing periodicals until March 2019 (email to the author, October 2020).

Figure 2. Food occurrence per topic for each Office



Source: Author's own compilation.

As mentioned earlier, tourism-related articles provide the majority (55.6–60 percent) of food content in all three Offices. For the Vienna one, food content also features prominently in “Culture” articles (32.4 percent). All three Offices also use food mentions in the “Event Notes” (Berlin 22.2 percent, Bern 20 percent, Vienna 2.9 percent); Bern (20 percent) and Vienna (5.9 percent) in the “People” category as well. Berlin further referred to the food of Taiwan in “Sports” as well as “Business and Economy” articles (each 11.1 percent). Vienna also featured food in their “Editorial” section (2.9 percent). In all three Offices, “Home Affairs,”

“Foreign Affairs,” and “Science” articles show no mention of food. Absolute food-occurrence numbers for Bern and Berlin are comparatively low compared to those for Vienna.

How food is used

The preceding section showed the areas in which TRO newsletters reference food. The analysis now addresses how these references are used. For this purpose, an initial examination of the material resulted in 18 codes, of which seven proved significant for further analysis (see Table 4 above). Each sentence with an actual food mention (246 in total, see Table 3 above) was categorized according to at least one of these codes with the help of Atlas.ti. As the description in Table 4 shows, codes are not mutually exclusive but intended rather to capture key components of food-related messages to an international (in this case German-speaking) audience.

Dish-Specific

The most common type of food mention was “Dish-Specific,” a code that appeared 148 times, thus including sentences referring to specific dishes or ingredients. Appendix B shows computer-generated word clouds of the most commonly used terms (in German) — which will hence be analyzed here. A minimum threshold¹² and stemming¹³ were applied to group keywords and limit repetition, and German capitalization is also omitted. English equivalents of the key terms are listed in italics, with the corresponding German words given in brackets. To ensure clear identification, the Chinese characters for names of dishes, people, and places have also been added.

Taiwan is the most frequently used term in “Dish-Specific” sentences, with 32 recurrences, followed by *zongzi* (粽子) — a dish of rice and meat steamed in a bamboo leaf, which is found 20 times. This exceptional frequency can be traced to a number of articles on the Dragon Boat Festival and events related to it (organized in Taiwan and Europe, particularly Austria) actively engaging local non-Taiwanese audiences in the production and consumption of the dish. This also explains several recurrences of the terms *bamboo leaf* (bambusblatt), *sticky rice* (klebereis), and *dragon boat festival* (drachenbootf*¹⁴) — all related to the production and consumption of *zongzi*. *Tofu* (tofu, stinkend, stinky) and *tea* (tee, teeplantag*) are also prominently listed in the publications together with specific dishes like *oyster omelet* 蚵仔煎 (austernomelett*, oachian, aust*), *minced pork rice* 滷肉飯 (fan,

12 The threshold determines the minimum frequency a word has to have for it to be displayed (Fries 2018: 87).

13 “Stemming is the process of reducing inflected (or sometimes derived) words to their word stem, base or root form — generally a written word form. The stem need not be identical to the morphological root of the word; it is usually sufficient that related words map to the same stem, even if this stem is not in itself a valid root” (Wikipedia, quoted in Fries 2018: 87).

14 The asterisk (*) indicates a stemmed version of a German term.

lurou, luroufan, sojasauc*), *xiaolongbao dumplings* 小籠包 (teigtasch*, din, fung, tai¹⁵, xiaolongbao), *ice cream* (eis, eisgele*), *beef noodle soup* 牛肉麵 (niuroumian), *Chinese new year cake* 年糕 (reiskuch*), and *bantiao noodles* 板條 (reis, reisenudeln, sojasauc*).

In addition, we also find several appearances of preparation methods within this category, such as *braising* (geschmort), *steaming* (gedampft*), and *boiled* (gekocht), as well as mentions of the attributes of the presented foods, like *special* (besond*), *popular* (beliebt), *well-known* (bekannt), *delicious* (kostlich*), and *specialty* (spezialitat*). Finally, a number of reoccurring place names link certain foods to particular localities. These will be analyzed more closely below with regard to the indigenization of Taiwanese cuisine.

Localizing and indigenizing Taiwan's food

According to Chen (2008, 2011), after decades of foreign dictate, Taiwan's food has recently been indigenized through a proliferation of ethnic cuisines and localization. One of the Vienna Office articles reflects on this, writing: "Taiwan's cuisine unites diverse influences such as the Minnan [閩南], Hakka [客家] and Teochew [潮州] cuisines of mainland China, with Japanese dishes playing an important role as well" (ATV 17-05-5; this and all subsequent newsletter translations by the author himself). This is in reference to a 2015 CNN article about the vote mentioned above. In comparison to the original CNN article, the sentence offers an interesting additional layer: the original in fact talks about "the cuisines of the Min Nan, Teochew, and Hokkien *Chinese communities*" (CNN 2015, italics added for emphasis) rather than referring to mainland China as an entity distinct from Taiwan.

Article ATV 17-05-5 continues to explore the historic roots of Taiwanese cuisine, directly linking *oyster omelet* to Koxinga (國姓爺, also Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功, 1624–1662). A Ming loyalist, Koxinga opposed the Manchu conquest of China and defeated the Dutch in Taiwan in 1661, founding the Kingdom of Tungning (東寧王國) in an attempt to reestablish Ming rule over mainland China. He and the succeeding regime remain a prominent although contested part of Taiwanese history (cf. Kang 2016).

Chen's indigenization and localization of Taiwanese food is reflected throughout the embassy circulations. There are 47 sentences that mention food in "Reference to Taiwan" as a whole, while another 85 connect food to the particular localities or ethnic groups ("Local/Ethnic Reference") within Taiwan. The word clouds in Appendix B provide greater detail.

15 Related terms in brackets are sorted first by number of appearances, then alphabetically. Thus, here din, fung, and tai together belong to the brand name of Din Tai Fung (鼎泰豐,) a Taiwanese restaurant chain prominently known for its xiaolongbao dumplings and Michelin Guide listings.

Table 5: Localization of food in order of frequency

	Localizing References
Major Cities	Taipei (臺北): taipei, raoh*, shidong Tainan (臺南): tainan, anping Kaohsiung (高雄): kaohsiung, meinong Chiayi (嘉義) Taitung (臺東) Hualien (花蓮): huali*
Townships and Villages	Lukang (鹿港) Daxi (大溪) Jiufen (九份): jiuf* Ruisui (瑞穗): rueishuei, ruei*, shuei* Dajia (大甲) Jiaoxi (礁溪)
Islands and Archipelagos	Kinmen (金門): kinm* Penghu (澎湖)
Hakka Minority	Hakka (客家): hakka, bantiao, hakkakuch*, hakkaspeis*

Source: Author's own compilation, based on the German word cloud for "Local/Ethnic Reference."

Among the Taiwanese localization of food content, "Contrasting Taiwan with China" is particular interesting. Only six times did texts make direct references to "Chinese" or "China" as an adjective or a noun referring to the language. Five occurrences depict China as a (past) source of traditional culture vis-à-vis a "modern and preserving" Taiwan: "Taiwan is known [...] for preserving traditional Chinese culture and for its culinary diversity" (DEB 17-10-1); "traditional Chinese landscape art was shown and traditional Taiwanese specialties were eaten" (CHB 18-04-6); "the dish was brought to Taiwan by soldiers from mainland China and continued to evolve as a way of remembering home" (ATV 17-05-5); "traditional flavors of Fujian cuisine combined with local [Kinmen] products" (ATV 17-10-4). One quote from a former scholarship student describes Taipei as "a modern but still traditional *Chinese* metropolis [with] good and inexpensive food, and friendly inhabitants" (ATV 18-11-4, italics added for emphasis). This is the only time the labels Chinese/China are used without an additional mentioning of Taiwanese/Taiwan in the same sentence. The final occurrence in this category includes only a reference to the Chinese language, introducing the Mid-Autumn Festival practice of eating pomelo.¹⁶

In addition to Taiwan as a whole, the food references also relate to specific localities and ethnic groups ("Local/Ethnic Reference"). The texts link dishes and culinary experiences to major cities, townships and villages, islands and

16 "The first syllable of pomelo [yòu 柚] in Chinese is a homonym for 'protect.' Consuming it [for Mid-Autumn Festival] bears the meaning of being protected [yòu 佑] by the moon" (ATV 18-08-4).

archipelagos, and the Hakka minority — as well as to Japan (in four instances; one presented above). While the food sentences still mention Taipei most often, the other localities in number go well beyond the traditional preeminence of the capital city — and even beyond the political dichotomy of Taipei and Kaohsiung. On the other hand, Hakka is the only ethnic group that receives statistically relevant attention. Other ethnic groups, mostly “Taiwanese aboriginal,” are mentioned only occasionally (in the context of their specific location), and did not reach the minimum threshold applied to this study.

Taiwan as a culinary destination

In addition to depicting specific dishes and localities, 140 out of 246 sentences also favorably depict Taiwan as a culinary destination — both explicitly and implicitly. The explicit statements (“Food as a Highlight (of Taiwan)”, 77) emphasize Taiwan’s “culinary diversity” (DEB 17-07-1) and its “distinguished cuisine” (ATV 17-01-1). Potential visitors are encouraged “to taste” (e.g. ATV 17-21-4; ATV 18-07-7) its local delicacies (e.g. ATV 17-14-4; ATV 17-15-4; ATV 17-18-4) at “Michelin-starred restaurants” (ATV18-03-3; ATV 18-03-5) or “lively night markets” (ATV 18-05-9). The night markets are a significant recurring theme and include references to Taipei’s Raohe Street Night Market (饒河街觀光夜市), Ningxia Night Market (寧夏觀光夜市), and Shilin Night Market (士林夜市) (ATV 18-03-5) with their “plethora of Taiwanese street snacks” (ATV 17-05-5; ATV 18-03-5; cf. Table 1 above). The sentences further encourage active engagement through *visiting* (besuch*, besucht*, tourist*), *tasting* (probi*), *eating* (ess*, isst), *enjoying* (geniess*), *exploring* (erkund*), *acquainting* (kennenzulern*), *participating* (nimm*), and *not missing* (verpass*) the foods and food-related events Taiwan is shown to *offer* (biet*) (cf. Appendix B, D4).

The remaining set of 63 sentences also depict “Taiwan as a Culinary Destination.” More or less implicitly, they draw a similar picture without directly inviting readers to actively engage or making in-sentence references to Taiwan. Within the context of the respective sentences or little previous knowledge about Taiwan, the text nonetheless connects specific foods and food occasions to a favorable image of Taiwan. Examples include increased standards of food safety (DEB 17-24-2), topics to be highlighted at the Taipei International Food Show (台北國際食品展) (ATV 17-14-3, DEB 17-30-2), and advertisement of local specialties without an explicit invitation to *visit* and *taste* as above (e.g. ATV 17-12-4, ATV 17-21-4, ATV 18-06-9).

Food and culture

The final category of this analysis looked at sentences that position food in relation to culture and arts. Sixty-one sentences refer to food as a form of culture and art in itself, or as part of a broader cultural and art context (“Culinary Arts as/and Culture”). More than half of the sentences in this category overlap with the promotion of Taiwan as a culinary destination, as introduced above.

The remaining 27 sentences link food items and food occasions to historical and mythological events, religious festivities and beliefs, and traditional family gatherings. Examples include the Mazu (媽祖) Pilgrimage in Dajia (大甲) (ATV 17-06-5), the traditional New Year rice cake (年糕) (ATV 18-02-13), and the iconic Koxinga (ATV 17-05-5). One sentence also refers to the Jadeite Cabbage (翠玉白菜) and Meat-shaped Stone (肉形石) in Taipei's National Palace Museum (ATV 18-05-9).

Conclusion

This paper has set out to answer the question of how Taiwan's embassies depict the country's food in presenting it to an international (in this case German-speaking) audience. Since, to the best of the author's knowledge, this paper is the first attempt at doing so, its first step was to map out the actual use of food in related publications (being "where" such references are made). This showed that food is predominantly represented in tourism-related content, in line with both familiarizing foreign audiences and triggering future engagement — as per Leonard, Stead, and Smewing's (2002) levels of impact.

Second, the paper identified some key dishes — including zongzi, oyster omelet, minced pork rice, and xiaolongbao dumplings. To the informed reader, these are very familiar from other sources on Taiwan's cuisine. At least the latter three form a reoccurring group of dishes often described as being "authentic Taiwanese." All four of these dishes have been prominently listed on the ROC Tourism Bureau webpage *Tastes of Taiwan* since 2019 (Tourism Bureau 2019). This tells a coherent food story, not only through embassy publications but also in correspondence with other sources.

Third, this food narrative is in line with the indigenization and localization of Taiwan's food as described by Chen (2008, 2011) as well as Hsiao and Lim (2011). China, if at all, is depicted as the source of some of the past influences, as is Japan. What is constructed as Taiwan's food culture today is a blend of these and of indigenous influences. The food items presented are linked to Taiwan as a (national) entity or to specific localities within Taiwan. Thereby, food as a symbol of national unity in diversity coherently relates to a culturally independent Taiwan. Within this food context, it successfully does this without resorting to its significant other, China, and the conflictual setting prevailing in the political realm. To a certain degree, Taiwan's embassies have, through food culture, thus managed to overcome an otherwise disabling international environment.

Fourth, in terms of localization, this paper has shown that when it comes to food, the traditional economic and political dominance of the two centers of Taipei and Kaohsiung is softened. This allows for a more diversified picture of Taiwan to be represented abroad. Again, we might speculate that this fits well into a larger effort to present Taiwan as a multifaceted and diversified society, in line with the

democratization of the 1980s or the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019 for example.

Limitations to the scope of the findings are, however, set by the research design. Written in German, the content being analyzed here has a clearly defined target audience. It is not possible to conclude whether the results are comparable to Taiwan's outreach in other regions of the world. A first engagement with other sources allows positive assumptions to be made in this regard, but further research remains necessary.

Future scholarship could also relate these findings to the receiving side too. How is this food content received by readers, and what impact (if any) has it produced? Research along such lines would further minimize the gap between theoretical considerations and practical case studies in the fields of gastrodiploamacy and public diplomacy.

Also, the actual food content is very unbalanced between the three Offices analyzed here. Therefore, while comparable narratives exist, the individual contributions of the authors and the general directions set by the respective ambassadors for the individual Offices appear to remain important. This confirms Rawnsley's (2017) notion of an "internal disabling environment," where seemingly uncoordinated efforts by its public diplomacy agents limit Taiwan's soft power output.

What this paper has not attempted to do is to make sense of the additional food-related content describing events in political and business contexts. Here, additional theorizing might open up new scopes of culinary diplomacy to be researched in the future. In terms of representing Taiwan's food to the German-speaking world in 2017 and 2018, Taiwan's national culinary identity might be less contested and undefined than Rawnsley (2017) suggests it is in other realms. In showing this and the other findings outlined above, this paper contributes greatly to our understanding of Taiwan's current use of food in public diplomacy. Maybe even more so, it shows how Taiwan can continue to move out of the shadow of the conflictual setting of the Taiwan Strait on the international stage.

To end on a quote by former vice president Chen Chien-Jen (陳建仁) (as quoted in DEB 17-30-2): "[Food] attracts people and draws attention to Taiwan from all over the world." Whether and how this attention can be translated into international leverage, particularly against an increasingly assertive China, is yet to be seen.

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Appendix A: Article categories and descriptions

Category	Description
Business and Economy	Article predominantly concerned with domestic and international business and the economy, including trade fairs and economic rankings.
Culture	Article predominantly concerned with domestic culture and its representation; applicable only when not predominantly related to political actors and/or tourism.
Editorial	Article expressing the local Offices' opinion on a topical issue or introducing a new format.
Event Notes	Event notes and invitations by the issuing local Office, including raffles.
Foreign Affairs	Article predominantly concerned with foreign policy, politics, and political actors, including cross-strait relations, international organizations, diplomatic relations, outgoing aid, international participation, and the military.
Home Affairs	Article predominantly concerned with domestic policy, politics, and political actors.
People	Article reporting on individual people and people-to-people exchange with regard to Taiwan and/or the respective Office's country; applicable only when not categorized otherwise.
Science	Article predominantly concerned with science and education; applicable only when not related to political actors and/or the economy.
Sports	Article predominantly concerned with domestic and international sports, and sports events.
Tourism	Article predominantly encouraging foreign incoming tourism or reporting on tourism activities, festivals, and hospitality.

Source: Author's own compilation.

D3. “Local/Ethnic Reference”



Note: Threshold: 2; stemming: yes.

Source: Author's own compilation, using Atlas.ti.

D4. “Food as a Highlight”



Notes: Threshold: 2; stemming: yes.

Source: Author's own compilation, using Atlas.ti.

Refereed article

Jiang Qing, between Fact and Fiction: The Many Lives of a Revolutionary Icon

Silvia Salino

Summary

Jiang Qing was the fourth wife of Mao Zedong and one of the leading politicians of the twentieth century. This paper explores the ways in which her life is narrated in four different biographies: Ross Terrill's *The White-Boned Demon: A Biography of Madame Mao* (1984), Ye Yonglie's *Jiang Qing zhuan (Biography of Jiang Qing)* (1993), Sha Yexin's *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands* (1991), and Anchee Min's *Becoming Madame Mao* (2000). Drawing on the concept of "metabiography," the author shows how each examined biographer employs specific narrative strategies to construct a certain image of Jiang, arguing that the way in which her life is told depends on the sociopolitical context in which the biography is rooted, each work ultimately serving a specific political purpose. At the same time, the strata of discourse that have settled around the figure of Jiang highlight the malleability of the biographical genre.*

Keywords: China, Jiang Qing, Nora, Cultural Revolution, documentary biography, fictional biography, metabiography

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* This is an expanded version of an earlier paper entitled "What do we Learn about Mao from Jiang Qing Biographies? Looking at Jiang Qing Biographies from a Meta-biographical and Mythobiographical Perspective," presented at the international symposium "Mao Zedong: Exploring Multi-dimensional Approaches to Biography," Vienna, Austria, July 1–3, 2016.

Introduction

Jiang Qing (1914–1991) was the fourth wife of Mao Zedong (leader of the country from 1949 to 1976) and herself a career politician. She was a central figure in the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), one of the darkest periods in Chinese history, during which many of the country's citizens were killed and politically persecuted. In reforming the realm of the performing arts, Jiang created the so-called Model Operas (*yangbanxi*), a corpus of works adhering to a strict political-aesthetic principle — according to which it became possible to distinguish proletarian art from nonproletarian art (see, e.g., Gu Yizhing 2010). After the death of Mao in 1976, Jiang was arrested and vilified by her opponents. She was accused of counterrevolutionary activities and sentenced to death in a show trial that took place in the winter of 1980–1981. The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. In 1991, Jiang committed suicide. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tried to erase her from the cultural memories of the people by banning any commemoration and public debate on her figure. In the People's Republic of China (PRC) Jiang has, thus, been a taboo subject for decades now.

Recently, there has been an upsurge of interest in Jiang internationally. The BBC documentary series by Adam Curtis *Can't Get You Out of my Head* (2021) features Jiang as one of the main protagonists of modern global history (Jiang Qing 2021). In China, in the year of the 100th anniversary of the CCP, the Party leadership has reportedly allowed public access to the grave of Jiang, triggering much attention from all over the world (Qiao 2021).

The life of Jiang has been narrated in various biographies — both fictional and nonfictional, Chinese and Western. Taken together, these writings create different “Jiang Qings”: the oppressed wife, the liberated feminist, the ruthless “empress.” Each of these images is part of its own plot, with each differing in key respects. Life-writing studies have increasingly placed attention on the changing nature of biography, a genre that has adapted in order to meet different needs and serve diffuse purposes. As Peter France and William St. Clair put it: “Biography is not the same, and does not perform the same tasks, at different times and in different places” (2002: 4). Consequently, the mode of inquiry France and St. Clair adopt is one that inspects “the functions which [biography] can serve and has served in different societies, its *uses*” (2002: 4; italics in the original).

One of the few articles — if not the only — to focus on the contingency of Jiang's biographical accounts is Elaine Jeffreys's “Woman, Nation and Narrative: Western biographical accounts of Jiang Qing” (1994). Jeffreys analyzes three early Western ones: Chung Hua-min and Arthur Miller's *Madame Mao: A Profile of Chiang Ch'ing* (1968), Roxane Witke's *Comrade Chiang Ch'ing* (1977), and Ross Terrill's *The White-Boned Demon: A Biography of Madame Mao Zedong* (1984). Hereby Jeffreys reveals the “constructed, rather than given, nature of the biographical subject” (1994: 36). The article shows that the image of Jiang portrayed by biographers depends on the interconnectedness between narrative strategies and

certain assumptions about Chinese politics and society, and suggests that the authors used Jiang's life to symbolize "China's moral and political bankruptcy" (35) from a Western perspective.

Expanding on Jeffreys's method, this paper increases the understanding of Jiang's biographical constructions by enlarging the spectrum of contexts in which accounts of her life have appeared. It examines four biographies written in different genres, eras, and places.¹ Terrill's *The White-Boned Demon* (1984)² and Ye Yonglie's *Jiang Qing zhuan* (*Biography of Jiang Qing*, 1993; revised and expanded edition 2000) are both documentary biographies, the first written by an Australian historian mainly for a Western readership and the second published in the PRC. Sha Yexin's *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands* (Sha 1991) and Anchee Min's *Becoming Madame Mao* (2000) are fictional biographies meanwhile; the first written by a Shanghai playwright for the theater (but published in Hong Kong),³ the second a biographical novel written by a Chinese-born American writer.

The analytical focus will be on the "locatedness" of Jiang's interpreters, highlighting the malleability and ideological embeddedness of biographical representation. The aim, then, is to investigate Jiang's legacies in light of more recent theoretical developments in the field of life writing. These consider fictional narratives an integral part of the ongoing discourse on the subject, because they feed into the same archive of collective memories.

Metabiography: Theory and method

In her recent study *Metabiography: Reflecting on Biography* (2020), Caitríona Ní Dhúill illuminates the concept of "metabiography" and shows its importance in deepening our understanding of the biographical genre. According to Ní Dhúill, metabiography aims to unsettle the unified notion of the "biographical subject," contradicting the biographical promise of an encounter between the reader and the subject:

Metabiography [...] takes a step back from biography, seeking to establish a level of reflection, distance, irony, and self-consciousness with regard to the claims, assumptions, and conventions of biography, while in turn galvanising and transforming biographical practice. (2020: 4)

Focusing on a range of biographical texts — fictional and nonfictional — Ní Dhúill highlights how metabiography "as method, as approach, as a hermeneutics

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- 1 The works analyzed in this paper represent only a small part of the vast biographical literature on Jiang Qing. The selection is by no means exhaustive, but shows rather the variety of contexts that are available.
 - 2 Revised and expanded edition published in 1999 under the title *Madame Mao: The White-Boned Demon*. A Chinese edition was published in 1988 as *Jiang Qing zhengzhuan* (*The Real Story of Jiang Qing*).
 - 3 The play is still banned in the PRC. In 2010 it was performed for the first time in Hong Kong by the Perry Chiu Experimental Theatre.

of biography” (2020: 10) can be applied to a great variety of biographical representations, ultimately showing the “democratic potential of biography” (2020: 10).

The term metabiography first gained scholarly attention only about a decade ago, with the publication of Nicolaas A. Rupke’s *Alexander von Humboldt: A Metabiography* (2008), a study of the eponymous author’s biographies. Rupke investigates changes in the biographical representation of a single figure over time, introducing metabiography as an approach that aims to “explore the fact and the extent of the ideological embeddedness of biographical portraits, not settle the issue of authenticity” (2008: 215). This resonates with Hayden White’s (1974) theory of “metahistory,” which argues that Western historiography can be explained in terms of the plot structures that historiographers borrow from literature. For White, a historical account can be “emplotted” in romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire, each representing a different way of “explaining” the historical events at hand. The significance of White’s theory lies in its entrance into discussions about the forms of historiographical writing — which, according to this scholar, is never neutral: “The events are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motif repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like” (1978: 84).

White’s insistence on the narrative of the historical text has inspired a way of approaching biography that focuses on the contingent, changeable, and constructed nature of the biographical subject, and which can be called, adapting White’s term, “metabiographical.” This mode of inquiry is, to some extent, similar to what Richard Holmes (2004) calls “comparative biography.” Holmes talks about the way in which biographies are continually replaced by other later ones, offering a new interpretation of the life in question. The process by which biographies reenvision their subjects in light of the present day registers how “social and moral attitudes” and “standards of judgement” evolve over generations (Holmes 2004: 15). Biography’s natural dynamic of perpetual reinterpretation is indicative, then, of changes in society and culture. “[Its] shifts and differences — factual, formal, stylistic, ideological, aesthetic” are some of the genre’s most stimulating characteristics and, for Holmes, they warrant the founding of “virtually a new discipline,” that of comparative biography — an examination of “the handling of one subject by a number of different biographers, and over several different historical periods” (all quotes from 2004: 16).

Ní Dhúill takes this idea to a more sustained level: while comparative biography and metabiography, as defined by Rupke, do not exclude the possibility of improving knowledge of the subject through the analysis of different interpretations, she proposes a metabiographical reading that “troubles the biographer’s claim, and the reader’s expectation, that the subject will be ‘brought to life’ and become somehow ‘knowable’ through the telling of a story” (2020: 24).

Her analysis is firmly concerned with the representation itself, and with its “ideological investments” (Ní Dhúill 2020: 6). This can be particularly interesting when dealing with biographical fiction. The liberty in rewriting the subject through a fictional retelling of the past allows the biographer to experiment with the new and nonconventional ways in which subjectivity can be represented, in a manner that might be more revealing of the “working of projections, desire, othering, identification, and self-reflexivity (Ní Dhúill 2020: 6). In other words, the “fiction” added by the fictional biographer makes their ideological position less hindered, thereby favoring a reflection on some crucial questions about biography — such as the one regarding the point of view from which the life in question is recounted.

In order to clarify how the various representations of Jiang reflect specific political, personal, and aesthetic interests, I first briefly outline the official image of Jiang produced by Chinese historiography.

Official historiography of Jiang Qing

Jiang’s official image was first molded after her arrest in 1976, when a huge vilification campaign was started against her and the other members of the so-called Gang of Four.⁴ The campaign was orchestrated by the Party, in an authoritarian political culture that continued under Mao’s successor Hua Guofeng (Premier of the PRC from 1976 to 1980). The years between Jiang’s arrest and her trial in 1980 were marked by the appearance of millions of posters and cartoons violently attacking the Gang of Four in a way that recalled the purging of the victims of the Cultural Revolution, denouncing them as class enemies and spies. Political caricatures depicted Jiang as an empress, mocking her ambitions to become Mao’s heir, or as a prostitute, using her past as an actress in Shanghai to destroy her moral integrity; moreover, they criticized her obsession with (Western) pastimes such as photography and poker, doing so in order to undermine her political authority as a communist. Finally, she came to be identified as the “white-boned demon” — a (gendered) destructive monster.⁵

The sensational Gang of Four trial, then, officially sealed Jiang’s image as guilty of wicked and manipulative deeds. According to the long indictment, the Gang of Four was held responsible for the violence of the Cultural Revolution. Jiang was accused of having framed cases against the Party leadership, setting large-scale purges in motion for the sake of personal vendettas (Cook 2006). As Mary Farquhar and Chris Berry have argued, the trial can be read within the narrative of speaking of “past bitterness and present sweetness (*yiku sitian*)” (2004: 128–129), which aims to create a positive assessment of the present by remembering past sufferings. It was propagated on a massive scale throughout the country by a range

4 The Gang of Four was a radical faction formed by Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

5 The white-boned demon is a fictional monster from the popular sixteenth-century Chinese novel *Xiyouji* (*Journey to the West*). For a discussion hereof, see Wagner (1990).

of media formats (including television), with the trial being broadcast both inside and outside of China.

Such a narrative is necessarily dualistic, with a clear-cut opposition between right and wrong, order and chaos, past and present. Jiang embodied the violence of the past, while the newly constituted Party under Deng Xiaoping (leader of the country from 1978 to 1989) represented the positive present and future (Farquhar and Berry 2004). In this sense, the trial is complementary to the Resolution on CPC History (1949–1981), through which the official version of post-1949 CCP history was produced. This document separated Mao the man from Mao Zedong Thought; the former was criticized for his “errors” — not crimes — while the latter was shown to be a still-valid ideology for the new order under Deng.⁶ Although he was criticized, Mao was not held responsible for the disasters and excesses of the Cultural Revolution — being entirely ascribed to Jiang and the Gang of Four instead.

In general, one can consider the biographical literature on Jiang a practice of intervention, of deconstruction, as well as of the hybridization of Chinese official historiography, contributing to the broader historical debate on the legacy of the Cultural Revolution.

Shaping the Evidence: Jiang Qing, Nora, and the Cultural Revolution

Terrill’s *The White-Boned Demon* and Ye’s *Jiang Qing zhuan* are two of the most authoritative scholarly works on Jiang. Both authors make use of a wide variety of sources, including interviews, letters, and journal as well as newspaper articles, each claiming to deliver a truthful representation of their subject. Indeed, they can be read as a contribution to the tradition of factual, source-based biographies “inescapably wedded to a truth-telling programme” (Schlaeger 1995: 67) and committed to verifiable sources. However, we can see how the two texts only partly aim to provide factual proof to satisfy the reader’s expectation of authorial objectivity. They also involve imaginative excursions, and leave room for mythology.

In *The White-Boned Demon*, Terrill sums up Jiang’s participation in politics as follows:

In Yanan, the Chinese Revolution had been Mao’s, but in the Cultural Revolution period Jiang Qing began to see it as hers as much as Mao’s. Her

6 The first “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party” (Guanyu ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi) was adopted by the Central Committee of the CCP in 1945 and defined a framework for interpreting events in Chinese history between 1840 and 1945 with special emphasis on the time period from 1921 onward. The 1981 “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China” (Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi) was produced to define the interpretation of Chinese history from 1945 to 1981 meanwhile. See Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (1987; 2006).

revolutionary idealism had always been an aspect of her drive for self-expression. Paradoxically, since joining the revolution in Yanan, she had felt little sense of self-expression, but rather a nagging feeling of oppression. (Terrill 1999: 234)

Jiang arrived in Yan'an in 1937 after leaving Shanghai, where she had worked as an actress under the name of "Lan Ping." At the headquarters of the Communist revolution, she met and married Mao, but had to sign a marital agreement that impeded her involvement in political activities for 20 years hence.⁷ This is described in the book as a humiliation for Jiang, who had left Shanghai because her "ambition was swelling too large for the theater to contain it" (98). The titles and contents of the two chapters describing the 1940s and 1950s demonstrate the author's explicit intent to frame Jiang's life within a narrative of victimhood: "Mao's Housewife in Yanan (1938–49)" and "Letdown (1950s)" reveal her marriage to Mao to be a "partial return to tradition, the coupling of an emperor with an actress" (138), and repeatedly tell the reader that she is "brittle emotionally" (165), "not content," and that "[t]he bureaucracy, or Mao, or both, tried to hold her down to private life" (167). Therefore, Jiang's political role during the Cultural Revolution, and her swift rise to power, are interpreted by Terrill in terms of retaliation after decades of suppression and misery.

In Ye's work, meanwhile, Jiang's role in the Cultural Revolution underlines a very different kind of revenge:

The "standard-bearer"⁸ had authority and power, as well as two traits that the bygone Lan Ping could not have hoped for. The first one is revenge: using the authority she held in her hands, she hit back at all her "personal enemies," and even joyed when one of them was put to death. The second one is conspiracy: scheming to wipe out in one stroke her entire inglorious past, she used all available means to seal the mouth of those who knew the facts, burning all the material to "prevent it from circulating." (Ye 2000: 516; all quotes from Ye are the author's own translations)

Following the mainstream narrative of Chinese historiography, Ye condemns the Cultural Revolution as a decade of chaos and holds Jiang responsible for its excesses and atrocities. Nonetheless, as will be shown, the book is much more complex than it appears at first glance. Ye, one of the most prolific biographers from Mainland China, not only took a daring step in writing about Jiang in the early 1990s, but also included in his book private aspects of her life that would never have made it into a political biography. The traditional way of writing biographies of eminent people was mainly an assessment of the subject's successes

7 The Party established three preconditions for the marriage between Mao and Jiang Qing to be approved: 1) Mao and his previous wife He Zizhen get officially divorced; 2) Jiang Qing's only responsibility would be taking care of Mao; and, 3) Jiang Qing should refrain from playing any role in politics (including making public appearances with him) for 20 years hence.

8 In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing was acclaimed by the masses with the expression "standard-bearer of the Great Cultural Revolution."

and failures in living up to Confucian standards; this changed very little in the socialist period when biography had a didactic function and showed exemplary lives (Wagner 2003). *Jiang Qing zhuan* is, therefore, a departure from the conventional way of writing political biographies in China, which were exclusively concerned with the public aspects of the subject's life.

Both Terrill and Ye believe in the idea that truth can be found in the sources. But in their attempt to present Jiang's story as plausible, they generate two competing images of the subject: the poor Jiang and the evil Jiang respectively. Terrill's book is, as Adrian Hsia has suggested, a "feminist-inspired biography" (2010: 103–104), as it describes Jiang's life as the individual and isolated struggle of a woman who was oppressed and victimized. By unfolding the sufferings she endured as a child — a violent father, unloving family, lack of economic opportunity — the book brings the reader face-to-face with the tragedies of her life, foreshadowing the many sorrows to come. After she moves from her poor hometown in Shandong Province to cosmopolitan Shanghai, Jiang is confronted with misogyny on several occasions, and furthermore struggles to establish herself as a professional actress. Terrill admires her strength and determination: "[S]he was a woman of spirit, not easily controlled or bought for favors" (77). It was precisely Jiang's strong desire for individual freedom that had led to the end of her marriage to Mr. Fei, allegedly her first husband, and which would eventually lead to the end of her third marriage too, that with the Shanghai literary and film critic Tang Na.

Jiang's rejection of the Confucian system and her embracing of the Western values of individuality and free will are addressed by Terrill through the figure of Nora from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, a character Jiang played in her most successful performance, in 1935:

Before the night was out, Lan had the audience at fever pitch by the challenge to Chinese tradition in the words falling from Nora's lips. Lan found a submerged aspect of her personality in turning herself into this "woman rebel" [...]. Lan was able to shout across the footlights her own private message to Mr. Fei: "We must both be perfectly free. Look, here's your ring back – give me mine." She was able to explain her resentment of male directors: "I've lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald." Lan Ping was Nora. (Terrill 1999: 56–57)

The idea of Jiang as a woman trapped, as implied in the above passage, distinctly expresses twentieth-century Western feminists' criticism of patriarchal societies as reducing women to the status of possessions. Terrill renders female subordination in China so obvious that it can be said to convey a critique of Jiang's "imprisonment" in the spirit of Western liberal societies. Terrill, therefore, also dismisses the opportunism attributed to Jiang by Chinese official historiography, and downplays the fact that she might have used her third husband to progress in her career by presenting this as but a mere — and quite unconvincing — possibility:

Lan's conduct made her difficult to deal with, yet she was not purely opportunistic in her approach to Tang. He did write nice reviews of her work, as

she no doubt expected him to. Her money problems were for a time eased by the proximity of Tang's ampler purse. Yet, pure opportunism is ruled out by the fact that Lan quarreled with Tang, almost from the start of their relationship. (78)

Terrill rejects the notion that Jiang's love relationships were part of a grand strategy to achieve success and power, in clear opposition to the Party's own narrative. To this end, the author commits to the image of the poor Jiang. On the contrary, in Ye's biography Jiang's activities in Shanghai are explicitly interpreted as an immoral attempt to functionalize men for her own purposes:

"Fundamentally, I am against marriage, I believe that when each other's love is mature, there is no need to go through the rite of marriage, but two people can just live together!" These are her "love principles." She said these words on August 4, 1935. Afterward, the kind of life she lived in Shanghai, so indecent that it gave rise to much discussion, was the result of her "practicing" these "love principles." Her "fundamentally being against marriage" was merely to avoid being fettered by the marriage contract, it was capricious. The "career" she pursued was that of the "big star," and she considered romantic love, and cohabitation, as a ladder to rise to "stardom" [...]. (Ye 2000: 105)

The passage exemplifies the way in which Ye tries to make sense of Jiang's experiences as an actress. In this context, Jiang's interpretation of Nora in 1935 is seen as a professional success as well as the beginning of her project of "climbing the stage" (94), alluding to her being a self-centered person. However, this representation of unrestrained desire and greed is countered by the author's use of the sources. Ye is particularly keen to employ private letters and testimonies that would reflect Jiang's intimate nature. This perfectly expresses his aim of painting a picture of the private Jiang as part of the whole, "objective" portrait he is hoping to achieve. With regard to her relationship with Tang in Shanghai, Ye includes two private letters. He also relays in its entirety an interview with Jiang published in *Min Bao (People News)* (Li 1935), wherein she talks about private matters like marriage and love. Seemingly this material is used for information purposes only, as it gives, according to Ye, a "true picture of the life and environment" of the young Jiang in Shanghai.

Yet in offering this private angle, Ye opens up a space to the reader that is specifically female, and thus revolutionary for a political biography. His careful development of the details regarding the troubled love story simultaneously create a romantic atmosphere, while providing the sort of texture typically used in such novels to create notions of sentimental entanglement. The first encounter between Jiang and Tang is narrated through the latter's testimony, which is quoted in its entirety from Terrill's book. It starts like this: "That night in the Golden City Theater, he had sat entranced with Lan Ping's acting. He found her strong, exciting, and sexually attractive. Meeting her was only a question of time" (Li 1935: 114; translation refers to Terrill 1999: 64). Then, the two letters included by Ye, which were written at very critical respective moments in their romantic relationship, also portray a soft and sensitive Jiang. Tang's letter, despite being

written after a tremendous fight with Jiang, depicts her as most fragile, ill, tender, and in love, while her own's letter (in which she expresses her decision to abandon him) shows her thoughtful considerations as well as her mature reflection on their relationship.

Ye, thus, ends up offering an analysis of their relationship that appears far warmer than what he originally set out to demonstrate. As he shapes the evidence into the plot of the immoral Jiang, the letters actually reveal a sensitive person and the reader is left with a strong impression of the passion, the tendresse, and even the desire she felt. The self-assertive and malicious image he is trying to construct is, consequently, countered by the womanly Jiang.

Compared to Terrill, whose perspective remains one-dimensional, Ye's narrative includes a variety of voices conveying contradictory information. This is again visible in the authors' interpretation of Jiang's political activities in Beijing. Terrill devotes one chapter to the 1960s, entitled "Recovery and Revenge: Politics as Theater (1960s)." From the title it is already clear what his interpretation of Jiang's work in politics is: he sees her activities mainly as a series of personal attacks for the sake of revenge after her recovery from cervical cancer, which was "a result of her own will to climb out of her pit of illness and depression" (214). Terrill describes Jiang's project of reforming drama as completely casual: "In her apartment, over meals, she listened to tapes of rehearsals, then rushed to the theater with fresh ideas" (222). He also points out her lack of skills: "Jiang Qing did not direct 'her' theatrical pieces, she hovered over them. Like a headmistress visiting the class of a junior teacher, she inspected, rebuked, dismantled, all without assuming operational responsibility" (222).

Terrill's gossipy temperament means that Jiang's has no capacities on her own. If she advances, it is only thanks to her "political marriage." Terrill is happy to reveal that people simply indulge her because she is "Chairman Mao's wife" (221) but that, in fact, they are confused at her ideas about drama, and most artists do not want to work with her. Terrill's urge to prove that Jiang has no political capabilities is aggravated by his desire to show that the Cultural Revolution is intimately related to her personality: "There was a psychological 'fit' between Jiang Qing and the Cultural Revolution" (231). As Jeffreys has correctly pointed out, Terrill explains the Cultural Revolution in terms of Jiang's "personal motivations and age-old power struggle" (1994: 47), and this is inextricably linked to the fact that she is a woman: "Terrill presents her as the other side of the feminine 'ideal': she is the empowered woman who exacts a savage revenge for her former repression. In doing so, Terrill feminises — and thus effectively discredits — the politics of this era" (Jeffreys 1994: 47). Terrill's exoticization of his subject from a feminist perspective shows his admiration of Jiang's ability to break with her past, liberate herself, and enter into history in a way no American women had yet done.

Regarding Jiang's public role in the arts, Ye is again ambivalent — never quite resolving the disjunction between his explicit aim to denigrate Jiang as an untalented person and the political enthusiasm that radiates out from the sources. The chapter “‘Model opera’ in Jiang's style” (Jiang ji “yang ban”) narrates Jiang's work in the cultural field. Ye's primary need, as ever, is to present Jiang as a scheming woman. For instance, he repeatedly tells the reader that she “gradually carried out her scheme” (406), that she sought a “breakthrough” (411), or that she wanted to “single-handedly grab (*zhua*) ‘the criticism,’ single-handedly grab ‘the creation’” (414). Yet, he goes on to quote at length sources that reveal Jiang's influence in creating proletarian works. Ye extensively quotes from “Tan jingju geming” (“On the Revolution of Peking Opera”), Jiang's first major public speech on drama reform.⁹ The chosen extract reveals an attentive analysis of the proliferation of opera troupes across the country and shows Jiang's understanding of the urgency to promote the revolutionary cause via the reforming of the contents of the works performed.

In the subchapter entitled “Stretch one's hand and grab ‘The Harbour’” (Shen shou “zhua” Haigang), Ye describes how Jiang “grabbed” the Huai opera *Morning at the Harbour* (*Haigang de zaochen*), in order to change it into a *yangbanxi* simply because “she lacked ‘workers’ [on the stage]” and *Morning at the Harbour* “coincidentally tells about dockers” (431), referring to Jiang's impulsive and capricious attitude. Yet, the testimony of the playwright Li Xiaoming discloses Jiang's serious engagement: “She said that she is seizing the revolution, reaching different places throughout the entire nation, her job is to watch plays, to select outstanding works that describe workers, peasants and soldiers, and arrange them for the Peking Opera” (432).

Finally, in the whole chapter we find several “comments” (*piyu*) written by Mao to Jiang in which he asks her to “read” (*yue*) a particular literary work. Ye must have privately believed that Jiang's opinions had started to become important not only for Mao but also for other members of the Party leadership too. As this idea begins to take shape, Ye concludes the chapter by firmly denigrating Jiang. Her “achievements” (*chengji*), written in quotation marks, are interpreted as Jiang's scheming all along, as in fact she is “in the dark carrying out extremely secret political activities” (436). Although Ye unveils Jiang's personality as “fundamentally competitive” and constantly stresses her “scheming talent,” he avoids the normative tone that univocally condemns her as a woman of inherent wickedness. In this way, the author manages to write about a taboo subject in the PRC with an air of ambivalence.

9 The speech was given in 1964 in Beijing at the Festival of Peking Opera on Contemporary Themes.

Resisting biography: Jiang Qing and the private sphere

While factual biographies assert the delivery of a truthful representation of the subject, fictional ones make no such claim. Instead, they use raw biographical material in a playful way to rewrite the life of a historical character without strictly adhering to facts. One of the liberties that fictional biographies have is to invent dialogues and conversations, like this one:

— What? I have committed four big crimes! Framing and persecuting leaders of the party and the country; persecuting and suppressing the party cadres and the broad masses, et cetera, et cetera. Humph, heinous crimes indeed! [...] Nonsense, fabricated rumors! [...] I was on the group deciding Liu Shaoqi's case, but I was only a helper. You have recorded proof? Okay, let's hear then.

— (JIANG QING's voice) [...] I am now taking responsibility for the nation's number-one special investigatory case ... and I can now tell you, Liu Shaoqi is a big counterrevolutionary who embodies all evil.

— Mmm, seems like my voice — pretty nice — probably a talk I gave in September of 1968 to the literary world. (Sha 2002: 286)¹⁰

This fictional dialogue between Jiang and an anonymous authority is placed in the Prologue of the play *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands*. Encircled by wooden railings, Jiang rejects all accusations made against her for the crimes committed during the Cultural Revolution. In recasting Jiang, Sha, an experimental playwright based in the PRC, deconstructs Chinese official historiography through the play's structure, merging fact and fiction: while the "recorded proof" seems to expose Jiang's "erroneous" recollection, as it is presented as a historical source, references with the status of historical sources are called into question by juxtaposing the official Jiang with the character on stage, favoring neither one nor the other. More than one version of the events at hand are presented, none of them authentic though.

In a similar way, in *Becoming Madame Mao* Min combines the fictionality of the narrated events with historical claims that attempt to legitimize the story's accuracy, thus radically renegotiating the relationship between fact and fiction in biography.

In the future the next moment is discussed as a moment of historical significance. Different views and interpretations have been adopted. Some say Mao walked out of the little meeting house and got into his car while Lan Ping was climbing into her truck [...]. Some say that Mao bent his head as he exited the house because of his height and when he raised his eyes again, he was caught by her beauty [...]. In Madame Mao's own story everyone comes to greet her with warm hellos. The truth is no one comes. No one says hello to anyone. (Min 2000: 94)

10 Liu Shaoqi (1898–1969) was a prominent victim of the Cultural Revolution. He was Chairman of the People's Republic of China from 1959 to 1968, when he was purged by Mao.

Min uses expressions such as “in the recorded history” and “as history reveals itself in the official documents,” in turn countering them with “the truth is” — which is then followed by the author’s/protagonist’s own view. Such statements not only structure Min’s narrative but they also encourage the reader to distinguish between the narratives propagated in official biographies and what is presented as Jiang’s version of the truth. As Eric Hayot has correctly pointed out: “The impossibility of deciding which particular chiasmatic structure the novel favors speaks, as does the strategy of changing narrators itself, to a wish to confuse imaginative fiction with history, a subjective or fantasized perspective with an objective and factual one” (2006: 620–621). Min’s note of historical accuracy is undermined by her own role as biographer, openly revealing her interpretative partiality. At the same time, this partiality is needed to nurture the reader’s anticipation that the novel will eventually disclose Jiang’s subjectivity. Min is motivated by her personal desire to tell the story of Jiang and yet is simultaneously skeptical about the ability of biography to accomplish this. Therefore she asserts the fictional truth, the truth of her “novel,” as the primary truth capable of representing the past.

Sha’s *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands* and Min’s *Becoming Madame Mao* both radically reinterpret the function of biographical documentation and present it as “intractable challenges to any single or definitive interpretation” (Ní Dhúill 2020: 144). Within these “anti-biographies,” these authors are, for the most part, less concerned with the details of Jiang’s life than with the (im)possibility of capturing her life per se. Ní Dhúill detects this pattern in many writings that call into question the “fundamental epistemological confidence in the biographer’s ability to reconstruct the life and make the subject known” (2020: 144).

Sha and Min both rewrite the story of Jiang entirely from the protagonist’s perspective, filtering her life through her own memories and reconstructing an ultimately inaccessible inner life, one betrayed by the omniscient narratives that have previously authored her story. In their revisitation of Jiang’s life, these two authors implement a key postmodern strategy — what Linda Hutcheon describes as “challeng[ing] the impulse to totalize” (1989: 66). By focusing on the private sphere, both fictional biographies express their rejection of Chinese official historiography and of established and authoritative biography.

Jiang Qing and Her Husbands was published in Hong Kong in 1991. In dialogue with the contemporary political environment Sha is concerned with the issue of multiplicity in the artistic sphere, in a context where politics works to ensure “equality of cultural content” in order to articulate a “‘main melody’ discourse that ‘guides’ and gives shape to a possible consensus on the foundations of the modern Chinese polity, underscoring that the CCP’s legitimacy continues to remain rooted in the battle over history” (Veg 2012: 44). In writing on Jiang, Sha not only breaks a taboo but also, through the subject’s private sphere, gives a new assessment of

her role in the Cultural Revolution.¹¹ *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands*, which focuses on her role as a wife, juxtaposes in the first part of the play events that happened in Shanghai and Yan'an, moving back and forth between the mid-1930s, when Jiang meets and marries Tang, and the years 1937 and 1938, when Jiang meets and marries Mao. While in the modern space of Shanghai Jiang addresses herself as "a headstrong, petulant, and independent-minded woman who could never be a man's slave" (307) and is determined to fight for individual freedom, in Yan'an she is dependent upon her powerful and dominating husband — finally being forced to "yield" in necessarily accepting the humiliating marital conditions (see footnote 7). Both versions of Jiang are presented as plausible. As Natascha Vittinghoff has pointed out, Sha "cautiously tried to avoid giving any definitive evaluation of Jiang's personality" (Vittinghoff 1997: 94). *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands* therefore opposes, through the very way it is composed, the official discourse on Jiang that identifies her as thoroughly depraved.

The initial depiction of the trial is linked to the juxtaposed scenes of Shanghai and Yan'an via these words offered by the protagonist herself: "I [...] want to go back to the 1930s [...] to Shanghai" (287). In Jiang's own subjective reconstruction of her life, therefore, her character is profoundly influenced by her husbands, and she reconstructs her identity as wife according to their respective personalities. While in Shanghai she admires Tang's progressive values and, just like him, is not fond of "being restricted by formalities" (306), in Yan'an Jiang is shaped by Mao's authoritarian and controlling nature: "I'll do as you say. In everything, everywhere, in my words and actions" (314). It seems, thus, that for Sha, Jiang did what her husbands told her to do. By linking the trial to her identities as a wife,¹² and by presenting these identities as ultimately shaped by her husbands, Sha forcefully intervenes in Chinese official historiography, implying that the crimes she was accused of committing should be seen as Mao's instead.

This idea becomes clearer if we consider that the husband and wife relationship the play is interested in is, in fact, the one between Jiang and Mao, and that Sha included the story with Tang in an attempt to evade censorship and get published in the PRC. It is worth noting that at the end of the Prologue, between Jiang expressing her desire to "go back" to the 1930s and the first act set in Shanghai, where she meets Tang, Sha interestingly inserts a play-within-a-play in which Jiang plays Nora, Mao plays Helmer, and Tang plays the audience, reinforcing the idea that the "husbands," plural, of the title might, in fact, refer to one — or *the* — husband. Sha's hope to be read in the PRC might also explain why he devotes only a small part of his play to the Cultural Revolution, represented in a monologue by Jiang, whose events critically engage with the official narrative. Had the play been

11 The play's experimentalism, combined with its deconstruction of the dominant narrative, can also be seen as an example of what Rossella Ferrari described as the final stage of "theatrical interculturalism," when Brechtian motifs are reworked into the local production in a synthesis of aesthetic innovation and cultural and political critique. See Ferrari (2004).

12 The link is reinforced by the presence of the two husbands at the trial as court witnesses.

published and eventually performed in the PRC, it would have caused the audience to reflect on — and question — the way in which they used to look at Jiang.

Similarly, Min's *Becoming Madame Mao* also seeks to revise the myth of the evil female ruler through the text's chosen structure; she reinterprets Jiang as a fluid and instable identity by constantly shifting the narrative perspective between the first and third person, rejecting any possibility of a totalizing narrative. The story told in *Becoming Madame Mao* is again a subjective reconstruction, this time within the framework of Jiang's suicide, which is referred to in the Prologue and in the novel's final scene. Facing death, Jiang tells her version of the story with a strong focus on sexuality, which makes the author's political and gendered point of view abundantly clear. As Wendy Larson (1999) has shown, Min criticizes the Cultural Revolution and wants to rewrite the history of that period giving voice to those figures and aspects that were marginalized and oppressed — in particular, women and women's sexuality.

At the same time the book can also be seen as part of Min's larger project to deconstruct the figure of Jiang, forcing the reader to see her from a different angle. In an interview, Min noted: "It is the Chinese tradition that every dynasty's downfall is the concubine's fault. Madame Mao is considered a white-boned demon. But how could she be all evil?" (Farmanfarmaian 2000: 66). Min's personal experience of the Cultural Revolution contributed to shaping her view on Jiang: in her autobiographical novel *Red Azalea* (1993), we read that in the 1960s Min was chosen for the main role in Jiang's autobiographical film (also called *Red Azalea*), feeding her dreams of becoming a "national starlet." But the fall of Jiang in 1976 ended Min's career in the cinema and she was forced to work as a set clerk in the film studio, before eventually emigrating to the United States in 1984. In an interview with Min, A. O. Scott noticed that she has fine memories of the Cultural Revolution and that revolutionary operas are still an integral part of her life, as she "trade[s] revolutionary arias" (Scott 2000: 44) with her daughter in California. Min's fascination with Jiang is, thus, related to an idea of revolutionary passion that, as Larson has pointed out, emerges as eroticized in Min's female characters — individuals who, "acting through lust," impersonate the "true spirit of revolution" (Larson 1999: 440–441).

In *Becoming Madame Mao*, Jiang is the protagonist not only on the stage of her life but on that of history as well: "I see myself as the protagonist in an imagined opera" (188). Her role in the Cultural Revolution is that of an active player, a "leading lady," confirming female superiority over men in performing the Revolution: "China is run by Madame Mao Jiang Ching with Mao behind every move" (Min 1996: 221).¹³ Focusing on sexuality, Min presents a Jiang who, on the one hand, is used by men in an oppressive milieu that denies female desire. Above all, Mao humiliates her; from the very beginning "[he] makes her feel that she is

13 Jiang Qing is spelled "Jiang Ching" in Min's text.

already in his possession” (143). On the other hand, through sexuality Jiang is empowered as a woman, and can claim her own identity:

She looks away, knowing that she has altered his focus. His attention is now on her, and on her alone. It happens in complete silence. A wild chrysanthemum secretly and fervently opens and embraces the sunbeams. The girl feels strangely calm and experienced. She is in her role. She takes the moment and tries to make it shine. She is pleased with herself, an actress who has never failed to cast a spell over the audience. Her heart misses no beat. In silence she introduces herself to him. Every part of her body speaks, delivers and reaches. She has him watching her, freely and boldly. Her neatly combed hair, her ivory skin. She sits still, on the ground of Yenan. She lets him find her. (Min 1996: 113)

The individualization of Jiang’s experience allows Min to overcome the dichotomy victim-perpetrator and to open up space for multiple alternate possibilities: “Let me tell you stories of my life. Because in a few minutes it will be a different story. I will be called the White-Boned Demon” (Min 1996: 302).

To conclude, by rejecting the authoritative model — wherein the biographer presents the subject’s life as a coherent narrative — *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands* and *Becoming Madame Mao* express instead the desire to call into question the established tradition of totalizing narratives about Jiang. Eventually, the private sphere is used not as the key to more intimate knowledge of the subject but rather to deconstruct official Chinese historiography.

Conclusion

This paper raises important ideas about writing the biography of Jiang Qing. In responding to Ní Dhúill’s call to “lay bare the workings of biography” (2020: 209), it shows how each author employs specific strategies to construct a particular image of the subject. Both the factual and the fictional biographies analyzed here, thus, extend the afterlife of their subject, and generate alternative narratives from the particular points of view in which each biography is embedded. Ross Terrill’s *The White-Boned Demon* focuses on Jiang’s struggles from a Western, feminist perspective, while Ye Yonglie’s *Jiang Qing zhuan* inserts some private aspects in a political biography in an attempt to go beyond the official Chinese historiography emanating from within the PRC. Sha Yexin’s *Jiang Qing and Her Husbands* encourages a new way of looking at her meanwhile — quite a problematic one at that, had the play been published in the PRC. Finally, in Anchee Min’s *Becoming Madame Mao* Jiang emerges as a sexualized female revolutionary who has voiced her story, therewith gaining a place in the historiography.

Furthermore it has been shown that these “points of view” can be particularly observed in the two fictional biographies in the way they reveal the subjectivity of biographical reconstruction. Indeed, the departure from biographical convention does not signify the total impossibility of biographical representation, instead putting a positive notion of the different achievements of subjectivity in the

foreground. Biographical “experiments” that reject the simplistic conventional modes of writing biography can actually expand the possibilities for reconstructing past lives by using a style that “more accurately reflects the condition of the modern subject, a style that is felt to do justice to, and therefore, to more faithfully represent, a particular person, or a form that activates additional levels of auto/biographical communication” (Novak 2017: 3).

Finally, it is possible to see some interesting links between the examined biographies. Both Terrill and Min frame Jiang from a Western perspective by positioning her life within a feminist narrative, wherein it is possible to detect the development of feminism from a question of political power to one of the empowerment of women as individuals. While Terrill is interested in Jiang as a woman in power and victimizes her because she dared to enter a male-dominated public space, Min’s urge is to give voice to Jiang’s subjectivity — rejecting a monolithic image of the victim and showing her complicity with the revolutionary regime.

In the PRC, both Ye and Sha write about a taboo subject. But while Ye manages to convey ambivalence without questioning Chinese official historiography, Sha’s implications are too subversive to avoid censorship. His idea that Jiang did what her husbands told her to do — assigning, thus, new responsibilities to Mao in the context of the Cultural Revolution — places him in a sort of counterfeminist position, even more apparent when compared to Terrill’s idea of her as a self-willed “top rebel.” On the other hand, Ye is less interested in Jiang as a woman than in her way of yielding power — and, thus, uses her to understand the events of post-1949 Chinese history.

In this way, in sum, writing the biography of Jiang Qing may not only result in a variety of different portrayals of the revolutionary’s life but can also produce unexpected connections between the diverse contexts in which these portrayals have appeared over time.

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Research Note

Crossing Boundaries: The Fox-Woman in Twenty-First-Century Novels

Jiachuan Li

Summary

The fox-woman, a literary figure able to shape-shift from fox to woman and vice versa, originated in Chinese mythology, thereafter appearing often in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean folklore. The figure was first introduced to Europe in the nineteenth century, at a time when fascination with Asian literature and art was blooming. The character and the narrative structure of the East Asian fox-woman stories have been adapted and interpreted in various cultural contexts, establishing connections between Eastern and Western traditions, and between tradition and modernity. In the last 20 years, more novelists from other cultures have adapted the fox-woman story into their own writing than ever before. This paper argues that the fox-woman in twenty-first-century novels is used to portray the ambiguous boundaries between cultures, genders, and human-animal spheres against a background of globalization and technological development. The fox-woman is therefore becoming a cultural symbol of those who cross boundaries in postmodern society, individuals with heterogeneous identities who transform themselves in order to live in different environments. Until now, studies on the fox-woman have remained mainly within the limits of national literature. This paper adds new perspectives to these readings by exploring the fox-woman story within a broader context that goes beyond that typical national framework. Several examples from twenty-first-century novels featuring the fox-woman are taken up and explored using different methodological approaches, such as critical feminist, postcolonial, new materialist, ecocritical, and animal studies.

Keywords: literary animal studies, literary transformation, fox-woman, twenty-first-century novel

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Fox-woman stories in East Asian culture

In early literature, the fox was seen as a boundary crosser between the earthly and divine spheres. The very first mention of the fox figure in East Asian literature is the nine-tailed fox (九尾狐) in the fourth-century Chinese mythology collection *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (山海经). The nine-tailed fox is one of the animals accompanying the goddess Queen Mother of the West (西王母), later even becoming an embodiment of her (Maihlahn 2006: 95). In this legend, after 100 years of practicing its magical powers, the fox was able to get a new tail, a process that continued until it reached the highest level of expertise: that of nine tails. At this point, the fox is able to transform into a woman. Since its inception, the nine-tailed fox has often been associated with female characteristics and especially with divine goddess figures. In Japan, the mythical fox is called *kitsune* (狐) or *myōbu* (命婦), and serves as the messenger of the divine spirit Inari Ōkami (稻荷神), who is also often represented as female (Smyers 1999: 8) and is believed to be the patron of the rice harvest and of fortune.

The fox-woman is found in early Chinese myths and tales. Just like the nine-tailed fox in the early legends, the fox spirit is said to train its magical powers for thousands of years before it can transform itself into a beautiful young woman, seduce a man, and possibly marry and give birth to children with him. The fox-woman usually keeps her true identity secret and establishes a relationship with her beloved, possibly a young student. The most influential fox-woman figure in Chinese legend is Su Daji (苏妲己) from *Investiture of the Gods* (封神演义), a sixteenth-century Chinese novel. It tells the story of how the goddess Nü Wa (女娲) sent a nine-tailed fox to earth to embody Daji, the new concubine of Emperor Zhou. The transformed fox spirit uses her charm to seduce Zhou and entices him into inflicting harsh punishments on his people. In the legend, Daji even causes the collapse of the Shang dynasty.

The same plot can be found in the relevant stories in *Ghost Stories from a Chinese Studio* (聊斋志异) and *Taiping Guangji* (太平广记), in which fox-women are depicted as being friendly to humans, and as getting along well with the family of their lovers or husbands. In the late imperial period in China, running from the mid-fourteenth to the early twentieth century, foxes as well as fox-women became very prominent figures in notebook fictions (笔记小说) written by Chinese literati such as Ji Yun (纪昀) and He Bang'e (何邦额) (Huntington 2003). In the twentieth century, however, the erotic aspect of fox-woman stories was depicted mostly in Chinese trivial literature (Monschein 1988: 329). The fox-woman figure and the narrative structure of these Chinese legends and tales also spread to Japan and Korea. The most significant fox-woman figures in Japanese myths and folklore are Kuzunoha (葛の葉) and Tamano-no Mae (玉藻前), and in Korean legends, the Kumiho (nine-tailed fox, 구미호).

Nowadays, the fox-woman stories are continuously reinterpreted in East Asian pop culture, showing up in Japanese manga, Chinese web fiction, and video and mobile games. Examples are the character Kūgen Tenko (天狐 空幻) in the Japanese novel *Our Home's Fox Deity* (我が家のお稲荷さま, 2004) and the Three-tailed Fox (三尾狐) in the Chinese mobile game *Onmyoji* (阴阳师, 2016). In modern Chinese slang, “fox spirit” (狐狸精) is used in two allegorical ways: as a determined and independent woman, and as a seductive female who destroys the marriage of others. The fox-woman character and the narrative structure of the romantic liaison between her and a man have been taken up time and again in East Asia, both in literature and in pop culture.

The adaptation and interpretation of the fox-woman stories in other cultural contexts

The fox-woman stories have broken cultural boundaries and made their ways into Western literature over the last two centuries. In the Western literary tradition, the talking fox is often depicted as a seductive and cunning figure who is good at persuading others through the sly use of language. Examples of this are the foxes in *Aesop's Fables* and in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Reineke Fuchs* (*Reynard the Fox*). There are very few indications of the fox being characterized as female in Western literature. The fox-woman stories and the female fox figure were introduced into Western countries in tandem with the growing European fascination with Far Eastern cultures during the nineteenth century. At this time, numerous fox-woman stories from China and Japan were translated into European languages, such as in Herbert A. Giles's English translation (1880) and Martin Buber's German translation (1911) of *Ghost Stories from a Chinese Studio* (聊斋志异). Simultaneously, some Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints featuring the fox-woman stories were introduced to Europe, such as Utagawa Kuniyoshi's (歌川国芳) *Abe no Yasuna and the Fox Kusunoha* (安倍保名 葛葉狐) — as collected by William Sturgis Bigelow between 1882 and 1889.

Figure 1. Abe no Yasuna and the Fox Kuzunoha (Utagawa 1852)



Source: The Trustees of the British Museum, released as CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

After the fox-woman stories had been introduced to Western readers, some writers began to incorporate it into their own works in the early twentieth century. Some examples include the American John Luther Long's *The Fox-Woman* (1900), the Canadian of Chinese-British descent Winnifred Eaton's *Tama* (1910), and the Englishman David Garnett's *Lady into Fox* (1922). In the mid-twentieth century, while a growing interest in the East Asian fox-woman was evident, novels about

the fox-woman transformation still remained, however, on the margins of Western literature (Monschein 1988: 356).

Further to those early adaptations, the proliferation of the fox-woman in pop culture and the growing interest in fantasy literature over the last two decades have contributed to the increased reception of this figure in Western culture. It is remarkable that the fox-woman has been taken up more frequently in the last two decades than in any other previous era. Furthermore, not only novelists from Asia but writers from many different parts of the world are increasingly making use of the character and the narrative structure too. Good examples of this are *The Sacred Book of the Werewolf* (2005) by Russian novelist Victor Pelevin and *Fox* (2018) by Croatian-Dutch writer Dubravka Ugrešić. According to Gérard Genette's theory of "transtextuality" (1997: 2), as far as twenty-first-century novels are concerned it is possible to identify two different patterns here with regard to the early East Asian fox-woman stories: (1) hypertextuality: novels which share the same storyline as the early East Asian stories without mentioning or citing them directly, with the fox transforming into the semblance of a woman and experiencing the human world, for example *Vixen* (2000) by Vietnamese-Australian writer Hoa Pham; (2) intertextuality: novels that cite or reference the fox-woman stories in a subplot, for example *Die Füchsin Spricht* (2016) by the Austrian writer Sabine Scholl and *Der Fuchs und Dr. Shimamura* (2015) by German peer Christine Wunnicke.

The fox-woman stories are proving suitable to a multitude of different cultural contexts. The study of the fox-woman in contemporary texts is very promising, as one can read it as a quintessential symbol for the boundary crosser, one who mediates between East and West, animal and human, past and present, tradition and modernity. Previous research on the fox-woman, however, has analyzed it almost exclusively within the framework of national literature, such as *The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China* (2006) by Xiaofei Kang and *Der Fuchs in Glaube und Mythos* (2006) by Klaus Mailahn. Few researchers have done studies on fox-women in contemporary world literature and in a modern global context. Ylva Monschein (1988), for example, examined how the Chinese fox-woman stories were reinterpreted in twentieth-century European literature. Some other studies are conducted on the basis of modern feminist and posthumanism approaches meanwhile. Luciana Cardi's article "A Japanese Fox in a Woman's Body: Shifting Performances of Femininity in Kij Johnson's Reworking of Konjaku Monogatari" compares the old Japanese *setsuwa* tale of fox-woman with a rewriting of it by Kij Johnson in *The Fox Woman* (2000). She argues that Johnson's novel blurs the boundaries between human and animal, thereby demonstrating the notion of the fictional nature of femininity. Furthermore, T. C. Baker (2009) explores the interrelationship of text and body in twenty-first-century fiction from the perspective of posthumanism, using the metamorphosis of the fox-woman as an example.

Yet there are two relevant questions that have not been addressed by previous studies on fox-woman stories so far: First, why have these stories gained more attention in the current social and historical context than ever before? Second, what problems are thematized and discussed through invoking this literary figure in twenty-first-century novels? In the following, several representative examples are selected out of the considerable number of twenty-first-century novels containing the fox-woman figure for examination. This will provide a perspective for reading the fox-woman stories in the current social and historical context.

Gender stereotypes and female self-perception

While the fox-woman originated in texts written in strict patriarchal societies, it is now being taken up again — in ways that go against the traditional social grain. Today's fox novels are predominantly composed by female writers and mark yet another step forward for the women's liberation movement first emerging in the 1960s. They are also representative of the ongoing evolution and evaluation of feminist discourse via fox-woman stories.

Via the fox-woman figure, certain gender stereotypes that can be traced back to early East Asian writing are revisited. The fox-woman in East Asian folklore — and even in present-day pop culture — is depicted as a seductive, mysterious, and dangerous figure. Men's uneasy feelings of being threatened by women were expressed in the elusive superhuman power of the fox-woman. For example, in both Hall's *Mrs. Fox* (2014) and Wunnicke's *The Fox and Dr. Shimamura* (2015), the first-person narrator is a man trying to understand the women around him. In *Mrs. Fox*, young wife Sophia transforms into a fox shortly after getting married. The story line of Hall's novel is almost the same as Garnett's *Lady Into Fox* (1922). In both stories, the husband is shown as being confused and sad after his wife transforms into a fox. At the end of Hall's story Sophia is killed by a hunting dog, after which she reverts to her human form. In both novels, the inaccessibility of the women's psyches and their inability to talk contributes to the men's feelings of alienation.

The novel *The Fox and Dr. Shimamura* also focuses solely on the male protagonist, Dr. Shimamura, a psychiatric doctor in nineteenth-century Japan. He is sent to a remote village to study several cases of mentally ill women, seen by the locals as a "fox epidemic." In the novel, the possessed women are regarded as being fox "receptacles." After his experiences in the village, Dr. Shimamura is sent to Europe to keep pace with research developments in modern Psychology and Psychiatry. During Dr. Shimamura's visit, he is able to study hysteria with the influential French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, who during the nineteenth century diagnosed the condition as a mental illness particular only to female patients. Despite devoting himself to the study of the condition, the "fox epidemic" in Japan and the cases of hysteria in Europe remain inexplicable to Dr. Shimamura,

as do his relationships with the female members of his family, from whom he has felt emotionally isolated his whole life.

In both novels, the boundaries and the tension between men and women are represented through the polarization of human and animal dimensions. Women are regarded as incomplete human beings in a patriarchal society, believed to “suffer so much by being half-human” (Hall 2014: 31). It is noticeable that both works are written by females who portray mysterious fox-woman figures whose voices can be neither heard nor understood. Commenting on the fox-woman figure in Garnett’s *Lady into Fox*, Tim Youngs notes that this inability to express themselves creates a kind of gap between “the intention and product, the declaration and behavior” (2014: 198). Why this gap is brought up repeatedly in twenty-first-century novels using the fox-woman story, despite the feminist movements, is something certainly worthy of further discussion.

In other novels, such as *Where the Wild Ladies Are* (2019) by Japanese author Matsuda Aoko and *The Revenge of the Mooncake Vixen* (2009) by Chinese-American writer Marilyn Chin, the voicelessness and mysteriousness of the fox-woman become hidden powers. In East Asian folklore, the fox-woman has the ability to change her shape at will, allowing her to adapt to two different worlds. The protagonists in *Revenge of the Mooncake Vixen*, twin sisters Moon and Mei Ling, call themselves “vixens.” They were born in Hong Kong and grew up in San Francisco, California. When Mei Ling is asked to meet a famous American poet at the airport, the latter wants the exotic young graduate student to go to his hotel room with him. Mei Ling seduces him in the taxi, then transforms herself into a fox and takes revenge by spraying him with yellow varnish, which makes him and his career stink for the rest of his life. The fox-woman in this novel makes full use of her fox powers — cunning and seductiveness — to deal with the threat and power of a human male. It also corresponds to the talking-fox character found in both Eastern and Western culture, who is good at manipulating others without them noticing in order to achieve its goals.

In the story “A Fox’s Life” in *Where the Wild Ladies Are*, the fox-woman folklore tale of Kuzunoha is retold, now set in contemporary Japanese society. The protagonist Kuzunoha, a fox-like girl who had always been the cleverest student in middle school, chooses to work as a secretary after graduating from high school instead of going on to study at university. She marries a colleague from her company and gives birth to his child, thus fulfilling the conventional expectations of society. Once her son has grown up, she starts to climb mountains as a hobby, where she accidentally transforms into a fox. After this experience, she discovers her true identity as a fox and decides to lead a more determined life, which results in her becoming head of a department in her company toward the end of the story. In this tale Kuzunoha has two identities, each with different expectations: as a woman she follows social and gender norms, as a fox she follows her inner voice and dreams. The latter identity is perceived as demonic within her patriarchal

society and is supposed to remain hidden as if a shameful secret. Changing into a fox, however, gives Kuzunoha the chance to show her talent and achieve her dreams. According to Baker (2019: 80), in literature such transformation not only represents the process of changing from one physical form to another, but also the destabilization of a given identity. The fox-woman stories show the opportunities that women in modern society have to overturn gender stereotypes and use them to their advantage, while reflecting on the conventional norms and identities still prevailing even in this new social environment.

Multicultural identity

As the result of globalization and the development of information technology, cultural boundaries have become increasingly blurred and related identities less fixed. Subjectivity in postmodern societies is always in a process of becoming and undergoing metamorphosis (Braidotti 2002: 13). Against this backdrop, the change from an ideal of homogeneity to the acceptance of a heterogeneous cultural identity has been thematized in twenty-first-century novels invoking the fox-woman figure. One of the most important early texts in which the fox-woman appears is the earlier-mentioned story of Su Daji, which portrays the simultaneous existence of her two identities, fox and woman, together with her ability to shift between the two in the very first chapter. The fox-woman story has always been associated with intercultural communication. Rereading these stories in the context of globalization, it becomes clear that the previously given stability of the individual identity is now being challenged — consequently becoming more and more precarious in the process.

In *The Revenge of the Mooncake Vixen*, for example, the twin sisters have to deal with the conflicts of the two cultures they are part of: the American milieu that surrounds them at school and in society, and the expectations of their traditional Chinese family. Braidotti (2002: 40) claims that the human body is a point of intersection between different classes, races, and sexes. It must transform simultaneously in order to negotiate the contradiction of social imaginary and one's sense of self-existence. The vixen girls in this novel must cross the boundaries between two different cultural contexts, and develop the ability to transform in order to deal with the situation faced. Their grandmother makes them do a Chinese full-body exercise routine every day, calling it “the dance of the mooncake vixen” (Chin 2009: 71). This exercise routine ingrains the Chinese cultural identity of their family — which is totally different from that of American culture — into their blood and muscles. At school and in society at large, the vixen girls must transform into women, keeping their fox side — in other words, their Chinese identity — secret and leading a normal life, just like the fox-women in early writings. From this point of view their heterogeneous cultural identity still appears to be unacceptable in the context of present national settings, even despite greater intercultural communication.

The troubled acceptance of heterogeneous cultural identities stands out in the discussion about migration. In the postcolonial discourse, the current century is characterized as a time of “new nomadism,” with people crossing national boundaries for the sake of their either immediate or long-term interests (Young 2015: 175). However foreign cultural identities, representing the “other” of society, are still regarded as “undesirable.” Pham’s *Vixen* (2000) conveys the experience of an immigrant to Australia through the invocation of the fox-woman story. In this novel, the protagonist is a Vietnamese fox-woman, courtesan of the imperial court in Hue during the First Indochina War (1946–1954). Having witnessed the decline of the empire and the worshiping of spirits, she flees to “the new gold mountain” — Australia. In this new environment she soon recognizes that she has simply chosen yet another alien and strange society, one in which she continues to struggle. In order to adapt to her new surroundings and transform into a woman she must take possession of a dead girl’s body.

It is remarkable that the female authors of these two novels, both of whom have immigration backgrounds, use the fox-woman figure to reflect upon their own multicultural identities. On the one hand, the transformation into a woman is a kind of compromise and trickery used to negotiate the conflict between an unfamiliar environment and their own self-perception. On the other, the transformation represents their exceptional ability to adapt to a globalized society in which they are required to continually break cultural boundaries, both physically and mentally. As Braidotti (2002: 60) argues, transformation is a fundamental feature of nomadic subjectivities when interacting with social realities in our new century. The characterization of the fox-woman in these two novels differs from the works mentioned in the previous section, where the fox-woman is regarded as an unfamiliar animal that is unable to talk and behave properly. Here, thanks to the transformation, the fox-woman has not only the fundamental ability to adapt to human society, to speak and to behave like a human being, she also has the chance to take a superior position, to make use of her advantages as a fox-woman, and even to take revenge on human beings by using her innate abilities.

Human-animal relations

In recent years social discussion has been increasingly concerned with relations between humankind and ecosystems, which has led to the development of the concept of the “Anthropocene.” The problematic implications of anthropocentrism and of the boundaries between humans and animals have been discussed both in academic spheres and among the general public. The fox-woman stories in twenty-first-century novels can be regarded as the representation of a new way forward, one in which humans and animals could live together, thus shattering the anthropocentric worldview (Baker 2019: 76).

The novel *How to Be Human* (2017) by Paula Coccozza, for example, tells how the protagonist Mary’s attitude toward the fox changes as the two become acquainted.

At the beginning of this work Mary sees the fox as an invader in her garden, while towards the end she comes to respect it as a friend who lived in the area before her arrival and who is willing to share the garden with her. This novel is a good example of Michael Cronin's concept of the "tradosphere", as developed in his work *Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene* (2017). Cronin broadens the concept of "translation" to a universal context in the form of nature and defines tradosphere as the sum of all translation systems existing on the planet and of all the ways in which living and nonliving organisms can communicate. In contrast to the "infosphere," where information from different parties cannot be translated into another language, the tradosphere enables a non-anthropocentric perspective on the manifold possibilities for communication between humans and animals. In Coccozza's novel, Mary's suffering from the recent breakup with her boyfriend and her loneliness are "understood" by the fox, in a way that the protagonist is not able to express through words. Nonetheless, Mary is still able to perceive the friendly greetings and messages of the fox. This story depicts a way of "living together" that naturally arises when humans relinquish an exclusively anthropocentric understanding of communication, opening up new dimensions of empathy between humans and animals.

The development of biotechnology has resulted in a sharpening of the ambiguous boundaries between human, animal, and machine, a theme that has been discussed using the fox-woman in twenty-first-century novels such as *The Many Selves of Katherine North* (2016) by the American Emma Geen. Kit, the protagonist, "jumps" into the body of a laboratory fox being used by a research program to help people better understand animals. After several years of being subject to experimentation, Kit is no longer certain of her identity — is she a fox or a woman?

When the boundaries between human and animal, organic and inorganic, body and mind are no longer easily distinguishable, the problem of ascertaining identity becomes an urgent one. This blurred boundary is depicted by the idea of the "Great Story" of nature, which is, Cronin (2017: 72) argues, everything that happens between all species within a given physical environment. In both Coccozza's and Geen's novels, the Great Story and the animal voices usually ignored by human beings are translated into a language comprehensible to the latter. Thus, the fox-woman stories can be interpreted as a way to tell the Great Story of nature and translate animal voices into human language in literature.

Conclusion

The fox-woman figure has been crossing cultural boundaries ever since the beginning of its long history of adaptation, from its first appearances in East Asia to today's reception and translation into cultures all over the world. In twenty-first-century novels, the fox-woman not only symbolizes females of East Asian background; it is also becoming a prolific symbol used in diverse cultural contexts.

This exemplifies how stories from national folklore continue to cross boundaries in our globalized society.

Due to its history as a boundary crosser, the fox-woman stories also convey important themes from the specific social and historical contexts in which it is embedded: namely the increasingly vague boundaries between genders, humans in general, animals, and machines. Ugrešić addresses the definitions of “writers” and “writing” in her novel *Fox* (2018) through the medium of the fox-woman. The first chapter of this work narrates the biography of Russian writer Boris Pilnyak. The latter would write that the fox is the writers’ totem, and that the entire tribe of a person possessed by a fox spirit is cursed together with the person in question themselves (Ugrešić 2018: 10). The narrator, however, regards the cunning and sometimes even divine and spiritual fox (referring to the fox messenger of Inari in Japan) as everyone’s totem:

In today’s social codes, Pilnyak’s fairy tale about the ethics of the writerly trade, about the fox as totem of treachery, would be read in reverse. The motto of the present would go something like: the fox is the totem of cunning and treachery: if the spirit of the fox enters a person, then that person’s tribe is blessed! The fox is everyone’s totem, there are no privileged few! (Ugrešić 2018: 27)

Fox is a good example of the converse attitude toward the fox-woman as compared to the early East Asian texts. In early texts, fox was rather a demonized “other”, while now it is regarded as a “totem” for everyone. In the current social and historical context, once stable frameworks, boundaries, and homogeneous identities are now continually being challenged. Therefore the fox-woman is neither merely a symbol of the boundary-crossing “other” and of minorities nor a totem for the few — rather she is representative of everyone. In contemporary texts, the transformation of the fox-woman is regarded as an affirmative and necessary strategy for us to deal with the tension caused by the destabilization arising from the simultaneous existence of various different identities. By adapting and reinterpreting the fox-woman story, twenty-first-century novels tackle the relevance of accepting ongoing mental and physical transformation as well as heterogeneous identities in modern society — both during the last 20 years and into the future too.

This research note is based on the first phase of the author’s research on the subject of fox-woman transformation in twenty-first-century novels. The aspects discussed above will be further explored and developed therein. There are several perspectives also very promising when it comes to matters for further exploration: How are fox-woman stories represented in new media (television series, manga, web fiction, and similar)? How do they influence the adaptation of the fox-woman stories in different cultural contexts? And, compared to earlier texts, how are fox-woman stories written and read differently within contemporary East Asian contexts?

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Research note

Debt Risk after the Reform: China's Land-Backed Municipal Bonds

Timna Michlmayr

Summary

Land-backed borrowing emerged as one of China's major economic risks after the accumulation of local-government debts and the implementation of the CNY 4 trillion fiscal stimulus package in 2008. Despite the introduction of far-reaching debt reform and the reorganization of local-borrowing mechanisms in 2015, the era of land-backed debt increases and the leveraging of public-land resources is not yet over. As exemplified by the recent developments in China's municipal-bond market, new mechanisms for land-backed borrowing were introduced on a trial basis in 2017 under the novel debt-management regime. By critically evaluating the introduction of land-backed municipal bonds, this paper sheds light on recent developments in local-government borrowing in China that have not been discussed in detail so far by the scholarship. My evaluation draws on an in-depth analysis of central and local policy documents issued after 2008, a dataset on municipal bonds issued after 2017, insights from preliminary field research trips, and secondary literature on the topic. I argue that the introduction of land-backed bonds reflects an attempt to strengthen the top-down control over local borrowing, with the leveraging of land necessarily being upheld due to institutional constraints and path dependency.

Keywords: local debt, municipal bond markets, land-based finance, financial stability, central-local relations, real-estate market

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Introduction

The Chinese government announced the first-ever issuance of local-government bonds (*difang zhengfu zhaiquan*) for investments in land reserves in June 2017 and for shanty-town renovations in April 2018. These new bonds were categorized as “special project bonds” (*shouyi zhuanxiang zhaiquan*)¹ and issued on a trial basis, forming part of the ongoing attempt to diversify China's nascent municipal bond market in order to regulate the financial behavior of local governments and curb the rise of hidden debt. According to official regulations, both bonds are backed by expectations of future gains in land value.²

While the diversification of the municipal-bond market is a crucial component of the Chinese government's efforts to resolve debt risk in the national economy, the collateralization of bonds through land-transfer income perpetuates what has actually become one of the country's greatest financial threats over the past decade: the dependency of local-government debt on the land market (Lu and Sun 2013; Tsui 2011; Zhou and Tan 2017). Local governments would use income from public land sales as the primary form of debt collateral in the period following China's CNY 4 trillion fiscal stimulus package of 2008, giving rise to far-reaching economic risk, real-estate bubbles, and repayment difficulties, as the ability to service debts hinged on volatile land- and real-estate prices (Collier 2017). Given these risks, why then did the Chinese government introduce land-backed debt mechanisms by design — especially within the framework of a pilot program aimed at mitigating debt risk?

So far, not much has been said in the academic literature about these recently issued special project bonds — and about their land-backed versions in particular. Besides, the latest developments in land-backed project bonds are characterized by astonishing ambiguity. While the issuance of “land-reserve bonds” (LRBs, *tudi chubei zhuanxiang zhaiquan*) and “shanty-town-renovation bonds” (STRBs, *penghuqu gaizao zhuanxiang zhaiquan*) would considerably increase compared to other bond types after 2017, it was abruptly halted (albeit temporarily) by the State Council in September 2019 (Central Government 2019b).

What is the nature and the background of land-backed municipal bonds under China's new debt-management system? Based on insights gained during research carried out for my doctoral thesis, I will critically explore the background to and

1 According to the principle of special project bonds, investment projects funded through them are repaid by the corresponding project incomes; further, stable repayment funds must be clarified in advance.

2 On June 1, 2017, the Chinese Ministries of Finance (MOF) and of Land and Resources (MLR) jointly announced the “Administrative Measures for Local Government Land Reserve Special Bonds (Trial Implementation)” (*Difang zhengfu tudi chubei zhuanxiang zhaiquan guanli banfa (shixing)*) (Ministry of Finance 2017; Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Land and Resources 2017). This was followed by a declaration on the issuance of bonds for shanty-town renovations by the MOF and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development on April 3, 2018 (Central Government 2018; Ministry of Finance 2018).

the functions of the land-backed municipal bonds that have recently appeared on the scene. In doing so, I draw on my in-depth analysis of local- and central-government documents related to local-government borrowing (2008–2020), data on municipal-bond issuance (2015–2020), on secondary literature, and on insights gained during field-research trips to various Chinese cities in October 2018 and June 2019 respectively.

After providing an overview of the risks and the evolution of land-based local-government borrowing after 2008, which was when the practice first started to flourish, I will then outline recent developments and the specific characteristics of the different land-backed project bonds based on descriptive data analysis. In the four sections of the paper that follow, I critically discuss the background to the initiative by placing it in the context of institutional settings, strategic debt-management goals, land-market regulation, and monetary considerations. In the conclusion, I briefly summarize my findings and provide a short outlook for the future. I argue that the introduction of land-backed bonds mainly results from an attempt to enhance top-down control over local-borrowing processes in China, while the reliance on land therein must be upheld due to institutional constraints and path dependency — a situation that impedes the central government’s ability to manage debts effectively.

Development and risks of “land-backed borrowing”

The high reliance of local-government financing in China on the land market has its institutional roots in the mid-1990s, when municipalities became increasingly dependent on income from selling the commodity to real-estate developers to boost local economies and compensate for insufficient tax revenue (Cao et al. 2008; He et al. 2016; Zhou and Tan 2017).³ As has been mentioned in numerous academic articles by now, this gave rise to rural and urban social instability, concerns over China’s food security, and to the forced expropriation of collectively owned farmland (Cartier 2001; Hsing 2010). While under China’s public-ownership system land was used as collateral for local-borrowing operations via half-public, half-private investment companies called “local government financing vehicles” (LGFVs) starting in the 1990s, its leveraging function only came extensively to the fore after China’s CNY 4 trillion fiscal stimulus package was implemented in 2008. Despite the well-known risks of land mortgaging through LGFVs, the sudden need for financing in the wake of the global financial crisis shifted land to the center of investment strategies, allowing local governments to borrow against the expected growth of its value in the future.

3 Through the introduction of the “tax-sharing system” (*jenshuizhi*) in 1994, taxes were reassigned between central and local governments, taxation was recentralized, and 75 percent of value-added tax was assigned to the central government (Wong 2000).

“Land-backed borrowing” (*tudi rongzi*) enabled the state to finance the economic stimulus, but produced unforeseen long-term risks to the Chinese economy and unexpectedly high local-debt levels too.⁴ In 2013, for example, more than 37.23 percent of all local debts were dependent on future income from land sales for repayment (National Audit Office 2013). Since the ability of local governments to service their debts increasingly hinged on volatile land prices, local governments faced difficulties repaying both capital and interest in times of declining land prices (Collier 2017; Lu and Sun 2013). Furthermore, the growing entrenchment of the real-estate market in the shadow-banking sector has fueled concerns of real-estate bubbles, land-price inflation, and systemic risks to the banking sector overall, since shadow banks would help local governments artificially stimulate the land market (Collier 2017; Tsui 2011; Zhang and Barnett 2014). According to official statements, land-backed borrowing led to a great risk of “non-performing loans” (*buliang daikuan*) by local governments (National Audit Office 2012); illegal land mortgaging, meanwhile, produced “large debt risks and financial risks” (*da zhaiwu he jinrong fengxian*) in the period after 2008 (Central Government 2011).

Due to the uncontrolled rise in local debts,⁵ the growth of the shadow-banking sector, and systemic threats to China's overall banking system, the Xi Jinping administration (under Finance Minister Lou Jiwei) announced a promising fiscal-reform package in 2013 that reorganized the local-borrowing system at its core (Wong 2018). The revision of China's “Budget Law” (*yusuan fa*) officially authorized local governments to autonomously issue debt in the form of municipal bonds as a replacement for high-risk LGFV borrowing (State Council 2014). Since 2015, they have been allowed to issue a fixed amount of “general-obligation bonds” (GOBs, *yiban zhaiquan*) and “special-revenue bonds” (SRBs, *zhuanxiang zhaiquan*) each year, as controlled by the State Council (2014).⁶ Based on this newly established framework, experimental trial projects for project-specific SRBs have been underway since 2017, including the bond trials for land-reserve and shanty-town-renovation projects mentioned in the introduction. In comparison to GOBs, the proportion of SRBs issued has been on the increase ever since the reform's introduction.⁷

4 In 2009 alone, local governments took on land mortgage loans worth CNY 774.9 billion, twice the amount they had taken on the year before, while mortgaging 51,000 hectares of land too (Ministry of Land and Resources 2010).

5 By 2013, local-government debts had risen to CNY 17.9 trillion (National Audit Office 2013).

6 GOBs are issued for projects without a fixed income and are to be repaid from tax revenue (State Council 2014). SRBs, meanwhile, are issued to finance income-generating projects and are guaranteed solely by expected project income, such as revenue from toll roads (State Council 2014).

7 In 2015 the limit for special debts was set at CNY 6.08 trillion, rising to CNY 14.52 trillion in January 2020 (CEIC database). For general debts, the 2015 limit was already as high as CNY 9.9 trillion; similarly, it rose to CNY 14.28 trillion in 2020 (CEIC database).

Project bonds on a land basis

Despite the far-reaching changes induced by the reorganization of local-borrowing mechanisms, the introduction of municipal bonds has not halted the use of land in local-government fundraising procedures. First and foremost, it is noteworthy that apart from the two recent land-backed trial projects for SRBs, the latter have per se become a new channel for the leveraging of land value through the reform measures. As I have shown elsewhere, the majority — more than 87 percent — of SRBs issued in the time period between the beginning of the reform in 2015 and 2017 were guaranteed by future land value, albeit under less detailed regulations than the new bond trials, with greater room for obscurity, and without predetermined rules for repayment (Michlmayr 2020).⁸ As a tool for the restructuring of debts, they provided local governments with the opportunity to exchange old LGFV debts into cheaper bonds with lower interest rates, longer terms of maturity, and land-sale revenue as collateral (Ministry of Finance 2015b; State Council 2014).

Based on revenue bonds, LRBs and STRBs emerged as two new pilots for project-specific SRBs after 2017 (Ministry of Finance 2018; Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Land and Resources 2017).⁹ Through the advancement of the SRB and the diversification of the municipal-bond market, different project-specific bonds have been introduced on a trial basis to standardize local-debt financing and to better manage risks (Ministry of Finance 2017).¹⁰ The new trial bonds are tied to specific sources of collateral in advance, the latter determined by the expected project revenue. In the case of LRBs and STRBs, this predetermined source of collateral is the expected income from local governments' future land sales.

To what extent do these experimental bonds rely on land? Available data provided by the Wind Financial Terminal (WFT) suggest that the majority of all pilot-project bonds issued after 2018 are either LRBs or STRBs, meaning that the majority are collateralized by land.¹¹ Between 2018 and 2020, 85.31 percent of all project-specific SRBs were guaranteed by land-transfer revenue, amounting to CNY 5.6 trillion in total (see Figure 1 below). Simultaneously, the issuance of LRBs has picked up speed since 2017. Local governments issued such bonds worth

8 My study draws on the quantitative content analysis of bond-rating reports on 657 bond issuances categorized in 202 bond bundles (*pi*). The bonds analyzed include newly issued bonds as well as debts exchanged from LGFV-bonds.

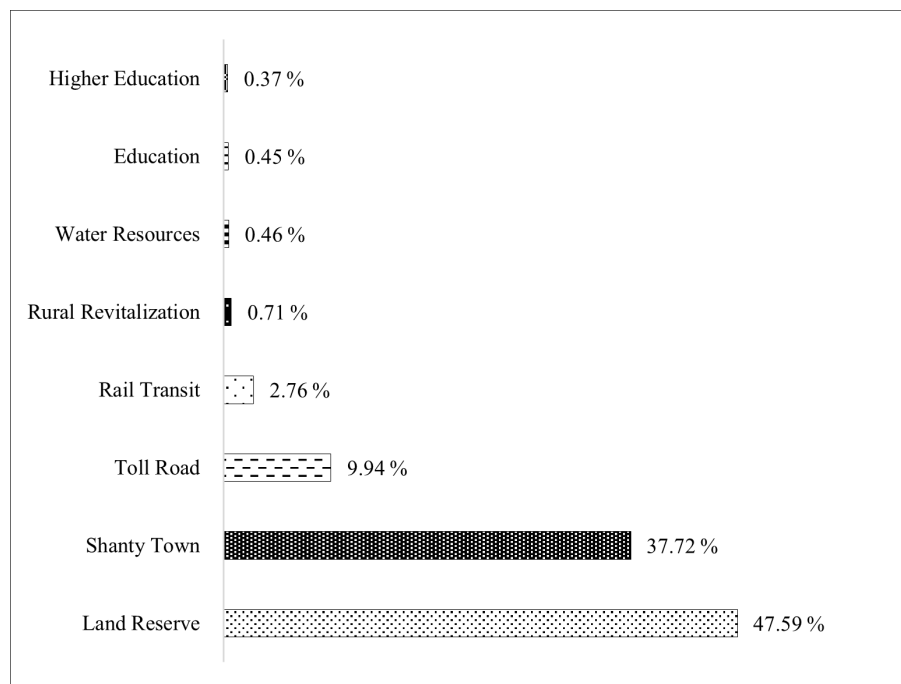
9 In the beginning, the issuance of LRBs was limited to seven provincial-level governments, including Beijing, Hebei, Tianjin, Henan, Shandong, Zhejiang, and Xiamen. Both trials were extended to local governments across the country until 2019 (Central Government 2019a, 2019c).

10 Project-specific bonds include those for investments in toll roads, land reserves, shanty-town renovations, and rural revitalization, each of them backed by expected project revenue.

11 The data on local bond issuance was downloaded from the WFT in March 2020 and include issuances for the period from July 2017 to March 2020. The data covers both newly issued bonds and debt exchanged from old LGFV bonds.

CNY 0.64 in 2017, growing in value to CNY 1.62 trillion by 2019 (see Figure 2 below).¹²

Figure 1. Distribution of project-specific bonds (January 2018–March 2020), in percent

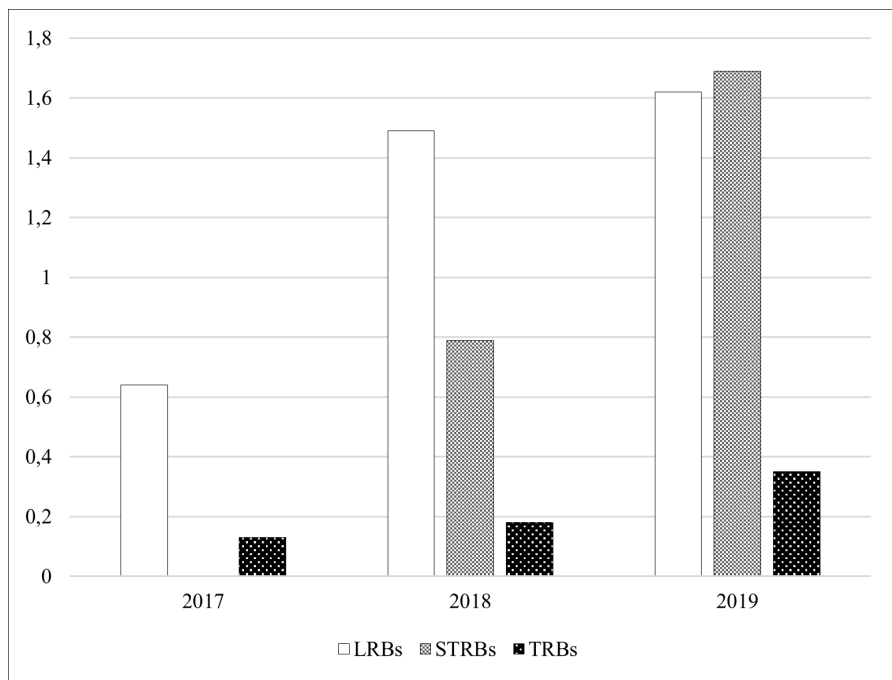


Source: Wind.

By comparison, local governments issued toll-road bonds (TRBs, *shoufei gonglu zhuanxiang zhaiquan*) worth only CNY 0.65 trillion and rural-revitalization bonds (RRBs, *xiangcun zhenxing zhuanxiang zhaiquan*) worth CNY 0.04 trillion in the period from 2018 to 2020 (Wind). With a median interest rate of 3.78 percent for LRBs and 3.56 percent for shanty-town-renovation-bonds provided in the data from Wind, the bonds do indeed provide local governments with a cheaper alternative to financing land development compared to their old high-interest LGFV peers. The maturity of these bonds is comparatively short (it may not exceed five years) in order to enable better control.

¹² In 2018 STRBs worth CNY 0.79 trillion were issued, an amount which had risen to CNY 1.69 trillion by the following year (Wind).

Figure 2. Growth of land-reserve bonds and shanty-town-renovation bonds per year compared to toll-road bonds (July 2017–December 2019), in CNY trillion



Source: Wind.

Due to the unexpected surplus of bond investments in land reserves and real estate, the State Council temporarily ceased, as noted, the issuance of LRBs and STRBs in September 2019 to encourage investment in other areas necessary to economic growth instead (Central Government 2019b). This could indicate that China's central authorities are tightening their grip on real-estate financing due to the associated financial risks, but at the same time it also shows how quickly the issuance of municipal bonds can be halted when developments are unfavorable. In any case, the available data demonstrate that despite the increasing diversification of SRBs, a significant proportion still rely on future land value. Predominantly, it can safely be assumed that the inclusion of land-backed municipal bonds in the debt-management system is by no means coincidental.

Path dependency and institutional constraints

When analyzing local-government borrowing and debt management in China, the importance of path dependency and institutional constraints cannot be sufficiently

stressed.¹³ State-led land leveraging, exemplified by the municipal-bond market, not only goes back to the developments that followed the fiscal stimulus package of 2008 but is deeply entrenched in China's local both institutional and fiscal structures too. I believe that this not only constrains the Chinese government's options for managing local borrowing but also necessitates reliance on public-land-value appreciation in a period of economic risk.

China enacted far-reaching tax reform in 1994 that recentralized fiscal resources while leaving the financial obligations for a majority of tasks with local governments (Wong 2000), leading to the latter generating nearly half of their revenue through land sales.¹⁴ In order to run budgetary deficits despite the Budget Law that had effectively cut them off from borrowing in 1994, various local governments also established LGFVs that borrowed from banks on their behalf. Since land is one of the most valuable assets that local governments have at their disposal, their loans were mostly underwritten with the expected rise in related prices set to be created by increasing urbanization (Breslin 2011; Wong 2011). Due to the institutional complementarities between China's fiscal and land institutions (Rithmire 2017) and pro-growth incentives provided by the cadre-evaluation system (He et al. 2016), a virtuous cycle was unleashed that aims at stimulating local gross domestic product and generating revenue through land- and debt-based infrastructure investments: through continual investment in public infrastructure that drives the appreciation of nearby land parcels market demand is kept high, land prices rise, and local governments are able to create revenue they can then use to repay debts (Collier 2017; Zhou and Tan 2017). The higher the price of land used as collateral, the more capital it is possible to raise.

This self-reinforcing process necessitates both land sales and debt in order to keep the system running. On the premise of a beneficial relationship between infrastructure investments, borrowing, and land value, the fiscal stimulus package of 2008 — marking a critical juncture for local borrowing — released massive amounts of money into the Chinese economy and transformed the virtuous cycle into a vicious one. It has since proven difficult to break: as the solvency of local governments has started to hinge on ever-growing land prices, they have increasingly been incentivized to inflate the property market and acquire money from shadow banks. As long as the current fiscal institutions that tie local revenue to the land market persist, China's local governments are unlikely to voluntarily shift away from land-backed borrowing and excessive land sales. This reality would, to my surprise, be clearly reflected in many of the interviews I conducted with former LGFV managers and personnel at land-reserve centers (LRCs) during my preliminary field-research visits to different Chinese cities. I was frequently

13 For theoretical elaborations of path-dependent processes, see for example: Capoccia and Kelemen (2011); Pierson (2000).

14 On average, the proceeds from land sales amounted to 40.5 percent of local-government income between 2001 and 2008 (Collier 2017: 27).

told that as long as there is land to sell, there is no Chinese debt crisis; besides, what else should local governments in China sell if not land?

The implications of this path-dependent necessity to sell land to service debts go far beyond the local perspective. As Tsui has indicated, China's municipal governments have engaged in a "‘land-infrastructure-leverage’ strategy of urban development" (2011: 688) that will lock China into an investment-driven modus operandi for the foreseeable future. A collapsing property bubble and large-scale defaulting on local debt could pose systemic risks to the entire banking sector, and a fiscal crisis that causes property values to collapse would be detrimental to China's financial stability as a whole (Collier 2017: 155). Moreover, China's unmarketed land resources are one of the biggest assets on the country's balance sheet (Collier 2017: 155) — and so, despite their natural limitations, the realization of their value becomes particularly important in conjunction with rising debt levels. Consequently, land-price stability — if not land-price gains — is/are necessarily in the interest of both local and central government.

As Breslin (2011: 193) has noted, it is not impossible for China's financial managers to square this circle. Nevertheless, the transition from economic expansion to retraction may be difficult to achieve if the investment-driven pattern of growth persists. In a period of slowing growth rates and economic restructuring, outcomes that would have been suboptimal at an earlier point in time may have now become feasible in the current environment.

Top-down control

Based on the institutional nexus described above, it can be reasonably assumed that debt reform and the introduction of a municipal-bond market were not targeted at terminating the state-led leveraging of land resources. Rather than constituting far-reaching institutional change, the bonds were aimed at regaining control over disguised local-borrowing practices and shadow banking, at enhancing transparency, and at cutting local-borrowing costs. There are, further, implications here regarding the strengthening of control over the extent of land mortgaging too.

According to the regulations circulated in the far-reaching "Document No. 43" on local-debt management, LGFVs have been prohibited from raising debt in the name of local governments since 2015. The only entity eligible to borrow is thus the provincial-level local government itself, namely through the issuance of municipal bonds (State Council 2014). Above all, borrowing conditions were renewed to the benefit of local governments and their financing vehicles (lower interest rates and longer maturity dates). As part of setting up a new borrowing scheme and in order to diminish risks, parts of old LGFV bonds could simply be exchanged for cheaper municipal ones (Ministry of Finance 2015a). Since LGFV debts were highly reliant on land, the new municipal-bond versions automatically hinged on that commodity too (Michlmayr 2020).

Based on the first two years of experience, the gradual diversification of the municipal-bond market further develops the established framework for local borrowing under top-down control. According to a report published by the central government, project-specific bonds shall focus on advancing supply-side structural reforms and on resolving local-debt risks, with a main goal of the pilot issuance being the strengthening of information disclosure on bonds and increasing transparency in the rating process to help investors better evaluate the risks involved (Central Government 2017). More specifically, the pilot bonds shall achieve a better balance between project revenue and financing, help better clarify the source of debt repayment, and serve to generate stable cash flow, curb illegal financing guarantees, and establish reasonable financing in key areas (Central Government 2017). In any case the specialization of bond types enables improved monitoring, while the use of land collateral has again remained untouched.

Looking at the management of land mortgaging in detail, it can be ascertained that the legal framework for land-backed debt would also be limited and increasingly tightly controlled in the years prior to the reform. In essence, the responsibility for borrowing based on public-land-reserve assets was shifted to local governments and their registered LRCs in 2012 (Central Government 2012).¹⁵ LGFVs have been increasingly decoupled from the process, and local land resources can no longer officially be transferred to such companies free of charge. By issuing land-backed municipal bonds, the authority to leverage publicly owned land has largely been reallocated to local governments. It must be noted, however, that despite the introduction of municipal bonds, LGFVs have illegally continued to issue debt on behalf of local governments, while the latter have found devious ways to share their land resources with these companies at no cost (Huang and Du 2018).

Along with the introduction of various SRBs and the pilot programs, some structural changes enabling better supervision of land-transfer revenues have made their way to local budgetary environments too. Local “government-managed funds” (GMFs), which regulate all revenue and expenditure related to land transfers, have been closely integrated with the issuance of SRBs (Ministry of Finance 2015b), while the management and monitoring of GMF assets has been declared a major goal (Central Government 2017). Last but not least, the sudden halt in the issuance of LRBs and STRBs in September 2019 also had a beneficial effect for municipal bonds compared to uncontrollable LGFV debts, namely by increasing risk control.

15 The free transfer of land use rights to LGFVs was terminated and land sale revenue from reserve land could no longer be legally used as a basis for debt repayment (Ministry of Land and Resources 2012).

Not a recent innovation: Land-market regulation through land reserves

In addition to debt-risk control, a core significance of the two types of land-backed project bonds — LRBs and STRBs — lies in their function for the regulation of China's land market through the institutional configuration of the land-reserve system (*tudi chubei zhidu*).

Since the mid-1990s China's land-reserve system has been set up to enable efficient control over divergent local land markets and has become an integral part of the overall land-market system. LRCs were established in various localities in order to maintain sufficient supply of construction land, increase land supply when needed to regulate related prices, and to promote efficient land use (Cao 2015: 205). To safeguard financing for land-reserve work — which includes the acquisition (and expropriation), maintenance, and management of urban-construction land according to plan¹⁶ — local governments have been authorized to take on land-mortgage loans (*tudi diya daikuan*) since 2007 (Central Government 2007). Due to the rise in debt and frequent misuse of land-reserve funds through LGFVs after 2008, land-reserve financing has become a central risk factor that is beyond formal control, and the streamlining of the land-reserve system became a major part of top-down debt management (Central Government 2012; Ministry of Land and Resources 2012). When the land-reserve system fails to work properly and the LRCs are unable to supply land on time due to debt or a lack of funds, efficient macroeconomic control and land-price stability are endangered.

As a result local governments were finally prohibited from issuing bank loans for land-reserve work in 2016 (Ministry of Finance 2016), but the loans were then directly replaced by land-reserve-project bonds in the following year (Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Land and Resources 2017). Rather than innovating from scratch, LRBs represent a new version of these loans and are hence part of the institutional setting relevant to China's overall land-market system. Especially under aggravating circumstances such as declining transferrable land resources and the constant dependency of debts on land sales, efficient land-reserve work is of pivotal importance. So far, according to data published by the MLR, revenue raised via LRBs is only slightly lower than what was raised by loans before.¹⁷

Although shanty-town improvements are not an official element of land-reserve work, procedures such as the acquisition and demolition of shanty towns and primary land development are closely connected to it regardless (He 2013). Furthermore, these projects are of benefit by freeing up urban land that can be added to the reserves. In the past, shanty-town-renovation projects were therefore

16 Registered land-reserve and land-supply plans are issued by local LRCs, being reported to higher-level governments.

17 While in 2014 local governments took on land-mortgage loans worth CNY 1.75 trillion (Ministry of Land and Resources 2015), in 2017 (starting from July) they issued LRBs worth CNY 1.63 trillion (Wind).

often funded by land-transfer revenues, additional financial appropriations from the government, and by land-mortgage loans. Since this has led to debt-repayment risks, these projects are now also financed through the bond market too (Central Government 2018).

Monetary considerations

Apart from the narrower discussion of China's municipal-bond market, land-backed borrowing is also linked to monetary-stability considerations. So far, this research field has received very little attention. Large-scale empirical studies have not yet been carried out, and much is still in the dark.

As theoretically indicated by Wu (2019), the mortgaging of land through LGFVs can be seen as a justification for credit expansion in the Chinese economy, and various tools such as LRCs, land-mortgage loans, and bonds issued by LGFVs are financial channels enabling the expansion of credit. This perception is similar to the idea proposed by Zhou (2011), who sees China's land-financing model as being at the core of the country's macroeconomic system and as a crucial component of "money creation" (*huobi chuangzao*) through the Chinese banking apparatus. In a more extreme fashion, Zhao (2014) argues that "land finance" has enabled the overissuance of currency. Assuming only some of the existing assessments hold true, land-based financing and land-backed borrowing in China could be closely interrelated with monetary developments and the upholding of monetary value. The leveraging of public land could thus be entrenched in institutional structures that go far beyond the solvency and the indebtedness of local governments.

However, convincing empirical studies on the nexus between monetary stability and China's land-based financing operations, as well as comprehensive related theoretical explanations, are still lacking. A number of contradictions exist too. As my doctoral research deals with this relationship in detail, I will hopefully be able to shed more light on the topic in the near future. In consideration of the insights I have gained so far, it is difficult to imagine that a system-relevant institutional fabric such as land-backed borrowing could be easily nullified without far-reaching consequences for the Chinese economy.

Conclusion, and future bond prospects

In light of this analysis, I conclude that the perpetuation of a land-centered borrowing strategy in the institutional guise of municipal bonds mainly evolved as a path-dependent necessity in an attempt to better control local-borrowing practices. The creation of specialized bonds for land-backed investments in shanty-town renovations, land-reserve work, or public-infrastructure projects is, essentially, a replacement for the formerly issued land-mortgage loans that led to high financial risks after 2008. Rather than abandoning the practice, the Chinese

government has opted for a more controlled use of land as collateral in official local-government borrowing practices.

As a result, what has emerged as a new element in the development of China's municipal-bond market is what I refer to as "state-led land leveraging under top-down control." At the same time, it has become increasingly obvious that the establishment of a sustainable municipal-bond market without reliance on land value would require far-reaching fiscal reforms. To terminate the exploitation of China's transferrable land resources for financial gain, local governments would, in the first place, need to have a higher share of tax revenue at their disposal. If my early assumptions on monetary relationships are indeed correct, any far-reaching fiscal reform would then also require changes to the banking system and the governance of monetary stability.

In the long run, municipal bonds might lead to more transparent borrowing and more controlled investments. Particularly the issuance of SRBs could be used as an incentive to invest in specific areas and to support countercyclical adjustments, something that the central government has already started to focus on under the leadership of Xi. In theory, SRBs might also enable the state to better control revenue and expenditure regarding China's land-transfer funds, as their introduction has been accompanied by the growing regulation of local GMFs.

As for now, the structure of the municipal-bond market still faces various obstacles and barriers. The debts issued officially via municipal bonds only constitute a small fraction of all debt issued by LGFVs, shadow banks, and local governments together, and are thus highly likely only the tip of the iceberg. What is more, the current volume of issued bonds has been stated as being far below what local governments would require to fully replace off-budget borrowing. Investor interest may remain limited for the time being due to artificially low interest rates; since land-development projects often do not generate stable revenue, it is likely that cash-flow problems will continue to exist too. In the future, it remains to be seen how long the Chinese government will be willing to stick to a controversial, high-risk financing model based on dwindling land resources — or, even more interesting besides, how long it will need to do so in fact.

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Rechenschaftsbericht des Vorstands für den Zeitraum 2019 – Februar 2021

Ziele und Selbstverständnis der DGA

Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Asienkunde e.V. (DGA) hat sich von ihren Anfängen als Förderin und „Koordinatorin“ der Ostasienwissenschaften zu einer wissenschaftlichen Fachgesellschaft für alle Bereiche der regionalwissenschaftlichen Asienforschung entwickelt. Sie will nicht nur wissenschaftliche Studien über das gegenwärtige Asien fördern, sondern auch eine breitere Öffentlichkeit über Asien informieren; sie will nicht nur Asienwissenschaftler*innen in ihrer Arbeit unterstützen und wissenschaftliche Kontakte über Fächergrenzen hinweg ermöglichen, sondern auch helfen, Arbeitsbeziehungen zwischen den Bereichen Politik, Wirtschaft, Naturwissenschaften und Kultur herzustellen.

Die Entwicklung und das Wirken unserer Gesellschaft sind damit sowohl von den Entwicklungen in Asien selbst und ihrer Rezeption in der deutschsprachigen Öffentlichkeit als auch von den Entwicklungen im Bereich der Asienwissenschaften und der Wissenschaften im Allgemeinen beeinflusst.

Das Interesse an Asien in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit ist auch in den letzten zwei Jahren weiter gestiegen, und dies betrifft nicht nur die Großmacht China, sondern auch andere Länder der Region, insbesondere Indien. Die Kenntnis der wirtschaftlichen, politischen und gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen in Asien wird mit der wachsenden Globalisierung immer wichtiger. Die DGA hat in den letzten zwei Jahren erfolgreich die Interessen der Asienwissenschaftler*innen vertreten. Sie kann dies, weil sie

- Wissenschaftler*innen aller Fachgebiete vereinigt,
- Arbeitskreise zur sozialwissenschaftlichen Chinaforschung sowie zu Südasien und Südostasien hat,
- den asienwissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs im der Nachwuchsgruppe der DGA organisiert,
- mit anderen Gesellschaften im Bereich Asien kooperiert,
- als Ansprechpartnerin für Asien sowohl für wissenschaftliche Institutionen als auch für Politik und Wirtschaft zur Verfügung steht,
- mit der Zeitschrift ASIEN über ein Medium verfügt, das über alle Fachgrenzen hinweg große Verbreitung gefunden hat, und
- durch die Website www.asienkunde.de (bzw. <http://asienforschung.de>) über eine Plattform verfügt, die sowohl Mitglieder als auch Interessierte nutzen können.

Vor diesem Hintergrund sollen nun die aktuelle Entwicklung der Gesellschaft aufgezeigt und über die Vorstandsarbeit der DGA berichtet werden.

Allgemeine Anmerkungen zur Vorstandsarbeit

Der Bericht umfasst den Zeitraum 2019 und 2020 sowie Januar und Februar 2021. In diesem Zeitraum hat der Vorstand wichtige Themen aufgegriffen und strukturelle Änderungen durchgeführt. Die Corona-Pandemie veränderte die Arbeit des Vorstands ab Februar 2020. An die Stelle analoger Treffen der Vorstandsmitglieder traten Online-Treffen, und zwar in deutlich kürzeren Abständen von rund sechs Wochen. Die Geschäftsstelle unterstützte die Digitalisierung der Vorstandsarbeit durch neue Online-Werkzeuge. Aufgrund der durch die Corona-Pandemie veränderten Rahmenbedingungen und Unsicherheiten beschloss der Vorstand frühzeitig, die DGA-Tagung im Jahr 2021 als Online-Tagung durchzuführen.

Zu den wichtigen strukturellen Veränderungen, die der Vorstand umgesetzt hat, zählen die klare Aufgabenteilung und Zuständigkeit der Vorstandsmitglieder für bestimmte Aufgabengebiete und die Arbeit in kleineren Arbeitsgruppen an einzelnen Aufgaben. Für bestimmte Aufgabenbereiche hat die Corona-Pandemie die Arbeit des Vorstands erschwert, – dazu gehörten beispielsweise Kontakte zu Wirtschaftsvertreter*innen – andererseits hat der Vorstand stärker als in der Vergangenheit zu politisch-wissenschaftlichen Diskussionen Stellung bezogen. Besonders wichtig war dem Vorstand im Frühsommer 2020 sein Plädoyer wider die Polarisierung in der Wissenschaft, als sich abzeichnete, dass in einer global komplizierter werdenden geökonomischen und geopolitischen Situation Wissenschaftler*innen zunehmend gedrängt wurden, politisch Position zu beziehen. Ferner hat der Vorstand sich auf Anregung der wissenschaftlichen Japan-Vereinigungen an einem Brief an die Regierung Bayerns beteiligt, um auf die besondere Situation der kleinen Fächer hinzuweisen, deren Stellung in den ursprünglichen Eckpunkten für eine Hochschulnovellierung übersehen worden war.

Der aktuelle Vorstand empfiehlt auch zukünftig eine aktive Teilnahme an derartigen Diskussionen, sofern sie unmittelbar die Wissenschaft und unsere Forschung in und mit den Ländern Asien betreffen.

Aktuelle Entwicklungen in den Aufgabenbereichen der DGA

Nachwuchsförderung

Für die Mitgliedschaft in der DGA ist, anders als in manchen anderen wissenschaftlichen Fachgesellschaften, kein akademischer Abschluss erforderlich. Diese „Fördermaßnahme“ ermöglicht es dem Nachwuchs, sich in die „Gemeinschaft der Wissenschaftler*innen“ einzubringen, und scheint, wie die Mitgliederentwicklung der Nachwuchsgruppe zeigt, für viele Studierende und Promovierende attraktiv zu sein.

Die Nachwuchsgruppe ist der aktivste und größte der Arbeitskreise in der DGA. Neben der Webpräsenz läuft der Austausch über einen Mitgliederverteiler und eine Facebookgruppe, die allen Interessierten offensteht. Zudem organisiert das Sprecher*innenteam der NWG Tagungen und Workshops für Mitglieder und Interessierte. Ziel der Tagungen ist es, Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen der Asienforschung ein Forum zu geben, in dem Qualifikationsarbeiten von Expert*innen (aus dem Kreis der DGA-Mitglieder) kommentiert und mit allen Teilnehmer*innen diskutiert werden können.

Die letzte Tagung fand im Januar 2019 im Akademiehôtel Jena mit knapp 20 Teilnehmer*innen statt; ein Bericht darüber (Verf.: Carolin Kautz) wurde in ASIEN 150/151 (Januar/April 2019) publiziert.

Förderung des fachwissenschaftlichen Diskurses

Es gehört zu den genuinen Aufgaben einer Fachgesellschaft, die Mitglieder an der fachlichen Entwicklung im eigenen Fach und in benachbarten Fächern teilhaben zu lassen. An erster Stelle dient hierzu die Zeitschrift ASIEN. Ein Blick auf die Autor*innenliste eines jeden Heftes zeigt den großen Kreis der einbezogenen Wissenschaftler*innen. In erster Linie ging es dem Vorstand und der Redaktion darum, diesen Kreis zu erweitern, die Qualität der Zeitschrift zu steigern, mehr englischsprachige Artikel einzuwerben sowie die Zeitschrift international sichtbarer zu machen und zu profilieren. Trotz der nationalen und internationalen Konkurrenz, die durch den allgemeinen Trend zur Internationalisierung wissenschaftlicher Publikationsorgane intensiver wird, hat sich ASIEN als anerkanntes Fachorgan halten können. Dies gelang u. a. auch durch die gezielte Einwerbung etablierter Forscher*innen als Gasteditor*innen.

Die Rubrik „Asien aktuell“ bietet die Möglichkeit, in kurzen wissenschaftlichen Analysen aktuelle Ereignisse und Entwicklungen anzusprechen. Und im Format der Research Notes können Wissenschaftler*innen auf erste Ergebnisse und Ansätze ihrer Forschung verweisen. Zu nennen sind weiter vor allem Konferenzberichte und Buchrezensionen – beides Formate, die den Leser*innen der Zeitschrift einen guten Überblick über Aktivitäten jenseits des eigenen Tellerrands vermitteln und nebenbei dem wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs eine niedrigschwellige Publikationsmöglichkeit eröffnen. Erreicht wurde im Berichtszeitraum auch eine breitere Streuung und Vielfalt der Themen, fast alle asiatischen Regionen konnten abgedeckt werden.

Von großer fachwissenschaftlicher Bedeutung sind weiterhin die Arbeitskreise in der DGA, von denen seit der Neugründung des AK Südostasien im Mai 2015 nunmehr vier existieren (China, neuzeitliches Südasien, Südostasien und natürlich die Nachwuchsgruppe). Die Programme und Berichte der Arbeitskreistagungen sind auf der Website der DGA bzw. den Unterseiten der einzelnen Arbeitskreise (<http://asc.asienforschung.de>, <http://akns.asienforschung.de> und <http://nwg.asienforschung.de> bzw. www.asiennachwuchs.de/) zu finden.

Alle Arbeitskreise legen außerdem zur Mitgliederversammlung 2021 eigene Berichte zu ihren Aktivitäten der Jahre 2019 und 2020 vor.

Ebenfalls von besonderer Bedeutung für den fachwissenschaftlichen Diskurs ist die wissenschaftliche Tagung, die alle zwei Jahre im Zusammenhang mit der Mitgliederversammlung von der DGA durchgeführt wird. Die DGA-Tagung in Würzburg, 3.–5. April 2019, war die erste rein akademische Tagung nach internationalen wissenschaftlichen Standards und mit Teilnehmer*innen aus drei Kontinenten. Nach dem ebenfalls noch neuen Prinzip, dass die DGA-Tagung in Kooperation mit wechselnden deutschsprachigen Universitäten durchgeführt werden soll, wird die Tagung im Jahr 2021 von der Universität Duisburg-Essen im Verbund Area Ruhr organisiert, wofür der Vorstand an dieser Stelle schon allen an der Vorbereitung beteiligten danken möchte. Als Gastgeberin für die Tagung 2023 konnte der Vorstand bereits die Universität Rostock gewinnen. Mit dem neuen Tagungsformat wurde auch eine eigene Website für die Tagungen unter <http://dga-conference.de> eingerichtet.

Small Grants-Programme

Die Corona-Pandemie hatte erhebliche Auswirkungen auf die Entwicklung des Small-grants-Programms. Während im Jahr 2019 die im Vorjahr bewilligten Förderungen von den Teilnehmer*innen des Programms vollständig abgerufen wurden, verhinderten Reisebeschränkungen die Inanspruchnahme der für 2020 für die Teilnahme an Konferenzen oder sonstige Forschungsreisen zugesprochenen Mittel. Die Entwicklung im Detail wird im Bericht der Geschäftsführung vorgestellt. Der Vorstand hat aber beschlossen, die Zusagen für die Small Grants nicht verfallen zu lassen, sondern die Möglichkeit eingeräumt, die Inanspruchnahme zu verschieben, sofern der Zweck der Mittelnutzung nicht an sich coronabedingt entfällt.

Förderung des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Austauschs

Im Bereich der internationalen Zusammenarbeit ist die Tätigkeit der Gesellschaft weiterhin ausbaufähig. Die Zweisprachigkeit der Website ist derzeit in Arbeit; zunächst werden die zentralen Inhalte auf Englisch zur Verfügung gestellt.

Die diesjährige Tagung hat, wie die letzte, der DGA einige neue Mitglieder beschert, die der deutschen Sprache nicht mächtig sind. Auch wenn die Hauptsprache der DGA natürlich Deutsch bleibt, stellen wir uns, soweit das zu schaffen ist, darauf ein und erleichtern diesen Mitgliedern den Zugang zu den wichtigsten Informationen auch in englischer Sprache. Für die Zeitschrift ASIEN liegen bereits sämtliche Unterlagen in englischer Sprache vor, um so die Einreichung von Manuskripten für internationale Autoren zu erleichtern.

Expert*innendatenbank

Mit der Einführung einer neuen Mitgliederdatenbank war 2014 der Aufbau einer Expert*innendatenbank verknüpft worden. Die Expert*innendatenbank war im

passwortgeschützten Mitgliederbereich der Website (<http://intern.asienforschung.de/>) der Gesellschaft für Mitglieder über eine Suchmaske zugänglich.

Das Inkrafttreten der Datenschutzgrundverordnung im Mai 2018 hat uns gezwungen, zunächst alle Daten von der Website zu nehmen und neue Daten sowie die Einwilligung zu ihrer Nutzung von den Mitgliedern zu erbitten. Die Resonanz auf diesen Rundruf war bislang zu gering, um die neuen Daten wieder zugänglich zu machen.

Vertretung der Fachgebiete, Kontakte zu anderen Organisationen, Öffentlichkeitsarbeit

Die Vertretung der Fachgebiete gegenüber der Öffentlichkeit erfolgt durch die DGA auch über die DFG-Fachkollegienwahlen. Seit 2014 hat die DGA das Recht zur Nominierung von Kandidat*innen für die Fachkollegienwahlen der DFG erhalten. Die letzte Nominierungsrunde für die Amtsperiode ab 2019 stand im Sommer 2018 an und die DGA hat zum zweiten Mal von ihrem Vorschlagsrecht Gebrauch gemacht. Erfreulich aus Sicht der DGA war die Wahl von Prof. Dr. Claudia Derichs, ehemaliges Vorstandsmitglied der DGA, in das entsprechende Fachkollegium 106. Bedauerlich aus Sicht auch der DGA ist allerdings, dass aus verschiedenen Gründen seit den letzten Wahlen die Chinaforschung in keinem der existierenden DFG-Fachkollegien mehr vertreten ist. Dies ist vor dem Hintergrund der umfassenden Forschungsaktivitäten zu China in Deutschland problematisch und passt auch nicht zu dem bundespolitischen Ruf nach mehr Chinakompetenz in Forschung und Bildung. Der Vorstand hat daher gemeinsam mit der Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien ein Schreiben mit Vorschlägen an die DFG geschickt, wie bei der anstehenden Überarbeitung der Fachkollegienstruktur und den nächsten Wahlen ein solcher „Unfall“ vermieden werden könnte,

CrossAsia

Seit Januar 2017 ist die DGA im wissenschaftlichen Beirat von CrossAsia vertreten. CrossAsia bietet Zugang zu Fachinformationen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften aus und über Asien – insbesondere in asiatischen Sprachen. Das Internetportal mit seinem Zugang zu umfangreichen Datenbanken wird von der Ostasienabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in Kooperation mit dem Südasiens-Institut und der Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg als Projekt der DFG betrieben. Über die aktuelle Entwicklung bei ASIEN und CrossAsia berichtet die Geschäftsführung.

Webpräsenz

Im Jahr 2020 wurde ein Relaunch der Website durchgeführt. Die wesentlichen Ziele waren Responsivität und Mehrsprachigkeit. Die Website kann nun auf allen Geräten, inklusive Smartphones, in jeweils dafür optimierten Layouts dargestellt

werden. Eine englischsprachige Version der wichtigsten Seiten der DGA-Website ist in Arbeit.

Das Ziel der selbstständigen Aktualisierung der Sub-Websites der Arbeitskreise durch dieselben haben wir trotz einiger Vorstöße in dieser Richtung noch nicht erreicht; lediglich die Nachwuchsgruppe hat die Pflege und Aktualisierung ihrer eigenen Seiten bereits übernommen.

Entwicklung der Mitgliederbeiträge und Mitgliederzahlen

Nach der Erhöhung der Mitgliederbeiträge im Jahr 2018 blieben die Beitragssätze stabil. Die Einführung der Schnuppermitgliedschaft ist beim wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs mit großem Interesse aufgenommen worden. Obwohl dies zur Gewinnung neuer Mitglieder beigetragen hat, bleibt die Einwerbung neuer Mitglieder eine wichtige Aufgabe, um den Abgang von Mitgliedern aus Altersgründen auszugleichen. Zur Entwicklung der Mitgliederzahlen gibt der Bericht der Geschäftsführung einen detaillierten Einblick. Der neue Vorstand wird weiterhin mit innovativen Konzepten daran arbeiten müssen, die DGA für neue Mitglieder attraktiv zu machen.

Tätigkeitsbericht der Geschäftsführung für die Jahre 2019 bis 2021

Einleitung

Nach dem Serverchaos des Jahres 2018 hätten 2019 und 2020 vergleichsweise geordnete Jahre für die Geschäftsführung der DGA sein können. Auf 2019 traf das im Großen und Ganzen auch zu; das Jahr begann mit den Vorarbeiten und der Durchführung einer sehr gelungenen Tagung in Würzburg. Wir haben neue Projekte auf den Weg gebracht, in erster Linie wäre hier CrossAsia zu nennen.

Dann kam 2020 ...

Mitgliederentwicklung

Ein wesentlicher Faktor zur Erfüllung der Aufgaben einer Fachgesellschaft ist zunächst die Entwicklung der Gesellschaft selbst, die nicht abgekoppelt von der Entwicklung der Asienwissenschaften im deutschsprachigen Raum zu betrachten ist.

Für den Berichtszeitraum hat sich die Mitgliederzahl leider weiter rückläufig entwickelt. Anfang März 2021 verzeichnet die Gesellschaft 557 Mitglieder (März 2019: 584; Mai 2017: 660), darunter 435 vollzahlende und 14 korporative Mitglieder sowie 107 Mitglieder mit reduziertem Beitrag. Der Trend der Vorjahre hat sich fortgesetzt und ist bei den Zahlen von 2020 am deutlichsten zu sehen: Die Austritte bewegen sich im normalen Rahmen und sind sogar rückläufig; problematisch sind die Eintritte. Eine detailliertere statistische Aufschlüsselung der Mitglieder Anfang März 2021 ergibt folgendes Bild:

	Ein- und Austritte		+/-
2014	49	77	-28
2015	68	49	+19
2016	41	79	-38
2017	26	58	-32
2018	27	61	-34
2019	24	47	-23
2020	14	32	-18

	März 21	März 19	Mai 17	+/-
Mitglieder	557	584	660	-27
– Vollzahler*innen	435	467	522	-32
– Promovierende	72	59	67	+13
– Studierende	24	30	43	-6
– PartnerIn	2	2	3	0
– Sonstige Erm.	9	9	16	0
– Korporative Mitglieder	14	16	17	-2
– Beitragsfrei	1	1	1	0

Schnuppermitgliedschaften	
2019	13
2020	18

Ein Lichtblick: Der Schwund speziell bei den studierenden und promovierenden Mitgliedern scheint gestoppt zu sein.

Die DGA hat in den letzten beiden Jahren einige bedeutende Schritte unternommen, um ihre Attraktivität insbesondere für den asienwissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs zu erhöhen, in erster Linie seien hier die ASIEN-Digitalisierung und das Small Grants Programme genannt, außerdem die „Schnuppermitgliedschaft“, die wir seit 2019 anbieten – sie ist meinem Eindruck nach ein wichtiger Grund dafür, dass sich die Mitgliederentwicklung beim Nachwuchs inzwischen gegenläufig zu den Gesamtzahlen verhält, während sie vor zwei Jahren noch besonders schnell vorangegangen war. Eine große Schwierigkeit in Pandemiezeiten ist es allerdings, die Vorteile, die eine Mitgliedschaft mit sich bringt, unter Studierenden zu kommunizieren. Was bereits vor der Pandemie eine Herausforderung war, die wir nicht sonderlich erfolgreich gemeistert haben, ist derzeit noch bedeutend erschwert. Die Tagungen der DGA sowie die Tagungen und Workshops der Nachwuchsgruppe sind in Zeiten, in denen man nirgends Plakate aufhängen und Flyer verteilen kann und sogar Mundpropaganda kaum stattfindet, praktisch die einzigen Motoren der Mitgliederwerbung.

Die Entwicklung der Zeitschrift *ASIEN*

ASIEN ist eine wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift, aber auch Mitgliederzeitschrift, d. h., sie soll nicht nur – mit Hilfe wissenschaftlicher Beiträge – das Wissen über Asien verbessern und verbreiten helfen, sondern zugleich auch die Kommunikation innerhalb der Asienwissenschaften im deutschsprachigen Raum fördern. Diesem Ziel dient neben den Konferenzberichten und Rezensionen vor allem der Forschungs- und Informationsteil.

Im März 2021 verzeichnete die Gesellschaft 70 Abonnements von Nichtmitgliedern (v. a. Bibliotheken). Daneben werden weltweit ca. 35 Freixemplare verschickt.

Die „gelben Seiten“, die früher halbjährlich als Informationsteil speziell für die Mitglieder im Heft enthalten waren, werden seit 2007 auf der Website der Gesellschaft präsentiert. Die Gesellschaft bietet nun als Weiterentwicklung dieses Angebots auf <http://studium.asienforschung.de/> Informationen zu asienwissenschaftlichen Studienmöglichkeiten im deutschsprachigen Raum an. (Derzeit ist dieser Teil der Website abgeschaltet, da wir eine Aktualisierung und einen Relaunch vorbereiten.) Nur noch im Anschluss an Mitgliederversammlungen sollen die Berichte sowie das Protokoll der Versammlung auf gelben Seiten dem Heft beigelegt werden.

Hefte im Berichtszeitraum:

ASIEN 148 (erschieden April 19), offen

ASIEN 149 (erschieden Juli 19), Gast-Hg. Cornelia Reiher, „Fieldwork in Japan“

ASIEN 150/151 (erschieden Dez 19), offen

ASIEN 152/153 (erschieden September 2020), offen

Aufgrund mehrerer „geplatzter“ Hefte – darunter leider auch unser eigenes Heft zur Würzburger Tagung von 2019 – konnten wir den Publikationsrückstand noch nicht wieder einholen. Die Heftjahrgänge 2019 bis 2021 erscheinen deshalb in Form von Doppelnummern, so werden wir im laufenden Jahr zeitlich wieder in die Spur kommen. Alle Hefte, die derzeit konkret in Vorbereitung sind, sind von Gast-Herausgeber*innen betreute Themenhefte. Das Konzept der Doppelnummern erlaubt es aber, neben den Themenschwerpunkten auch freie Artikel aufzunehmen. Die Redaktion kann dadurch flexibler planen als bei einer strikten Aufteilung in Schwerpunkt- und offene Hefte. Wir reagieren damit auch auf den anhaltenden Trend, dass weniger Manuskripte als früher „frei“ eingereicht werden, was sich in den letzten Jahren für die Planung „offener“ Hefte zu einem Dauerproblem entwickelt hatte.

Die Druckkosten sind im Wesentlichen konstant geblieben. Die Versandkosten pro Heft sind erneut angestiegen, stärker als je zuvor, da die Deutsche Post die Büchersendung ersatzlos abgeschafft hat. Wäre der Heftjahrgang 2019 nicht bereits in Form von Doppelnummern erschienen, wären 2020 die Versandkosten um über 50 Prozent gestiegen.

Ab sofort werden sich die Versandkosten erheblich reduzieren, da – Sie haben es im vergangenen Herbst mitbekommen – nur noch diejenigen Mitglieder, die das ausdrücklich wünschen, eine Druckausgabe von ASIEN erhalten werden. Die Auflage sinkt dadurch aktuell von 7-800 Ex. auf 350 Ex., von denen wir ca. 280-300 Ex. versenden und den Rest für Neumitglieder, Mitgliederwerbung etc. vorhalten werden. Wieviel Einsparung die reduzierte Auflage bei den Druckkosten bringt, lässt sich vorab schwer beziffern.

Zusätzlich zu den bereits angebotenen Formaten PDF, E-Books und Print ist ASIEN künftig auch auf der Plattform von CrossAsia vertreten. Ein Team der Heidelberger Universitätsbibliothek pflegt derzeit das ASIEN-Archiv ein, während wir selbst uns von den aktuellen Heften aus rückwärts vorarbeiten.

Die Arbeit des Redaktionsteams ist mittlerweile gut eingespielt. Eine Verstärkung der Redaktion, insbesondere für die Bereiche Südostasien und Zentralasien, wäre sehr willkommen.

Das Small Grants Programme

Das von der Mitgliederversammlung 2017 verabschiedete Small Grants Programme war 2018 erfolgreich angelaufen.

Im zweiten Durchlauf 2019 (für 2020) waren elf gültige Anträge eingegangen, davon wurden fünf nach einem Begutachtungsverfahren vom Vorstand positiv beschieden: zwei Forschungsreisen, eine Tagungs-Ausrichtung und zwei Konferenzteilnahmen. Insgesamt wurden 5,840 € zur Auszahlung auf Abruf zugesagt; allerdings konnte pandemiebedingt der Großteil davon bis jetzt nicht abgerufen werden; der Vorstand hat die Abruffrist b.a.W. ausgesetzt.

In der dritten Bewerbungsrunde 2020 (für 2021) war die Pandemiesituation deutlich zu spüren. Konferenzen weltweit waren entweder abgesagt, unsicher oder als Online-Veranstaltungen geplant; Forschungsreisen konnten nicht geplant werden. Diese Unsicherheit hat sich direkt auf die Zahl der eingehenden Bewerbungen ausgewirkt: Es gingen lediglich fünf gültige Förderungsanträge ein, die nach eingehender Begutachtung alle bewilligt wurden (Auszahlungssumme 4.140 €). Abgerufen wurden bisher zwei der fünf Grants.

Für die nächste Runde können sich die DGA-Mitglieder jederzeit bewerben; Die Antragsfrist für 2022 endet am 15.9.2021.

Arbeitskreise

Die vier Arbeitskreise in der DGA sind nicht nur von fachwissenschaftlicher Bedeutung, sondern, wie oben anhand der Nachwuchsgruppe bereits dargelegt, wichtige Motoren der Mitgliederwerbung.

Arbeitskreise	März 21	März 19	Mai 17	Mai 15	+/-
Arbeitskreis Sozialwissenschaftliche Chinaforschung (ASC)	93	82	89	78	+11
AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens (AK NS)	80	76	81	74	+ 4
AK Südostasien (AK SOA)	49	49	45		0
Nachwuchsgruppe (NWG)	154	141	150	131	+19

Bemerkenswert: Alle Arbeitskreise konnten ihre Mitgliederzahlen erhöhen oder zumindest halten, während die Gesamtzahl der DGA-Mitglieder gesunken ist.

Zu den Aktivitäten der Arbeitskreise im Berichtszeitraum siehe deren separate Berichte.

Tagungen

Zu den Aufgaben der Geschäftsführerin gehört die Mit-Organisation der zweijährlichen Tagungen. Was das konkret bedeutet, hat sich in den vergangenen Jahren stark verändert. Die Würzburger Tagung 2019 war die erste, die als wissenschaftliche Fachtagung nach internationalen Standards durchgeführt wurde, mit zahlreichen Panels, denen die entsprechenden Calls vorausgingen. Um das zu ermöglichen, hat die Geschäftsführung eine eigene Tagungswebsite (dga-conference.de) entwickelt, über die sämtliche Einreichungs- und Anmeldeprozesse (inklusive Zahlung der Tagungsgebühr) abgewickelt wurden, und außerdem intensiv das Würzburger Organisationsteam unterstützt.

2020 hat die Geschäftsführung die Tagungswebsite für die diesjährige Tagung umgerüstet und weiterentwickelt; wieder liefen die Einreichungen von Panel Proposals und Paper Proposals über die Website, aktuell läuft noch die Anmeldephase für die Teilnehmenden. Neben der Weiterentwicklung und Aktualisierung der Website unterstützt die Geschäftsführung das Duisburger Organisationsteam in allen möglichen Belangen und verwaltet die Tagungsgebühreneingänge.

Geschäftsstelle

Der Servercrash des GIGA 2018 ist mittlerweile verschmerzt, auch wenn wir 2020 noch immer vereinzelt mit seinen Folgen konfrontiert waren: Mindestens ein Eintritt, der uns 2018 nicht erreicht hatte, kam erst im vergangenen Jahr zum Abschluss; mehrere Artikel und Rezensionen, die 2018 verschwunden waren, sind wieder aufgetaucht – meist nach erbosten Nachfragen der Verfasser*innen – und wurden 2020 publiziert.

Das Coronajahr hat die Arbeitsabläufe in der Geschäftsstelle erheblich durcheinandergewirbelt. Das Zusammenspiel von Home Offices und DGA-Büro war nicht einfach zu organisieren und hat viel zusätzliche Zeit gekostet. Zusätzlich erschwert wurde die Arbeit durch akute personelle Engpässe, da pandemiebedingt keine Praktikant*innen beschäftigt werden konnten. Die notwendig gewordenen zahlreichen Zoom-Meetingsmussten aus im Home Office stattfinden, da die Rechner im DGA-Büro keine Kameras und Mikrofone haben. Inzwischen haben wir mit Webcams und Headset nachgerüstet. Da die Geschäftsstelle während der Pandemie bisher keine festen Telefonsprechzeiten anbieten konnte, haben wir einen Telefon-Rückrufservice eingerichtet. Mittlerweile haben wir unsere veränderten Routinen im Griff, auch personelle Verstärkung ist in Sicht.

Deike Zimmann im März 2021

Bericht über die Rechnungsprüfung der DGA für die Jahre 2019-2020

Prüfung durch: Dr. Günter Schucher, Dr. Gerhard Will
Prüfungszeitpunkt: 23. Februar 2020, 10-15 h (gs);
Prüfungsort: Hamburg Bergedorf (gs);
Prüfungszeitraum: 1. Jan. 2019 bis 31. Dez. 2020
Auskünfte erteilte: Frau Deike Zimmann

Vorgelegte Unterlagen:

- Auszüge mit Belegen folgender Konten der DGA für die Jahre 2019 und 2020
 - Allgemeines Geschäftskonto der DGA
 - Konto „Arbeitsgruppe Sozialwissenschaftliche Chinaforschung der DGA“
 - Konto „Nachwuchsgruppe der DGA“
 - Festgeldkonto der DGA
- Gewinnermittlung für die Zeiträume
 - 1. Jan. bis 31. Dez. 2019
 - 1. Jan. bis 31. Dez. 2020
- Saldenliste der Sachkonten sowie die Sachkonten für die Jahre 2019 und 2020

Prüfungsergebnisse:

Die Belege und die Sachkonten wurden eingesehen und die entsprechenden Buchungen systematisch überprüft. Die Geschäftsvorgänge wurden auf den Konten in der Software der DGA korrekt erfasst und in den Kontoauszügen nachgewiesen. Es gab keine Beanstandungen.

Die in den Saldenlisten aufgeführten Konten wurden mit den entsprechenden Kontoauszügen und Abschlussrechnungen verglichen; es ergab sich eine Saldenübereinstimmung. Bei den Kontoauszügen stimmten die Werte jeweils überein.

Die in den Saldenlisten der Sachkonten im Einzelnen aufgeführte Zusammenstellung der Einnahmen und Ausgaben gibt das Ergebnis der jährlichen Rechnungslegung korrekt wieder und entspricht der Gewinnermittlung in den Einnahmen-Überschuss-Rechnungen.

Für die Jahre 2019 und 2020 ergeben sich folgende Entwicklung der Einnahmen und Ausgaben:

Für das Jahr 2019 ergaben sich Einnahmen in Höhe von 68.461,71 €, für das Jahr 2020 in Höhe von 59.490,016 €. Ihnen standen Ausgaben in Höhe von 61.759,76 €

bzw. 46.820,93 € gegenüber. D.h. dass es Überschüsse im Saldo in Höhe von 6.701,95 € im Jahr 2019 und von 12.669,08 € im Jahr 2020 gab.

Diese Entwicklung warf einige Fragen auf, die im (digitalen) Gespräch von der Geschäftsführerin beantwortet wurden:

- Einnahmen: Durch die 2017 beschlossene Erhöhung der Mitgliedsbeiträge waren die Einnahmen im Jahre 2018 auf 71.647 € gestiegen, darunter allein die Mitgliedsbeiträge auf 63.700 € gestiegen. Diese Summe ist seit 2019 wieder gesunken, zunächst auf 59.064 €, dann im Jahr 2020 auf nur noch 53.685 €. Gründe dafür sind einerseits ein kontinuierlicher Mitgliederschwund, andererseits technische Probleme im Jahr 2020, die Beiträge in der ersten Jahreshälfte einzuziehen. Diese waren unter Coronabedingungen schwierig zu lösen war, sodass erst im Oktober eingezogen werden konnte.
- Ausgaben: Im Jahr 2019 waren die Ausgaben höher, da zum einen die zweijährlichen DGA- und ASC-Tagungen stattfanden (zusammen mit der Nachwuchstagung Ausgaben in Höhe von 13.647 €) und zum anderen Mittel aus dem Small-Grants-Programm in Höhe von 4.729 € ausgeschüttet wurden. Im Jahr 2020 wurden nur 3.737 € für die Nachwuchstagung ausgegeben. Den Ausgaben standen zusätzliche Einnahmen durch Tagungsgebühren in Höhe von 8.025 € im Jahr 2019 und in Höhe von 450 € im Jahr 2020 gegenüber.
- Insgesamt gelang es, die Ausgaben auch weiterhin gering zu halten. Kaum ins Gewicht fallen auch weiterhin Posten wie Bürobedarf oder Porto. Letzteres war im vorherigen Prüfungszeitraum durch die weitgehende Digitalisierung der Kommunikation (vor allem in Vorbereitung der Mitgliederversammlung) zwar deutlich gesunken, ist in diesem Zeitraum allerdings wieder leicht angestiegen. Grund ist eine massive Portoerhöhung, die Einsparungen durch Mitgliederschwund mehr als ausgeglichen hat: Die Kategorie Büchersendung wurde z.B. ersatzlos abgeschafft, statt 1 € sind jetzt 1,55 € pro Sendung zu zahlen. Außerdem wurde ein größerer Vorrat vorfrankierter Umschläge (Service der Druckerei) angelegt.
- Die Raumkosten sind für die DGA dank der Unterstützung des GIGA weiterhin gering und stabil, ebenso die Buchführungskosten für den Steuerberater Herrn Fenn. Reisekosten werden nur für die Geschäftsführerin oder Vorstands-/Beiratsmitglieder ohne eigenes Einkommen erstattet. Allerdings wurde für das Jahr 2020 bisher keine Rechnung über Raumkosten erstellt, sodass diese Kosten wohl erst 2021 auflaufen. Im Bereich Internet und IT-Infrastruktur hat das GIGA seine Unterstützung eingestellt, sodass die DGA jetzt einen eigenen Internetzugang und einen eigenen Drucker/Scanner/Kopierer braucht. Auch für die Software muss sie selbst zahlen, was bereits begonnen hat, sich 2020 aber noch nicht massiv niederschlägt. Ausgaben in diesem Bereich werden künftig noch erheblich mehr werden (Betriebssystem, Office, Sicherheit, Adobe, ...).

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- Die Kosten für die Zeitschrift ASIEN sind nicht gestiegen, aber auch nicht gesunken, außer durch die verspätete und unregelmäßige Herausgabe der Ausgaben (148-151 = Juli 2018-April 2019 im Jahr 2019 sowie 152/153 = Juli/Oktobre 2019 im Jahr 2020). Der Rückstand konnte nicht, wie bei der letzten Rechnungsprüfung angekündigt, aufgeholt werden. Auch die Versendung digitaler Ausgaben hat sich noch nicht finanziell positiv ausgewirkt, obwohl auch dies vor zwei Jahren angekündigt wurde. Ab 2021 sollen allerdings noch die Mitglieder eine Printausgabe erhalten, die das ausdrücklich wünschen. Damit wird die Printauflage drastisch sinken, und zwar auf 350 Exemplare; versendet werden davon künftig ca. 300 Ex. (Mitglieder, Abos, Pflicht- und Freiexemplare, Verlags- und Autor*innenexemplare), der Rest wird für Neumitglieder und Werbezwecke vorgehalten.
 - Durch die verspäte Herausgabe der Zeitschriften-Jahrgänge 2018 und 2019 wurde im Jahr 2019 bewusst keine Abo-Rechnung gestellt und dann im Jahr 2020 2 Jahrgänge als einer abgerechnet, damit der DGA die Abonnent*innen erhalten bleiben. Entsprechend sanken die Einnahmen aus Veröffentlichungen von 4.400 € im Jahr 2018 auf quasi 0 € im Jahr 2019 und stiegen dann wieder auf 2.800 € im Jahr 2020. Das die „volle Höhe“ nicht erreicht wurde, ist auf eine späte Rechnungsstellung und auf technische Probleme und durch Corona veränderte Abläufe zurückzuführen. Positiv ist, dass die Abozahlen stabil bei ca. 70 geblieben sind.
 - Hervorheben möchten wir, dass die DGA dank der Kooperation des GIGA und der Einwerbung von Sponsorengeldern durch Dr. Margot Schüller so gut wie keine eigenen Mittel für die Tagung im Jahr 2019 aufbringen musste.
 - Während der ASC seine Tagungen aus eigenen Beiträgen finanziert, wird die Nachwuchsgruppe durch Beschluss des Vorstandes mit maximal 2.500 € im Jahr aus den allgemeinen Beiträgen unterstützt. Da die NWG von ihren Mitgliedern auch Tagungsbeiträge erhebt, konnten die Tagungen finanziell erfolgreich durchgeführt werden.
 - Mehrausgaben in Höhe von 1.800 € ergaben sich im Jahr 2020 durch einen Relaunch der Website. Manche Programme für die Wartung wie Wordpress kosten nichts, manche AddOns für Wordpress dagegen schon. Die DGA zahlt für funktionsfähige Formulare, die dringend gebraucht werden, und für die Mehrsprachen-Fähigkeit der Website; mit der Zweisprachigkeit soll jetzt nach dem Relaunch angefangen werden. Da die DGA mehrere Domains und Subdomains hat, kommen einige Kosten zusammen.
 - Für Sitzungen in der Pandemiezeit wurde auch Zoom eingesetzt. Mehrkosten für Zoom stehen gesunkene Reisekosten gegenüber.
 - Zusätzliche Nebenkosten für Geldverkehr ergaben sich aus der Nutzung von PayPal, was allerdings einige Mitglieder außerhalb des SEPA-Raums zur Überweisung von Tagungs- und anderen Gebühren günstig ist.

Auch im diesmal geprüften Zeitraum kam es zu technischen Problemen, die die Einnahmensituation ungünstig beeinflussten. Auf der Ausgabenseite wird es erst jetzt durch die schon 2017 beschlossene weitgehende Digitalisierung der Zeitschrift ASIEN zu einer Verringerung kommen. Wenn die Herausgabe der Zeitschrift ASIEN nicht verzögert erfolgt wäre, wären außerdem die Druck- und Versandkosten in den Jahren 2019 und 2020 deutlich höher gewesen und evtl. keine, auf jeden Fall aber geringere Überschüsse erzielt worden. Die pünktliche Erhebung der Mitgliedsbeiträge und Erstellung der Abo-Rechnungen sowie die pünktliche Herausgabe der Zeitschrift ASIEN als Gegenleistung sollte in Zukunft eine höhere Priorität in der Geschäftsstelle erhalten.

Auch in diesem Zeitraum wurden die Bankunterlagen über zwei Jahre wieder erst am Ende des Prüfungszeitraums, wenn diesmal auch noch kurz vor der Prüfung an den Steuerberater Herrn Fenn weitergereicht. Das ist sehr bedauerlich, verhindert es doch, dass seitens der Steuerberatung kontinuierlich ein prüfender Blick auf die Finanzen der DGA geworfen werden kann. Es wäre sehr zu wünschen, wenn auch hier eine andere Prioritätensetzung erfolgen würde.

Hamburg, den 28. Februar 2021

Hamburg, den 28. Februar 2021

[im Original unterzeichnet]

gez. Dr. Gerhard Will

gez. Dr. Günter Schucher

Berichte aus den Arbeitskreisen

Bericht über die Arbeit der DGA-Nachwuchsgruppe für die Wahlperiode 1/2019 bis 5/2021 sowie Ausblick auf die Wahlperiode 5/2021 bis 1/2023

Der folgende Bericht umfasst die Aktivitäten der DGA-Nachwuchsgruppe in der Wahlperiode vom 27. Januar 2019 bis 15. Mai 2021 sowie den Ausblick auf die neu beginnende Wahlperiode ab Mai 2021. Auf der letzten Tagung der Nachwuchsgruppe im Januar 2019 in Jena wurden Anna Caspari, Silke R.G. Hasper, Anja Ketels und Sophie Veauthier als Sprecherinnen gewählt. Aufgrund der Covid-19 Pandemie haben wir uns entschieden, die nächste Tagung der Nachwuchsgruppe von Januar 2021 in den Mai 2021 zu verschieben. Damit verlängert sich unsere Wahlperiode als aktuelles Sprecherinnenteam bis Mai 2021. Bei einer Mitgliederversammlung am 08. Oktober 2020 haben wir die NWG-Mitglieder über diese Verlängerung abstimmen lassen und ihre Einwilligung bekommen, das Amt bis Mai 2021 weiterausführen zu dürfen. Innerhalb unserer Wahlperiode haben wir einen Theorienworkshop im Januar 2020 durchgeführt sowie eine Nachwuchstagung für Mai 2021 geplant. Darüber hinaus gab es im Oktober 2020 erstmals eine online abgehaltene Mitgliederversammlung. Zudem haben wir uns u.a. durch Gestaltung und Druck deutsch- und englischsprachiger Flyer aktiv um Öffentlichkeitsarbeit und Mitgliederwerbung bemüht.

(1) Theorienworkshop

Aufgrund der gleichbleibend großen Nachfrage bieten wir alternierend zur Tagung Workshops an. Während bei den Tagungen der Austausch über wissenschaftliche Forschungsvorhaben und -ergebnisse im Vordergrund steht, legen die Workshops den Fokus auf Methoden- oder Theorietraining.

Der Workshop dieser Wahlperiode fand unter dem Titel „Theorien in den Asienwissenschaften“ im Januar 2020 an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum statt. Ziel der Veranstaltung war es, Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen Hilfestellungen bei dem Umgang mit Theorien zu geben. In der Regel rezipieren und adaptieren Forschungen zu Asien auch solche Theorien, deren Entstehungskontexte außerhalb des asiatischen Raumes liegen. Neben der allgemeinen theoretischen Kenntnis drängen sich daher oft Fragen bezüglich Eurozentrismus sowie der eigenen Rolle als Wissenschaftler*in auf. Vor diesen Hintergründen gestaltete die Nachwuchsgruppe in Bochum ein interdisziplinäres Forum für die theoretische Weiterbildung und für die Diskussion der hier aufgeworfenen sowie weiterer Fragestellungen rund um die theoretische Arbeit. Etwa 30 Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen traten hierfür von Süddeutschland bis Finnland auf die Reise zu unserem Workshop an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum an. Drei Tage führten wir theoriegeleitete Diskussionen über unsere Forschungsprojekte.

Dabei stellten wir uns Fragen nach dem Umgang mit Eurozentrismus sowie mit Theorien außerhalb ihres Entstehungsraumes, Fragen nach der Wahl und Operationalisierung von Theorien und setzten uns kritisch mit dem Stellenwert von Theorien auseinander.

Zwei einführende Vorträge zu „Theorien und Eurozentrismus in den Asienwissenschaften“ (Boike Rehbein) und der Frage „Was sind Theorien und wozu?“ (Dimitiry Okropiridze) lieferten von Beginn an Stoff zum Nachdenken und Diskutieren, mit unterschiedlichen Ansichten zur Relevanz von Kausalität und Erklärung. Der erste Tag endete mit der positiven Erkenntnis, dass die Teilnehmenden als Forschende in den Area Studies besondere Chancen und Möglichkeiten haben, Theorien kritisch zu hinterfragen und zu bereichern.

Vier Arbeitsgruppen zu Poststrukturalismus (Dimitiry Okropiridze), Theorien und Paradigmen in den Internationalen Beziehungen (Nele Noesselt), Institutionalismus (Kamila Szczepanska), und Kritischen Theorien (Melissa Shani Brown) boten viel Gelegenheit zur fokussierten Beschäftigung mit dem jeweiligen Theoriekomplex, zum Austausch und zur Diskussion individueller Fragen zu den eigenen Forschungsprojekten. Der Workshop war von einer regen und offenen Diskussionskultur geprägt und entließ einige Teilnehmende mit neuen Anregungen und Ideen. Natürlich kamen auch die sozialen Zusammenkünfte nicht zu kurz und so mancher Gedanke oder Austausch wurde abends im Bochumer Bermudadreieck weitergeführt und vertieft.

(2) Nachwuchs-Tagung 2021

Herzstück unserer Arbeit sind die alle zwei Jahre stattfindenden Nachwuchstagungen. Junge Wissenschaftler*innen haben hier die Möglichkeit, neben Forschungsergebnissen insbesondere „Work-in-Progress“ zu präsentieren und von etablierten Kommentator*innen sowie den Teilnehmer*innen wichtige Hilfestellungen und Impulse zu erhalten. Die diesjährige Tagung wurde aufgrund der Covid-19 Pandemie verschoben und findet, anstatt wie üblich im Januar in Präsenz, dieses Jahr im Mai digital statt. Thema der diesjährigen Tagung ist „Asien in Zeiten von Krisen und Polarisierung: Herausforderungen, Prozesse und Lösungen“. Die aktuelle Pandemie ist dabei nur ein Thema unter vielen, die bei dieser Tagung betrachtet werden sollen. Neben der fachlichen Diskussion soll es Workshops zu Aspekten wissenschaftlicher Arbeit, eine spannende Keynote und ein buntes Rahmenprogramm geben. Die sozialen Zusammenkünfte und die Vernetzung innerhalb der NWG sollen trotz virtuellem Format nicht zu kurz kommen. Die Vorbereitungen für die Tagung sind momentan in vollem Gange. Wir konnten bereits Rajib Shaw für die Keynote gewinnen und werden 2-3 Workshops zu Themen wie „Feldforschung in Zeiten von Corona“ und „Publizieren in den Asienwissenschaften“ anbieten. 34 Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen werden voraussichtlich an der Tagung teilnehmen und in parallelen Panels ihre Forschungsprojekte zu religiösen Fragestellungen, internationaler Politik, nachhaltiger Entwicklung und vielen

weiteren Bereichen präsentieren. Auf der Tagung wird das neue Sprecher*innenteam gewählt, das ab Mai das Amt übernehmen wird.

(3) Öffentlichkeitsarbeit der Nachwuchsgruppe

Die NWG bietet Möglichkeiten zur Vernetzung ihrer Mitglieder und bemüht sich gleichzeitig stetig darum, neue Mitglieder – auch langfristig für die DGA – zu werben. Zu diesem Zweck hat das Sprecherinnenteam in der aktuellen Wahlperiode Flyer entworfen und gedruckt. Eine deutsche Version des Flyers wurde 2019 fertiggestellt und bereits auf Konferenzen, an Universitäten und in anderen öffentlichen Einrichtungen verteilt. Die englische Version des Flyers wurde 2020 gedruckt, konnte bis zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt aufgrund der Covid-19 Pandemie jedoch nur geringfügig verteilt werden. Die im Mai noch übriggebliebenen Flyer werden wir dem Sprecher*innenteam der nachfolgenden Wahlperiode übergeben.

Im Rahmen der Erneuerung der DGA-Website wurde auch die Website der NWG auf das neue Design umgestellt. Wir haben die Gelegenheit genutzt, um die Website teilweise zu erneuern und zweisprachig (Deutsch-Englisch) zu gestalten.

Über unseren E-Mailverteiler erreichen wir alle Mitglieder der NWG. Darüber hinaus bietet die NWG ihren Mitgliedern sowie anderen jungen Asienwissenschaftler*innen mit ihrer geschlossenen Facebook-Gruppe eine weitere Möglichkeit zur Vernetzung. Die stetig wachsende Facebook-Gruppe verzeichnet derzeit 290 Mitglieder.

(4) Allgemeines, Mitgliederzahlen

2005 wurde die „Nachwuchsgruppe Asienforschung“ mit dem Ziel gegründet, den deutschen Nachwuchs in der Asienforschung über die Grenzen der eigenen Universität hinaus zu vernetzen und eine Plattform für den interdisziplinären Austausch zu bieten. Die Gruppe ist heute der größte Arbeitskreis der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Asienkunde. Seit März 2019 (siehe letzter Bericht der NWG) stieg die Mitgliederzahl von 140 auf fast 180 Mitglieder zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt (Stand: Februar 2021). Die Nachwuchsgruppe schafft ein Forum für Studierende, Promovierende und Habilitand*innen, aber auch für Graduierte und Berufstätige. Doktorand*innen machen nach wie vor den Großteil der Mitglieder aus. Nicht wenige haben sich auch aufgrund des konstruktiven Austausches in der Nachwuchsgruppe für eine Promotion oder eine weitere wissenschaftliche Karriere entschieden. Ein großer Teil der Mitglieder arbeitet hauptsächlich zu China. Aber der Anteil an Mitgliedern, die sich mit Süd(ost)asien beschäftigen, hat in den letzten Jahren stark zugenommen. Auch methodisch herrscht Vielfalt: Qualitative Interviewforschung, teilhabende Beobachtung oder quantitative empirische Sozialforschung sind nur ein Teil der angewandten Methoden der Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen.

Ein Anliegen des Sprecherinnenteams in der aktuellen Wahlperiode ist es, die NWG auch für nicht-deutschsprachige Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen in

Deutschland attraktiv und zugänglich zu machen. Zu diesem Zweck haben wir alle Informationsmaterialien (Website, Flyer, E-Mails, Facebook-Posts) sowie Veranstaltungsankündigungen und Calls for Participation zweisprachig gestaltet und unsere Veranstaltungen so organisiert, dass die Teilnahme auch ohne Kenntnisse der deutschen Sprache möglich ist.

Ohne die großzügige finanzielle Unterstützung durch die DGA wäre die Nachwuchsarbeit im oben beschriebenen Rahmen nicht möglich und wir möchten uns hierfür beim Vorstand und den Mitgliedern der DGA explizit bedanken. Wir werden weiterhin unseren Beitrag dazu leisten, die DGA für junge Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen zu öffnen und das neue Sprecherinnenteam wird 2022 wieder einen Workshop anbieten. Mit einem herzlichen Dankeschön für das Vertrauen in den letzten zwei Jahren und mit vielen Ideen für die nächsten zwei Jahre,

Anna Caspari, Silke R.G. Hasper, Anja Ketels, Sophie Veauthier
23. Februar 2021

Arbeitskreis Sozialwissenschaftliche Chinaforschung (ASC)

Seit der letzten Mitgliederversammlung der DGA im Jahr 2019 fanden zwei ASC-Tagungen statt. Im Jahr 2019 wurde die Tagung am 29./30.11.2019 von Tobias ten Brink und Markus Conlé an der Jacobs University Bremen ausgerichtet. In der anschließenden Mitgliederversammlung wurde Sabrina Habich-Sobieggalla als Sprecherin des ASC für zwei Jahre gewählt.

Die ASC-Tagung 2020 wurde am 27./28.11.2020 von Barbara Darimont der Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ludwigshafen ausgerichtet und online abgehalten. In der anschließenden Mitgliederversammlung wurde diskutiert, inwiefern der ASC in der öffentlichen Chinadebatte in Deutschland sichtbarer sein sollte. Es wurde hervorgehoben, dass ein öffentliches Auftreten des ASC mit einheitlicher Stimme aufgrund der Diversität der Mitglieder des ASC unrealistisch sei, dass eine Beteiligung der ASC-Mitgliedern an der öffentlichen Diskussion aber ausdrücklich gewünscht sei und dabei auf den ASC verwiesen werden könne. Weiterhin wurde beschlossen, zusätzlich zur jährlichen Tagung, weitere kleine Online-Workshops zu Themen der sozialwissenschaftlichen Chinastudien zu veranstalten. Das erste Treffen eines Workshops zur Datenkollaboration wird in der letzten Februarwoche 2021 stattfinden.

Die ASC-Tagung 2021 wird am 26./27.11.2021 von Genia Kostka und Sabrina Habich-Sobieggalla an der Freien Universität Berlin organisiert.

Aktuell (Stand Anfang Februar 2021) hat der ASC 92 Mitglieder.

Sabrina Habich-Sobieggalla, 19.2.2021

Bericht des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens

Seit der letzten DGA-Mitgliederversammlung 2019 konnte dieser Arbeitskreis einen Zuwachs von zwei Mitgliedern verzeichnen und besteht nun aus 79 Mitgliedern. Somit konnte er trotz des Mitgliederrückgangs, den die DGA zu verzeichnen hat, wachsen, was den steigenden Bedarf nach der Vernetzung Südasiensforschender im deutschsprachigen Raum verdeutlicht.

Deutscher Südasiientag

Dieser Bedarf hat sich auch in der regen Teilnahme von zirka 130 Personen am 1. Deutschen Südasiientag, der mit Unterstützung des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens am 27. und 28. Juni 2019 an der Universität Bonn stattfand, widerspiegelt. Die Idee für einen gesamtdeutschen Südasiientag entstand nach der erfolgreichen Durchführung der Mitteldeutschen Südasiientage an der Universität Leipzig und der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg in den Jahren 2015 und 2017. So unterschiedlich die disziplinären Hintergründe der einzelnen Mitglieder des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens sind, so divers waren auch die Vorträge im Rahmen der Südasiientage. Forschende aus der Ethnologie, Geographie, Geschichte, Indologie, Islamwissenschaft, Kunstwissenschaft, Medienwissenschaft, Politikwissenschaft, Rechtswissenschaft, Religionswissenschaft und Südasienswissenschaft präsentierten ihre Forschungsergebnisse zu südasiensrelevanten Fragestellungen.

An allen drei Südasiientagen haben auch Mitglieder des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens aktiv mitgewirkt – im Organisationsteam und als Vortragende. Der 2. Deutsche Südasiientag war für 2021 an der Universität Heidelberg angedacht, aber wurde aufgrund der Corona-Pandemie erst einmal ausgesetzt, da ein Online-Format für diese Art von Veranstaltung, bei der insbesondere auch der informelle Austausch großgeschrieben wird, nicht infrage kommt. Aufgeschoben heißt aber auch in diesem Fall nicht aufgehoben und bei dem nächsten Treffen der Mitglieder des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens wird das weitere Vorgehen besprochen.

Neuer Verteiler

Ein weiterer Punkt, der bei dem nächsten Mitgliedertreffen eruiert werden sollte, ist die Einrichtung eines E-Mail-Verteilers, bei dem alle Mitglieder ohne große Hindernisse an alle anderen ihre Neuigkeiten verschicken können. Dies ist aufgrund datenrechtlicher Bestimmungen mit dem bisherigen leider nicht möglich.

Vernetzung der (digitalen) Sprachlehre

Insbesondere aufgrund der digitalen Lehre, mit der wir in den letzten Monaten nun fast alle in Berührung gekommen sind, aber bereits schon vor der Corona-Pandemie gab es Bestrebungen von Seiten einiger Mitglieder des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens, die Lehre moderner südasiatischer Sprachen an deutschsprachigen Universitäten stärker zu vernetzen und sich intensiver auszutauschen. Da dies vornehmlich die ohnehin schon gefährdeten sogenannten Kleinen Fächer betrifft, wäre es wünschenswert, wenn sich hier eine Arbeitsgruppe aus diesem AK bildet,

um sich längerfristige Strategien zu überlegen, ohne dass im Zuge der gegebenenfalls fortschreitenden Digitalisierung der Lehre Standorte gefährdet sein könnten. Eine der wichtigsten Fragen ist somit: Wie kann man den größtmöglichen Vorteil aus den neuen digitalen Möglichkeiten gewinnen, ohne gleichzeitig Einsparmöglichkeiten für die Hochschulpolitik zu liefern?

Publikationen zur Südasienforschung

Neben der ASIEN, der Zeitschrift der DGA, wirken auch Mitglieder des AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens aktiv an der Herausgabe der Interdisziplinären Zeitschrift für Südasienforschung mit. Diese bietet insbesondere dem Nachwuchs in der Südasienforschung, aber auch etablierten Forschenden die Möglichkeit, open access und peer reviewed in sowohl englischer als auch deutscher Sprache zu publizieren. Gehostet wird diese Zeitschrift von der UB Heidelberg im Rahmen des Fachinformationsdienstes Asien, der auch die Möglichkeit bietet, Monografien und Sammelbände open access digital und als print on demand zu publizieren. Das Thema open access ist besonders für die Südasienforschung von großer Bedeutung, da kostenpflichtige Zugänge zu Online-Zeitschriften und der kostenintensive Erwerb in Europa publizierter Literatur die Rezeption in Südasiens selbst oftmals verringert, wenn nicht sogar verhindert. Insofern wäre zu überlegen, ob sich der AK Neuzeitliches Südasiens in diesem Bereich stärker engagiert.

Bonn und Heidelberg, 08.02.2021

Carmen Brandt, Hans Harder und Nicole Merkel-Hilf

Bericht des AK Südostasien

Der Arbeitskreis Südostasien hat aktuell (Stand: Februar 2021) 49 Mitglieder.

Ein wichtiges Ziel des Arbeitskreises ist die Vernetzung mit anderen Institutionen und Gruppen die zu (Südost) Asien arbeiten, insbesondere mit folgenden Partnern:

Regionalgruppe Südostasien der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie

FID Asien – CrossAsia

EuroSEAS

Die Vernetzung mit der Regionalgruppe Südostasien der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie wurde verstetigt. Überlegungen zu einer gemeinsamen Südostasien Tagung wurden jedoch aufgrund der Corona Pandemie verschoben.

Bei der DGA Tagung 2021 ist der Arbeitskreis mit einem Panel zu “Transregional Connections across the Indian Ocean” vertreten.

AK Treffen zur Neuwahl des Sprecher*innen Teams

Freitag, den 5. März 2021, 12:30 Uhr

<https://huji.zoom.us/j/82289008392?pwd=UGJlaWdVNmU3V1pjTHVpQlRtUmNFUT09>

Meeting-ID: 822 8900 8392

Kenncode: 112449

Sina Hardaker und Lukas Maximilian Müller treten von ihren Sprecherämtern zurück.

Mirjam Lücking und ggf. weitere Kandidat*innen stellen sich am 5. März 2021 für das Sprecher*innen Team zur Wahl.

Protokoll der ordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung der DGA

am Freitag, den 5. März 2021, von 14 bis 17 Uhr
online auf Zoom

TOP 1: Eröffnung durch den Vorstand der DGA

Die Vorsitzende der DGA, Prof. Dr. Doris Fischer, eröffnet die Online-MV um 14:11. Sie stellt fest, dass die MV satzungsgemäß und fristgerecht einberufen wurde und in jedem Fall beschlussfähig ist, da die Satzung kein Quorum vorsieht. Die Einladung, alle Unterlagen zur schriftlichen Stimmabgabe (Vorstandswahl und Satzungsänderung) sowie die Tagesordnung wurden allen Mitgliedern fristgerecht (1. Einladung am 4.12.2020; 2. Einladung mit allen Unterlagen am 5.2.2021) zugestellt, alle Unterlagen (vorläufige Tagesordnung, Stimmzettel, Erläuterungen zur Stimmabgabe, Antrag des Vorstands auf Satzungsänderung) sind außerdem im Mitgliederbereich der DGA-Website verfügbar und liegen für die Anwesenden aus.

Auf Nachfrage äußert keines der anwesenden Mitglieder Änderungswünsche an der Tagesordnung, die damit einstimmig angenommen ist.

Es werden keine Anträge zur Geschäftsordnung gestellt.

TOP 2: Berichte

a) Bericht des Vorstands

Die Vorsitzende der DGA, Doris Fischer, trägt den Bericht des Vorstands, der allen Mitgliedern vorliegt, vor (s. Anhang 1: Bericht des Vorstands).

Sie dankt dem Vorstand für die gute, konstruktive und sehr freundschaftliche Zusammenarbeit.

b) Bericht der Geschäftsführerin

Die Geschäftsführerin, Deike Zimmann, trägt ihren Bericht, der allen Mitgliedern vorliegt, vor (s. Anhang 2: Bericht der Geschäftsführung) und geht etwas tiefer auf folgende Punkte ein:

Mitgliederentwicklung:

Der Rückgang der Mitgliederzahl hat sich fortgesetzt, v. a. durch einen Mangel an neuen Mitgliedern. 2020 besonders wenig Eintritte. Großes Problem: DGA ist in den Fachbereichen nicht mehr optisch präsent, jüngere Studierende kennen die DGA gar nicht. Dieses Problem anzugehen ist unter Pandemiebedingungen noch schwieriger. Appell an die Lehrenden unter den Mitgliedern zur Mitgliederwerbung. Bitte um Vorschläge zur Mitgliederwerbung.

Schnuppermitgliedschaft ist gut angenommen worden. Erfreulich: Schwund ist beim Nachwuchs gestoppt. Funktionierende Motoren für Mitgliederwerbung sind

die Tagung und die Arbeitskreise, die sich entgegen dem Trend fast alle vergrößert haben.

Diskussion:

Vorschlag M. Lücking: Werbung über Engagement in Sozialen Medien; dazu GF: Twitter ist geplant, die NWG ist aktiv auf Facebook [Link].

Rüdiger Frank: Was die Leute wirklich interessiert, sind Geld und Stellen; die DGA sollte sich dazu als wichtiger Anlaufpunkt profilieren: Stipendien, Karriereförderung („meat market“, Vernetzung); dazu Doris Fischer: Das DGA-Tagungsformat als internationale wissenschaftliche Tagung ist noch jung, es ist zu hoffen, dass dieses Format diese Funktion erfüllen wird. Beim ASC (ASC-Tagung) funktioniert dieser Anreiz bereits.

ASIEN:

Verzug, da einige Hefte im letzten und vorletzten Jahr geplatzt sind, darunter das eigene Würzburger Tagungsheft. Derzeit sieht die Planung gut aus, zumindest unter der Voraussetzung, dass weiterhin Doppelnummern herausgegeben werden. ASIEN 154/155 ist veröffentlicht, 156/157 „steht“ inhaltlich und geht jetzt in die Lektorats- und Endredaktionsphase, die geplanten Hefte des Jahrgangs 2021 kommen voran (Begutachtungsphase) und werden aller Voraussicht nach tatsächlich beide 2021 veröffentlicht werden können. Alle geplanten Hefte sind Themenhefte, die aber offen sind für freie Beiträge.

Zusammenarbeit mit CrossAsia ist inzwischen weit gediehen, sowohl jüngere als auch die alten Jahrgänge sind online verfügbar. Arbeitsteilung: Heidelberg retrospektiv, beginnend mit den ältesten Jahrgängen, die Geschäftsstelle pflegt die aktuellen Jahrgänge ein.

Druckversion: Verbindliche Mitgliederbefragung hat ergeben, dass ca. 170 Mitglieder weiterhin ein gedrucktes ASIEN-Heft beziehen möchten. ☐ Einsparung Versandkosten; künftig werden ca. 280 Ex. regelmäßig versendet, außerdem an Autor*innen, Gutachter*innen, was gut angenommen wird.

Redaktionsarbeit: Die Redaktion kann Verstärkung gebrauchen in den Bereichen Zentralasien und SOA

SGP:

Die Mehrheit der 2019 für 2020 bewilligten Grants konnte pandemiebedingt noch nicht abgerufen werden; der Vorstand hat alle Fristen ausgesetzt, die Grants verfallen nicht, sofern sie zu irgendeinem Zeitpunkt für den bewilligten Zweck abgerufen werden. 2020 für 2021 nur fünf Anträge (Pandemie), die dennoch intensiv begutachtet und alle bewilligt wurden, zwei sind bereits abgerufen.

c) Bericht der Kassenprüfer

Der Bericht liegt schriftlich vor (s. Anhang 3: Bericht der Kassenprüfer). Es gibt dazu keine Nachfragen, Diskussionsbedarf besteht nicht.

Die Geschäftsführerin und die Vorstandsvorsitzende sprechen den beiden scheidenden Kassenprüfern Gerhard Will und Günter Schucher ihren herzlichen Dank für ihr langjähriges Engagement aus.

TOP 3: Entlastung des Vorstands

Marcus Conlé stellt den Antrag, den Vorstand zu entlasten; der Antrag wird einstimmig bei 8 Enthaltungen angenommen (46:0:8).

TOP 4: Berichte der Arbeitskreise

Nachwuchsgruppe

Anja Ketels trägt den Bericht der NWG, der allen Mitgliedern vorliegt (s. Anhang 4: Bericht der Nachwuchsgruppe), vor und macht insbesondere auf die diesjährige Nachwuchstagung aufmerksam, die im Mai 2021 erstmalig online stattfinden wird. Geplant sind derzeit 34 Vorträge, es gibt sehr großen Zulauf und damit verbunden viele Neuanmeldungen für NWG/DGA.

Arbeitskreis Sozialwissenschaftliche Chinaforschung (ASC)

Sabrina Habich-Sobieggalla trägt den Bericht des ASC (s. Anhang 5) vor und fasst kurz die beiden vergangenen ASC-Tagungen (2019 in Bremen, Hosts/Orga: Tobias ten Brink u. Marcus Conlé; 2020 online, Host/Orga: Barbara Darimont, Ludwigshafen) zusammen. Der Call für die diesjährige Tagung (FU Berlin, Genia Kostka u. S. Habich-Sobieggalla) ist verschickt.

Arbeitskreis Neuzeitliches Südasiens

Carmen Brandt trägt den Bericht des AKNS (s. Anhang 6) vor und macht insbesondere auf das für den 18.3. geplante AK-Treffen (Zoom) mit Wahl zum neuen Sprecherrat aufmerksam. Aufruf zur Kandidatur zum Sprecherrat.

Arbeitskreis Südostasien

Mirjam Lücking trägt den Bericht des AK SOA (s. Anhang 7) vor und berichtet vom heutigen Treffen des Arbeitskreises. Das neue Sprecher*innenteam besteht aus Friederike Trotter und Mirjam Lücking, Stellvertreter sind Paul Christensen und Patrick Keilbart.

Aus organisatorischen Gründen werden die TOPs 5 und 6 getauscht.

TOP 5: Vorstandswahl

Zur Wahl stehen 13 Kandidat*innen; ihre Profile sind den Mitgliedern fristgerecht mit der zweiten Einladung zur MV zugegangen, sie sind außerdem seit Januar auf der Website einsehbar.

Wahlverfahren

Die Geschäftsführerin erläutert das diesjährige Wahlverfahren. Auch bei einer Präsenzwahl, die online stattfindet, muss die Wahl sicher, geheim, satzungs- und datenschutzkonform sein; die Abgabe von mehr als 11 Stimmen muss auch beim digitalen Wahlverfahren ausgeschlossen sein; es muss sichergestellt sein, dass Mitglieder, die bereits per Briefwahl ihre Stimme abgegeben haben, sich nicht online noch einmal an der Wahl beteiligen können. Das Tool, das verwendet wird (abstimmen.online) erfüllt all diese Anforderungen.

Nachträgliche Bestätigung der provisorischen Wahlleitung für die Briefwahl und Bestellung der Wahlleitung für die Online-Präsenzwahl

Marcus Conlé hatte im Vorfeld die Wahlleitung für die Auszählung der Briefwahl übernommen; die Versammlung stimmt bei einer Enthaltung einstimmig zu.

Doris Fischer schlägt vor, Deike Zimmann mit der Wahlleitung zu beauftragen; der Vorschlag wird einstimmig angenommen.

Kandidat*innen

Die Wahlleiterin übernimmt für die Dauer der Wahl die Versammlungsleitung. Die Profile aller Kandidat*innen sind den Mitgliedern zusammen mit der zweiten Einladung zur Versammlung fristgerecht zugestellt worden; sie stehen außerdem seit Januar auf der Website. Alle Kandidat*innen für den Vorstand sind anwesend und stellen sich nacheinander vor.

Durchführung der Vorstandswahl und Wahlergebnis

Da keines der anwesenden Mitglieder Diskussionsbedarf anmeldet, eröffnet die Wahlleiterin die Wahl.

Während die Mitglieder online abstimmen, berichtet Marcus Conlé über die ordnungsgemäße Durchführung der Briefwahlauszählung. Wahlhelfer*innen bei der Auszählung waren Deike Zimmann und Leo Koenig (Mitarbeiter in der Geschäftsstelle der DGA). Die analogen Stimmzettel (7 Stück) wurden, geprüft von sechs Augen, ins System von abstimmen.online eingegeben.

In den neuen Vorstand gewählt sind (absteigend nach Stimmenzahl): Nele Noesselt, Margot Schüller, Sophie Veauthier, Carmen Brandt, Carolin Kautz, Jörn Dosch, Florian Pölking, Mirjam Lücking, Shazia Wülbers und Marco Bunte; auf Platz 11 und 12 gibt es ein Patt zwischen Philipp Immel und Stefan Rother; nicht gewählt ist Stefan Tetzlaff.

Die Wahlleiterin schlägt eine anonyme Stichwahl in Zoom vor. Nach kurzer Diskussion über das weitere Vorgehen zieht Stefan Rother im Interesse der Nachwuchsvertretung seine Kandidatur zugunsten von Philipp Immel zurück, der damit ebenfalls gewählt ist.

Alle in den Vorstand Gewählten nehmen die Wahl an.

Nach der Wahl

Katja Levy spricht dem scheidenden Vorstand ihren herzlichen Dank aus.

Claudia Derichs schließt sich an und lobt die neue Website, die einen großen Beitrag zur Außenwirkung leistet.

Aus organisatorischen Gründen leitet die scheidende Vorsitzende, abweichend von der DGA-Tradition, weiterhin die Versammlung.

Nele Noesselt dankt dem scheidenden Vorstand (Doris Fischer, Karsten Giese, Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, Stefan Rother); sie freut sich auf die Zusammenarbeit mit den neuen Vorstandsmitgliedern.

Philipp Immel dankt Stefan Rother für seine große Geste und den damit verbundenen Vertrauensvorschuss; Sophie Veauthier schließt sich an.

Doris Fischer verabschiedet sich mit einem lachenden und einem weinenden Auge und den besten Wünschen für den neuen Vorstand; sie bietet ihre Unterstützung auch in in der Zukunft an.

Deike Zimmann bedankt sich bei Doris Fischer für die sehr gute und harmonische Zusammenarbeit.

TOP 6: Diskussion und Abstimmung über den Antrag des Vorstands auf Satzungsänderung

Der Versammlung liegt ein Antrag des Vorstands auf Satzungsänderung vor (s. Anhang 8). Mit der Änderung sollen auch künftig elektronische Abstimmungen möglich sein, sowohl rein elektronisch als auch in Hybridform. Karsten Giese erläutert kurz den Antrag. Es besteht seitens der anwesenden Mitglieder kein Diskussionsbedarf, die geheime Online-Abstimmung wird über [abstimmen.online](https://www.abstimmen.online) durchgeführt.

Ergebnis: Die Satzungsänderung ist mit 53 Ja-Stimmen und einer Gegenstimme angenommen.

TOP 7: Wahl der Kassenprüfer*innen

Es haben sich dankenswerterweise im Vorfeld der MV zwei Mitglieder, Benedikt Skowasch und Uwe Kotzel, bereit erklärt, diese Aufgabe für den Berichtszeitraum 2021-22 zu übernehmen. Weitere Personen, die Interesse hätten, das Amt zu übernehmen, haben sich nicht gemeldet.

Die MV wählt die beiden Kassenprüfer einstimmig ohne Enthaltungen.

TOP 8: Antrag der ASIEN-Redaktion auf Beibehaltung der Druckausgabe von ASIEN

Diana Schnelle erläutert den Antrag der ASIEN-Redaktion (s. Anhang 9): Die Umfrage unter den Mitgliedern hat ein großes Interesse bei einem Teil der Mitglieder an der Beibehaltung einer Druckausgabe gezeigt. Doris Fischer gibt einen kurzen Abriss über den bisherigen Diskussionsverlauf zum Thema, v. a. bei der MV 2017.

Diskussion:

Karsten Giese: Der Vorstand hat nie beschlossen, die Druckausgabe komplett einzustellen; das Hauptargument für den Beschluss 2017 waren die Kosten im Zusammenhang mit der mittelfristigen Finanzplanung (Giese 2017); er verweist auf Kosten, die auf die DGA zukommen werden und plädiert für die Ablehnung des Antrags.

Schnelle: Auch ohne Druck auf die Mitglieder wird sich die Nachfrage nach der Printversion voraussichtlich im Lauf der Zeit verringern, während die Gefahr, bei Einstellung Mitglieder zu verlieren, eher akut ist.

Schüller: Die DGA ist gemeinnützig und kann nicht Rücklagen in beliebiger Höhe bilden; die derzeitige Finanzlage ist entspannt.

Kautz: ASIEN dient auch zukünftig der Werbung für und Repräsentation der DGA (Auslage bei Tagungen und in Instituten etc.).

Giese: Die verschiedenen elektronischen Formate, die mittlerweile angeboten werden, sind ein deutlicher Mehrwert für die Mitglieder. Auch wenn die Finanzen derzeit gut aussehen, wird das mittel- und langfristig nicht so bleiben; die mittelfristige Finanzplanung war von einer durchschnittlichen Mitgliederzahl von 650 ausgegangen, die derzeit deutlich unterschritten ist.

Zimmann: Gerade weil die die Finanzplanung aufgrund der sinkenden Mitgliederzahlen gefährdet ist, gilt es, auf keinen Fall weitere Austritte zu provozieren. Über die Zukunft der Printversion kann man jährlich neu nachdenken, aber ausgetretene Mitglieder sind der Gesellschaft dauerhaft verloren.

Noesselt: Auch für die Beziehungspflege (z. B. AA) ist es gut, gedruckte Hefte zur Verfügung zu haben. Die DGA sollte über weitere Projekte neben dem Small Grants Programme nachdenken, die der Nachwuchsförderung und Mitgliederwerbung dienen, z. B. eine Buchreihe (b. Nomos?) für Nachwuchswissenschaftler*innen; die Ausgaben sollten möglichst breit gestreut werden, sofern ausreichend Mittel vorhanden sind.

Brandt: Die Überlegungen pro und contra basieren alle auf Spekulationen, v. a. hinsichtlich der Entwicklung der Mitgliederzahlen. Deshalb ist es wichtig, jedes Jahr neu auf der Basis der vorhandenen Daten zu entscheiden. Plädoyer für die Annahme des Antrags.

Giese: Rücklagen können auch in größerer Höhe gebildet werden, wenn ihr Zweck klar definiert ist; neue Projekte bzw. eine Ausweitung des SGP sind sehr wünschenswert; der neue Vorstand muss unbedingt eine neue Finanzplanung vorlegen.

Wengoborski: Die Nachfrage nach einer Printausgabe hat sicher mit Lesegewohnheiten zu tun und ist daher tendenziell eine Generationsfrage. Der DGA-Mitgliedsbeitrag ist eher hoch, eine Druckfassung sollte auf Anfrage enthalten sein.

Veauthier: Die Diskussion ist weitgehend eine Wiederholung von 2017, wobei die gegensätzlichen Positionen gar nicht weit voneinander entfernt sind. Der neue Vorstand muss über die Print-Frage auf der Basis einer neuen Finanzplanung neu nachdenken. Dank an Karsten Giese für seine Finanzplanung von 2017.

Giese: Der alte, sehr offen gehaltene Antrag von 2017 sollte beibehalten werden, da er dem Vorstand ermöglicht, jederzeit über die Druckausgabe neue Beschlüsse zu fassen. Der heute vorliegende Antrag würde bei Annahme den Vorstand für die nächsten zwei Jahre binden, jedem Mitglied auf Anfrage kostenfrei gedruckte Ausgaben zukommen zu lassen.

Die Abstimmung erfolgt in Zoom.

Ergebnis: Der Antrag der Redaktion ist mit 23 (56%) Ja-Stimmen angenommen bei 8 (20%) Gegenstimmen und 10 (24%) Enthaltungen.

TOP 9: Verschiedenes

Doris Fischer erinnert an die DGA-Tagung in der kommenden Woche; noch ist es möglich, sich online anzumelden (dga-conference.de).

Die Versammlungsleiterin schließt die Versammlung um 16:56.

Für den Vorstand

Hamburg, den 30. März 2021

Dr. Margot Schüller

Für das Protokoll

Hamburg, den 29. März 2021

Deike Zimmann

Anhänge zum Protokoll der Mitgliederversammlung

1. Bericht des Vorstands: s. oben

2. Bericht der Geschäftsführerin: s. oben

3. Bericht über die Rechnungsprüfung: s. oben

4.–7. Berichte der Arbeitskreise: s. oben

8. Antrag des Vorstands auf Satzungsänderung

Der Vorstand beantragt, die Satzung wie folgt zu ändern:

(Die zustimmungsbedürftigen ergänzten Passagen sind farblich und durch Fettdruck hervorgehoben)

§ 6 Mitgliederversammlung

[...]

(4) Die Mitgliederversammlung ist unabhängig von der Zahl der erschienenen Mitglieder beschlussfähig. Jedes erschienene Mitglied hat eine Stimme. Mitglieder, die verhindert sind, an der Mitgliederversammlung teilzunehmen, können ihr Stimmrecht auf schriftlichem Wege **oder durch vergleichbare sichere elektronische Abstimmungsformen** ausüben oder auf ein teilnehmendes Mitglied schriftlich übertragen. Dies gilt auch für die Stimme zur Wahl des Vorstands. Kein Mitglied kann mehr als drei Stimmen abgeben. Beschlüsse werden mit einfacher Stimmenmehrheit gefasst. Beschlüsse über Satzungsänderungen bedürfen einer Zweidrittel-Mehrheit aller abgegebenen Stimmen, über die Auflösung der Gesellschaft einer Dreiviertel-Mehrheit der Stimmen aller Mitglieder.

[...]

(7) Beschlüsse der Mitglieder können in begründeten Ausnahmen vom Vorstand auch auf schriftlichem Wege **oder mittels vergleichbaren sicheren elektronischen Abstimmungsformen** herbeigeführt werden. Sie stehen Beschlüssen der Mitgliederversammlung gleich. In diesem Fall sind alle Mitglieder mit einer Erklärungsfrist von drei Wochen anzuschreiben. Eine Stimmenübertragung ist nicht zulässig.

(8) Die Mitgliederversammlung ist eine Präsenzveranstaltung mit Anwesenheit der teilnehmenden Mitglieder am Versammlungsort. Virtuelle Mitgliederversammlungen sowie Mischformen mittels vergleichbaren sicheren elektronischen Versammlungs- und Abstimmungsformen sind zulässig. Für virtuelle Mitgliederversammlungen und Mischformen gelten die Bestimmungen des § 6 (1)–(7) mit Ausnahme von Stimmrechtsübertragungen, die in diesen Fall nicht zulässig sind. Der Vorstand ist berechtigt, über die Form der Mitgliederversammlung und deren technische Umsetzung im Einzelfall zu entscheiden; die Gründe für die Durchführung einer virtuellen Mitgliederversammlung sind den Mitgliedern spätestens mit der Einladung zur Mitgliederversammlung darzulegen.

Zur Begründung:

Die Satzungsänderung ist erforderlich, damit wir in Ausnahmesituationen wie der derzeitigen Pandemie und anderen begründeten Fällen digitale und hybride Mitgliederversammlungen und Wahlen/Abstimmungen satzungskonform durchführen

können. Präsenz-Mitgliederversammlungen sollen nicht ersetzt werden, sondern auch künftig die normale Form sein.

9. Antrag auf Beibehaltung der Druckausgabe von ASIEN

Antragstellerin: ASIEN–Redaktion

Die Mitgliederversammlung möge beschließen, dass die Zeitschrift ASIEN auch zukünftig jedem Mitglied der DGA neben den digitalen Formaten auf Wunsch weiterhin als Druckausgabe zur Verfügung gestellt werden soll. Mit diesem Beschluss wäre der Beschluss der Mitgliederversammlung vom 16. Mai 2017 aufgehoben.

Begründung:

In den letzten vier Jahren ist die Digitalisierung von ASIEN weit vorangekommen. Wir bieten ASIEN in vier Formaten an – drei davon digital –, die alle gut angenommen werden.

Nach mehreren Jahren, in denen alle Überlegungen zum Prozess der Digitalisierung ohne Berechnungsgrundlage auskommen mussten, liegt nun endlich eine Zahl vor: Die verbindliche Mitgliederbefragung hat ergeben, dass ca. 170 Mitglieder ausdrücklich weiterhin ASIEN auch als Druckausgabe beziehen möchten. Außerdem beziehen etwa 70 Abonnent*innen die Zeitschrift, die meisten davon sind Bibliotheken oder wissenschaftliche Einrichtungen; zusätzlich werden einige Institutionen, mit denen die DGA kooperiert, mit Freixemplaren bedacht, ebenso die ASIEN-Autor*innen und Gutachter*innen, die das sehr zu schätzen wissen.

Daraus ergibt sich: Die Druckauflage ist ab sofort rund 60% kleiner als bisher und beläuft sich gegenwärtig auf circa 350 Exemplare. Entsprechend besteht bereits erhebliches Einsparpotential bei den Druck- und insbesondere den Versandkosten.

Der Prozess der Digitalisierung verläuft also erfolgreich. Wir haben aber auch Grund anzunehmen, dass für zumindest einen Teil der Mitglieder, die weiterhin gedruckte ASIEN-Hefte beziehen möchten, die Zeitschrift der wesentliche Grund für die Mitgliedschaft in der DGA ist. Eine Einstellung der Druckausgabe hätte demnach höchstwahrscheinlich einen spürbaren Mitgliederschwind zur Folge. Der daraus folgende finanzielle Verlust wäre womöglich größer als die moderaten Druck- und Versandkosten, die künftig weiterhin anfallen würden. Vor allem wäre er irreparabel.

Die physische Präsenz von ASIEN in Bibliotheksregalen weltweit und auf – hoffentlich bald wieder möglichen – Tagungs-Büchertischen betrachten wir zudem als einen wichtigen Baustein in der Außenwahrnehmung der DGA und damit auch für die Mitgliederwerbung.

Research Note

Chasing the Locals in Urban Japan: An Anthropocentric Approach to Conceptualizing Multilayered Locals in Contemporary Tokyo

Florian Purkarthofer

Summary

The term “local” often has positive associations, adding a warm familiarity to ordinary phenomena and items and creating “a sense of home.” Local communities, locally produced products, and local traditions carry sentiments of belonging, often capitalized on through branding strategies, policies, or even political propaganda. In contrast, this paper takes a closer look at dissonance and conflicting conceptions of the local. Because it is essential to critically rethink what constitutes locality, our central question is: How can we define a type of “local” that is not based upon the demands of a single (scientific) discipline or ideology like the “idealized image of the local community,” but on qualitative parameters and factors of influence? The goal of this research project, in which this paper is only a small but significant step on a long journey, is to get one step closer to an analytical understanding of the local in an anthropocentric sense, by rendering the local and existing conceptions through the layer of sensory possibilities and affective processes. This anthropocentric and sensory-sensitive approach to the local is achieved by analyzing empirical data from fieldwork in urban neighborhoods in Tokyo.

Keywords: urban space, local, anthropocentric, human scale, Tokyo, Japan

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I would like to express my gratitude to the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo) for their scholarship in 2018/19, which enabled fieldwork over several months, and especially to Sonja Ganseforth and Hanno Jentsch for their support and invitation to take part in the “What Is the ‘Local’?” symposium.

The Local as the Place to Be?

The conceptual distance between the three song titles “Home, Sweet Home,”¹ “Home Is Where the Hatred Is”² and—maybe even further—“Home Is Where You Hang Yourself”³ may seem immense, but, as I argue in this paper, it is actually quite small when we understand home as an example of the “special local” through affect, interaction, and unavoidability. These contrary notions of the local (a place of harmony vs. a place of hatred) are not limited to music and art but also exist in the realms of academia and science, and might have amplified how some of us have felt during the recent pandemic. In these unusual times of restricted movement and working from home due to the pandemic, the local as refuge, as habitat, and as territory we live in is omnipresent—but the feelings of imprisonment and unavoidability are also part of a complex locality that we individually and socially constitute and participate in. Interestingly, there has been a strong emphasis on positive analysis of the local in recent decades. “Local community,” “local economy,” and “locally produced” are just a few of the buzzwords that pop up in papers in all fields, from sociology to economy but also prominently in political science and city planning (Gehl and Svarre 2013: 43).

Despite this frequent usage, the theoretical discussion about “the local” has still not advanced. But, rather than through a systematic approach, “the local” has been commodified in Japan in a way that links it to other eco-friendly buzzwords like “*gurīn*” (green), “*tezukuri*” (handmade/homemade), and “*eko*” (ecological). This connection is often made in academia as well, though perhaps not in such a striking or blunt way. Particularly in the broader field of social sciences, the “local community” has been promoted as the hope, safe haven, and even utopia for a sustainable and bright future. The local community functions as a positioning device depicting a social arrangement that holds up on a national or global level against complex post-industrial societies (cf. Brenner 2019) that are characterized by flux and constant (social) insecurity. Notwithstanding the fact that such a longing for an alternative in a post-socialist era is understandable, this vague idea of “local” is unsatisfactory to work with. Furthermore, such an idealistic approach does not seem to lead to a “theory of the local” but to a “dream of the local.”

In contrast, this paper connects different approaches to “the local” and renders them through examples from my own research in western Tokyo, drawing one step closer to a theoretical understanding of the local as a multilayered, scalar concept. Special emphasis is placed upon anthropocentric and sense-related layers that consider affective processes and sensory range. The approach is based on a “social-

1 By John Horward Payne (lyrics) and Henry Rowley Bishop (composition) (1823); in Japan known as “Hanyū no yado” 塙生の宿; first published Meiji 22 (1889) in the *Chūtōshōkashū* (中等唱歌集) by the Tōkyō Ongakugakko (東京音楽学校) (see NDL, <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/855558/22>).

2 By Gil Scott-Heron (1971).

3 By Marc Bianchi aka Her Space Holiday (2000).

relational and situated understanding of affect” (Slaby and Scheve 2019) and space that acknowledges the temporary, fluid, and multilayered nature of spatial processes (Schmid et al. 2018). Further, the concept should cover, link, and combine the perspectives of individual humans and collectives in order that it may be applicable to different social science disciplines. The central question is therefore: How can we define a “local” that is not based upon the demands of a single (scientific) discipline or ideology like the “idealized image of the local community,” but on qualitative parameters and factors of influence? This inevitably creates a need to identify the layers and constituting elements of the local and to understand the mechanics and interplay of its different parameters. This research document depicts this theorization as a work in progress, because it should spark discussion and cooperation between the three research strains involved. As an intermediating paper, it can be linked to the discussion in area studies regarding the meaning of locality in Japan, prominently discussed at the “What Is the ‘Local’?: Rethinking the politics of subnational spaces in Japan” (2021-10-18~20) international symposium at the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo, and condensed into the book *Rethinking Locality in Japan: What Is Local?* (Ganseforth and Jentzsch 2021). This paper also includes questions regarding urban scale addressed by leading sociologists and geographers (cf. Schmid et al. 2018; Brenner 2019) and the growing but still fragmented literature that uses urban assemblage as method and theory for approaching these questions (cf. Wang 2019; McFarlane 2011).

The goal of this research project, in which this paper is only a small but significant step on a long journey, is to get one step closer to an analytical understanding of the local in an anthropocentric sense, by rendering the local in addition to existing conceptions through the layer of sensory possibilities and affective processes (cf. Purkarthofer 2020).

Based on the existing research regarding spatial perception (cf. Diaconu et al. 2011, Henshaw 2014, Hall 1990) and human-space relations (cf. Fukazawa et al. 2000, Gehl 2010, Paglen 2015), it seems reasonable to approach this topic through the lens of the everyday production of space (cf. Lefebvre 1991), aware of the (limited and learned) possibilities of perception and the human scale as a spatial range of interaction. But even though I am enthusiastic to read about the “good human scale” (Gehl and Svarre 2013: 43) and descriptions such as “the scenery is on a human scale. This is a good place to be—also for a town” (Gehl 2010: 32), I propose to hypothesize the anthropocentric local as an analytic category without assuming that a human scale is always positive. Therefore, the local should be anthropocentric—i.e. on a human scale—but should exist without a “*happy* community,” where common goals, harmony, and mutual understanding flourish; instead, it only needs a “*local* community,” where people might hate each other but still need to interact, because the local ties them together. Happiness as well as hatred are bound by the possibilities permitted by the free interplay of spatial and social chains (cf. Aichinger 2002).

Localizations on Linguistic Grounds

When starting with the English word “local,” it is important to note that the word can be used as an adjective as well as a noun.

Local

adjective

Ⓐ Relating or restricted to a particular area or one's neighbourhood. [...]

Ⓑ (in technical use) relating to a particular region or part, or to each of any number of these. [...]

noun

Ⓒ An inhabitant of a particular area or neighbourhood. [...]

Ⓓ British informal. A pub convenient to a person's home. ‘A pint in the local’ [...]

(OUP 2020a)

This dictionary definition, as simple as it seems, already gives us some hints regarding the question posed by the organizers of the symposium “What is the local?” One answer could be that *izakaya* (Japanese dining bar/pub) around the corner (cf. Ⓓ). But this is satisfying neither as a scientific category nor as a concept to work with further. In addition, the answer cannot mean a person, which would necessitate changing the question to “Who is the local?” (cf. Ⓒ), to which the answer would be the “local person,” leading us to reasonably conclude that “local” is an adjective. Definitions Ⓐ and Ⓑ might seem similar in their inclusion of “relating to particular region or part [or area],” that the local is an adjective to “mark a spatial distinction.” More precisely, “local” creates an *inside* space distinct from all that is not this space, therefore *outside*. “The relationality of these ‘logical emergents’” (namely inside and outside) is a crucial characteristic of categorical distinctions⁴ (Hillier 2007, 15; cf. 15–18). The difference between definitions Ⓐ and Ⓑ is that while Ⓐ refers to geographical spaces, like “neighbourhoods,” Ⓑ refers to general, abstract, or specific spaces, like “local pain” or “local memory.” Definition Ⓐ is therefore a sub-category of Ⓑ. The difference can be illustrated by looking at the corresponding antonyms, which read “general” for Ⓑ and “national” or “global” for Ⓐ (OUP 2020a). Ultimately, definition Ⓐ is what the symposium’s organizers had in mind when referring to the local and what should be discussed further in this article. Looking for an equivalent word in Japanese brings numerous examples from dictionaries, but leaves us with at least four meaningful entries⁵ (Weblio 2018).

4 Of course, from an epistemological point of view, every act of cognition is the process of telling one thing apart from (all) the others (cf. Parson, Luhmann), but this need not be discussed here.

5 There are many terms that are in the wider sphere of “the local”—for example, *kyōdo* 郷土, which is used in local history *kyōdoshi* or local/folk literature *kyōdobungaku*, but that is referring to a “native place, birth-place” (the German term “heimat” seems like a suitable translation). This is normally not used in social sciences because it carries a strong ideological association with “folklore” and “tradition.”

The first, *kyokuchi* 局地, is an accurate translation of the noun “locality” and in compounds formed by adding *teki*, making it an adjective, it bears the meaning “local.” But the usage of the term is very limited, mostly in meteorology or medicine (NINJAL 2020d; Kotobanku 2018c).

The second, *rōkaru* ローカル, is an English loanword, easily recognizable as written in katakana. Even though it theoretically could have the same meaning as in the English language, it is predominantly used in compounds with other loanwords (e.g. *rōkarudisuku* local disc) or in specific fields like media, IT, broadcasting or advertising (NINJAL 2020c; Kotobanku 2018d). As with many loanwords, it is also used to highlight or emphasize something local as a stand-in for other terms that would not be so recognizable because they are not written in katakana.

The third, *chihō* 地方, is also a quite accurate translation and widely used in casual discourse as well as in such academic disciplines as social sciences, city planning, and geography (NINJAL 2020b). The shortcoming of this term is its fuzziness, which stems from the second meaning, “province, countryside” (Weblio 2018; kotobanku 2018b). Therefore, the adjective *chihōteki* could mean “local” as well as “provincial,” or both at the same time. Nevertheless, or maybe because of this lack of specificity, *chihōteki* appears to be the appropriate term for the Japanese-speaking scientific community.

Last, the term *chi'iki* 地域, with its meanings “an area; a region; a district,” has a broader meaning that is not a true translation of locality or local (NINJAL 2020a; Kotobanku 2018a). However, in compounds and as an adjective, it is often used to signify locality (“relating or restricted to a particular area” (OUP 2020b)) in a geographical sense. In contrast to *chihō*, the term *chi'iki* is not associated with province, rural, or countryside and therefore is often used as a substitute in scientific texts dealing with an urban setting.

Table 1 below summarizes these four possibilities for expressing the local:

Table 1: Japanese Terms Used for “the Local”

Romaji	Kanji/kana	Meaning	Equivalent
<i>Kyokuchi(teki)</i>	局地(的)	A locality (local)	b (incl. a, but not as common except for in meteorology)
<i>Rōkaru</i>	ローカル(な)	Local [loanword of the Engl. adjective]	a (mostly in media, broadcast, and IT, e.g. “local disc”)
<i>Chihō(teki)</i>	地方(的)	District, province (local)	a (incl. “rural, provincial”)
<i>Chi'iki(teki)</i>	地域(的)	District, area (local)	a (w/o the meaning “rural, etc.,” in contrast to <i>chihō</i>)

Source: (Weblio 2018; NINJAL 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2020d; Kotobanku 2018a; 2018b; 2018d; 2018c).

Having explored the pre-existing linguistic conditions of the local and the corresponding signifier, it is time to elucidate the different dimensions of the

signifier. Accordingly, we will address the pre-existing dimensions of the local, that is, the basic sociospatial dimension, as well as the specific economic-agrarian, administrative-political, and discursive-cultural dimensions.

Of Borders, Axes, and Scales

The basic meaning of local, as stated above, is something “relating or restricted to a particular area” (OUP 2020). This distinction is a relational, spatial one, demarcating one (smaller) area from a bigger area or a number of areas. But following the reasoning of philosophers (cf. Lefebvre 1991), geographers (cf. Soja 2010, Weichhart 2018) and sociologists (cf. Löw 2001, Weidenhaus 2015) who theorize space, the spatial distinction is a socially produced one. In other words, social relations, orders, and systems are realized in different dimensions like time, language, or space, which leads to the construction/production of the same. The architect Bill Hillier describes this relation as follows:

The origins of relational schemes of space lie somewhere between the ordering capacities of the mind and the spatial ordering inherent in the ways in which social relationships are realised in space. (Hillier 2007: 18)

This basic sociospatial dimension could be described as a substratum that is necessary to create the local. But the different preexisting definitions of the local are quite dependent on the social subsystems—for example the economic-agrarian in regard to “local food”—that project their distinctions and orders onto a sociospatial dimension. However, the production of locality is a special case, because at its core lies the construction of a border. In order to define the local as an analytical category, this border or margin of the local must be identified. Hence exploring some thoughts about borders is important.

While there is consensus among scholars in most space-related academic disciplines that space is constructed (as described above), it seems useful to identify this about borders as well:

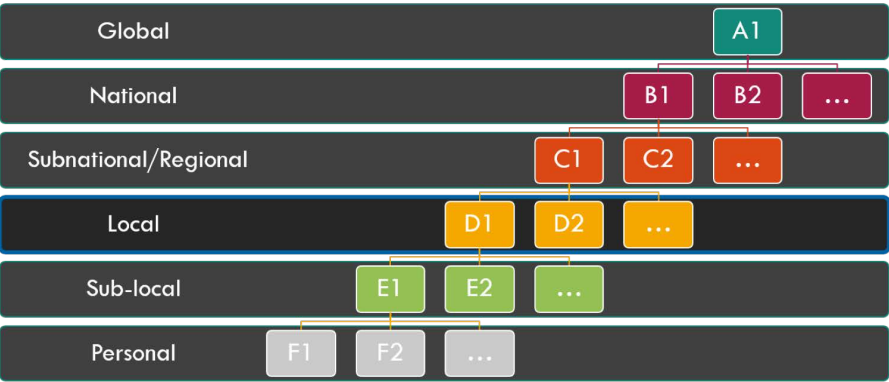
Distinctions and therefore demarcations [borders] are not based on the “nature” of the distinguished or its attributes but based on the discretion of whoever draws the distinction. (Weichhart 2018: 51 [my translation])

But as Weichhart further explains, the borders of spatial entities are not always as distinct as lines on maps (distinct borders/“closed borders”) but also spectrum-like in form (“fuzzy borders”), creating a border belt of indeterminate belonging (Weichhart 2018: 49–54). Nevertheless, even if fuzzy, a border is a distinction that that separates spatial entities (cf. Weidenhaus 2015: 46). After clarifying this, an examination of localities follows.

When thinking about borders it is helpful to differentiate two axes on which spatial distinctions can work (see figure 1). The first way to draw a distinction is by distinguishing one spatial entity from its neighboring entities on the same hierarchical level. An example would be to recognize Setagaya-ku in contrast to its

neighboring wards Suginami-ku, Shibuya-ku, Meguro-ku and Ōta-ku. This axis of spatial distinction is called *horizontal* in the following text. The second way to segregate is to identify the hierarchical layer above and beneath the entity. To keep our example, Setagaya-ku is part of the City of Tokyo (higher entity) and contains internal regions like Kitazawa-chiiki or Kinuta-chiiki, but also the similar sounding Setagaya-chiiki. This axis is called *vertical* in the following text.

Figure 1: Horizontal and Vertical Axes of the Local



Source: Florian Purkarthofer

What becomes strikingly clear in this regard is the complexity of scalar questions, as they deal with lived environments that are “expressions of the multiscalar, polymorphic and restlessly mutating geographies” (Brenner 2019: 14), which preclude simple categorization on both axes. In other words, “geographical difference no longer represents the spatialization of particularity. It instead demarcates the distinctive yet constitutively relational positionality of any given space within an evolving, worldwide grid of interdependencies” (Brenner 2019: 260). The specific local, as one scalar unit in a sea of topological connected neighboring ones, is hard to delineate. Because of its interdependency with regional contexts embedded in global networks and regimes, which Brenner calls “metacontexts” (2019: 261), a long-term fixation of localities seems nearly impossible. To bring some analytical order to these ever-shifting local assemblages, I sidestep the straightforward approach of “a (single) local” with an attempt to understand the internal logics of disciplinary locals that contribute to the “layered process” of urbanization (Wang 2019: 5).

Disciplinary Locals—Conflicting Layers of Locality

Beyond science and academia, several definitions of the local exist simultaneously. Depending on the social subsystem and the associated field, mode of interaction, and commodity, they produce a certain kind of local through distinction. This

subsystem's localities are exemplified through the actual case of Setagaya ward in western Tokyo.

Territories

First, we explore the administrative-political dimension, because it is strongly influential in everyday life and the urban fabric. This dimension is mainly concerned with the field of power that pervades society. Spatial manifestations of these fields are quite common (e.g. nation-states, municipalities, etc.), and seem clearly marked as borders, called territories (cf. Weichhart 2018: 54–55). But, as shown in table 2, the hierarchical structure and multifaceted nature of these administrative entities makes them complex. Furthermore, the use of “local” as a marker for sub-national territories is fluid and ranges from huge, internally diverse areas to small-scale neighborhood areas.

Starting from one address in the researched field sites, the multiple layers of administrative territories are explicated in table 2, illustrating the range from national to individual level. But, while the question of whether something belongs is quite clear on a horizontal axis—a place is either in Suginami-ku or Setagaya-ku—it is often unclear or disputed on a vertical axis.

Table 2: Administrative-Political Spatial Distinctions (Vertical Axis)
(e.g., 〒156-0043 東京都世田谷区松原 2 丁目 4 2-7 Y S 第二ビル
1F, かくれん坊, in transcription: Tōkyō-to, Setagaya-ku,
Matsubara 2 chōme 42-7, YS daini biru 1F, kakurenbō)

Level			Example	
English	Japanese	Transcription	English	Japanese
National/Country	国	<i>kuni/koku</i>	Japan	日本国
Subnational/Region	地方	<i>chihō</i>	Kantō	関東地方
Prefectural	都道府県	<i>to-dō-fu-ken</i>	Tōkyō	東京都
City/Ward/Town/Village	市区町村	<i>shi-ku-chō-son</i>	Setagaya	世田谷区
Region	地域	<i>chiiki</i>	Kitazawa	北沢地域
District	地区	<i>chiku</i>	Matsubara	松原地区
Block number	番地	<i>banchi</i>	2	2 丁目
Lot number	地番	<i>chiban</i>	42	4 2 番
House number	号	<i>gō</i>	7	7 号
Building name	ビル(館荘)	<i>biru (kansō)</i>	YS №2 Bldg.	Y S 第二ビル
Floor number	F・階	<i>efu・kai</i>	1 st	1 F
Name	店・名前	<i>ten・namae</i>	Kakurenbō	かくれん坊

the local?

Source: Setagaya-ku 2018.

In this concrete case study in Setagaya-ku, the question is as follows: Is the city planning policy of Japan, Tokyo-to, or Setagaya-ku binding in the case of new

streets and the reconstruction of a train line?⁶ And who is “involved or part of the local” and therefore entitled to speak for and pursue its needs and visions?

While the plan to build two additional train tracks between Yoyogi-Uehara Station and Izumi-Tamagawa to increase capacity (and reduce congestion on the commuter trains) was formulated as early as 1964, the final part was only realized in March 2018 due to massive protest by “local groups” who tried to slow down or stop the project (cf. Odakyu 2016; 2018). At the same time, many users of the commuter train (who lived farther away from the city center) awaited the construction of the additional train line with eager anticipation.

Regarding the planned construction of Road Nr. 54 in the same area, the question was more centered on the competence of administrative bodies. Even though this plan was also strongly opposed by residents, it was not as clear who or what this resistance was fighting against. The plan to build the street was established by the Tokyo Government more than half a century ago, but Setagaya ward seems obliged to enforce the plan. During the public and legal conflict, the position of Setagaya ward changed a few times, from opposing the “local inhabitants” to being their voice vis-à-vis the city government (cf. Takahashi et al. 2015: 46–58).

In both cases, the definition of the local is a crucial point for legitimizing claims and the right to be involved in decision-making, as well as for defining the border between the local and other areas one is not concerned with. From a city planning point of view these disputes can be described as NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) struggles, where a group attempts to prevent a generally useful undertaking in a particular area, but has no opposition if it is built somewhere else. In this case of destructive testing, the “backyard” would describe the local, by demarcating an area so nearby that what happens to it matters, even though someone might not be actively participating in another positive activity, such as community building.

Concluding from these actual cases, the local in the administrative-political dimension is characterized through distinct horizontal borders that divide an area in localities on the same hierarchy level, but also through a fluid use of the local to describe different asymmetrical relations between a bigger (national, supranational, etc.) and a smaller spatial entity. While the horizontal differentiation (arbitrary administrative division) determines quantitative research due to its influence on data collection, classification, and statistics, the vertical levels of locality are relationally structured and play a vital role in qualitative studies concerning citizen empowerment, participative planning, as well as populism and power relations.

Places

The discursive-cultural dimension of the local is mainly concerned with the field of meaning as produced through narration and discourse. Names are addressed and

6 Another contemporary example would be the conflict between the Japanese government, the prefecture of Okinawa, and the city of Nago about the relocation of Futenma air base to Henoko.

histories are written that identify a specific locality, a place, and add cultural value and meaning to spatial entities (cf. Weichhart 2018: 56–60). In doing so, place-related personal identities as well as group identities are constructed by relating identity to a place, a specific “local.” The borders of the local in this dimension are fuzzy through overlapping pluralistic views and process-like in form, depending on relation and reaffirmation.

To illustrate how the local is constructed in a discursive-cultural dimension, we will explore two different histories of localities within Setagaya: first, the first chapter of the book *DNA of Shimokitazawa* (2015), written by the journalist Takahashi Yurika, and second, *Furusato Setagaya o kataru: Kamikitazawa - Sakurajosui - Akatsutsumi - Matsubara* (1996), edited and published by the Setagaya ward.

Takahashi’s book includes a history of Shimokitazawa. In her view, it does not matter that Shimokitazawa is not a recognized locality in an administrative-political sense, but simply the name of a train station, nor is it even discussed. In clear contrast, she begins her prologue by saying “Shimokitazawa is the town in the center of Setagaya, where the Odakyu-line and the Inokashira-line cross” (Takahashi et al. 2015: 12). The local she describes as a place as well as a community is called Shimokitazawa, because it is the name people identify it with. In her not strictly chronological exposition, the “atmosphere” (Takahashi et al. 2015: 22), “culture” (Takahashi et al. 2015: 36, 67), and “identity of Shimokitazawa” (Takahashi et al. 2015: 60, 66) have a central position, and guide the reader through historical changes of architecture and inhabitants. In addition to a resident-based view, the book shares a strong focus on leisure, subculture, and consumption, inviting people who do not reside in the area to identify with the place. This might not be surprising, as the book was a product of the conflict regarding reconstruction of the Odakyu line and the new planned road and is obviously intended to promote resistance or at least spread sympathy for the protesters and the existing cityscape.

A history with a completely different view, but similar in its nature, is *Furusato Setagaya o kataru* [Narrating [our] Hometown Setagaya], published by the Setagaya ward and available for purchase only at the Setagaya Literary Museum (Setagayabungakukan 世田谷文学館) or the city hall. The intended audience is clearly identified in the preface as “the next generation” (Setagaya-ku 1996: 5) of residents. In addition, the authors of the book are introduced in the preface not by name but by their relation to the locality (and time-space):

[T]he ones who were born and raised in the late Meiji years until the mid Showa period [approximately 1900 until 1950], brought material and sources, discussed in round tables [*zadankai*] and talks and compiled this record. (Setagaya-ku 1996: 5)

According to this introduction, the texts that describe the history of every locality are easy to read and have a personal tone, as if your grandparents were telling you

about their childhood. The book series is divided into different smaller spatial entities (like Matsubara, or Akatsutsumi); it does not tell the story of Setagaya, but very particular stories of these spatial entities. Still visible in contemporary place names, Setagaya's structure is based on the villages that existed before the formation of the postwar district in 1947. Even though the purpose of the publication is quite different, local identity is conjured by sharing traditions, ambience, and memories. In addition, "local knowledge" and facts about local history are slipped into the story—for example, theories about the origin of the place name Matsubara (Setagaya-ku 1996: 101–103) or statistics about how many people (and households) lived there around 1870 (530 persons in 107 households) (Setagaya-ku 1996: 107).

The places that are created in the discursive-cultural dimension are fuzzy on a horizontal axis, only loosely drawing a line around the local, but instead creating a spectrum of affiliation, which often dissolves into other localities. On a vertical axis the spatial entities overlap each other, most of the time without conflicting. So how can borders between localities then be drawn or identified? Through contradiction and dispute, of course—through stating differences or independence. A quite literal example is the tagline on the poster for the 2014 published documentary *Shimokita 2003–2014 Shimokitazawa de ikiru* by Satō Mayumi 斎藤真由美, which translates as "Someday, to be independent." Of course, this is a statement designed to provoke and resist, but it also clearly draws a line by "othering," which means distinguishing us from them and vice versa. It also illustrates how the different dimensions of the local refer to each other, as the discursive-cultural dimension refers to the administrative-political in this example, to strengthen the argument and accrue additional credibility.

Networks

The economic-agrarian dimension of the local is mainly concerned with the field of capital and is characterized by the practices of production, trade, and consumption. Locality is first a brand and an added value, second a variable concerning infrastructure and logistics, and third a form of influence through regulations and norms. Or, on a more abstract level, the economic-agrarian dimension can also be analyzed as a network, structured through linkages, circulation of goods, and interaction across disparate locations. Such networks are often multiscalar—spanning from the global to the national and local—but the borders of the smallest unit in this dimension are often constructed along the geographical concept of region (the next entity in size on the vertical scalar axis), which could be described as "[a]n area, especially part of a country or the world having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries" (OUP 2020b). For example, a coastal region with a strong dependence on fisheries or an area where specific fruits are cultivated would create a regional industry (*chiiki sangyō* 地域産業).

Here, the local is an indicator of the easy availability of a product or the short distance between a producer, merchant, and consumer.

One such example from the field site is a map showing the places where locally grown or produced agricultural products can be purchased (Setagaya Sotachi 2018). Even though Setagaya is a significantly urban district with a high density of inhabitants (over 15,000/km²), there are still fields (*hatake*) and farms and over 120 places where local products are sold, according to the *Setagaya nōsanbutsu chokubaisho mappu* [Setagaya agricultural product direct marketing map].

The idea that “eating locally means minimizing the distance between production and consumption” (Brain 2012: 1) coincides with the purpose of direct marketing as described in the map. Still, it is crucial to understand that the local—as used in “local product,” “locally grown vegetables” and so on—can be a discursive, culturally produced local but also a supply chain and economic-agrarian dimension-based local, or both at the same time. While the first uses “locality” as a brand, the second employs “local” as marker of proximity (in the region) and practicality (short supply chain). Roslyn Brain clarifies the difference as follows:

Locality vs. Local Foods

The terms sound similar, but local food is the better choice if attempting to purchase and consume goods in or near your geographic location. Locality foods have a brand associated with one locality/region (such as Utah’s Own or Fresh from Florida), but often source out nationally and/or internationally. (Brain 2012: 1)

Of course, local business means something different in the steel industry than it does in vegetable production, but nevertheless, the economic idea of locality as a regional network of production and consumption with a short supply chain in between should now be clear.

Topology of disciplinary locals

To review, we have identified the multiple dimensions of definitions of the local and have illustrated the simultaneous existence and application of these locals through the case of Setagaya-ku in Tokyo.

One of the problems with these dimensions of the local is that they distinctly exist only as analytical categories, while they are actually intertwined and connected throughout their historical paths, or conversely, through hiding the circumstances and variables of their own formation as the city was shaped. This is quite normal, as “[e]very established order tends to produce [...] the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Bourdieu 2010: 164), but is counterproductive to a deeper understanding of and common ground for an interdisciplinary, multilayered conception of the local.

Nevertheless, table 3 identifies and summarizes some facts and characteristics of disciplinary dimensions of the local, which should provide a basis for developing

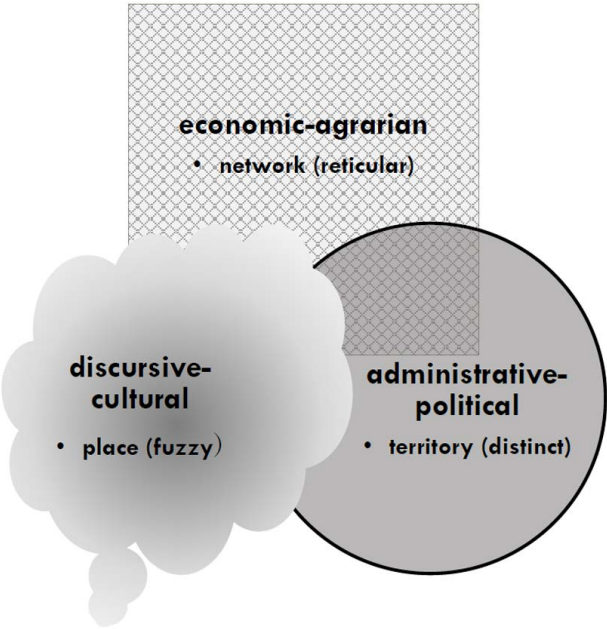
an analytic concept of the multilayered local to better understand, study, and distinguish local phenomena and communities.

Table 3: Social Subsystems and Their Configurations of Spatial Distinctions (Localities, Borders)

Social subsystem	Field of ...	Commodity	Action	Border tendency	Locality type
<i>Administrative-political</i>	Power	Rights Contract	Legislation Jurisdiction	Distinct	Territory
<i>Discursive-cultural</i>	Meaning	Identity History	Discourse Narration	Fuzzy	Place
<i>Economic-agrarian</i>	Capital	Goods Money	Production Trade	Reticular	Network

Source: Florian Purkarthofer.

Figure 2: Disciplinary Layers of the Local



Source: Florian Purkarthofer.

Since these dimensions (place, territory, network) can be also found, together with scale, in many other “dimensions of sociospatial relations” (Brenner 2019: 263–67), this is not an exhaustive list but an attempt to visualize these dimensions through concrete examples. It should be emphasized, however, that these dimensions are mutually co-formative and thus inextricably intertwined. Accordingly, the distinction between place, territory, scale, and networks must be

understood as a purely analytical device for deciphering the intricately interwoven layering of modern sociospatial relations; it is not an ontological demarcation (Brenner 2019: 267).

In short, we can try to understand the local as the scalar factor in connection with other modes of sociospatial relations, but we may get lost in a multilayered structure of the dimensions listed above and the respective scalar layers on the vertical axis. However, Henry Lefebvre (1991: 68–88), the influential forefather of most modern spatial discourse, addressed this problem by stating that

the local (or 'punctual', in the sense of 'determined by a particular "point"') does not disappear, for it is never absorbed by the regional, national or even worldwide level. The national and regional levels take in innumerable 'places'; national space embraces the regions; and world space does not merely subsume national spaces, but even (for the time being at least) precipitates the formation of new national spaces through a remarkable process of fission. All these spaces, meanwhile, are traversed by myriad currents. (Lefebvre 1991: 88)

While it may seem simple to identify the local—such as by placing a mark on a map—this does not advance the conception toward an anthropocentric local that takes into account the possibilities and limitations of human interactions and takes seriously their “qualitative chaos (the practico-sensory realm) presented by the perception of things” (Lefebvre 1991: 17). Therefore, the idea of the “perceived space” (Lefebvre 1991: 38) is reprioritized and combined with contemporary multisensory anthropology to add a more sensory-sensitive dimension to the existing discussion.

Towards an Anthropocentric Local

After exploring the linguistic, axial, and disciplinary uses of the local, one thing becomes clear: it's a multilayered, complicated matter. Not only are there already several frequently used and finely nuanced terms to signify the local, but also a complex interplay of individual human cognitive potentials (the cognitive power of distinction) and societal spatial patterns. Moreover, the three dimensions outlined through the case studies above revealed differently structured, shaped, and confined localities which at the same time and in the same space, but on different dimensions/layers, overlap but are not congruent (see figure 2).

A lazy solution to the question “What is the local?” (or a way to circumvent the question) can be to rephrase the question to “Which local do we use?” While this might work in disciplinary settings, it is also not very enlightening, because the existing conventions already work, as long as one does not cross disciplinary borders. But the question remains unchanged if one is dedicated to research, work, or writing in an interdisciplinary or “antidisciplinary” (cf. Ito 2014) setting, or if one is to base the idea of the local on more than one disciplinary convention.

The (possible) solution I am advocating for here is to re-approach the local through parameters not based on disciplines, but on humans as individual and social beings,

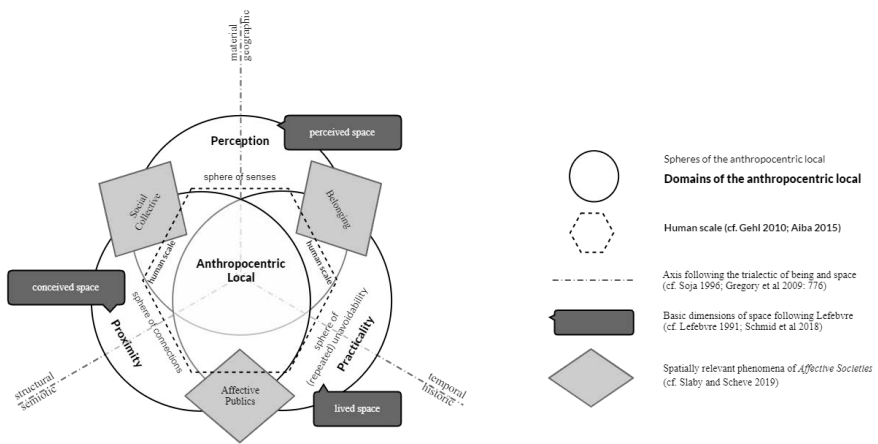
acknowledging their ability to grasp spatiality and to interact in and with spatial configurations. I suppose this humanistic or anthropocentric version of the local is in many cases already part of the existing definitions, but not explicitly or systematically, rather more as a forgotten signpost along the way. It is also worth noting that the anthropocentric local (AL) is not a replacement or substitute for the preexisting locals mentioned above, but an additional way of tackling the problem. Because the AL is still an experiment based on fieldwork conducted from April 2014 to March 2016 and from July 2018 until March 2019, with a few short encounters in between, it is not yet a full-fledged theory, more an attempt to think in an orderly way about the observed and the analyzed in a generalizable abstract form. AL aligns with Lefebvre's production of space (cf. Lefebvre 1991; Goonewardena et al. 2008; Gregory, Johnston, and Pratt 2009, 590–92, 775–76) and its modern interpretation and use in research about urbanization processes (Schmid *et al.* 2018; Streule 2016; Brenner and Schmid 2015; Gehl 2010; Aiba 2015), in addition to combining it with recent research about affective processes (cf. Slaby and Scheve 2019; Scheve 2019; Mattes et al. 2019; Lünenborg 2019).

The main idea is that AL is based on three spheres that are fundamental for everyday human life and that allow a (spatial) distinction through (gradual) falsification. Where these three spheres intersect, the local, in an anthropocentric sense, can be found, or precisely, could be defined that way. These three domains are as follows: (1) perception, or the sphere of senses; (2) proximity, or the sphere of connections; and (3) practicality, or the sphere of (repeated) unavoidability (see figure 3). But in sharp contrast to the preexisting conditions of the local, these analytic spheres constitute AL only in combination, not alone. Therefore, the local is understood as a multi-dimensional process that can be described through the framework of spatial production:

Following Lefebvre (1991/1974) we can distinguish three basic dimensions of the production of (urban) space (Schmid, 2005, 2008): (1) the production and transformation of material elements and structures (perceived space); (2) processes of territorial regulation and representation (conceived space); and (3) socialisation and learning processes (lived space). (Schmid et al. 2018:29)

These dimensions and the spheres work on the same level and also allow for integrating the affective phenomena of: first, “social collectives”—dynamic, fragile social forms based on structures that allow one to affect and be affected, and an understanding or realization of this connectedness (Scheve 2019: 268–70) connecting perception and proximity; second, “affective publics”—understood as “performative emphases that [...] are temporally and situationally sustained in the mediated and/or localized co-presence of actors” (Lünenborg 2019: 320), spanning proximity and practicality; and third, “belonging”—as the process of “sensing and making sense of one’s place in both spatial and temporal terms” (Mattes et al. 2019: 302).

Figure 3: Analytic Spheres of the Local/Dimensions of Space/Spatial-Affective Processes



Source: Concept by Florian Purkarthofer based on Aiba 2015, Gehl 2010, Gregory et al. 2009: 776, Lefebvre 1991, Schmid et al 2018, Slaby and Scheve 2019, Soja 1996.

The drawback to this approach is that this anthropocentric view works only in connection with human beings; even though biological, geometric, and logical considerations are involved, it is still a social scientist's analytic category. It also uses individual as well as collective (social) points of reference and qualitative data, which limits its (easy) use for quantitative approaches.

Nevertheless, while analyzing the fieldwork material, these structures and axes of the local begin to take a clearer shape. To formulate AL properly, the following section discusses perception as one of the three spheres and clarifies the necessity of this dimension for the AL. Finally, a condensed definition of AL is formulated, with the intention of stimulating discussion regarding the local.

Perception: The Limits of Affection

Discussion of the anthropological local (AL) might best be begun by exploring the possible sphere of the senses (SpoS) and its limitations. This interest in the biological and cognitive possibilities of perception is one of the main distinctions between the AL and many other models of the local. Even though it might seem obvious, because we entirely rely on our perception, it is widely overlooked or ignored in social sciences.

This neglect of perception is rooted in the hegemony of the eye and the downgrading of other senses during the Enlightenment. The philosophical movement of phenomenology, following Husserl's writings at the beginning of the

twentieth century, somehow reclaimed the senses for their purpose. Nevertheless, or maybe because of those who followed and developed Husserl's ideas, phenomenology did not reintegrate the senses into the social sciences, but pushed them into the realm of self-reflection and literature. Only modern-day cognition science, an intersection of biology and psychology, (cf. Smith 2008), brought back the senses into an empirical, researchable realm (cf. Slaby and Scheve 2019). Still, there seems to be a fear of contact between the social sciences and perception, even though the social aspect of perception must not be underestimated.

To start our exploration of the SpoS, let's look into the biological-evolutionary basis of perception as formulated by the biologist C.U.M. Smith:

All organisms live in an environment full of changes, full, as it has been said, of 'happenings'. Some of these changes will be beneficial to the organism, others detrimental. Some will occur quite independently of the organism, others will be due to the organism's own activities. In order to survive, the organism requires the fullest possible information about what is going on. (Smith 2008: 33)

In other words, information about our surroundings is helpful or even necessary for our existence. And the more useful information we are able to acquire, the better the predictions we can make about our surroundings. However, our senses are not omnipotent, but limited to specific skills that are necessary to survive, and they also have spatial limitations. The biologist Jakob von Uexküll labelled this SpoS, restricted by the ability of the senses and spatial-temporal conditions, *Umwelt*:

Everyone who looks about in Nature finds himself (or herself) in the center of a circular island that is covered by the blue vault of heaven. This is the perceptible world [. ...]

Outward from the body, the senses of touch, smell, hearing and sight enfold man like four envelopes of an increasingly sheer garment. This island of the senses, that wraps every man like a garment, we call his *Umwelt*. (Uexküll 2001: 107)

While our contemporary use of *Umwelt* might be understood in the sense of nature that surrounds us (environment), the term actually refers to the perceivable share of the environment and therefore its individual picture/map of the environment. In this regard, Uexküll is quite close to Luhmann's system theory and information science (cf. biosemiotics, robotics), but far from phenomenologists like Heidegger. The SpoS could be understood as a collection of information on which basis, by "transform[ing] stimuli into properties," a world is (re-)created (Uexküll 2001: 108). As librarians might know only too well, a mechanism that organizes or selects the important from the less important information is necessary to process any given data. The same happens with our senses, where "specific features of the sensory world are 'extracted' as the sensory information streams upward through the brain. These features are aspects of the world which are of paramount importance to the animal" (Smith 2008: 38). We might use artificial sensors to detect phenomena our biological senses are not capable of detecting, but we have to translate this information back into a perceivable form. A contamination meter

(Geiger counter) does not let us perceive radioactivity, but creates noise or a visualization that correlates with radiation, which we are then able to perceive. The exact same thing is happening when we read a book or watch television or consume any other media: something we cannot perceive (at the moment) is translated into something that makes sense (cf. “Beobachtung zweiter Ordnung” Luhmann).

Another important fact described by Uexküll is that perception is learned, not a priori. In the process of adapting to our surroundings, for example, we learn “little by little, to see that familiar objects are not small but remote” (Uexküll 2001: 108). The stimuli for our nerve cells do not change, but our reasoning does, and therefore we no longer try to touch the moon. We learn to interpret the information we are receiving so that all our different spheres of perception conform with each other. It should be clear, then, that we are bound through our senses and are not able to escape their boundaries. These are the individual limits of perception.

However, another important limit of perception is covered above. It is the social boundary of perception.⁷ This boundary came into existence with the development of civilizations or cultures. It is the adaption of one’s own *Umwelt* to an agreement about what the perception should be. This process can be viewed as a step beyond what Karl Jaspers understood as the discursive construction of the truth (cf. Salamun 2006: 75f).

[T]he idea of an objective universe, that embraces all living things, is undeniably very useful for ordinary life. The conventional universe, where all our relationships to our fellow human beings are enacted, has brought all personal *Umwelt* spaces under a common denominator, and this has become indispensable for civilized human beings. (Uexküll 2001: 109)

The problem is not that we learn to adapt our perceptions to those of our fellow human beings (mostly the dominant party’s view), but that we forget or deny that we are doing so. The learned perception, regardless of how crazy it might be, is then viewed as “normal” or “right,” and deviant perceptions are viewed as “madness” or “strange,” even “wrong” (cf. Foucault 1973). This does not mean that every person has to perceive things in the same way, but it limits the possibilities of what is sensible.

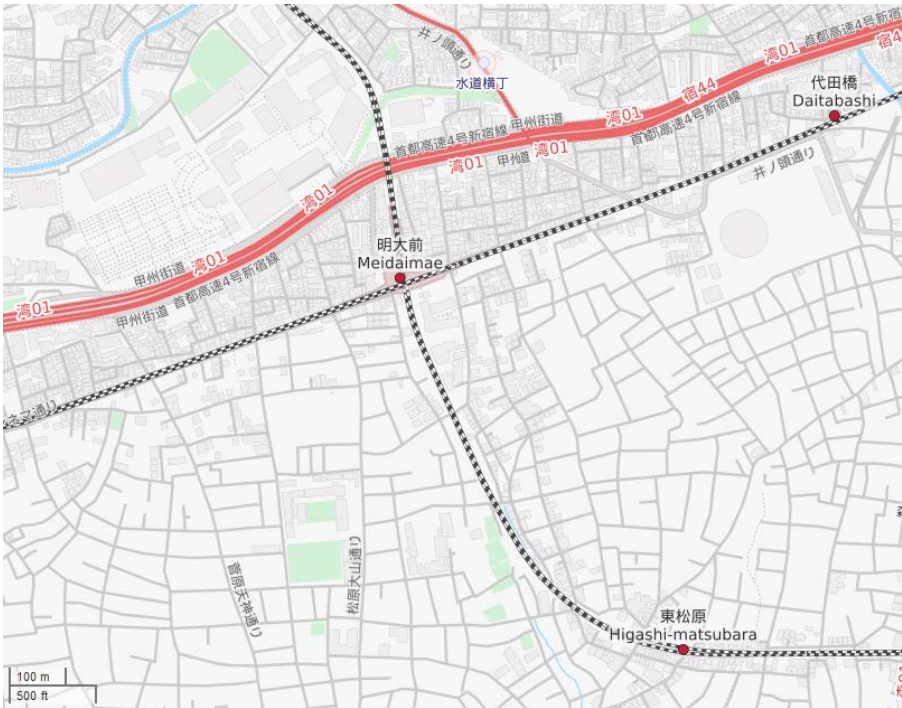
To summarize the SpoP it is absolutely necessary to be aware that perception, while always individual, depends on the process of learning. In the case of human beings, it is a double learning process, first to interpret the stimuli in accordance with experience, and second to interpret them in accordance with society. A second important point is that our perception of our surroundings, and therefore also the local, is bound to our senses. Additionally, information that we receive through analog or digital media has to be perceived through our senses. Finally, we cannot

⁷ The social boundaries of perception are described in detail and tested in my dissertation thesis about the individual perception and social construction of space.

directly communicate perceptions in a way that makes another person feel what we feel. We can expose someone to the same stimuli, or describe a sensation to them, but doing so will not lead to an identical perception.

Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching the Local

The local, as a matter of perception, is somewhere in the unspoken messiness of everyday life, but the borders of this type of local are difficult to distinguish. The method of destructive testing proved very fruitful in this regard, because it did not force people to decide what and where the local should be, but looked at where the thin line between the ignorable and the unignorable is drawn. Depending on the sense organ, this leads to different edges of the local, which by superposing them creates an AL sphere of the senses. The discussion that took place during the *machizukuri* workshop in Meidaimae (2014-06-21) is illustrative in this regard. In connection with the change of the Keio railway line, some street projects were also planned. Guided by Professor Aiba from the Tokyo Metropolitan University, the participants (about 20) were seated in a small group around tables, with a big map of the area in question. At the beginning, the inhabitants searched for their homes or the venue of the *machizukuri* workshop. After a short introduction by Aiba, the changes to the urban landscape as well as the use of the area around the planned elevated train tracks were discussed. Interestingly, as the discussion between the participants intensified, two groups seemed to form. One group was more concerned with the height of the train tracks and their structure, and the other group with the emissions and disruption that the trains could cause. Over the course of the event, it became clear that the people living north of the train line (next to the multilane street no. 20 *Kōshūkaidō*) were among others concerned about the reduced light and shadow because of their perception of the townscape, fearing that they might be trapped visually between the train and the road. In contrast to the people living south of the train line, they had relatively little fear of additional noise and pollution, because for them the train was the lesser of two evils (compared to the street). The participants resident south of the train line, in the quieter area, farther away from the street, perceived the train as loud and the street as untenable.

Figure 4: Meidaimae Station and Surrounding Areas

Source: OpenStreetMap 2021.

The venue of the of the *machizukuri* workshop—north of the street at Meiji University, Izumi Campus—was regarded by most of the locals as not “really” local, even though it was close. For those living south of the street, the unspoken but collectively agreed-upon northern border of “local” seemed to be the street itself, which served as a visual, olfactory and sonic barrier. This *machizukuri* workshop and the railway construction project also showed how the concept of “social collectives” (cf. Scheve 2019) helps to demonstrate how groups form based on level of affectedness, develop a relational self-understanding as part of a group, and then become a structuring force by self-localizing (against others). Jordan Sand’s description of the formation (through conflict) and development of the Yanase Residents Group in eastern Tokyo is a more elaborate example of social collectives (Sand 2013: 54–87). It also shows the transformation of such a tenuous cluster into a social movement that actively redefined their local through discourse and action, by creating and stoking an affective public (Lünenborg 2019).

Discussing Variations of the Multilayered Local: Urban Locals vs. Rural Locals

In contrast to most contributions to the “What Is the ‘Local’?” symposium, which dealt with the local as a rural concept—or, more precisely, its application to a rural setting—this argument is developed based on case studies set in an urban area of a metropolitan region. Nevertheless, the proposed framework of an anthropocentric local is designed to work in both settings. I will briefly discuss scale and density in order to acknowledge the most important differences regarding the rural-urban divide in this context.

First, I argue that the human scale limits the local on a sensory (biological), infrastructural (material), and practical (temporal) level. And while the human scale does not vary between rural and urban settings, the settings and the structuring conditions that influence the human scale do vary considerably. Second, densities (population, building, and dwelling density) are key factors to differentiate the urban from the local through quantitative methods (cf. Andersson 2009; Dovey and Pafka 2014; MIT 2019). One kind of density that is often forgotten, or just not addressed in the social sciences with similar intensity (cf. Dijkstra and Poelman 2014: 2–15), is the density of information and its shape in rural and urban settings. I suggest using the concept of information density to understand why the borders of the local are different in rural and urban settings and why the “crisis of the local” in recently merged rural municipalities is best understood through a reflection of the urban local.

Coinciding Locals—A Rural Phenomenon

All of the above-explained conditions of the local—the disciplinary (cf. table 3) as well as the anthropocentric—can be understood as referring to a specific kind or layer of information. If the borders of these locals and consequently the rift in information densities overlap, a singular local forms, consisting of different layers of the local that are joined through their similar borders. As an example, let us look at a remote Ogasawara village in the prefecture of Tokyo. It is located on the Bonin/Ogasawara island chain, nearly 1,000km south of the metropolitan region of Tokyo, and is home to around 3,000 inhabitants (cf. Long, Imamura, and Arai 2011; Long 2011). Because of the geographical, infrastructural, and administrative circumstances—its remote location in the Pacific, with only a single ferry connection (once every six days) to Tokyo (Takeshiba Pier)—the borders of the local are very much aligned along the inhabited part of the island. The administrative-political, discursive-cultural, and economic-agrarian locals coincide. The anthropocentric local also follows this border, even though on the islands there is a distinction between the two inhabited islands—the main island, Chichijima, in the north and the smaller Hahajima further south. While the two islands are separated by open sea, bi-daily ferries connect the islands and local unity as a social collective is provided through shared factors that affect the residents

(climate, infrastructure, history, etc.). The human scale can be found in population, building, and dwelling as well as perception, proximity, and practicality, which became quite clear during a local festival at the time of fieldwork in 2014. The destructive part of destructive testing is applied through structural conditions and the applicability to the locality clearly marks the transition—which is also collectively experienced while travelling on the same vessel for 24 hours.

In summary, the local, with its multilayered, relational, processual, and performative character, is here clearly distinguishable because the information density on all socially relevant layers is congruent. It is not always necessary to have 1,000 kilometers of open sea to establish a local, but this extreme example shows that a gap or rift in information density stabilizes the affective processes of belonging (“home”), social collectives, and publics and helps to create prevailing forms of locality.

Fragmented, Overlapping, and Alternative Locals—An Urban Phenomenon

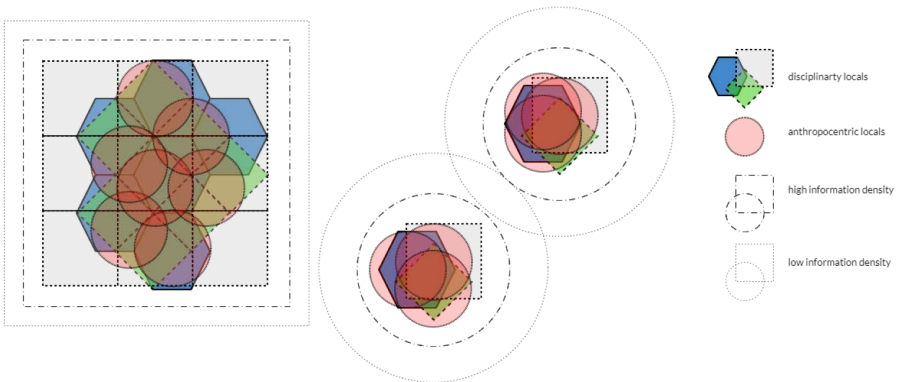
In contrast, in the metropolitan district of Setagaya, the one local dissolves; on the human scale of proximity and practicality, there is too much to perceive and therefore one must arbitrarily choose a local and conceive a fragmented and fractured spatial entity as the local. Despite the collective experience in Ogasawara *mura*, there is a large volume of cohesive information on nearly all layers. During fieldwork in 2018, residents of Daizawa 1 chōme (an administrative section with approximately 3,000 inhabitants) were asked where they did their daily shopping and accordingly what they consider to be part of their local (or home or neighborhood). The answers differed quite dramatically, giving the impression of individualized definitions of the local. The same can be observed regarding other layers of locality, which do not align but are diverse in shape, scale, and permanence. Only in cases where force was applied to social structures, such as a massive urban planning project, did the destruction reveal interpersonal rifts in layers of information, which often formed along the borders of personal feeling. Local protests groups can establish “affective publics” (Lünenborg 2019: 324–27) that allow for discourse and networks to be repeated and take a structuring role. The formation of the “Save the Shimokitazawa” protest group in the neighboring district of Kitazawa is a quite good example of this form of locality formation (Miura 2016: 159–69).

In summary, the urban local is indeterminate and fluid, eluding interpersonal and multilayered borders. Only under pressure is the local performed by a social collective, contributing to discursive and social processes and therefore enabling the formation of more stable forms of locality. Between these two amplitudes, every form of the local is thinkable and possible, but as shown above, the variables of information density and relationship to other possible locals should be

considered in understanding variations of anthropocentric locals in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

In abstract terms, the overlapping urban locals and coinciding rural locals have the same structures and mechanics (see figure 5). With their layers of dependency, different disciplinary locals and anthropocentric locals exist simultaneously. The difference is that if these locals (right) are surrounded by an area of low information density, creating a rift or discord, a socially shared idea of the local is supported. In contrast, the overlapping and laminal formation of locals (exceeding the single anthropocentric local in scale) allow for a seamless mosaic of locals, which only show their borders through conflict and friction during scalar processes.

Figure 5: Overlapping Urban Locals (Left) and Two Coinciding Rural Locals (Right)



Source: Florian Purkarthofer.

Final Thoughts

What is spatial practice under neocapitalism? It embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality [... and] can only be evaluated empirically. (Lefebvre 1991: 38)

During our pursuit of “the local” through the small and winding streets of Tokyo, we have come to see the multilayered structure of disciplinary locals and concepts, demonstrating the complexity of urban space and the benefits and limits of scalar approaches. By advocating for an anthropocentric local, and thereby viewing the local and existing conceptions of it through a lens of sensory possibilities and affective processes, this paper has attempted to add an additional layered structure to this already complex system. Our goal has been to refocus the discourse back on human beings, and on their spatial practices and perceptions. In other words, I have tried to link material from my ongoing research with a current theoretical dispute

regarding scale in order to enrich the discussion with empirical examples, analyses, and critical thoughts developed in the field. Thus, the hypothesized anthropocentric local remains more an academic think piece than a full-fledged theory. While the ongoing pandemic is reframing and transforming many scientific discussions, I see strong evidence to support my approach of, first, emphasizing the conflicting multilayered locals and, second, identifying a solution to the over-boarding interdependencies in a highly globalized world by re-focusing on human beings, their lives and perceptions. Finally, as has become even more obvious during the pandemic, the (urban) local is an unsigned field—affecting us positively and negatively alike—and is therefore not necessarily “the place to be” but the ontological “place of being,” and might consequently be as messy as human existence itself (to theorize).

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Forschung und Lehre

Exploring Rural Well-Being through an Interdisciplinary Lens — The “Shrinking, but Happy” Research Team at the University of Vienna

Dionyssios Askitis, Antonia Miserka, and Sebastian Polak-Rottmann

Summary

Japan's rural areas are facing substantial demographic and structural change. While the negative impact of this development can be traced by objective social indicators, subjective well-being in these communities does not show a clear trend. This interdisciplinary project aims at assessing the interrelations between different dimensions of social relationships and locally salient conceptions of well-being, such as relational well-being, in the structurally average rural Aso region. Applying a mixed-methods approach, we combine quantitative and qualitative research, which enables an integration of both statistically robust associations and case study material with its focus on contextual aspects of well-being. In so doing we demonstrate how a broad interdisciplinary analysis is a promising approach when tackling complex issues such as well-being and social relationships as well as their interplay.

Keywords: relational well-being, rural Japan, interdisciplinary research, demographic change, mixed-method approach, community life

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Introduction

This paper provides insight into the interdisciplinary project “Shrinking, but Happy” at the Department of East Asian Studies of the University of Vienna. This project employs a mixed-methods research design to assess “well-being” in a rural area of southern Japan from multiple disciplinary angles. It shows how, by combining different theoretical and methodological approaches, a fresh understanding can be generated that takes both relational and individual conceptions of well-being into account.

Research on well-being has by now featured prominently in international surveys (including Eurostat 2015 and OECD 2017) as well as in national happiness studies (such as Gallup Healthways 2017 and Hakuhōdō 2014). Due to the sampling techniques used by these studies, it is often not possible to infer regional differences and various other aspects of rural well-being from the data. In addition, comparative regional research tends to draw different conclusions based on discrepant definitions of “rural” and “urban.” Some authors point to higher ratings of happiness in urban areas (Easterlin et al. 2011; Spellerberg et al. 2007; Witters 2010), while others observe higher values in rural areas (Berry and Okulicz-Kozaryn 2011; Henkel 2015; Sander 2011).

Critical observations of well-being research highlight the importance of social interaction for well-being and its embeddedness in society as a whole, thus challenging the predominant individual focus of psychological approaches. Sociological studies in particular indicate a strong connection between well-being and social embeddedness (Blanchflower and Oswald 2000; Easterlin 2003; Helliwell and Putnam 2004), as well as between well-being and social capital (Helliwell and Putnam 2004; Yip et al. 2007), which in turn are seen as characteristics of rural communities (Ziersch et al. 2009). However, vague conceptualization and unidimensional operationalization of well-being limit the generalizability of findings (Holthus and Manzenreiter 2017; Ponocny et al. 2016). Considering recent public and academic debates on shrinking rural areas in Japan (Masuda 2014; Odagiri 2016), we argue that research on social capital and well-being in the countryside is a salient topic in happiness research — especially in rural areas.

We adopt a research design that questions universal conceptions of well-being and accounts for both cultural sensitivities (Uchida 2013) and interindividual differences (Ponocny et al. 2016). We combine four disciplines (Japanese Studies, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology) and two different methodological approaches (qualitative and quantitative) in order to adequately address the complexity of well-being. By focusing on rural areas, we hope to carve out the amplified structural issues and the inherent potential in those communities in terms of well-being.

First, we give a brief overview of the demographic challenges facing rural Japan and the controversies surrounding it in academic discussions. Second, we outline several psychological and sociological approaches to (rural) well-being and social interaction. Third, we introduce our methodological design and its theoretical consequences for a reevaluation of rural well-being.

Rural Japan in decline

Japanese society is characterized by both a low fertility rate (1.36 in 2020, MHLW 2020a) and a high life expectancy (81.41 for men and 87.45 for women in 2019, MHLW 2020b), resulting in a simultaneously aging and declining population — especially in rural areas. Accordingly, in Japanese research, classifications that use demographic indicators depict a rather gloomy image for the future of the Japanese countryside (Lützel 2018; Masuda 2014; Ohno 2009). Some of these accounts — especially the reports by former minister Masuda Hiroya (2014) — have been criticized for their possible detrimental impact on local societies. Rather than helping regions struggling with steady out-migration and dwindling populations, they serve to further stigmatize or demoralize them (Odagiri 2014). Other studies suggest using a more nuanced approach to better understand the situation in the countryside, as many of the out-migrants still frequently return to their hometowns to assist their families (Özşen 2020; Tokuno 2015).

Measures to address the structural implications resulting from ongoing out-migration and an aging population have been implemented since the 1960s with little success (Matanle et al. 2011: 24). Debates on local governance (Foljanty-Jost et al. 2013: 49) and decentralization (Hüstebeck 2014: 59) have been intensifying, and several reforms have successively provided the regions with more responsibilities, while not effectively making them more autonomous (Honma 2007). With the developing local social movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Avenell 2010: 149) and activities of *machizukuri* (“community development”) and *mura okoshi* (“revitalization of the villages”), demographic matters have become firmly linked to participation activities and well-being alike. Incentives that try to stimulate social capital or social networks underline the importance of social relationships in revitalization policies (Tsutsumi 2011; Ueno 2005).

Rural well-being

The marked decline that many rural communities have witnessed in terms of structural and economic indicators has typically not been reflected in reduced subjective ratings of well-being. The scientific literature does not present a uniform picture here, but it does point toward a complex relationship between the structural conditions of rural regions and well-being: While some international studies found lower well-being in rural areas in comparison to more urban environments (Easterlin et al. 2011; Spellerberg et al. 2007; Witters 2010), most studies show elevated well-being in rural and small-town communities (Berry and Okulicz-

Kozaryn 2011; Cramer et al. 2004; Fassio et al. 2013; Gattino et al. 2013; Henkel 2015; Sander 2011). With regard to Japan, a cross-prefectural study on rural well-being showed no significant differences (Ōsaka Gasu CEL Enerugī Bunka Kenkyūjo 2011). Research at the local level, such as the Aggregated Kumamoto Happiness Index (AKH 2015), revealed higher rates for certain aspects of well-being in some structurally disadvantaged rural regions of Kumamoto than in more urban regions (Manzenreiter 2018).

Clearly, objective measures of well-being do not represent the full scope of the phenomenon. Richard A. Easterlin's (1974) widely cited work was one of the first to point out the less-than-linear relationship between objective and subjective measures of well-being in the stagnant life satisfaction of growing economies (see also, Diener and Suh 1997). As a result, the growing interest of policymakers in subjective indicators has shifted the scientific focus of well-being studies toward the assessment of subjective scores (Stiglitz 2010). Likewise, for this project, we choose self-reported well-being to clarify what impact social capital in rural communities might have on the actual emotions of local residents in light of the structural changes affecting them. In terms of well-being constructs and operationalization, our approach reflects the fragmented state of well-being research, relying on a broad number of psychometric approaches to quantify well-being on an individual level and aggregate it to the group level with the aim of increasing external validity. In the dominant tradition of hedonic concepts such as examined in "Subjective Well-Being" by Ed Diener (1984), which encompasses the cognitive self-evaluation of life satisfaction and the affective component of happiness, to eudaimonic models such as Carol D. Ryff's "Psychological Well-being" (1989), with its focus on purpose of life, well-being is assessed as a universally applicable construct.

In the context of our regional focus, however, we aim to also take into account specifically Japanese understandings of happiness, if such things even exist. Particularly within the field of Japanese Cultural Psychology, the universal validity of Euro-American well-being concepts has been called into question and complemented by measures that seek to grasp the relational aspects of well-being. We have identified emotional support, interpersonal harmony, and an equilibrium between positive and negative emotions within the concept of "Interdependent Happiness" (Hitokoto and Uchida 2015) as well as the non-eudaimonic elements of *ikigai* ("one's purpose in life," or "what makes life worth living") as originary aspects worth investigating (Kamiya 2004; Mathews 1996).

There has also been extensive critique leveled at these psychological accounts of well-being, coming especially from the Social Sciences, that challenges the focus on the individual level of analysis, the normativity of universalist happiness concepts, and the methods of inquiry employed by dominant psychological approaches (see e.g. Cabanas and Illouz 2019; White 2017). From a sociological perspective, well-being is understood as an experience that is related to historical,

cultural, and societal practices and thus subject to change (Hyman 2014: 16). Well-being in this sense is not a neutral phenomenon, but rather a “way we explain the world and think we ought to function within it” (Ehrenreich 2010: 4). The pursuit of happiness, then, can be assessed as a “societal ‘imperative’” (Hyman 2019: 98) that suggests full personal responsibility for one’s own well-being, while remaining silent about possible societal influences on and conditions for happiness.

However, the pursuit of happiness, albeit socially conditioned, can also not be reduced to its social function, as is clearly shown by empirical qualitative studies on well-being. Mark Cieslik discusses this aspect in respect to “how people work at their happiness, with other people, balancing the good and not so good events over their life course” (2017: 219). Well-being thus encompasses a relational aspect that suggests that an interactionist understanding might better grasp the ambivalence that is both individual and interindividual, as well as having both positive and detrimental effects. A positive experience for one person may be associated with grief for another (Derné 2017: 223, 231).

From a relational Social Science perspective, well-being is a phenomenon experienced through interactions with the social environment, and therefore other people (Derné 2017: 236; Mathews 1996). Hence well-being cannot be isolated from its context, in particular its “structures, affects, materiality, places, other life forms and so forth” (Atkinson et al. 2019: 13). These voices clearly question a purely individual approach to well-being concentrated on the measurability of such a complex experience, demanding instead a framework that pays respect to individual and societal perspectives alike.

Methods

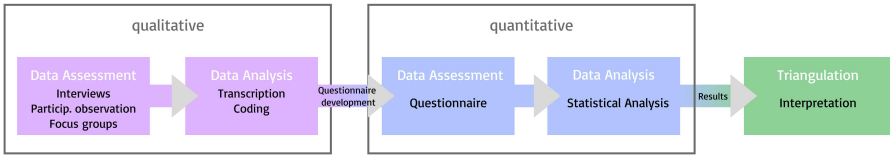
To address the complexity of the concept of well-being, Gordon Mathews (2012) suggests setting up interdisciplinary collaborations drawing on a diverse set of methods. We support his statement by combining qualitative and quantitative approaches and individual (personality, psychology) with sociocultural (network analysis, political participation, community life) levels of analysis. We choose qualitative methods here as their open approach enables us to critically examine our survey data and to ensure a certain level of openness throughout the entire project. On the other hand, introducing quantitative methods helps increase the reliability and generalizability of our findings (Mayring 2001). By considering different ways to evaluate well-being (hedonic and eudaimonic, universal, and culture-specific) and using varying modes of measurement (interviews, observations, surveys), we ultimately aim to increase the construct validity of our research.

This project is thus built on interdisciplinary foundations and encompasses the constructs of “social capital,” “well-being,” and their relationship from the perspective of four scientific disciplines. For the operationalization of the former we follow Lin’s network approach, which reifies social capital as “resources

embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions” (1999: 35). This functions as an “investment in social relations” (Lin 2001: 6) that enhances “profits” and ultimately results in well-being.

Our project follows a mixed-methods design, similar to the sequential exploratory design as suggested by Creswell et al. (2003; see Figure 1 below): Findings from the qualitative research help with the design of the subsequent survey. The findings of both approaches are combined to interpret the quantitative results.

Figure 1. Sequential exploratory mixed-methods design of this project



Source: Author’s own compilation, based on Creswell et al. (2003).

Research takes place in the Aso region (see Figure 2 below) of Kyūshū island, continuing the work of the Aso 1.0 project that has influenced research in Japanese Studies at the University of Vienna since the late 1960s (Slawik and Kreiner 1975; Slawik and Linhart 1982). As mobility has greatly increased since the last project was conducted, we have expanded the boundaries of our research, focusing not only on a few marginal villages but on three municipalities that lie within the crater of Mount Aso (the city of Aso, village of Minami Aso, and town of Takamori).¹ This enables us to not only analyze the situation in a few pinpointed locations, but also to draw comparisons regarding disparities within and between these three municipalities.

¹ Taken together, these municipalities show a population density of approximately 66 inhabitants per square kilometer, far below the cut-off point of 500 inhabitants per square kilometer in Japan, making them rural by the OECD’s definition (Manzenreiter 2016: 292–294).

Figure 2. The Aso valley and the Aso volcano as seen from the northern crater



Source: Photo by the authors.

Qualitative operationalization

The qualitative research part of this project investigates well-being by using a variety of explorative methods employed during several visits to the field. The two subprojects concentrate on (1) well-being and collective participation in the community and (2) well-being and community life, respectively. The bulk of our data consists of semi-structured interviews based on the MODUL study (Ponocny et al. 2015, 2016), which reveal restrictions to and drivers of well-being based on individual life circumstances that usually go unassessed in quantitative surveys. We have adapted these questions to the specific Japanese rural context, while adding questions on *ikigai*. We conducted our interviews in two phases:

1. February–March 2018: explorative open interviews on well-being and participation aiming to identify important community issues
September–October 2018: semi-structured interviews and a focus group on well-being and participation in the community; collection of material on activities (pamphlets, flyers, documents)
2. March–August 2020: semi-structured interviews and focus groups on well-being, community life, and social relationships on a local level

By now we have transcribed the interviews carried out in 2018 and used initial coding (Charmaz 2014) followed by focused coding allowing us to identify main categories. These categories show how well-being can be experienced in participatory activities as a social phenomenon that is simultaneously linked to the specific local conditions of the rural (see Figure 3 below). In addition, we have constructed a “happiness profile” for each interviewee that contains the most

relevant aspects of their well-being (Flick 2018: 74–75). These profiles help to discuss the overall categories identified in conjunction with the individual narratives, and also provide an overview of some of the relevant contextual information about the interview situation.

Figure 3. Categories developed for the first subproject on well-being and collective participation in the local community



Source: Photos and figure by the authors.

In these initial rounds of interviews, many of our respondents explained the notion of sharing well-being with others by making them happy. This understanding — often termed *yorokonde morau* (“to have someone feel happiness”) by interviewees — shows how relationality is a central feature of their individual well-being. It follows that even individual accounts of well-being are nevertheless subject to a complex net of interactions with human actors and with the nonhuman environment. To our interviewees, the abundant natural surroundings and cultural background in particular seem to be reference points for identity and *ikigai*, while at the same time highlighting how they are contested: Not all respondents share the same understanding of what the region should look like in the future and the specific role they themselves play in shaping the community.

During the second phase of qualitative research, we planned to gain more detailed insight into community life and social relationships on a local level by partaking in community activities, such as village road maintenance, festival preparations, and public gymnastics for the elderly. However, as COVID-19 brought community life to a complete halt during the first two weeks of our stay in March 2020, we had to adjust our methods to fit the new circumstances. Hence, we decided not to investigate community life itself, but how people talk about it via semi-structured interviews and focus groups. During these interviews participants were encouraged

to speak freely about their relationship with the community they lived in, starting with their immediate neighborhood and ending with their municipality and the Aso region as a whole. Questions addressed their participation in and opinion about community activities and groups (*kumi*), interactions within their immediate neighborhoods (*tonari gumi*),² their perceived standing within the local community, and the ways in which their surroundings may or may not influence the happiness they perceive and experience. Further questions about participants' everyday lives, worries, and problems, as well as about hopes, happiness, and priorities, were asked. In inquiring about their community as well as their everyday lives and the things that concern them, both positively and negatively, we hoped to get a sense of our participants' lives, not just as individuals but as part of their local community.

Preliminary observations show a shift in people's perceptions of their local community. As a growing number of individuals experience migration at some point in their lives (either because they left their hometown to acquire an education or job experience, or because they grew up in a different part of Japan), how they think about boundaries is changing. While until a while ago local communities had been the core of social life, providing mutual support and community sustainment, people now have social connections all over the country (or world), gathering help and support from outside their local community and banding together with people with a similar mindset — rather than those who live nearby — in order to achieve their goals. Similarly, there seems to be a change happening in the way people think and talk about their own well-being — the more “global” their way of thinking about community, the clearer their understanding of happiness. Some participants who have been strongly tied to the local community since childhood told us that they had never thought about their own happiness prior to the interview. On the other hand, interviewees with diverse social ties within and outside their local community seemed to reflect very deeply upon their own personal happiness as well as about happiness in relation to their surroundings and to other people.

Well-being in this sense must be analyzed as an experience that is subject to change due to both societal and global influences. This echoes the hybrid nature of rural areas as outlined by Michael Woods (2007). Different (e.g. urban, local, global) conceptions of rurality thus can be linked to different lifestyles (Takeda 2020) that are, as we argue, ultimately also tied to distinctive approaches to well-being. Well-being, therefore, can be continuously negotiated, changed, and integrated into people's lifestyles. As we will see, these observations have implications for our quantitative operationalization.

2 *Tonari gumi* are a set of about eight households that would usually work together during community activities. Due to demographic change they have lost some of their functions by now, but still represent an important unit when talking about community life.

Quantitative operationalization

The focus of our quantitative research project is roughly divided into (1) a sociological emphasis on social-level predictors of well-being such as social networks and (2) a psychological emphasis on individual-level predictors of well-being such as personality, thus bringing together the social and individual levels of analysis.

The goal of the quantitative approach is to put numbers on the phenomena observed in the qualitative studies, and thereby validate the qualitative findings. Specifically: (1) gathering high-volume data to make representative statistical inferences about the association of interesting variables and well-being while controlling for confounding variables; (2) the use of reliable instruments with high test validity that enable us to draw comparisons with other regions and prior studies in this field, complemented by our own scales to fill in the gaps identified by the qualitative studies; and, (3) aggregating high-volume individual data to the level of communities and sociodemographic groups to create a replicable macro perspective of the region that is further removed from the research subject and therefore less susceptible to observer bias.

To capture the scope of well-being as broadly as possible without becoming redundant in terms of the constructs employed, our comprehensive approach is derived from the “needs theories” of Evolutionary Psychology. The satisfaction of each of the basic human needs is then measured by corresponding well-being constructs that cover the whole range of supposed needs, while avoiding unnecessary overlap. Our chosen assessment method is a self-report questionnaire, administered to a full survey of multiple villages in the region with different structural-demographic statuses, thus achieving a large sample size and enabling intraregional comparisons. In the process of questionnaire development, we first received explorative input from the qualitative research team. This included feedback from a pretest of the well-being constructs under consideration, specifically on how they fit to local understandings of well-being, and from a pretest of response behavior to select items of the questionnaire in the qualitative interviews. This helped with the mapping of locally salient predictors and elements of well-being as well as of contextual factors (local living conditions, natural environment), and with the adjusting of the questionnaire to the specific locale of the study region with respect to respondent demographics, timing, and on-site partners helping with its implementation.

As part of the sequential working process during the initial stages of the project, data assembled by the qualitative research team directly led to a number of revisions being made to the basic framework of the questionnaire, which was then fine-tuned in a collective effort by the whole group. The data that initiated changes ranged from the reported major impact of natural disasters such as the 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes, to the general significance placed on the local environment in terms of well-being, to the concerns of locals regarding the

construction of a cattle barn inside the town limits — all examples of issues that provided the impetus to include questions, for example, on environmental domain satisfaction. The salience of individual life events on well-being that was detected in the interviews also prompted the inclusion of a control item intended to measure the impact of acute extraordinary restrictions on well-being that could temporarily compromise self-evaluations.

In a similar vein, negative aspects to close social ties became apparent — which called for them to be assessed separately in the survey. Well-being reported as a result of participation in local activities led to the inclusion of several items assessing “volunteer activism.” The relational nature of well-being emphasized in many interviews further stressed the importance of including the Interdependent Happiness questions, while the desire for self-realization expressed by many younger interviewees is meant to be assessed by items on *ikigai* and “autonomy orientation.” In addition, we include the type of “migrational background” (U-turn versus I-turn) as a sociodemographic variable, while also controlling for the “relevant group of close relatives outside the immediate household or community but within driving distance” to capture nuances of migrant well-being identified in our qualitative research.

In practical terms, the initial interviews called attention to the problem that a full survey would be complicated by both formal and informal community structures, such as the exclusion of migrant and other marginalized households from local administrative structures, as well as the necessity of shortening the questionnaire further and improving legibility in order to increase the response rate given the aging demographic of the study region. However, it would eventually turn out that another, entirely unforeseen factor would interfere more substantially with the practical implementation of the survey. As the COVID-19 situation in Japan was developing, it became increasingly clear that survey data would be all but impossible to collect in person within the planned timeframe. Therefore, in order to secure funding for the online implementation of the questionnaire with the help of a survey company in Japan, major revisions to the research design had to be made. However, reaching out to the ageing local demographic with an online survey did not seem to be a viable option, while distribution by mail exceeded the funding available for the slated sample sizes. Accordingly, the scope of the quantitative research was broadened to a nationwide comparison of urban and rural environments via online survey.

Even though some of the microscale regional focus is lost as a result in this part of the study, the extant qualitative and explorative elements of the collaborative research remain firmly embedded in the local specifics of the Aso region. At the same time, the quantitative data can now give a more comprehensive overview of rural well-being and its various aspects as they relate to individual resource networks, values, and personality in Japan. The quantitative team will now investigate whether patterns detected in the case of Aso are reflected in nationwide

findings, and place them in the greater context of Rural Sociology and Cultural Psychology.

This change in focus provides an additional level of analysis, while at the same time being grounded in the immediacy of a concrete case example. Specifically, we now have the ability to include major urban centers in our study. Thereby we can increase variance between our areas of reference, and as a result carve out the “rural” more distinctly by contrasting it to “urban” Japan. Oversampling the number of respondents classified as “rural” furthermore allows for stronger inference of urban-rural differences than was previously possible from existing nationwide studies on well-being. Despite the inherent limitations of online surveys, our nationwide sampling now helps to generalize findings beyond the scope of the Aso region alone and extend the implications of our findings to the Japan-wide scale.

Meanwhile, the benefits of a sequential workflow remain in place. Following data collection and analysis, the findings are again integrated with the qualitative material for a final triangulation. This — along with the valuable input and advice from fellow researchers in the department, senior researchers in the fields of Japanese Studies, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology, as well as from regional experts — helps capture well-being and its local and nationwide contexts both broadly and in a multipronged fashion not otherwise imaginable.

Conclusion

In this paper we have introduced an interdisciplinary approach to rural well-being that uses a mixed-methods framework including both qualitative and quantitative analyses. While research on well-being is usually conducted using either quantitative surveys designed for large-scale comparison or centered around a sociological critique of positive psychology in general, we strive to integrate the strengths of both traditions to elaborate how well-being in rural Japan could be conceptualized more holistically.

Our qualitative findings enable us to firmly establish the salience of the social context in rural well-being with the relational understanding of *yorokonde morau* (“to have someone feel happiness”) that permeated many of the interviews held. This is in line with the criticisms of sociological well-being studies leveled at the “individualization” of well-being. The harmonious coexistence of this relational well-being conception and the ego-focus of self-realization found in our analysis right down to the level of the individual bears great potential significance for well-being studies within Cultural Psychology that thus far have tended to situate the two in opposition to each other.

In terms of upcoming research, we hope to complete our quantitative assessment by next year and integrate the findings into our existing qualitative data. However, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the progress of our

interdisciplinary project. The indispensable field research of the qualitative team has been significantly curtailed and had to undergo significant adjustments to fit the new circumstances. Due to the cancellation of all public events through the end of 2020, we had to rearrange part of our qualitative studies to rely on data gathered by interviews and focus groups instead of via personal observations, as had been planned. Further, the lockdown and subsequent entry restrictions placed on foreigners by the Japanese government have inhibited the team from beginning the quantitative survey and follow-up interviews. These obstacles have been overcome by transcribing and analyzing some of the data and amending parts of the questionnaire in light of the findings, further transforming our research design from what was initially a concurrent focus to a decidedly sequential affair. In doing so, we were able to develop a framework to assess well-being via different theoretical approaches as well as methods of inquiry that take into account both relational and individual aspects.

Against the backdrop of transforming rural areas and their increased connectedness to external — meaning national and global — influences, we expect that this combined research design will provide a more nuanced understanding of rural well-being in Japan.

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Forschung und Lehre

Chinesisch studieren: Ergebnisse einer Erhebung zu Ausstattung, Lehrzielen und Umfang von Sprachunterricht in chinawissenschaftlichen Bachelor- und Master-Studiengängen

Andreas Guder

Summary

Institutes of Chinese studies are still the only institutions in Germany where Chinese language skills can be acquired to an extent that enables learners to deal with authentic Chinese language material and corresponding texts. At the same time, Chinese is considered one of the most difficult languages to master, especially because of its complex writing system. This paper documents the results of an extensive survey of teaching in institutes of Chinese studies/sinology in German-speaking countries, with a focus on target competences, size of courses, number and background of teaching staff, and information on the workload estimated via ECTS in relation to the scope of the language courses. In addition, the integration into curricula of semesters abroad, the relevance of standardized examinations from the PRC and Taiwan as well as language training in master's programs for Chinese studies and courses in pre-modern/classical Chinese were also included in the survey. The results show that education in Chinese language, even in an academic context, is a complex task, which can by no means be considered complete within the framework of three-year BA programs, which are still under-resourced at many institutes.

Keywords: Chinese as a foreign language, language education, academic education, Chinese studies, China studies, sinology

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Einleitung

Regionalwissenschaftliche Studiengänge zeichnen sich vor allem dadurch aus, dass neben der regionalen Expertise zu Geschichte, Politik, Kultur und Wirtschaft einer Region die Befähigung vermittelt werden soll, die lokale Sprache oder sogar mehrere Sprachen der jeweiligen Region zu beherrschen. Bestand die Sprachausbildung eines solchen Studiums einst im Wesentlichen in der Lektüre und Übersetzung historischer oder aktueller Texte, hat der Sprachunterricht in den meisten Instituten in den letzten Jahrzehnten durch die Globalisierung und mit Unterstützung der inzwischen überall zur Verfügung stehenden muttersprachlichen Lehrkräfte seinen Fokus auf alle Kompetenzen des modernen Fremdsprachenunterrichts ausgedehnt: Hörverstehen, Konversationsfähigkeit oder auch das Verfassen eigener Texte sind in den letzten Jahrzehnten zumeist zur Selbstverständlichkeit des akademischen Sprachunterrichts geworden. Auch Auslandssemester oder Studienjahre in der betreffenden Region, zunehmende Vorkenntnisse durch Bilingualität oder, im Falle von Chinesisch, auch durch Belegung des entsprechenden Schulfachs führen dazu, dass sich die Sprachausbildung in all diesen Fächern ungleich diverser aufstellen müsste als noch vor einer Generation.

Dennoch stehen die Sprachausbildung und Fragen möglicher an diversen Kompetenzen ausgerichteter Ziele nicht immer im Mittelpunkt der Ausbildung (dies z. B. im Unterschied zu germanistischen oder vergleichbaren Studiengängen in Asien), und die Tatsache, dass sich der Erwerb bestimmter Sprachen für europäische Lernende schwieriger und komplexer gestaltet als anderer, scheint bei der Konzeption der Sprachausbildung ebenfalls nicht immer eine Rolle zu spielen: Das US-amerikanische Defense Language Institute ordnet seit Jahrzehnten Fremdsprachen (für englische Muttersprachler) verschiedenen Schwierigkeitsgraden zu: Dabei wird der Lernaufwand für die schwierigsten Sprachen Arabisch, Japanisch, Koreanisch und Chinesisch 2,5mal so hoch veranschlagt wie für romanische Sprachen (vgl. Association of the United States Army 2010).

Die primär bildungspolitische Frage, unter welchen Bedingungen und in welchem Umfang Kenntnisse des Chinesischen oder anderer gleichermaßen „distanter“ Fremdsprachen (u.a. Guder 2008) tatsächlich vermittelt und erworben werden können, oder ob diese Kenntnisse vor allem rezeptiver oder auch produktiver Natur sein sollten, tritt eher selten in den Vordergrund regionalwissenschaftlicher Fragestellungen.

2018 wies die MERICS-Analyse „China kennen, China können“ unter anderem darauf hin, dass in Deutschland nur wenige Studierende im Laufe ihrer Ausbildung ein Sprachniveau erreichten, mit dem sie sich in China fließend verständigen und auch komplizierte Texte verstehen könnten (vgl. Stepan et al. 2018: 53). Fraglos stellen aber bis heute chinawissenschaftliche Institute an Hochschulen die einzigen Orte dar, an denen im deutschsprachigen Raum Chinesisch auch auf Mittelstufenniveau und fundiert im Interesse chinabezogener Ausbildung und

Forschung vermittelt wird. Wie sich diese Ausbildung gestaltet und welche institutionellen wie sprachdidaktischen Fragestellungen sich daraus ergeben, sollte die vorliegende Studie zur Situation des Chinesischunterrichts in chinawissenschaftlichen Studiengängen beleuchten.

Ähnliche Untersuchungen wurden vom Fachverband Chinesisch bereits in früheren Jahren durchgeführt: Kupfer (2004), Bermann/Guder (2010) sowie Klöter (2016) zeigten bereits, dass hinsichtlich Anforderungen, Workload und Lernzielen akademischen Chinesisch-Sprachunterrichts an den einzelnen Instituten nicht zuletzt auch aufgrund hochschulinterner Stellen- und Haushaltspolitik recht unterschiedliche Ausgestaltungen chinaorientierter BA-Studiengänge bestanden. Die aktuelle Studie nimmt darüber hinaus auch chinawissenschaftliche Masterstudiengänge sowie die Ausbildung in Klassischem bzw. Vormodernen Chinesisch in den Blick. Von März bis Juli 2020 wurden alle chinawissenschaftlichen Institute im deutschsprachigen Raum (einschließlich Wien und Zürich) um die Beantwortung eines umfassenden Fragenkatalogs zu Umfang, Studierendenzahlen, Lernzielen, Prüfungsformen und zahlreichen anderen Aspekten des Chinesisch-Sprachunterrichts an ihrem Institut gebeten.¹

Die Befragung erfolgte in erster Linie quantitativ. Ihre Ergebnisse sollen nicht dazu dienen, Qualitätsurteile über einzelne Standorte zu fällen, sondern vielmehr als Referenzwerte für die Konzeption von Chinesisch-Sprachunterricht an Hochschulen und insbesondere bei der Formulierung realistischer Lernziele vor dem Hintergrund vorhandener Ressourcen herangezogen werden. Zusätzlich wurden auch offene Fragen zu Problemen und Herausforderungen gestellt, sodass die befragten Institutionen auch die Möglichkeit bekamen, aus ihrer Sicht spezifische Problematiken der Sprachausbildung zu artikulieren.

Berücksichtigte Hochschulen und Studiengänge

Die Studie umfasst nicht nur die traditionellen sinologischen / chinawissenschaftlichen Institute an Universitäten, sondern auch (Fach-) Hochschulen, die eine China- und Chinesisch-bezogene Ausbildung gezielt mit Wirtschafts- oder Technikfächern kombinierbar machen (Ludwigshafen, Konstanz, Reutlingen, Zwickau und Bremen). Fast alle angefragten Einrichtungen nahmen an der

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Befragung teil (insgesamt 26 Institute mit 36 chinaorientierten BA-Studiengängen² und 31 Masterstudiengängen, Tabelle 1), so dass das gewonnene Bild des akademischen Chinesischunterrichts im deutschsprachigen Raum als annähernd vollständig betrachtet werden kann:

Tabelle 1: Teilnehmende Hochschulen / Universitäten und berücksichtigte Studiengänge in alphabetischer Reihenfolge der Standorte

Standort	Bachelorstudiengänge	Masterstudiengänge
Freie Universität Berlin	B.A. Chinastudien / Ostasienwissenschaften B.A. Integrierte Chinastudien (Bachelor Plus)	M.A. Chinastudien
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin	B.A. Regionalstudien Asien/Afrika	/
Ruhr-Universität Bochum	B.A. Sinologie B.A. Wirtschaft und Politik Ostasiens	M.A. Sinologie M.A. Ostasienwissenschaften M.A. Politik Ostasiens
Universität Bonn	B.A. Asienwissenschaften	M.A. Asienwissenschaften
Hochschule Bremen	B.A. Angewandte Wirtschaftssprachen und Internationale Unternehmensführung B. Eng. Internationaler Studiengang Maschinenbau mit Schwerpunkt Wirtschaftsraum China	/
Universität Duisburg-Essen	B.A. Moderne Ostasienstudien	M.A. Contemporary East Asian Studies M.A. Modern East Asian Studies
Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg	B.A. Sinologie	M.A. Sinologie mit fachspezifischer Ausrichtung
Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main	B.A. Sinologie	M.A. Sinologie M.A. Modern East Asian Studies
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg	B.A. Sinologie B.A. Chinesisch	M.A. Modern China Studies
Georg-August Universität Göttingen	B.A. Moderne Sinologie; B.A. Chinesisch als Fremdsprache (auch Lehramt) B.A. Modernes China	M.A. Modern Sinology M.Ed. Chinesisch als Fremdsprache
Universität Hamburg	B.A. Ostasien/Sinologie B.A. Wirtschaft und Kultur Chinas	M.A. Sinologie
Universität Heidelberg	B.A. Ostasienwissenschaften: Sinologie B.A. Ostasienwissenschaften: Sinologie mit Lehramtsoption	M.A. Sinologie M.Ed. Chinesisch

2 Bei BA-Studiengängen wurde nicht zwischen unterschiedlichen LP-Optionen des gleichen Studiengangs differenziert.

Hochschule Konstanz	B.A. Wirtschaftssprachen Asien und Management China	/
Universität Leipzig	B.A. Sinologie	M.A. Chinese Studies
Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ludwigshafen	B.Sc. International Business Management (East Asia)	/
Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz	/	M.A. Translation
Internationale Hochschule SDI München	B.A. Übersetzen Chinesisch B.A. Wirtschaftskommunikation Chinesisch	/
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München	B.A. Sinologie	M.A. Sinologie
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster	B.A. Chinastudien	M.A. Sinologie
Hochschule Reutlingen	B.Sc. International Management Double Degree	/
Universität Trier	B.A. Moderne China-Studien	M.A. China - Kultur und Kommunikation
Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen	B.A. Sinologie/Chinese Studies B.A. Sinologie/Chinese Studies mit berufspraktischem Schwerpunkt B.Ed. Chinesisch	M.A. Sinologie/Chinese Studies M.A. Politik und Gesellschaft Ostasiens M.Ed. Chinesisch
Universität Wien	B.A. Sinologie	M.A. Sinologie
Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg	B.A. Modern China	M.A. Chinese Studies M.Sc. China Business and Economics M.A. China Language and Economy M.A. Chinese Politics and Society
Universität Zürich	B.A. Sinologie	M.A. Sinologie
Westfälische Hochschule Zwickau	B.A. Languages and Business Administration	M.A. Languages and Business Administration

Wie aus der Tabelle ersichtlich, verfügen zahlreiche Standorte über mehrere chinabezogene Bachelor- oder Masterstudiengänge mit Sprachlehrangebot Chinesisch: Neun von insgesamt 25 Standorten bieten mehrere BA-Studiengänge an, sieben von 20 Standorten mehrere Masterstudiengänge. In Würzburg ist das weiterführende Angebot mit vier verschiedenen Masterstudiengängen besonders vielfältig (davon zwei ohne Chinesisch-Vorkenntnisse), mit jeweils drei (darunter den Lehramts-M.Ed.) weisen auch die Standorte Tübingen und Bochum eine überdurchschnittlich hohe Anzahl an chinabezogenen Masterstudiengängen unterschiedlicher Ausrichtung auf.

Studierende

Insgesamt wurden aus den Angaben knapp 4000 (3980) Bachelorstudierende und 620 Masterstudierende in chinawissenschaftlichen Studiengängen ermittelt. Diese Zahlen sind aufgrund leicht abweichender Standorte und Studiengänge nur bedingt mit den 2016 erhobenen Daten (3800 Studierende) zu vergleichen, deuten aber entgegen mancher Vermutungen auf keine grundlegenden Veränderungen der Nachfrage hin.³

Die meisten Bachelorstudierenden fanden sich wie in den letzten Jahren in Wien (ca. 500) sowie in Berlin (FU) und Bochum (jeweils 350), wo die Studierendenzahlen ebenfalls fast unverändert geblieben sind. Auch Tübingen (ca. 270), Göttingen (ca. 250) und Heidelberg (ca. 200) verzeichnen eine relativ große Studierendenzahl. Deutliche Rückgänge gegenüber den Angaben von 2015 waren auch sonst kaum zu verzeichnen.

Von den insgesamt angegebenen 620 Masterstudierenden weist mit Abstand der Standort Würzburg mit 130 den größten Anteil auf, gefolgt von Göttingen (70), Tübingen und Bochum (jeweils 60). Mit jeweils ca. 50 Studierenden verzeichnen auch Berlin (FU) und Wien eine verhältnismäßig hohe Anzahl an Masterstudierenden, an allen anderen Standorten sind maximal 30 (Bonn, Heidelberg) oder weniger Studierende eingeschrieben. In den erst in jüngster Zeit entstandenen Lehramtsmasterstudiengängen (Master of Education) ist die Anzahl der Masterstudierenden noch vergleichsweise niedrig und beträgt an den erfassten Standorten maximal 16 Studierende.

Manche Dozentinnen und Dozenten beklagen einen Rückgang an Lernmotivation, der sich möglicherweise auf die sich verschlechternden bilateralen Beziehungen zu China, aber zum Teil wohl auch auf eine generell geringere Bereitschaft zu langfristigen Lernprozessen bei gleichzeitigem Vormarsch erstaunlicher digitaler Übersetzungstools zurückführen lassen dürfte. Andere zeigen sich aber auch positiv angesichts der zunehmenden Professionalität von Gastlektoren und -lektorinnen sowie dem Angebot digitaler Medien und Plattformen, die neue Möglichkeiten des Spracherwerbs zulassen und die Motivation der Studierenden deutlich steigern.

3 Laut der MERICS-Analyse „China kennen, China können“ von 2018 war die Zahl an sich neu einschreibenden Studierenden in chinawissenschaftlichen Studiengängen seit 2008 leicht rückläufig. So wurde dort festgestellt, dass manche Institute „ausgehend von den Zahlen von 2007/2008 einen Rückgang um 20–30 Prozent im Studienjahr 2017/2018“ verzeichneten (Stepan et. al. 2018: 57). Dies mag jedoch auch mit der vollständigen Umstellung auf B.A.- und M.A.-Studiengänge und der damit einhergehenden Exmatrikulation zahlreicher Langzeitstudierender zusammenhängen.

Lehrpersonal

Ohne Berücksichtigung von Gastlektoren verzeichnet ein Standort durchschnittlich ein Stellenvolumen von lediglich 1,9 Vollzeitstellen für den Chinesischunterricht. Knapp 80% dieser insgesamt 48 Stellen sind mit chinesischen Muttersprachlern besetzt. Mancherorts sind Stellen auf zwei Anstellungsjahre beschränkt, was die Möglichkeiten einer erforderlichen Kontinuität und Professionalisierung der Sprachausbildung Chinesisch deutlich behindert. Ergänzt werden die Lehrkapazitäten für den Sprachunterricht an etwa der Hälfte der Institute durch einzelne, meist auf maximal 2 Jahre befristete Gastlektorate, von denen 8 aus Taiwan, 28 aus der Volksrepublik kofinanziert werden. An drei Vierteln der Standorte werden im Rahmen des Sprachunterrichts zudem weitere Lehraufträge in einem durchschnittlichen Umfang von 2–8 Semesterwochenstunden vergeben (in Reutlingen und Wien bis zu 28 bzw. 40 SWS).

Die sehr unterschiedlichen Konstellationen in der Stellen- und Personalstruktur bewirken, dass die diesbezüglichen Zahlen der einzelnen Standorte nur sehr bedingt miteinander verglichen werden können (vgl. bereits Klöter 2016: 54). Insgesamt zeigt sich, dass an den Instituten häufig lediglich zwei Planstellen (nicht selten auch nur eine oder 1,5) den gesamten Chinesischunterricht in allen Studiengängen zu halten, zu administrieren und zu prüfen haben. Im Schnitt steht damit eine Planstelle etwa 110 Studierenden gegenüber, wobei dieses Verhältnis je nach Standort erheblich variieren kann. So werden in Tübingen sogar 220 Studierende mit einer Stelle versorgt, in Wien existieren nur zwei Planstellen für über 500 Bachelor- und Masterstudierende, wohingegen in Würzburg oder Zürich eine Stelle auf knapp 75 Studierende kommt. Wenn man von einem Lehrdeputat von 16 SWS, einem Sprachmodul von 8 SWS und einer Kohortengröße von max. 25 Studierenden ausgeht, dürfte das Verhältnis eigentlich 1:50 nicht überschreiten, so dass die Institute nur mit Hilfe der Gastdozenten und zusätzlichen Lehraufträgen – oder eben durch Kursgrößen von deutlich über 25 Teilnehmenden – ihren Unterrichtsvolumina für fünf konsekutive Studienjahre (B.A.+M.A.) nachkommen können.

Aufbau und Umfang der Sprachausbildung

Regelstudienzeit und Auslandsaufenthalte

Studienanfängern und Außenstehenden ist oft noch nicht ausreichend bewusst, wie wichtig eine intensive Sprachausbildung und ein längerer Aufenthalt im Sprachumfeld gerade für den Erwerb der chinesischen Sprache sind. Zu den größten Herausforderungen und Problemen des Chinesisch-Sprachunterrichts wurde in den Rückmeldungen entsprechend die kurze Dauer des Bachelorstudiums angeführt. Bereits die 2010 erschienene Erhebung wies auf die Schwierigkeit hin, mit dem gegebenen Unterrichtsumfang in sechs Semestern ein Mittelstufenniveau

zu erreichen. In der letzten Erhebung wurde die verstärkte Integration von Studienangeboten in China als wichtigste Entwicklung gegenüber vorangegangenen Erhebungen herausgestellt (Klöter 2016: 62), inzwischen liegt bei einem Drittel der Studiengänge, darunter den an den (Fach-) Hochschulen, die Regelstudienzeit bei sieben oder acht Semestern und umfasst dort fast überall auch einen längeren Aufenthalt im chinesischsprachigen Raum. In Göttingen, Leipzig und Würzburg ist dieser Aufenthalt sogar Bestandteil eines sechssemestrigen Studiums. An der FU Berlin und in Tübingen haben die Studierenden die Wahl zwischen einem sechs- und einem achtsemestrigen Studiengang (mit zwei Semestern im chinesischsprachigen Raum).

Die Anzahl der Studiengänge, die einen obligatorischen Auslandsaufenthalt vorsehen, hat im Vergleich zu 2016 ebenfalls zugenommen und macht nun insgesamt etwas über 40% der berücksichtigten Bachelorstudiengänge aus. In den meisten Fällen wird das Auslandsemester im fünften Semester (8 Studiengänge) oder im fünften und sechsten Semester (5 Studiengänge) angesetzt (siehe Tabelle 3). Ausnahmen bilden der B.A.-Studiengang „Sinologie“ in Frankfurt, der bereits im dritten Semester einen Auslandsaufenthalt vorsieht, sowie der B.A.-Studiengang „Modern China“ in Würzburg, wo er im vierten Semester stattfindet. Im achtsemestrigen Bachelor-Studiengang „Ostasien/Sinologie“ an der Universität Hamburg liegt der Auslandsaufenthalt wiederum im siebten Semester, wohingegen im ebenfalls acht Semester umfassenden Studiengang „Sinologie/Chinese Studies mit berufspraktischem Schwerpunkt“ in Tübingen der Auslandsaufenthalt für das vierte und das fünfte Semester vorgesehen ist.

Tabelle 2: Bachelorstudiengänge mit einer sechs Semester übersteigenden Regelstudienzeit, alphabetisch nach Standort

Bachelorstudiengänge mit einer Regelstudienzeit von acht Semestern:
B.A. „Integrierte Chinastudien“ (Bachelor Plus) (Berlin, FU)
B.A. „Angewandte Wirtschaftssprachen und Internationale Unternehmensführung“ (Bremen)
B.A. „Moderne Ostasienstudien“ (Duisb.-Essen)
B.A. „Sinologie“ (Frankfurt)
B.A. „Ostasien/Sinologie“ (Hamburg)
B.Sc. „International Business Management“ (East Asia) (Ludwigshafen)
B.Sc. „International Management Double Degree“ (Reutlingen / UIBE)
B.A. „Sinologie/Chinese Studies mit berufspraktischem Schwerpunkt“ (Tübingen)
Bachelorstudiengänge mit einer Regelstudienzeit von sieben Semestern:
B.A. „Wirtschaftssprachen Asien und Management China“ (Konstanz)
B.A. „Übersetzen Chinesisch“ (München, SDI)
B.A. „Wirtschaftskommunikation Chinesisch“ (München, SDI)
B.A. „Languages and Business Administration“ (Zwickau)

Auch an Instituten, die kein verpflichtendes Sprachstudium im chinesischsprachigen Raum vorsehen, gehen naturgemäß viele Studierende freiwillig und auf Empfehlung (z.B. mit Stipendien des DAAD oder über Hochschulpartnerschaftsstipendien) für ein Semester oder ein Jahr an eine chinesische Hochschule, um ihre Regional- und vor allem ihre Sprachkenntnisse in intensivem Sprachunterricht in authentischer Umgebung zu erweitern. Dabei bemühen sich alle Institute um individuelle Lösungen, solche Kurse nach Möglichkeit mit ECTS anzuerkennen, an mehreren Instituten wird beklagt, dass entsprechende Initiativen durch das Korsett der Prüfungsordnungen stark eingeschränkt sind.

Tabelle 3: Bachelorstudiengänge mit obligatorischem Sprachstudium im chinesischsprachigen Raum, alphabetisch nach Standort

Bachelorstudiengänge mit obligatorischem Sprachstudium im chinesischsprachigen Raum		
Studiengang	Standort	Semester
B.A. „Integrierte Chinastudien (Bachelor Plus)“	Berlin FU	5+6
B.A. „Angewandte Wirtschaftssprachen und Internationale Unternehmensführung“	Bremen	5+6
B.A. „Moderne Ostasienstudien“	Duisburg-Essen	5+6
B.A. „Sinologie“	Frankfurt	3
B.A. „Moderne Sinologie“	Göttingen	5
B.A./B.Ed. „Chinesisch als Fremdsprache“	Göttingen	5
B.A. „Ostasien/Sinologie“	Hamburg	7
B.A. „Sinologie“	Leipzig	5
B.Sc. „International Business Management (East Asia)“	Ludwigshafen	5+6
B.Sc. „International Management Double Degree“	Reutlingen	ab 5. Semester an UIBE
B.A. „Sinologie/Chinese Studies mit berufspraktischem Schwerpunkt“	Tübingen	4+5
B.A. „Wirtschaftssprachen Asien und Management China“	Konstanz	5
B.A. „Übersetzen Chinesisch“	München, SDI	5
B.A. „Wirtschaftskommunikation Chinesisch“	München, SDI	5
B.A. „Modern China“	Würzburg	4
B.A. „Languages and Business Administration“	Zwickau	5

Der Großteil der erfassten Masterstudiengänge schreibt eine Regelstudienzeit von vier Semestern vor. Ausnahmen liegen zumeist in der Länge des vorgeschalteten Bachelorprogramms begründet, da bei konsekutiven Studiengängen die

Gesamtregelstudienzeit höchstens zehn Semester (300 LP) betragen darf; siehe Tabelle 4).⁴

Tabelle 4: Masterstudiengänge mit einer Regelstudienzeit unter vier Semestern

Studiengang	Standort	Regelstudienzeit
M.A. „Integrierte Chinastudien (Master Plus)“	Berlin, FU	2
M.A. „Modern East Asian Studies“	Duisburg-Essen	2
M.A. „Sinologie“	Frankfurt	2
M.A. „Languages and Business Administration German-Chinese“	Zwickau	3

In dieser kurzen Zeit ist es schon wegen der langen Vorlaufzeit von Chinaaufenthalten kaum möglich, ein verpflichtendes Studienangebot in China zu integrieren. So ist einzig an den Standorten Freiburg, Würzburg und Zwickau ein Auslandsaufenthalt vorgesehen, der im dritten (Freiburg u. Würzburg) respektive zweiten und dritten Semester (Zwickau) stattfindet (siehe Tabelle 5). Leipzig bietet seinen Masterstudierenden im dritten Semester ein „Mobilitätsfenster“, das für das Studium in China genutzt werden kann, ähnlich auch Münster für das zweite Semester. Auch andere Standorte versuchen, individuelle Lösungen und entsprechende Leistungs-Anerkennungen zu ermöglichen, beklagen aber ebenfalls die diesbezüglichen Einschränkungen der Prüfungsordnungen.

Verteilung vom Semesterwochenstunden und ECTS-Punkten

Der Gesamtumfang des Chinesischunterrichts beträgt in Bachelorstudiengängen im Schnitt 49,5 Semesterwochenstunden (SWS) und liegt damit um 8,5 SWS höher als in den Daten von 2015/16. Dies hängt direkt mit den zunehmend in das Regelstudium integrierten Spracherwerbs-Aufenthalten an chinesischsprachigen Partnerhochschulen zusammen, wo im Allgemeinen eine deutlich höhere Wochenstundenzahl Chinesisch als an den hiesigen Instituten angeboten wird.

Im direkten Vergleich des Unterrichtsumfangs der Institute zeigt sich ein äußerst heterogenes Bild: Selbst in den regulären sechssemestrigen chinawissenschaftlichen Bachelor-Studiengängen differiert die Kontaktzeit zwischen 20 SWS und 72 SWS (beides Göttinger Studiengänge). In Tübingen umfasst der achtsemestrige B.A.-Studiengang „Sinologie/Chinese Studies mit berufspraktischem Schwerpunkt“ sogar ganze 92 SWS und damit nahezu das Doppelte des durchschnittlichen Umfangs – allerdings unter Einschluss eines einjährigen Sprachaufenthalts in China.

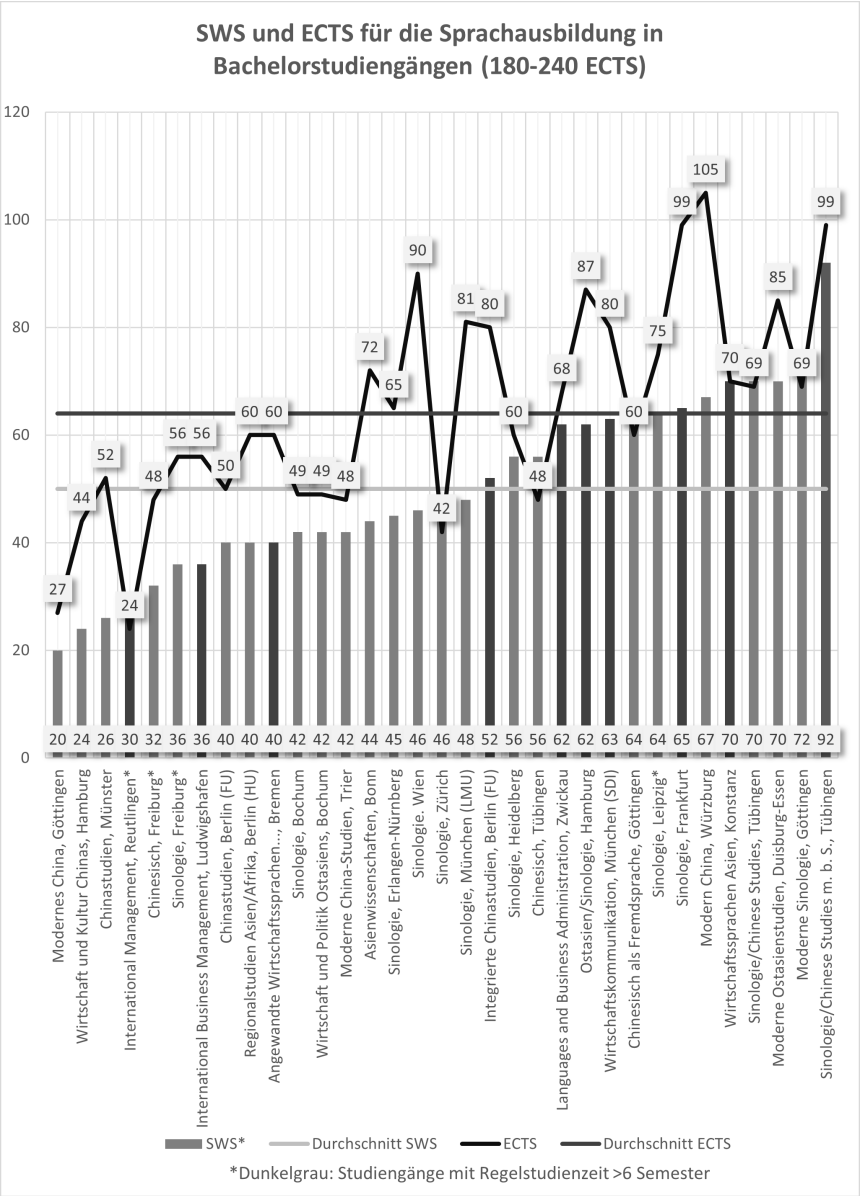
4 Der zweisemestrige M.A.-Studiengang „Integrierte Chinastudien (Master Plus)“ der FU Berlin wurde mangels vorliegender Studienordnung in dieser Untersuchung ansonsten nicht berücksichtigt.

Tabelle 5: Masterstudiengänge mit obligatorischem Sprachstudium im chinesischsprachigen Raum

Studiengang	Standort	Semester
M.A. „M.A. Modern China Studies“	Freiburg	3
M.A. „Chinese Studies“	Würzburg	3
M.A. „China Language and Economy“	Würzburg	3
M.A. „Chinese Politics and Society“	Würzburg	3
M.A. „Languages and Business Administration German-Chinese“	Zwickau	2+3

Diese höchst unterschiedliche Gewichtung einer Sprachausbildung Chinesisch illustriert zum einen divergierende Zielsetzungen der Studiengänge, unterstreicht aber auch die unterschiedlichen Lehrkapazitäten der einzelnen Institute bei dem Bemühen, eine umfassende Sprachausbildung überhaupt anbieten zu können. Das mit der unterschiedlichen Ausgangssituation zwangsläufig höchst unterschiedliche Sprachniveau führt zu entsprechenden Schwierigkeiten bei der Definition sprachkompetenzbezogener Anforderungen bei chinawissenschaftlichen Masterstudiengängen, worauf wir weiter unten zurückkommen.

Diagramm 1: Für die Sprachausbildung angesetzte SWS und ECTS in Bachelorstudiengängen*



* Der Umfang des Sprachstudiums kann in manchen Fällen je nach Wahlbereich variieren (z.B. in Reutlingen oder im Zwei-Fächer-B.A.-Studiengang „Chinesisch“ in Freiburg). Für Reutlingen konnte

zudem das Sprachstudium in China nicht berücksichtigt werden, ebenso fehlt in der obigen Tabelle für Leipzig die im Ausland für das Sprachstudium aufgewandte Zeit, da hier nur die ECTS-Punkte ohne genaue Angabe von SWS definiert sind. Der Studiengang „Übersetzen“ am SDI München wurde in der obigen Grafik nicht berücksichtigt, da er bereits ein Eingangsniveau von B1 voraussetzt, sodass sich die Sprachausbildung nicht mit den anderen hier berücksichtigten Studiengängen vergleichen lässt.

Einer Unterrichtsstunde (von meist 45 Minuten) pro Woche (= 1 SWS) ist laut den Vorgaben des ECTS-Leitfadens ein halber ECTS-Punkt (15 Zeitstunden/Semester) zuzuordnen (vgl. Europäische Union 2015). Nur in Wien und Würzburg wird die Hälfte aller ECTS des Studiums (6 Semester = 180 ECTS) dem Spracherwerb zugebilligt, im Durchschnitt nur ein Drittel, nämlich 63 ECTS-Punkte. Damit ergibt sich ein Durchschnittswert von 1 SWS zu 1,27 ECTS-Punkten.⁵ Dies bedeutet, dass den Studierenden im Durchschnitt pro Unterrichtsstunde 1,5 weitere Stunden selbständige Beschäftigung mit der Sprache eingeräumt werden.

Wie schon in früheren Erhebungen fällt auch hier die sehr unterschiedliche Korrelation von ECTS-Punkten zu SWS an den Standorten auf, was bedeutet, dass der veranschlagte Lernaufwand unterschiedlich betrachtet wird bzw. werden muss: Während in Konstanz, Zürich, Tübingen und Göttingen das Verhältnis bei etwa 1:1 liegt (und damit nur eine weitere Zeitstunde pro Unterrichtsstunde zum selbständigen Lernen vorgesehen wird), entspricht die Relation in Frankfurt, Würzburg oder Berlin (HU) dem Durchschnitt von 1:1,5. In Münster und Wien wird mit einem Verhältnis von etwa 1:2 am meisten zusätzlicher Arbeitsaufwand (ECTS) für eine SWS vorgesehen. Bei all diesen Gegenüberstellungen muss allerdings immer im Blick behalten werden, dass die Anzahl der zur Verfügung stehenden Personalstellen und/oder bestimmte Vorgaben bei der Akkreditierung von Studiengängen hier die entscheidendere Rolle spielen können als die fachliche Einschätzung der Studiengangsleitungen selbst, die sich bei der Studiengangskonzeption vor allem an den zum Teil sehr divergierenden Vorgaben zu orientieren haben.

Wie bereits angesprochen, sind die Kursgrößen, die an den meisten großen Instituten mit 20-30 TN angegeben werden, noch nicht zufriedenstellend, was natürlich – gerade in zunehmend heterogenen Kursen – kaum individuelle Betreuung oder gar Binnendifferenzierung möglich macht (positive Ausnahmen laut Selbstauskunft sind hier die Standorte Zwickau, Reutlingen, Trier und Göttingen). Spezielle Lehrangebote für Lernende mit Vorkenntnissen oder bilingual aufgewachsene (und daher häufig mündlich kompetente, aber über Defizite hinsichtlich Literalität/Schriftzeichensystem verfügende) Studierende werden unseres Wissens noch an keinem Institut angeboten.

In den Sprachkursen der Masterstudiengänge überschreitet die Teilnehmendenzahl der entsprechend fortgeschrittenen Sprachkurse fast nirgends die Kursgröße von 20, tendenziell liegt sie eher im Idealbereich zwischen 10 und 15 TN.

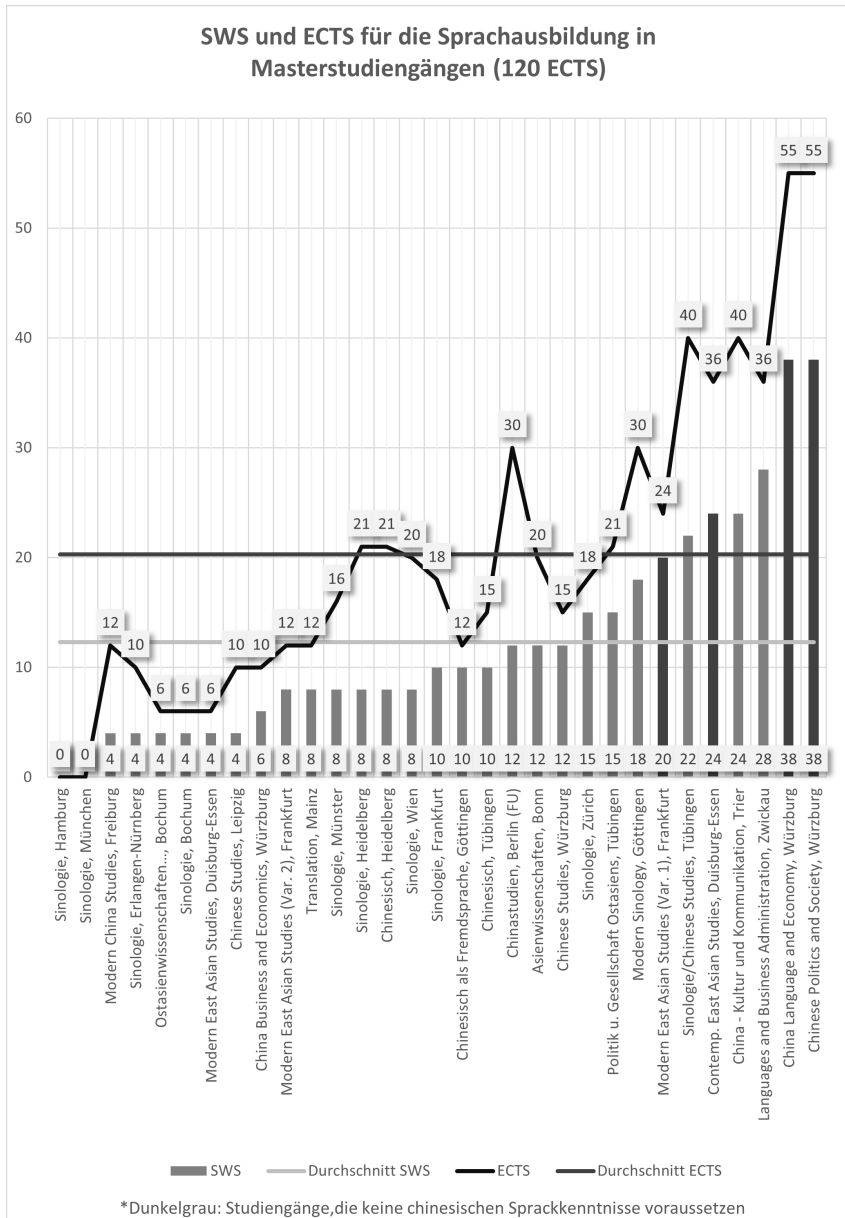
5 Im Folgenden ist das Verhältnis von SWS zu ECTS-Punkten in der Form SWS : ECTS angegeben.

Der Umfang des Sprachunterrichts in chinawissenschaftlichen Masterstudiengängen gestaltet sich jedoch ebenfalls höchst unterschiedlich: Dabei müssen diejenigen Masterstudiengänge, die keinerlei Sprachkenntnisse voraussetzen, gesondert betrachtet werden: Dies sind der Duisburg-Essener Studiengang „Contemporary East Asian Studies“ (24 SWS / 36 ECTS), der Frankfurter Studiengang „Modern East Asian Studies“ in seiner Variante 1 (20 SWS / 24 ECTS mit der Option eines zusätzlichen Sprachsemesters im Ausland) sowie die Würzburger M.A.-Studiengänge „China Language and Economy“ und „Chinese Politics and Society“ (je 38 SWS / 55 ECTS) mit einer recht umfangreichen Grundausbildung Chinesisch. Es fällt auf, dass alle diese Studiengänge in der Arbeitssprache Englisch angeboten werden und somit auf ein internationales Publikum orientiert sind. Alle anderen Masterstudiengänge bauen auf vorhandenen Chinesischkenntnissen auf (zu den Anforderungen siehe folgenden Abschnitt) und bieten zwischen 0 und 28 SWS Chinesischunterricht für Fortgeschrittene an (siehe Diagramm 4).⁶

Auch das Verhältnis SWS : ECTS gestaltet sich recht divers: Im Durchschnitt beträgt die Relation 1 : 1,65, die ECTS pro SWS liegen also nur unwesentlich höher als in den Bachelorstudiengängen. Während an mehreren Instituten eine Unterrichtsstunde mit nur 1,2 ECTS vergütet wird, erhalten Masterstudierende an den Standorten Leipzig oder der FU Berlin 2,5 ECTS pro Unterrichtsstunde, womit sich deutlich umfangreichere (in Heimarbeit zu erfüllende) Lese-, Schreib- oder Vortragsaufgaben auf Chinesisch einfordern lassen.

6 An Instituten wie Frankfurt (1-jähriger Master Sinologie), Hamburg oder München, die in ihren Masterstudiengängen keinen konventionellen Sprachunterricht für Fortgeschrittene anbieten, wird die Sprachkompetenz auf Textlektüre im Rahmen der wissenschaftlichen Lehrveranstaltungen und Fachseminare fokussiert. Auch in Mainz/Germersheim werden nicht alle Übersetzungsübungen des M.A. Translation dem Sprachunterricht zugerechnet. In Zwickau, Tübingen oder Trier hingegen werden auch im Master noch mehr als 20 SWS weiterführender Sprachunterricht angeboten.

Diagramm 2: Für die Sprachausbildung angesetzte SWS und ECTS in Masterstudiengängen



Die Sprachausbildung im Master sieht sich jedoch vor allem mit der Frage konfrontiert, die sich aus der beschriebenen heterogenen Sprachausbildung im Bachelorstudium ergibt: In chinawissenschaftlichen Masterstudiengängen können Studierende mit unterschiedlichen Chinesisch-Niveaustufen aufeinandertreffen, was die Sprachlehrenden vor besondere Herausforderungen stellt. Dies liegt auch daran, dass Zugangsvoraussetzungen für die Masterstudiengänge sehr unterschiedlich definiert werden, was der folgende Abschnitt thematisiert.

Ziele und Inhalte der Sprachausbildung

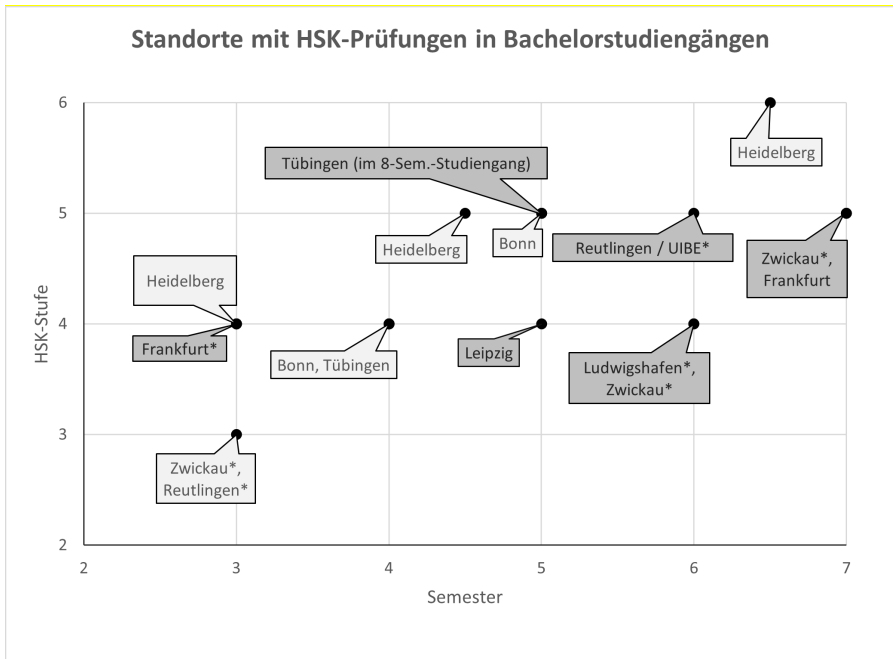
GER-Niveaustufen und standardisierte Sprachprüfungen

Schon 2016 wurde beobachtet, dass „an 16 von 25 Standorten [...] Lernziele von BA-Chinesischkursen unter Verweis auf HSK-Stufen und/oder Kompetenzstufen des Gemeinsamen europäischen Referenzrahmens für Sprachen (GeR) definiert“ wurden (Klötter 2016: 58). Den beiden in Deutschland angebotenen standardisierten Sprachprüfungen für Chinesisch HSK (汉语水平考试 *Hànyǔ shuǐpíng kǎoshì* / Chinese Proficiency Test) aus der Volksrepublik China und TOCFL (華語文能力測驗 *Huáyǔwén nénglì cèyàn* / Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language) aus Taiwan ist es aber bisher nicht gelungen, hier Standards zu setzen. Lediglich an vier von 26 Standorten (Reutlingen, Zwickau, Ludwigshafen und als einzigem chinawissenschaftlichen Institut Frankfurt), die alle auch Pflichtsemester in China umfassen, wird die HSK als Standardprüfung eingesetzt. So muss in Reutlingen und Zwickau das Bestehen von HSK 3 im dritten Semester nachgewiesen werden. Nach dem Studium in China ist ein Nachweis einer bestandenen Prüfung HSK 4 in Frankfurt zum Ende des dritten Semesters, in Ludwigshafen und Zwickau im sechsten Semester zu erbringen. HSK 5 wird in Zwickau wiederum im siebten Semester erwartet, in Reutlingen gehen die Studierenden nach dem 4. Semester an die University of Business and Economics in Beijing, wo sie nach dem 6. oder 8. Semester ebenfalls die HSK 5 absolvieren.⁷

Nicht an allen Standorten können bestandene HSK-Prüfungen als Äquivalente einer Modulprüfung anerkannt werden. Dabei mag die Tatsache eine Rolle spielen, dass die HSK eine primär rezeptive Prüfung des Hör- und Leseverstehens darstellt (erst ab Stufe 5 muss auch ein eigener Text verfasst werden; die aktiv-mündliche Prüfung HSKK wird separat abgelegt und wurde nirgends angegeben).

⁷ Es sei hier darauf verwiesen, dass der Fachverband Chinesisch bereits 2010 in seiner „Erklärung des Fachverbands Chinesisch e.V. zur neuen Chinesischprüfung HSK“ die offiziellen Niveauzuweisungen der HSK zum Europäischen Referenzrahmen entschieden ablehnt und HSK 4 das Niveau A2 bzw. HSK 5 das Niveau B1 zuordnet. Die Behauptungen der HSK-Offiziellen, dass es sich bei der HSK 4 um eine B2-Prüfung handele, behindert eine realistische Einschätzung von Sprachkompetenzen im Chinesischen in Europa bis heute.

Diagramm 3: Standorte mit fakultativ oder obligatorisch eingesetzten HSK-Prüfungen nach Stufen und Semestern



* Pflicht. Dunkel gefärbt: Prüfungstermin nach obligatorischem/n Auslandssemester/n

Die in Taiwan entwickelten TOCFL-Prüfungen werden nur an den Standorten Frankfurt (Band A nach dem dritten Semester) und Heidelberg (Band B nach dem vierten und Band C nach dem sechsten Semester) im Rahmen des Studiums angeboten.

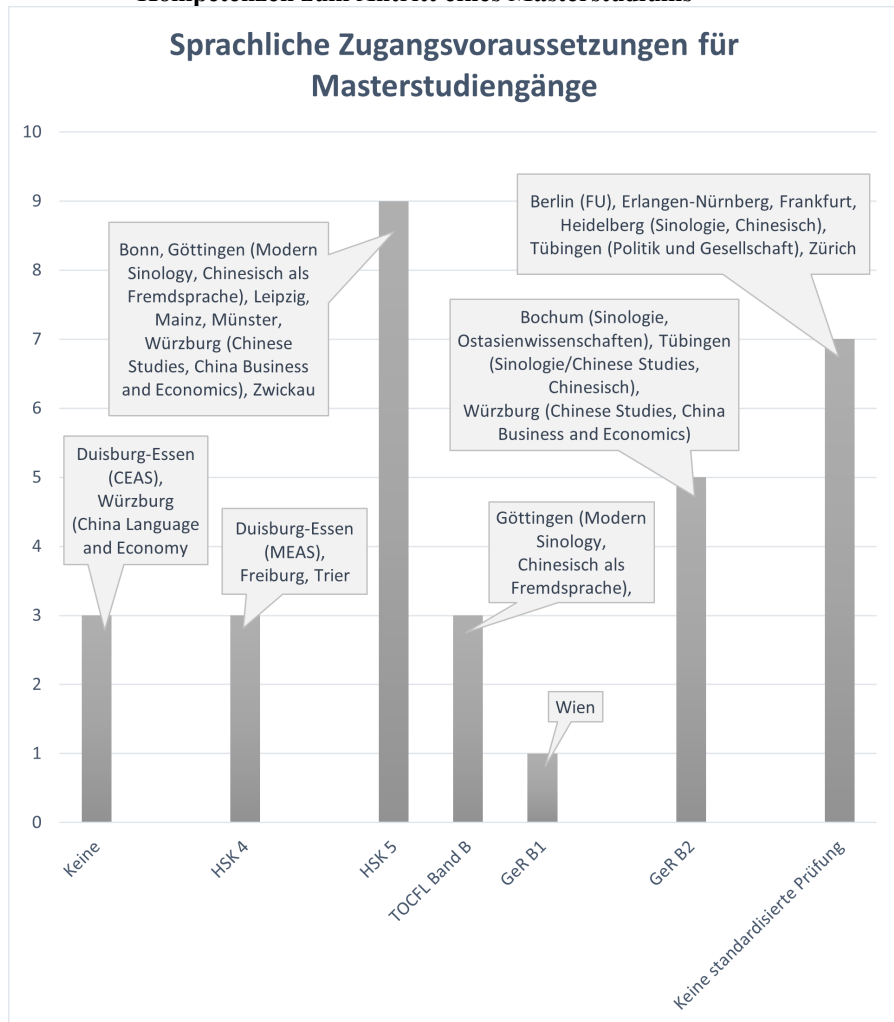
Bezüglich der sprachlichen Mindestanforderungen für Masterstudiengänge findet sich an keinem Standort die Vorgabe, eine standardisierte Sprachprüfung im Laufe des Studiums ablegen zu müssen. Der Nachweis einer bestandenen HSK-Prüfung kann aber an manchen Instituten als Sprachnachweis für die Zulassung verwendet werden. Die meisten Standorte erwarten lediglich einen Nachweis über eine bestimmte ECTS-Anzahl an Chinesischunterricht und lassen sich in drei Gruppen unterteilen:

Gruppe A (Duisburg-Essen, Freiburg, Trier, FU Berlin): Mindestanforderung 30 ECTS Chinesisch oder HSK 4

Gruppe B (die große Mehrheit der Institute): Mindestanforderung 50 ECTS / B.A.-Abschluss / HSK 5 / TOCFL B / GER-Niveau B1

Gruppe C (Bochum, Tübingen, Würzburg):⁸ Institute, die Level B2 als Einstiegskriterium für den Masterstudiengang benennen; allerdings wird an keinem der letztgenannten Institute die diesem Niveau entsprechende HSK 6 als äquivalent angegeben (vgl. die Zuordnungen der HSK-Levels zu den Niveaustufen des GER, vgl. Fußnote 8 bzw. FaCh 2010).

Diagramm 4: Anteile der als sprachliche Zugangsvoraussetzungen definierten Kompetenzen zum Antritt eines Masterstudiums



⁸ Für den einjährigen Master in Frankfurt werden sogar 90 ECTS-Punkte im Bereich Modernes Chinesisch und darüber hinaus 6 ECTS-Punkte Klassisches Chinesisch erwartet.

Angesichts des unterschiedlichen Umfangs des Chinesisch-Sprachunterrichts in unterschiedlichen Bachelorstudiengängen und zahlreicher individueller Lernbiografien mit längeren China-Aufenthalten ist es nicht erstaunlich, dass zahlreiche Standorte im Zuge der Erhebung die Heterogenität der Sprachkenntnisse im Masterbereich als eine der größten Herausforderungen in der Sprachausbildung bezeichnet haben. Wenn eine bestandene Prüfung HSK 4 (mit einem Wortschatzumfang von 1200 Lexemen) als Mindestvoraussetzung für den Zugang zu einem chinawissenschaftlichen Master gilt, befähigt dies natürlich in keiner Weise zum kompetenten Umgang mit originalsprachlichem Forschungsmaterial oder zu einem akademischen Diskurs auf Chinesisch, wie er von jungen Forscherinnen und Forschern chinabezogener Wissenschaften erwartet werden könnte. Die Institute stehen vor dem Dilemma, einerseits in ihrem institutionellen Rahmen möglichst ausgelastete chinawissenschaftliche Master-Studiengänge nachzuweisen, andererseits aber ihren eigenen Qualitätsansprüchen bzgl. der Sprachkompetenzen ihrer Masterstudierenden gerecht zu werden. Möglicherweise repräsentativ für diese Problematik ist folgendes Zitat aus der Befragung:

Unsere Beobachtung ist, dass an bestimmten Universitäten die Ausbildung in sinologischen Fächern (Staat und Gesellschaft, jüngere chin. Geschichte, Gegenwartskultur inkl. Literatur) zugunsten der Sprachausbildung leidet bzw. gar nicht stattfindet, während andere Unis die Sprachausbildung zugunsten sinologischer Inhalte beschnitten haben. Nur wenige Unis bekommen es hin, dass sowohl Sprache als auch sinologisches Wissen in zufriedenstellendem Umfang unterrichtet werden. (Aus der Befragung; anonymisiert)

Gemeinsame verbindliche Sprachkompetenzstandards für chinawissenschaftliche Bachelorstudiengängen im Interesse eines möglichst einfachen Wechsels von einem Institut ans andere bleiben ein Desideratum, und es bleibt abzuwarten, ob die angekündigte Prüfung HSK 3.0 hier mehr Akzeptanz finden und neue Standards setzen wird.

Gewichtung der Kompetenzen in der Sprachausbildung

An im Grunde allen Instituten wird Chinesisch als moderne Fremdsprache, d.h. sowohl in seinen mündlichen als auch in seinen schriftlichen Dimensionen, vermittelt. Die Detailfrage nach der Gewichtung der Kompetenzen ergab, dass in der Ausbildung im Bachelor die Kompetenzen „Schreiben“ und „Übersetzen“ hinter „Mündliche Kommunikation“ sowie „Lesekompetenz“ zurückbleiben. Gegenüber 2016 fällt außerdem auf, dass das Schreiben von Hand, damals noch als nahezu von gleicher Wichtigkeit wie die Bereiche mündliche Kommunikation und die Lesekompetenz eingestuft, an Bedeutung verloren hat. Die Bedeutung des digitalen Schreibens hingegen hat gegenüber der Befragung von 2015/16 dennoch nur leicht zugenommen, was als genereller Rückgang der Bedeutung von Schreibkompetenz interpretiert werden kann.

Die Bedeutung der Lesekompetenz nimmt in Masterstudiengängen gegenüber dem Bachelor noch einmal zu, zudem gewinnt im Vergleich zum Grundstudium naturgemäß auch die Übersetzungsfähigkeit an Relevanz.

In Masterstudiengängen diversifizieren sich die Ausrichtungen der Chinesischmodule noch stärker: Während einige Institute ihre Module fertigungsübergreifend „Modernes Chinesisch VI“ oder „Fortgeschrittenes Chinesisch 1–3“ oder auch „Wirtschaftschinesisch“ labeln, finden sich anderswo auch primär auf Lesefertigkeit orientierte Veranstaltungen, die Zeitungslektüre, literarische Texte oder auch (z.T. wissenschaftliche) Übersetzungskompetenz in den Fokus nehmen. An vielen Instituten werden außerdem Lektürekurse angeboten, die jeweils einem inhaltlichen Seminarthema zugeordnet sind (und dann auch von den Befragten z.T. nicht der Sprachausbildung zugeordnet wurden). In keiner Institution bestanden dezidierte Schreibkurse im Sinne selbständiger Textproduktion.

Lehrwerke

Trotz der inzwischen beträchtlichen Auswahl an Lehrwerken wurde von mehreren Befragten Unzufriedenheit mit dem aktuellen Angebot geäußert. Insbesondere wird ein fehlendes Angebot an Lehrwerken für chinawissenschaftliche Inhalte vermisst. Diese Problematik nimmt im Master noch zu; kein Institut kann aktuell ein Lehrwerk für Sprachkurse im Rahmen des chinawissenschaftlichen Masterstudiums empfehlen. Dies ist natürlich der Vielfalt in der Ausrichtung der Arbeitsschwerpunkte in den einzelnen Masterstudiengängen geschuldet, die sich mit ihrem knappen Unterrichtsdeputat zwischen dem Aufbau aller sprachlichen Kompetenzen oder einer stärker wissenschaftlichen (und damit Lesekompetenz in den Mittelpunkt stellenden) Orientierung ihrer Chinesisch-Ausbildung in der einen oder anderen Richtung zu entscheiden haben:

„Es mangelt an hochwertigen Lehrwerken für die Oberstufe, die nicht ausschließlich auf literarische Werke ausgerichtet sind. Es mangelt ebenfalls an gut ausgebildeten Unterrichtskräften, die den inhaltlichen Anforderungen an einen hochwertigen Sprachunterricht im Masterstudium gewachsen sind. Früher haben Professor/innen in diesem Bereich unterrichtet. Das ist heutzutage eher die Ausnahme. Sprachlehrer/innen sind den Texten oft inhaltlich nicht gewachsen.“
(Aus der Befragung; anonymisiert)

Für die detaillierte Analyse der in den Studiengängen verwendeten Chinesischlehrwerke wird auf den umfangreicheren Bericht dieser Erhebung in CHUN/Chinesischunterricht 36/2021 verwiesen.

Klassisches Chinesisch

Deutlich mehr als die Hälfte der erfassten Bachelorstudiengänge bieten neben Modernem Chinesisch auch Einführungen in „Klassisches Chinesisch“ oder „Vormodernes Chinesisch“ an. In 14 Studiengängen sind diese Module

obligatorisch, in acht weiteren fakultativ. Betrachtet man sowohl Pflicht- wie Wahlmodule, können mit Kursen im Bereich Klassisches / Vormodernes Chinesisch – die im Unterschied zum Modernen Chinesisch naturgemäß keine mündlichen Kommunikations- und auch keine aktiven Schreibkenntnisse fordern – zumeist nur etwa 10 ECTS-Punkte erworben werden. Besondere Schwerpunkte in der „klassischen“ Sinologie sind Hamburg mit insgesamt 21 ECTS im achtsemestrigen B.A.-Studiengang „Ostasien/Sinologie“ sowie die LMU München mit Pflichtmodulen im Umfang von 18 ECTS, gefolgt von Bonn (16) und Freiburg (12), beide im Wahlbereich.

Bei den Masterstudiengängen beinhalten nur knapp ein Drittel Module im Bereich des Klassischen und Vormodernen Chinesisch (9 von insgesamt 31 Studiengängen). Je nach Ausrichtung des Instituts variiert der Umfang dieser Kurse stark. Mit 25 ECTS-Punkten und dem Schwerpunkt „Vormodernes Chinesisch“ im Studiengang M.A. „Sinologie/Chinese Studies“ werden in Tübingen die meisten ECTS-Punkte in diesem Bereich vergeben. Auch an den Standorten Trier und Würzburg (dort Studiengang „Chinese Studies“) ist der Anteil an entsprechenden Studienpunkten mit 18 bzw. 21 vergleichsweise hoch. In Bonn sind mit dem Schwerpunkt Sinologie im Masterstudiengang „Asienwissenschaften“ Pflichtmodule im Umfang 20 ECTS-Punkten vorgesehen, in denen hauptsächlich klassische Texte gelesen werden. Hinzu kommen naturgemäß nicht immer klare Abgrenzungen zwischen entsprechenden Sprachkursen und Seminaren, die ebenfalls die Lektüre vormoderner Texte zum Inhalt haben. Insgesamt zeigt sich, dass eine textbasierte Befassung mit dem historischen China vor dem 20. Jahrhundert und dessen zentraler Bedeutung für die ostasiatische Geistesgeschichte, Geschichts- oder Religionswissenschaften je nach Ausrichtung der Institute sehr unterschiedlich stark vertreten ist.

Umgang mit Kurz- und Langzeichen

Neben der Dualität von Klassischem und Modernem Chinesisch steht der Chinesisch-Sprachunterricht auch vor der Herausforderung zweier parallel existierender Standards des Schriftzeichensystems, wobei es wenig überraschend ist, dass die Verwendung von Kurzzeichen an drei Vierteln der Standorte dominiert. Mancherorts werden Langzeichen nur rezeptiv im Kontext des Klassischen und Vormodernen Chinesisch vermittelt (Bonn, Freiburg, Zürich), ein Drittel der hier berücksichtigten Institute verzichtet gänzlich auf die Integration von Langzeichen im Unterricht. An den Standorten Münster, Bochum, München (LMU), Leipzig, Hamburg (im Studiengang „Ostasien/Sinologie“) und Göttingen herrscht hingegen der Ansatz vor, zunächst Langzeichen auch aktiv zu lehren, um erst später auch Kurzzeichen zu vermitteln. Der umgekehrte Ansatz, mit den Kurzzeichen zu beginnen und später auf Langzeichen zu wechseln, findet sich am Standort Trier. In Zürich sowie ab dem zweiten Lernjahr auch in Bochum, Göttingen und Leipzig wird es den Studierenden freigestellt, in welchem System

sie selbst schreiben wollen. Der größte Teil der Institute (40%) unterrichtet in Kurzzeichen, gibt jedoch an, Wert auf eine passive Beherrschung der Langzeichen zu legen.

Diese Haltung gegenüber Kurz- und Langzeichen an den verschiedenen Standorten verändert sich im Wechsel von Bachelor zu Master nicht. Institute, die im Bachelor vor allem Kurzzeichen gelehrt haben, behalten diese Praxis im Master bei, sodass auch hier deutlich die Verwendung von Kurzzeichen dominiert.

Prüfungsformen

Die große Mehrheit, nämlich drei Viertel der Bachelorstudiengänge, beinhaltet der Betrachtung des Chinesischen als Moderne Fremdsprache entsprechend sowohl schriftliche wie mündliche Prüfungsformen, wobei letztere an manchen Standorten nur vereinzelt durchgeführt werden. An stärker auf das historische China ausgerichteten Instituten wie Münster, München und Trier wird eigenen Angaben zufolge auf mündliche Prüfungen gänzlich verzichtet. In Masterstudiengängen nimmt der Anteil an Modulen mit ausschließlich schriftlichen Prüfungsformen zu.

Gelegentliche mündliche Prüfungen sind jedoch – neben kleinen Kursgrößen – ein wichtiges Moment, Sprachgefühl für die chinesische Sprache zu entwickeln. Hier zeichnet sich die zugrunde liegende Entscheidung zwischen einem vor allem auf Lesekompetenz orientierten Sprachunterricht und einem alle Kompetenzen gleichermaßen zum Ziel erklärenden Sprachunterricht ab: Die Tatsache, dass mündliche Einzelprüfungen bei großen Kohorten mit sehr hohem zeitlichen Aufwand verbunden sind (zumal häufig zwei Prüfer anwesend sein müssen), führt dazu, dass an manchen Instituten darauf verzichtet wird – womit die angestrebte Gleichrangigkeit mündlicher und schriftlicher Kompetenzausbildung konterkariert wird. An anderen Instituten fordern auch die Prüfungsämter eine Reduzierung der Prüfungen, was im Ergebnis ebenfalls häufig zulasten der Sicherung mündlich-kommunikativer Kompetenzen ausfällt.

Im Zuge der Corona-Pandemie sind Distanzprüfungen eingeführt worden, die aufgrund der bestehenden Unsicherheiten in Bezug auf Betrugsmöglichkeiten derzeit noch keinen nachhaltigen Trend darzustellen scheinen. Die Tatsache, dass – im Unterschied zu alphabetisierten Sprachen – offenbar überall in den Grundmodulen weiterhin auch handschriftliche Kompetenzen geprüft werden, erschwert die Durchführung von schriftlichen Distanzprüfungen zusätzlich.

Digitalisierung des Chinesischunterrichts

Die Umstellung auf Distanzunterricht als Folge der Corona-Pandemie hat tiefgreifende Veränderungen im generellen universitären Lehrbetrieb und dementsprechend auch im Chinesisch-Sprachunterricht bewirkt. Über Plattformen wie Zoom, Webex oder Big Blue Button musste Sprache auf Distanz vermittelt werden, was eine deutliche Reduzierung der sozial-kommunikativen Dimension

von Sprachunterricht zur Folge hatte. Zum Zeitpunkt der Erhebung lagen viele dieser Entwicklungen erst kurz zurück oder bahnten sich gerade erst an, weshalb die Daten an dieser Stelle kein resümierendes Fazit erlauben.

Während vereinzelt über „fehlende technische Voraussetzungen zur sinnvollen Digitalisierung des Unterrichts“ geklagt wurde, wurden auch positive Effekte ins Feld geführt: So wurde herausgestellt, dass mehr selbstständiges Lernen durch Apps stattfindet, ebenso konnte durch Social Media der Kontakt der Lernenden mit Muttersprachlern intensiviert werden. 17 der insgesamt 26 berücksichtigten Standorte gaben an, in Kursen auf digitale Angebote zurückzugreifen, was vom Einsatz von Video- und Audiomaterial über die Nutzung von E-Learning-Plattformen (wie Moodle, ILIAS, OLAT oder Blackboard) bis zur Verwendung von Lerntools wie „Quizlet“ und Lernspielen wie „Kahoot!“ reicht. Besonders stark scheint das digitale Angebot an den Standorten Erlangen und Berlin (FU) ausgeprägt zu sein, wo mit „StudOn“ beziehungsweise „eChinese“ eigene E-Learning-Plattformen etabliert wurden. Nur zehn Institute geben allerdings an – tendenziell ab dem zweiten Lernjahr und zu einem kleinen Teil (meist ca. 20%) – auch digitale Hausaufgaben einzufordern.

Resümee

Auch wenn die Möglichkeiten selbständigen und digitalen Lernens enorm zugenommen haben: Chinesisch bleibt eine der weltweit lernaufwändigsten Sprachen, und zahlreiche Studien, allen voran die Hattie-Studie, belegen, dass es – neben individuellen Faktoren des/der Lernenden selbst – vor allem die Kompetenz, Ausbildung und Persönlichkeit der anleitenden Lehrkraft sind, die eine zentrale Bedeutung für erfolgreiche Lernprozesse besitzen (vgl. Zierer 2016: 57 ff). Der Aufbau von Chinesischkompetenzen in allen ihren Dimensionen wird auch weiterhin vor allem Aufgabe von gut ausgebildeten, kompetenten, motivierenden und motivierten Lehrpersönlichkeiten bleiben, die mit entsprechend umfangreichen Kontaktzeiten und kleinen Kursgrößen entsprechende Lernerfolge bewirken können.

Es ist klar, dass eine solche Lehrkraft nicht nur Chinesisch-Sprachkompetenz, sondern auch eine fremdsprachenpädagogische Ausbildung mit entsprechender Reflexions- und Diskussionsfähigkeit über Lehr- und Lernziele, eine sinologische/chinawissenschaftliche Orientierung sowie idealerweise auch noch gute Deutsch- und Englischkenntnisse und eine hohe interkulturelle Sensibilität besitzen sollte – ein Ziel, zu dessen Entwicklung eine standardisierte Studienbiografie zumeist nicht ausreicht.

Vor allem aber bedarf die Ausgestaltung des Sprachunterrichts nicht nur im Rahmen von chinawissenschaftlichen Studiengängen einer differenzierten Reflexion der diversen Kompetenzziele, die im Rahmen eines solchen Studiengangs erreicht werden sollen bzw. können. Einerseits ist es heute selbstverständlich, dass Studierende in einem chinawissenschaftlichen Studium

auch dazu befähigt werden, die Sprache mündlich und in diversen Kommunikationssituationen anzuwenden und im chinesischen Sprachraum kompetent zu agieren, andererseits stellt vor allem die Lesefähigkeit für eine Vielzahl von Textsorten aus diversen Quellen und Zeiträumen die im Sinne einer wissenschaftlichen Befassung mit China zentrale Kompetenz einer Sinologin / eines Chinawissenschaftlers dar, wie sich auch an manchen Sprachmodulen der Masterstudiengänge erkennen lässt. Jedoch reichen die hier angebotenen Module bei weitem nicht aus, neben der Textlektüre außerdem die Fähigkeit zu erwerben, auf einem mit B2 vergleichbaren Niveau mündlich und schriftlich in diversen sprachlichen Handlungsfeldern adäquat zu interagieren. Für entsprechend anspruchsvolle Lernziele und Sprachhandlungen wie z.B. mündliche Interaktion im Rahmen von Geschäftsbeziehungen oder Mediation in interkulturellen Settings kann zumeist kein Unterricht angeboten werden. Zur realistischen Betrachtung von Lehrzielen in B.A.-Studiengängen und zur Stützung der Bemühungen um eine entsprechende Unterstützung innerhalb der Hochschulen sei an dieser Stelle noch einmal auf die „Leipziger Empfehlungen des Fachverbands Chinesisch 2016 zum Chinesischunterricht im Rahmen von chinaorientierten BA- und MA-Studiengängen“ (Fachverband Chinesisch 2016) verwiesen, die diese Problematik unterstreichen.

Hinzu kommt die allseits dringend befürwortete, für die fremdsprachliche Entwicklung oft entscheidende, aber mit dem Korsett der dreijährigen Studiengänge schwer vereinbare Sprachstudienzeit von möglichst einem Studienjahr in China oder Taiwan, deren Organisation und Betreuung aus diversen sprachlichen, bildungspolitischen und administrativen Gründen zusätzliche personelle und finanzielle Ressourcen fordert und natürlich in den meisten Fällen sprach- und motivationsfördernd, aber studienzeitverlängernd wirkt. Es wäre wünschenswert, wenn sich hier zusätzliche Wege finden ließen, für eine Regionalexpertise zwingend erforderliche Jahresaufenthalte zu subventionieren. (Dies gilt auch und insbesondere für die ebenfalls benötigte Expertise zu kleineren Sprach- und Kulturräumen Asiens und Afrikas.)

Zum vom BMBF auf seiner Website geforderten „quantitativen und qualitativen Auf- und Ausbau von Chinakompetenz“ gehört fraglos, dass wir in Europa Menschen brauchen, die neben einer fundierten Ausbildung zu Chinas kulturellen, historischen, sozialen oder politischen Gegebenheiten die chinesische Sprache soweit beherrschen, dass sie zumindest auf Mittelstufenniveau (B1/B2) lesen und kommunizieren können. Dies ist/wäre, wie der Fachverband Chinesisch und andere Institutionen mehrfach festgestellt haben, nur im Rahmen eines Studiums mit sehr umfangreichen Sprachanteilen möglich. Solange es aber in allen untersuchten chinabezogenen Studiengängen im gesamten deutschsprachigen Raum insgesamt weniger als 50 feste Stellen gibt, deren definierte Aufgabe es ist, eben diesen professionellen Chinesischunterricht – und dies ausschließlich im Rahmen von chinafokussierten Studiengängen – anzubieten, erscheint die angestrebte

umfassende Förderung von sogenannter China-Kompetenz weiterhin als *Cāng hǎi yī sù* (沧海一粟): ein Hirsekorn im weiten Ozean.

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DGA Biennial Conference “Transnational Asian Studies—Multi-level Dynamics of Identity Formation and Institution Building”, organized in cooperation with AREA Ruhr

DGA and AREA Ruhr (online), March 10–12, 2021

Report by Dennis Arabadzhev, Dirk Bremann, Anna Grimminger, Gwendolin Kleine Stegemann, Kerstin Lukner, Annika Seidel, Lea Wallraff, and Anke Weißelmann

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis the Alliance for Research on East Asia (AREA) Ruhr, a joint research and teaching alliance of the Faculty of East Asian Studies at Bochum University and the Institute of East Asian Studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen, hosted the 2021 DGA biennial conference as an online event, offering virtual museum tours and country trips, virtual tea rooms for private chats, as well as an online quiz on top of three keynote speeches, three roundtables and fifteen conference panels. The conference was joined by 215 participants. On the first conference day, Claudia Derichs (HU Berlin) gave a thought-provoking keynote lecture on “Transnational Asian Studies: Implementing an Agenda for our Times” in which she argued in favor of rescaling research entities when studying regions and focusing on “entities of interest” instead of on mere geographical units. With regards to transnational research methods Derichs emphasized the importance of epistemic decolonization, i.e. the inclusion of non-Western analytical concepts and methodological approaches, as well as collaboration with colleagues in and from Asia. In the subsequent panel discussion, Susanne Brandtstädter (Cologne), Matthias Middell (Leipzig), Jörg Plassen (Bochum/AREA Ruhr), and Karen Shire (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) agreed on the need to make the voices of “global Asia” more audible in their respective fields of research and reflected on ways to do so as well as obstacles to decolonization in their own Asia-related scholarship.

The second and third conference days each started with an early keynote lecture as a joint event for all conference participants. For the rest of the two conference days, participants were then able to choose between two to three different panel sessions that were conducted at the same time. The first early keynote on the “Transnational Coproduction of Food Safety in Asia” by Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin) aimed at illustrating how research on transnational mobilities of food, knowledge, people and related but contested concepts could contribute to a better understanding of power relations in Asia. Reiher first showed how different groups of Japanese actors were able to set up and influence shrimp production in Vietnam and across the Asian region according to their own standards and then explained how transnational protest networks organized their food-related anti-TPP campaign. The keynote revealed multifaceted power relations in the realm of transnational food production and pointed to the importance of scientific knowledge in the (regional) food safety regime. In the subsequent discussion the

audience commented and raised questions on various issues such as conflicts between culture and science in food production and safety, food justice as well as alternative food regimes.

The double panel on “Industrialization in Northeast Asia—A Long-Term Perspective 1900–Now” (organized by Christiansen and Moll-Murata) dealt with Northeast Asia’s industrial transformation under Japanese and Russian influence with a focus on Northeast Asia’s industrial dynamism and its broader relevance for global industrialization processes. In her presentation on “Industrialization of Inner-Mongolia in the Phase of Mengjiang (1937–45)”, Christine Moll-Murata (Bochum /AREA Ruhr) outlined the industrialization processes in Inner-Mongolia, highlighting and critically evaluating the speed with which Japanese enterprises and colonial institutions appeared in the region. The talk by Limin Teh (Leiden) on “Geopolitics, Coal Production, and Labor Processes in the Fushun Coalmine, 1946–48” showed how the state’s capacity for governance was weakened by the absence of industrial equipment, raw materials, and finished stock, which had been taken away by the Soviets after their withdrawal in 1946. In his presentation on “Northeast Asia—History and Conundrum of Frontiers and Margins”, Flemming Christiansen (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) discussed the dynamics of “territorial shifting” in the region, with a particular focus on Chinese-flagged territories that were in fact more independent than had previously been assumed. The presentation by Katarzyna Golik (Polish Academy of Science) on “Dependent Development of a Post-Transition State—The Case of Mongolia” showed how China’s structural power influenced the Sino-Mongolian economic relationship at the social, political and legal levels. Golik questioned whether Mongolia could play a prominent role in the northern economic region in the future. In their presentation on “Nutaq Councils as Postsocialist Lifelines between the Steppe and the Metropolises in Mongolia”, Ines Stolpe and Tümen-Ochiryn Erdene Ochir (both Bonn) scrutinized how rural and urban spheres within Mongolia’s borders were connected via Nutaq councils (a form of self-government), and how these civil society instruments represented modern Mongolia in showing the deep connections Mongolians in the big cities and abroad have with their rural origins.

The panel “Civil Society in Identity-Formation and Institution-Building Processes in Asia” (organized by Caspari, Ketels, and Szczepanska) asked how civil society actors contributed to processes of identity formation and institution building in Asia. In her talk on “Managing China’s Civil Society in the Xi Era: The Case of LGBT Activism”, Anna Caspari (Bochum) illustrated the development of civil society from the 1990s to present and scrutinized the regime’s strategy of handling LGBT-related issues and civil society activism. Anja Ketels’ (Münster) presentation on “NGOs in China’s Foreign Policy: Processes, Strategies and Objectives Behind the ‘Going Global’ of Chinese NGOs” showed China’s approach of realizing a more diversified and proactive foreign policy with the involvement of NGOs. In the presentation on “The Challenge of Building Institutional Framework for Collaboration: Development Cooperation Networking

between North East Asian NGOs in the 21st Century”, Kamila Szczepanska (Turku) examined three case studies to analyze the collaboration in international development between NGOs in Japan, South Korea, China, and Taiwan. She discussed global governance theories and research on civil society networks as well as the NGOs’ efforts to build a stable institutional framework to strengthen their mutual collaboration.

The panel on “Transnational Economies, Digital Labor and Globalization: Exploring Chinese Entrepreneurs” was organized and chaired by Béatrice Zani (Tübingen, ENS Lyon) and Tseng, Yu-Chin (Tübingen). Jaok Kwon (Heidelberg) and Jamie Coates (Sheffield) acted as discussants. The first presentation by Yong Li (ENS Lyon) on “The Development of Chinese Ethnic Food Trade in France: The Case of ‘Belleville’ and ‘Triangle de Choisy’ in Paris” focused on the transformation of the Chinese diaspora and Chinese businesses over two generations. Tang Ling (Hong Kong) continued with a talk on “Burning out in the Digital Economy on China: E-Commerce, Platform Economy and Social Networking Economy”, arguing there was a high rate of self-exploitation in the digital economy due to shared values developed in the context of *guanxi*-relationships. The presentation by Yong Li (ENS Lyon) on “The E-Commerce of Infant Milk Among Chinese Migrant Women in France: Morality, Gender Performance and Transnational Social Ties” shed light on the various motivations of Chinese women in France to trade infant milk to China and on their strategies to become successful entrepreneurs. In the last talk on “International Education, Digital Worlds and Entrepreneurial Awareness: A Case Study based in the Experience of Chinese Students in France”, Claudia Astarita (IAO Lyon) scrutinized how and why Chinese international students’ perspectives on China and their entrepreneurial interests were subject to change during their time abroad. The different papers all gave important insights into the complexity of Chinese immigrants’ entrepreneurial practices in multiple spaces in France.

In the panel on “Transnational Mobility in East Asia and beyond and its Institutional Actors” (organized by Hüstebeck and Kwon), five presentations introduced a wide range of ongoing or planned research projects related to transnational (im-)migration experiences and practice, with a focus on institutional actors. In her talk on “Birth of Global Nomads among Korean Youth in the IT Sector: Interactions of Institutional Actors at the Local and National Levels”, Jaok Kwon (Heidelberg) analyzed government policies on youth mobility in the IT sector. Whereas there was state support for educational programs at different levels of government to increase IT-related knowledge, institutional actors stressed self-responsibility for transnational mobility at the same time. Ruth Achenbach (Frankfurt) turned toward “Japanese Labor Market Demands vs Career Goals: The Case of Chinese Graduates in Japan”, explaining how the inconsistencies between Japan’s migration policy and Japanese companies’ actual demands for skilled workers led to high return rates of Chinese graduates in Japan in the long run. Momoyo Hüstebeck’s (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) presentation on “Migrant

Policies of Japanese Municipalities: Local Governments Filling the National Vacuum” showed that municipalities played an active role in integrating migrants locally despite the absence of an immigration law for low-skilled workers. As municipalities acted on an MHLW initiative, Hüstebeck did not rate their engagement as bottom-up. The talk by Julia Marrinaccio (Bergen) on “Dealing with the Absence of Absentee Voting: Voter Mobilization in Transnational Spaces in the 2020 Elections in Taiwan” asked how and why Taiwanese in Austria did (not) take part in the 2020 election in Taiwan, scrutinizing the processes, actors, and practices in transnational voter mobilization. Xiaoying Jin (Heidelberg) turned toward “Korean Migrants and the Engagement of Institutional Actors for Integration in Germany” by examining the role and activities of the Federation of Koreans in Germany and its changing role over time. After two Q&A sessions, first on inner-Asian migration, then on migration from Asia, Anja Senz (Heidelberg) reflected on the five presentations and discussed their points of similarity (such as practices of integration and exclusion).

The panel “Defenders of the Empire in Late Nineteenth Century East Asia: Ching-Chosŏn (清-朝鮮) Negotiated Sovereignty and de facto Protectorate”, organized by Jihoon Chun (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) and chaired by Marc Matten (Erlangen-Nürnberg), examined the foreign policy of the Chosŏn kingdom. The independent scholar Song Yeol Han’s presentation on “Chosŏn-Qing Envoy Brush Talk and New Framework of Informal Diplomacy towards the Opening of Korea” discussed the role of informal diplomacy in the form of two “brush talks” and concluded that Chosŏn foreign policy was not a mere result of foreign influence, but a consequence of a long tradition rooted in its own history and identity. According to the panelist, the driving force for restoring diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan was based on preexisting models of Confucian kingship. The second presentation by Jihoon Chun on “Defenders of a Confucian Empire Confronted with ‘Public Law of all Nations’ 萬國公法: Ching-Chosŏn 清-朝鮮 Negotiated Sovereignty and 屬邦體制 as Transcendent Protectorate during 1882–1895” focused on Ching-Chosŏn foreign policy and interpolity relations. Chun argued that the transcendent protectorate 皇清朝鮮 was an overarching and unifying authority with suzerain-vassal relations, a protectorate, and (con-)federal union. The two presentations were followed by detailed comments from Nianshen Song (Maryland) and Yoo Bada (Korea University).

The panel “Convergence with and Divergence from Eurocentric Regional Institutional Integration” (Joe and Cao) focused on developments in Asian regionalism and was based on reflections on classic Eurocentric frameworks and models of new regionalism theory. The presentation by Un-Hye Joe (Jena) concentrated on “correct law” (in German: richtiges Recht) by examining the European doctrine of integration principles and discussing their applicability to the East Asian experience by looking at ASEAN, for instance. In the presentation on “Never Again: Dystopian Temporality as a Normative Condition of Transnational

Asia”, Francis Cao (Frankfurt) shifted the focus to the process of the realization of law (in German: Prozess der Rechtsverwirklichung). He elaborated on the temporal formation of transnational Asia and its impact on constitutionalism operating beyond the state. Cao pointed out how dystopian temporality was evident in symbols, procedures and discourses that emphasized underdevelopment and conflicts, hampering joint regional attempts for economic prosperity.

The panel on “Transnational Migration and Contemporary Japan: Flows and Realities” was organized by Muranaka and Tran. Eline Delmarcelle’s (Waseda) presentation on “Renouncing the Past, Becoming ‘One of Them’: Naturalized Japanese Citizens’ Negotiation of the Single-Citizenship System” asked why there were not more immigrants who applied for Japanese citizenship and scrutinized the reasons of those who accepted single Japanese citizenship. Panel discussant Ruth Achenbach (Frankfurt) subsequently commented on the theoretical concept of identity used in the talk. In “Differentiating between ‘I’m a Chinese’ and ‘I am a Chinese Newcomer in Japan’—A Discussion on Chinese Immigrants’ Ethnic Identity and National Belonging”, Bin Li (FU Berlin) analyzed Chinese immigrants’ ideas of belonging depending on context. The subsequent discussion focused on the research approach and methodology and the challenges they posed. The talk by Aimi Muranaka (Duisburg-Essen) on “Sourcing Foreign Skilled Labor via Cross-Border Training: Study of Japanese Temporary Staffing Firms’ Recruitment and Training of Vietnamese IT-Skilled Workers” explored how the Japanese private sector has shaped the cross-border labor market by training Vietnamese workers for employment in Japan. She also highlighted the long-term prospects of these specially trained Vietnamese workers. Helena Hof’s presentation on “The Gendered Migration Trajectories of European Labor Migrants in Tokyo” examined the different experiences of a sample of European labor migrants in Japan over several years, highlighting the differences in the workers’ trajectories depending on their gender. Hof’s hypothesis that female migrants met more challenges in the male-dominated environment of Japanese firms contrasted with Achenbach’s own findings on the subject. This led to a lively discussion as well as inquiries about the migrant women’s strategies of coping with the male domination. In “Japanese Do not Like Vietnamese Men—Negotiating Sexualities among Male Vietnamese Migrants in Japan”, Huy An Tran (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) raised the question of how Vietnamese men negotiate their sexualities in an environment that generally does not view them as sexually desirable. The audience was specifically interested in the Japanese perspective on the topic and in whether sexual desirability could be viewed as a kind of sociological capital.

The panel on “Die ‘Manzhouguo-Identität’—Akteure, Institutionen und Diskurse zur Schaffung einer transnationalen Identität für die Bewohner des Staates Manzhouguo (1932–45)” was one of the few meetings conducted in German. The panel organizer Anke Scherer’s (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) presentation on “Die ‘Manzhouguo-Identität’ und der Plan zur Schaffung einer neuen ostasiatischen

Moderne” discussed how Japanese political actors avoided to officially create a joint citizenship/nationality in the multiethnic state on the one hand but sought to establish a common Manzhouguo identity for its citizens on the other, e.g., through its welfare policies, attempting to grant its colonialist action a high degree of legitimacy. In her talk on “Kolonialarchäologie in der Mandschurei—Die Schaffung einer ‘Manzhouguo-Identität’ durch archäologische Konzepte?”, Aline Dreher (Bochum) addressed how Japanese archeologists sought to scientifically justify their government’s attempt to legitimize Manzhouguo by stressing culture-theoretical approaches instead of racist-hegemonic theories. This new approach argued that novel transnational identities such as that in Manzhouguo would be naturally established through cultural exchange. In the final presentation on “‘Manzhouguo-Identität’ im und durch Film?”, Shiro Yukawa (Bonn) examined whether and how the film industry was able to support efforts to establish a common transnational Manzhouguo identity as film seemed to be a useful propagandistic tool to that end. Yet as people of different ethnic backgrounds would understand and interpret films differently, this attempt did not fully succeed. In the general discussion, discussant Katja Schmdtpott (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) and the speakers reflected on the successes and failures of identity politics in Manzhouguo and deliberated over relevant reasons.

The panel “Post-Imperium Identity Formation and Institution Building: Taiwan, Hong Kong and Central/Eastern Europe Compared”, organized by Thomas Gold (Berkeley), sought to contrast social changes in in post-colonial Hong Kong and Taiwan and post-imperial states in Central and Eastern Europe. Tana Dluhosova (Czech Academy of Science) compared democratization in the Czech Republic and Taiwan at the level of social elites. In Czechoslovakia, the political elites became high-level businessmen, building on networks they could rely on from the communist past. In contrast, the situation did not change much in Taiwan during the 1980s. The reasons for this divergence could be seen in marital networks, which were mainly based on academic and cultural capital and closely intertwined with economic success. In his talk “Sleeping Dogs Won’t Lie Long”, Felix Brender (LSE) discussed the establishment of transitional justice (TJ) in Taiwan as an identity-building project. The mechanisms of TJ were accompanied by a performative process that led Taiwan to economic prosperity and liberal democracy: as Taiwan demonstrated that it was clearly different from the PRC and Chinese narratives of Taiwan, it was able to create a collective memory on its own. The talk by Miroslav Sadowski (McGill) on “(Over) 30 and 20 Years Post-Transition: End of the Process, Revolution or Evolution of the System? The Cases of Poland and Hong Kong” discussed Poland’s and Hong Kong’s transition to democracy between the late 1980s and the late 2010s and commented on the political future of both countries, which are currently confronted with strong illiberal currents. Sadowski saw some ability to cope with the situation in Poland but assessed that people in Hong Kong had lost optimism and felt increasingly powerless vis-à-vis Beijing. In sum, the panel focused on current developments

taking place near the PRC. While Beijing's direct intervention was highly visible in the case of Hong Kong, the Taiwanese case revealed only indirect involvement. The panelists deemed both cases important for social studies and for the testing of theories on discursive power.

The panel "Transregional Connections Across the Indian Ocean: Muslim Identities in Indonesia and Beyond", organized by Miriam Lücking (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), started with Sylvia Wolf's (FU Berlin) presentation on "Learning Islam 'ala Gaza': Palestinian Sheikhs and their Newly Acquired Role as Figures of Religious Authority among Indonesian Muslim Communities". Wolf showed that Indonesian Muslims turned to focus on Gaza as their leading religious authority due to a range of Palestine-themed activities in Indonesia, including visits by sheikhs and the organization of Palestine solidarity concerts, creating a connection between the two countries and their communities. In his talk entitled "From Dutch East Indies to Cape Colony: Diasporic Lives and the Creation of a New Muslim Society at the Edge of the Indian Ocean", Ariff Hafizi (Hamburg) discussed the creation of an Islamic identity in the Cape, based on the Malay community that was forced to migrate there by Dutch colonial powers in the past, with many traditions living up to this day within the community in the area. Amanda tho Seeth (EHESS, Paris) spoke on "'The Indonesian Cosmopolitan Islamic Intellectual' Revisited" by introducing the elitist discourse on cosmopolitanism in Indonesia, the historical background of the concept and its modern-day version being shaped through the influence of Japanese and Western thought, but also on the modern Indonesian branding of progressive Islam. The discussion led by Claudia Derichs (HU Berlin) touched on the links between the three topics, e.g., the export and import of thoughts and power and the connections between the global ummah.

The last conference day started with Sabine Burghart's (Turku) keynote on "Researching and Teaching the 'Peripheries' in Transnational Asian Studies: The Case of North Korea". Based on her analysis of the body of research published on North Korea (as displayed in the Web of Science database) since the early 1990s, Burghart showed that security-related topics such as the nuclear and missile program as well as human rights issues loomed specifically large in the literature and were primarily produced in the fields of IR, social sciences/law and in area studies and in English-speaking countries. In her view, knowledge production seemed to follow broader political trends and interests. When it came to genuine transnational research on North Korea, security, migration, and transnational history were the key topics in publications, but research questions were again often approached through a securitization lens. According to Burghart this pointed to a somehow narrow research scope, while reflecting dominant frames in the discourse. She called for the broadening of research topics on North Korea, e.g., by focusing on its connectedness with the Asian region and beyond. Similar to Claudia Derichs, Burghart suggested research should be conducted in research teams via cross-border networks with scholars of diverse backgrounds (disciplinary orientation, country of origin, gender, ethnicity, and stage of academic career, etc.).

The panel on “Populism in North- and Southeast Asia—in Search of a Phenomenon” examined four case studies in order to identify common characteristics as well as the region’s understanding of populism. The panel organizer Axel Klein (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) gave an introduction to the theoretical concepts on populism as well as into the Japanese case, where he mostly saw PINO (populism in name only). Frédéric Krumbein (Institut für Europäische Politik, Berlin) focused on Taiwan, scrutinizing two case studies: the anti-LGBT movement and the politician Han Guo-yu. Based on his analysis, Krumbein argued that populism was weak in Taiwan and discussed possible reasons. Hannes Mosler (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) examined the discourse on “populist” politicians in South Korea such as Jae-in Moon, and examined particular language use and discourse topics utilized as evidence for labeling someone a populist. Finally, Andreas Ufen (GIGA, Hamburg) drew attention to three allegedly populist politicians from Southeast Asia, Thaksin in Thailand, Duterte in the Philippines, and Prabowo in Indonesia, focusing on the reasons why the last of these in particular could be assessed as populist in accordance with various definitions. The discussion focused on methodological questions such as how to measure populism or how to identify variables that foster it.

The German-language roundtable on “Asienwissenschaften in der Relevanzfalle? Wege zu größerer gesellschaftlicher Wirksamkeit”, organized by Marina Rudyak (Heidelberg) and Bertram Lang (Frankfurt), took up the “plea against polarization”—as formulated by the DGA board—and provided a platform for discussing ways to achieve greater social visibility and effectiveness of Asian studies. Panelists exchanged ideas on how academic studies could possibly contribute to sustainably strengthening their societal resonance on the individual, institutional, and structural levels. The discussion did not focus on science communication, but on the socio-political relevance of transdisciplinary knowledge transfer, suggesting the need for an institutionalized exchange beyond academia. Moreover, roundtable participants reflected on scientific practices, research processes and incentives for transdisciplinary knowledge transfer as well as scientific contributions and research projects on socio-political issues in Asia that highlighted innovative forms of communication and the application of their results. The discussion was very lively; during a short breakout session participants focused on specific issues in small groups and deliberated on ideas for their future implementation.

The Young Scholars’ Group (DGA YSG), organized and chaired by Anna Caspari (Bochum), Silke Hasper (Heidelberg), Anja Ketels (Münster), and Sophie Veauthier (Tübingen), updated participants on the upcoming DGA YSG board elections as well as on the conference program for the Nachwuchstagung to be held in May. The goal of the panel discussion was twofold: to find ways to attract new members, especially young students and scholars, and to diversify the focus of the DGA, which is currently on China and contemporary studies, to involve further countries of the Asian region as well as to foster the inclusion of research on

historical topics. To address these issues, regular virtual meetings were proposed to provide a platform for exchange that was specifically tailored for young researchers. Several participants furthermore offered to introduce the YSG to their students.

The panel “Beyond National Borders—Citizenship and Belonging in Southeast Asia in the 21st Century”, organized by Mirjam Le and Mandy Fox (both at Passau), focused on questions of identity and belonging in Southeast Asia beyond national frameworks and thus on shifting the debate towards a transnational perspective. In three presentations the contributors provided thought-provoking input. In her talk “Ethnic Trauma in Indonesia and the Cosmopolitan Novels of Empathy”, Silvia Mayasari-Hoffert (Frankfurt) addressed how cosmopolitan literature could help to defuse the tensions between the ethnic majority and minorities in Indonesia. In the talk “Legitimation of the War on Drugs and the Role of Public Space in an Alternative Grassroots Strategy in Indonesia and the Philippines in Comparison”, Luzile Satur (Passau) discussed how the legitimization of the “War on Drugs” in Indonesia and the Philippines was intended to be implemented and stressed possible alternative strategies to combat the drug problem. Finally, in “Transnational Mobilities and Knowledge Carriers in Southeast Asia: Debating Knowledge, Ideas, Values and Practices”, Friederike Trotier (Passau) and Patrick Keilbart (Frankfurt) scrutinized whether transnational knowledge mobilities and knowledge carriers were appropriate frameworks to understand South East Asian interactions, relations and connectivities across national borders. All three presentations were followed by lively debates characterized by great expert knowledge.

The roundtable on “Climate Change, Pandemic, Authoritarianism, De-Globalization and Response Options for Regional Studies” started with short statements by Anna-Katharina Hornidge (German Development Institute, Bonn), Christoph Antweiler (Bonn), and Karen Shire (Duisburg Essen/AREA Ruhr) on current challenges for regional studies, its self-image as well as its role for society and science, and on how regional studies could be conducted in difficult working environments in times of crises (chair: Markus Taube, Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr). The panelists entered into a lively debate on issues such as the global imbalance in the provision of vaccinations against Covid-19 in favor of Western industrialized countries, the impact of climate change in the Anthropocene on Asian rice cultivation as an example of a non-Western experience of global warming, or the many challenges the current pandemic posed to researchers in area studies. In the context of the last of these aspects, the discussion showed that researchers needed adaption strategies for the pandemic situation (e.g. travel bans circumventing fieldwork) which could lead to the creation of new research setups and to the application of new research methodologies in projects that had been originally designed pre-Covid. The digitalization of communication (e.g., online interviews) was seen as one way to stay connected to the research field, if research topics allowed for it. The panelists agreed with keynote speaker Claudia Derichs

that research should not be conducted about Asia, but rather in cooperation with Asian scientists to level out existing power asymmetries. Such asymmetries were also seen in the practices of academic publishing, thus the need to change the status quo in favor of more publication diversification to include European as well as Asian journals and editors was stressed.

The double panel “Sustainable Urban Regions Synthesizing Current Research Endeavors in East and South East” was organized by Borgmann. All panelists but one presented research projects from the same BMBF-funded project Sustainable Urban Regions. The first part of the panel was moderated by Katharina Borgmann and Lisa Reudenbach (both at HafenCity University Hamburg; HCU) and started with a presentation by Michael Waibel (Hamburg) on the “Build4 People Project Enhancing Quality of Life through Sustainable Urban Transformation”, pointing out how successful transdisciplinary research was a matter of intensive exchange and of the personal dedication of all parties involved. The presentation by Frauke Kraas (Köln) and her partners on “Multiple Risk Management in Fast Growing Megacities: Impacts of the Pandemic and Strategies for Combating Covid-19 in Yangon, Myanmar” emphasized one important lesson learned: the need for a holistic, people-oriented approach and a shift from urban planning to urban development. Stefan Greiving (Dortmund) presented on the LIRAP project “Linking Disaster Risk Governance and Land-Use Planning” and stressed that the lower the disturbance to the livelihoods of the ISF (informal settler families), the better is the effect of resettlement. The second part of the panel was moderated by Anika Slawski (TH Lübeck) and Kai Michael Dietrich (Manufacturing Cities). Matthias Falke (Bochum) gave a presentation on “Green Infrastructure Planning in Shanghai and the Role of Ecosystem Services—Insights from the BMBF Research Project IMECOGIP”, outlining the results from project phase 1 as well as the plan for the upcoming phase 2. Oliver Assman (AT-Versand) introduced the emplement! project on “Empowering Urban Regions for Cooperative Synergistic and Practical Implementation of Sustainability and Resilience Strategies Considering the Urban-Rural Nexus”, in which he analyzed various synergetic effects. Finally, David Meschede (Köln) talked about “Hopes for Economic Development, Fears of Ecological Devastation. Indonesia’s New ‘Green’ Capital and its Influence on the East Kalimantan Hinterland”. Meschede concentrated on people’s responses in Kalimantan to the newly planned capital of Indonesia, which is most likely not going to be very green in an ecological sense. The panel discussion was very lively, focusing mainly on the project plans as well as on the conventionalization of risk.

The double panel on “East Asian Futures Past and Present”, organized by Moll-Murata, focused on projecting past and present issues and topics into the future of the East Asian region. China’s past was discussed at length in three of the presentations with a focus on economic development during different historical periods, their specific features and the lessons modern China had learned from them. In his talk on “From Economic Moderation to Sustainability? Managing

Resources and Planning for the Future in Ancient Chinese Economic Thought. Past and Present Narratives”, Christian Schwermann (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) addressed the concepts of harmonizing benefits, conservation of natural resources and sustainability, which were popular in ancient China and have recently reappeared in Chinese writings. In her deliberations on “Concepts of Future in the Chinese Economy and Society, Late Qing to Republic of China, 1900–1950”, Christine Moll-Murata (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) discussed the post-Boxer Rebellion reforms of the Qing government that aimed at the introduction of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, modeled after Japanese and Western examples, as well as the concept of future through the changing use of the terms “weilai” and “jianglai.” Markus Taube’s (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) presentation on “Economic Development in Challenging Domestic and International Environments” concentrated on the more recent stages of China’s economic development, i.e. from the “lazy growth” of catching-up to developed countries to the current stage of even or decreasing growth rates, as well as on the future of the US-China competition and creating the new “rules of the game.” With a talk on “Artificial Intelligence, Leadership Claims and Power Politics in China”, Nele Noesselt (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) turned the debate to modern-day China and focused on China’s change from a passive observer of global innovation to a rule-generator due to its development of AI and technology, but also due to tackling the issues of rising energy consumption. With “What Happens to Future as Trust-Based Interacting Experience? Empirical Results of Digital Temporal Change from Germany and China”, Maria Faust (Leipzig/Chemnitz) introduced a comparative analysis of the understanding of time in Germany and China based on the internet consumption of selected groups in order to develop a Chinese time dimension of past, present, and future. Two further presentations shifted attention to other major East Asian countries, i.e. South Korea and Japan. Marion Eggert (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) introduced “Korean Projections of a Confucian Future” through means of accumulating and transferring knowledge from Chinese and Western sources by translating them into Korean and the eventual return to Confucianism in the 21st century with a well-developed Korean identity. In her lecture on “Japanese Futures for Euroamerican Cities (1950s/60s)”, Katja Schmidtpott (Bochum/AREA Ruhr) gave insights into the development of Japanese architecture from its roots in the imperial period, its struggle to define its own identity to its eventual ascension to influence Western architecture through the works of individuals like Tange Kenzo. In the final discussion, panelists and participants deliberated on the future of the region.

The third roundtable on “Current Developments (and Challenges Ahead) in the Fields of Chinese Political Science” was hosted by the Association of Chinese Political Studies (ACPS). The ACPS board members (Gregory Moore, Nele Noesselt, James Paradise, Yumin Sheng, Xi Chen) first introduced their academic backgrounds and fields of expertise. Second, they discussed how US–China relations would probably continue to develop negatively under the Biden administration and what could be done to ease bilateral tensions. Third, they shared

their views on the extent to which free and independent research could be conducted in the PRC. The ACPS board members argued that most research questions could still be posed (research on big data seemed an exception), though controversial topics required cautious field research approaches and/or domestic partners. They agreed that their students of political science needed counseling on what could or should (not) be asked before going on field trips to the PRC. The DGA will also get the chance to host a panel at ACPS' next annual conference.

At the closing ceremony, the newly elected DGA chairwoman Nele Noesselt (Duisburg-Essen/AREA Ruhr) introduced the current members of the DGA board and announced the three winners of the Asia-related DGA 2021 conference quiz. She encouraged conference participants to contribute their papers to the planned special conference issue of the journal "ASIEN" and thanked everyone for the inspiring 2.5-day online conference, which had proceeded smoothly without technical problems.

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2020 Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Social Science Research on China (ASC) “China in Times of Crisis”

ASC (online), November 27–28, 2020

Report by Hannah Fuhr, Anny Liu, Juliane Rüger and Jolyn Brenker

Under this year’s special circumstances, the ASC’s annual meeting was held online on the 27th and 28th of November under the direction of Prof. Dr. Barbara Darimont of the East Asia Institute of the Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ludwigshafen. Around 50 members of the ASC “zoomed in” from all over Germany and abroad. It consisted of 4 panels which focussed on both current political as well as social and environmental problems in China. Barbara Darimont welcomed everyone and was the moderator of the first panel, which started with Björn Alpermann. He addressed the problem of “Social and Environmental Management” and first presented the paper “Casting ancient nets: Grid-style social management during the Corona crisis and its effect on the poor” by Sabrina Habich-Sobiegalla and Franziska Plümmer. The authors draw on Foucault’s concept of milieu and propose that through a topographical reading of this concept we can gain deeper insights into practices of authoritarian governmentality in China. The paper particularly scrutinizes the appropriation of emergency measures on combating the virus, the role of community-based self-regulation, and how grid-style social management has been used since the outbreak of COVID-19. It was suggested to define and describe the grid administration in more detail and advised to keep a more guarded assessment of these systems, however the paper was praised greatly. The second paper “Smoggy cities, contaminated waters and courageous transport policies: old and new images of China in environmentally related media coverage in Germany” by Julia Marinaccio was presented by Doris Fischer. The paper states that news coverages in Germany regarding China’s environment have been biased in the past, with the reports being mostly negative, whereas the current Chinese government has become more involved in the fight against climate change. The paper was well received and it was remarked that it might not only be interesting to research the perception of China in German media but also in Chinese media. During the first panel it was pointed out that due to COVID-19 there is an increased difficulty accessing into fieldwork.

The topic of the second panel was devoted to “International Politics” and hosted by Maximilian Mayer. It started with the paper “Why does China say “No” to the US initiative of tri-lateralizing the INF and New START Treaty?” by Jiagu Richter. It stated that the international disarmament regime has further eroded during the trump administration by Washington’s 2018 announcement to withdraw from the INF Treaty. The main reason for this was the Trump administration’s intention to either include China into a new disarmament regime or to have a free hand in deploying new weapons systems close to China. In the discussion, however, after

Joe Biden's election as president of the United States, it was pointed out that the time ahead will be very important, as it will determine and define the position of the United States. It was also noted that it would be much more interesting in terms of how China's stance could be changed by what kind of self-perceived identity. In addition, Gunter Schubert made suggestions for the paper to support and clarify the statements concerning the treaty. Jiagu Richter also mentioned to keep in mind that the paper was written before the elections and therefore there might be some differences compared to the current situation. The subject of the paper received a lot of praise for its relevance to the current situation. The second paper covered "China's Corona Crisis in Crossfire: Analyzing the dynamic interplay of domestic and international legitimization narratives" by Heike Holbig. The paper demonstrated the relationship between China's internal and external propaganda during the COVID-19 crisis. For a deeper insight, panelist Armin Müller briefly introduced the background of China's health policy. He stated that, among other things, China had major problems with its healthcare system and structure in the past. The diverse discussion afterwards allowed for a brief overview and a lively exchange of information, which gave Heike Holbig a lot of inspiration for further alterations. She was further encouraged to expand the paper and write a book instead of a larger article, as the subject is very broad and offers many different insights and aspects. This concluded the discussion for the first day.

The next day began with the third panel about Global challenges in Chinese society and the report and discussion of the paper "Eating for the environment or eating for safety? – Chinese government's discourse on environmental food safety risks and green consumption" by Franziska Fröhlich, summarized by Anna Ahlers. The paper presents research on the issue of food safety and the factors that are leading consumers in making their food decisions. It aims to comprehend the structure of the issue itself as well as the discourse as a framework around it. Franziska Fröhlich remarked not only in the paper, but also during the discussion that it is a chapter taken from her doctoral thesis on discourses of eco-related green food consumption in China. This also served as a response to some of the questions asked by the readership during the discussion which was opened by Wiebke Rabe. In addition to questions regarding the content, the readership also gave comments which the author praised to be helpful and to which she expressed her thanks. The second paper of the morning, "In other news: China's international media strategy on Xinjiang – CGTN on YouTube" by Björn Alpermann and a second anonymous writer, examines videos related to Xinjiang on the Chinese news channel CGTN and Xinhua's YouTube-channels. Kristin Shi-Kupfer, as the discussant, presented the main research focus points and key findings of the paper and briefly introduced her comments and personal suggestions. In the following discussion, the two authors received further recognition for their work by the audience and even encouragement to produce a second paper. During the second coffee break, the two authors offered to give the audience an impression of their sources by showing short videos and teasers in one of the breakout rooms.

The fourth and final panel of the ASC conference discussed “Economic politics” and was moderated by Daniel Koss. Mo Chen, together with the two other doctoral candidates Theresa Krause and Lena Wassermann, contributed the paper “China’s model of corporate credit reporting in comparative perspective”. A comparative study of the Corporate Credit Report (CCR) models of China, Germany and the USA with an emphasis on how the Chinese Social Credit System influences the credit eligibility of local companies. After introducing it to the audience, Genia Kostka offered focus points to improve the paper and the elaboration of its key argument. In the discussion afterwards the authors were asked to extend their paper and highlight the links of the system towards not only the company as an institution whose credit score is affected by the CCR and Social Credit System, but also to the individual. It was further suggested to compare these to the situation in the USA and Germany, with a special focus on recent changes of Germany’s SCHUFA, which had already been topic of a lively discussion by some participants in the chat. The last paper addressed during this year’s conference, “Farewell to competence-based vocational qualifications?” by Armin Müller, argues that China’s educational sector is characterized by a massive inequality that hardly allows workers to break out of low-skill jobs into high-skill jobs with better pay. He also stresses that certificates needed for this transition are often too numerous and acknowledged, depending on where they have been acquired. The difficulties connected to the issues of certificate recognition were frequently addressed during the discussion, following Christoph Steinhardt’s introduction of the paper to the audience. Some participants shared their personal experiences and contributed links and sources to further enhance the paper regarding this topic. Other topics that were brought up: the lack of consistently published sources regarding the number of people with a vocational qualification corresponding to their jobs as well as how to stress the importance of vocational qualifications in terms of its link towards the middle-income- gap.

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Asia in Times of Crises and Polarization: Challenges, Processes, and Solutions — 10th Conference of the Young Scholars Group of the German Association for Asian Studies (DGA)

Digital conference, May 7–8 and 15, 2021

Report by Jan Robin Sofinowski

Due to Covid restrictions the 10th biannual conference of the DGA's Young Scholar Group took place digitally. Lead by the YSG's team of representatives, the conference was spread over two platforms and three days on two consecutive weekends.

Around the world people feel an increase in polarization. Various crises humanity faces, from the ongoing pandemic over resource shortages to partisan politics give rise to this polarization. The conference's eleven panels investigated several of them, ranging from governance, education and agriculture to international relations and foreign policy. The conference offered the opportunity to both present in a formal conference setting as well as in an informal meeting place for discussions. The platforms and approach were thus the first topic after the representatives' welcoming remarks. What are the challenges, what are the solutions? These are the young scholars' works:

The first panel on governance had two presenters, with Prof. Jörn-Carsten Gottwald acting as discussant. Hannes Gohli presented his work "Yes Mr. Xi, No Mr. Xi: A Study of Political Steering and Countersteering in the People's Republic of China's Smart Grid Industry" on economic steering by the Chinese government. This was followed by Phillipp Immel's presentation "On the Origins of the Social Credit System: Innovations in Chinese Social Governance." His work included a comparison with three previously existing Chinese systems of social control to contextualise what aspects of the Social Credit System are truly new, and which are not.

The second panel was held on political institutions and participation, with Dr. Kamila Szczepanska acting as discussant. The first presenter, Zhang Hao, presented his work "Citizen Participation in China's Digital Governance Era" that focuses on motivations by citizens and local governments. The second presenter was Vicent Plana Aranda who presented the theoretical aspects of his work about party institutionalisation in Korea, including findings of his ongoing research. Thirdly, Shoko Tanaka presented her PhD project "Intersections Between the Political Culture of Youth and Voting Behaviour in Japan" in which she is trying to shed light behind the rationale of "broken connections" in terms of political trust and social trust among young Japanese.

The third panel focused on education, the presented works were commented by Lena Henningsen. The panel kicked off with Anna Schnieder-Krüger and her

research on the role of universities in India, asking what these institutions embody and how much criticism they are allowed to voice. Christoph Weithas presented his work concerning the internationalisation of Chinese universities since the 1990s. He also included challenges presented by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The third presenter was Lena Wesemann. Her PhD project concerns the “Presentation of Palaeolithic Archaeology in Museums in China”. The first day of the conference ended after these first three panels with a mingling event on the platform WonderMe. This included a possibility to dine together online. For this purpose, the speakers and panelists were provided with several recipes to try out and show off their cooking skills.

The second conference day started with the keynote presentation by Rajib Shaw, Professor of the Graduate School of Media and Governance at Keio University, who delivered important insights on Asia’s reaction to the Covid-19 pandemic. He also explored Disaster Risk Reduction, which led to a lively discussion. The following break included a guided yoga session presented by Anna Caspari.

The keynote presentation was followed by a total of four panels. Panel four was concerned with media ethnography. The first presentation was by Helen Hess, whose work looks at the possibilities of digital technologies to help increase the visibility of marginalised groups. The second presentation in this panel was given by Dhanya Fee Kirchhof, who focused her presentation on Ravidassia music videos in India. Instead of a single discussant, this panel received a peer commentary from colleagues and YSG representatives.

Panel five’s theme was Chinese urban development, and presenters received commentary by Eva Sternfeld. The first presentation was by Mia Hallmanns, whose research project seeks to dive deeply into China’s sustainable urban development. The next presentation “Xiangang Workers in Chinese Nursing Homes” by Yan Zhe, who investigated the developments of China’s changing elder care environment, specifically into “xiangang” (laid-off) workers who staff the increasing number of nursing homes in China.

Panel six was concerned with religion. Amanda tho Seeth delivered the commentary. The first presenter was Jens U. Augspurger, who discussed the depolarisation of the East-West dichotomy of spiritual practitioners. Charlotte Chin presented her PhD project on the role of re-integration projects for Philippine women who left ISIS and possible scaling up to the global level. Lastly, Dissa Julia Paputungan presented her work on Islamic values in education aiming to contribute to the democratisation effort in Indonesia by focusing on the education sector.

Panel seven, with the theme of sustainability, took place at the same time with Sabrina Habich-Sobiegalla acting as discussant. The first presentation was delivered by Wiegand Körber, whose work focuses on the water-energy nexus in India. The second presentation on sustainability was presented by Julia Tiganj. Her work seeks to investigate the oncoming post-mining period in China that will pose wide reaching challenges in many mining related areas such as geo-monitoring and

more. Lastly, Luisa Flarup presented her thesis where she seeks to add to the sustainability debate by applying Mol's concept of informational governance to citizen generated data in China. The second day of the conference was rounded-off by an information session about the DGA, the Young Scholars Group and the upcoming election of new representatives to be held on the third day after the conference's end.

The third and last day of the conference started with two parallel workshop sessions, one on the topic of fieldwork during the pandemic by Daniel Fuchs, the other about Academic Publishing in Asian Studies by Claudia Derichs & Amanda tho Seeth. These two workshops were followed by a mingling session that again had the option of a guided yoga session.

Panel eight, the first panel about international relations, was then held and commented on by Florian Pölking. The first presenter was Erik Isaksson who introduced his work about Japanese foreign policy and its efforts to balance a rising China. This presentation was followed by Bohyun Kim who studies the "Comfort Women" Movement as a transnational advocacy network. Panel nine, held at the same time, was concerned with the "Belt and Road Initiative" and commented on by Sebastian Bersick. The first presenter was Carsten Schäfer, whose work researches the "Belt and Road Initiative" through the strategic-narrative approach, trying to uncover what internal crises are translated into external propaganda through the initiative. Stefan Tetzlaff introduced his work about connectivity issues between Asia and the EU, arguing that the China-US conflict as well as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic strongly influence and question the state of global supply chains.

The afternoon again consisted of two parallel panels. Panel ten was held on the topic of agriculture and commented by Anika Trebbin. The first presenter was Sarah Luft who studies waterscapes in periurban Pune. Periurban resources in India, especially water, are facing increasing challenges due to transformative pressures from both urban and rural sides. The second presentation was by Mehwish Zuberi. Her presentation summarised her insights from four months of fieldwork in South Punjab in Pakistan. The parallel panel was the second panel about international relations with Niall Duggan as discussant. The first of the three presenters, Pia Dannhauer, introduced her research project about the influence of intra-governmental contestation on Indonesia's foreign policy behaviour in ASEAN. The second presentation was given by UnHye Joe, who argues that two modified sovereignty games are needed in transnational relations. The last presentation was held by Jan Robin Sofinowski who presented his research project about risk and risk perception in Japan and how it influences policy decisions. As a work in progress, he concentrated his presentation on his chosen method of written interviews and how they open the "bureaucratic black box".

The third day of the conference ended with the introduction and election of new representatives of the Young Scholars Group. The new representatives are Disa

Julia Paputungan, Helen Hess, Hannes Gohli, Philipp Immel and Wiegand Körber. Finally, presenters and guests alike were invited for a last mingling on the platform WonderMe.

With a total of eleven panels, a keynote presentation, two workshops and two guided yoga sessions, the tenth YSG conference can truly be called a great success. Covid-19 has brought forth a multitude of challenges with a diverse range of impacts. Issues increasingly ripple from one area to another and become interlinked, sometimes with compounding effects. The diversity of research projects presented offers a glimpse at the various issues Asia is facing, ranging from water issues to education to foreign policy. We wish all presenters the best of luck with their research. Great and many thanks therefore go out to the team of representatives and to all commentators who made this three-day conference possible!

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Helmut Schneider (Hg.): Eurasia. Schriften der Gesellschaft für Asiatische Philosophie

Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kowač, 2019. 74,80 EUR, ISBN 978-3-8300-9371-8

Rezension von Thomas Weyrauch

Helmut Schneider, der Herausgeber dieser Schrift, ist zugleich Vorsitzender der Gesellschaft für Asiatische Philosophie, die sich primär um das Verständnis der chinesischen, indischen und japanischen Philosophie bemüht. Sie misst Philosophie nicht an einem bestimmten vorausgesetzten europäischen Philosophiebegriff, sondern versteht sie in einer komparatistischen Konzeption im weitesten Sinne als denkendes Erfassen der Wirklichkeit, das sich in Ost und West in verschiedener Form zeigen kann. Die 2006 erschienene Reihe „Zusammenhänge – Jahrbuch für Asiatische Philosophie“ hat sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, komparative philosophische Arbeiten mit Schwerpunkt Süd- und Ostasien zu publizieren. Ihr zweiter, 2019 erschienener Band „Eurasia. Schriften der Gesellschaft für Asiatische Philosophie“, die der emeritierte Philosophieprofessor Schneider stellvertretend für die 1991 gegründete Vereinigung herausgibt, ist genau genommen der erste Teil einer zweibändigen Schrift. Er beinhaltet sieben Beiträge unter Federführung von Sarah Kissler. Sie betreffen den asiatischen Kernbereich der Philosophie, d. h. die Indiens, Chinas und Japans mit ihren Ausläufern und Einflusszonen in Tibet und Korea. Die Autoren kommen aus unterschiedlichen Disziplinen wie Philosophie, Religionswissenschaften, Mathematik, Kunstwissenschaften, Germanistik und Japanologie und bringen daneben eine Vielfalt akademischer Meriten ein, nämlich Abschlüsse von Bachelor über Promotionen bis zu Habilitationen.

So behandelt Udo Reinhold Jeck etwa die Ontologie, die Lehre vom Seienden, des griechischen Philosophen Parmenides und vergleicht sie mit den indologischen Untersuchungen von Friedrich Schlegel und Wilhelm von Humboldt. Die von der heutigen Schulphilosophie wenig behandelte oder gar abgelehnte Beschäftigung mit der chinesischen Alchemie des Yijing macht Dirk Stederoth zum Thema historischer und philosophischer Betrachtung sowie eines interkulturellen Vergleichs. Dabei geht er von zwei Dimensionen aus, der logischen und der „symbo-logischen“, bei der letztere etwa am Beispiel Gold für die Unwandelbarkeit, Quecksilber für die Wandelbarkeit stehe.

Die Laozi-Hermeneutik des französischen Sinologie-Pioniers Jean-Pierre Abel-Rémusat verdeutlicht für Hermes Spiegel, emeritierter Philosophieprofessor an der Université Libre de Bruxelles und Dozent an der Renmin Universität in Beijing, wie wichtig es für die Betrachtung fremder Kulturen ist, zunächst die eigene zu kennen: „Je weniger man das westliche Denken kennt, desto andersartiger erscheint einem das chinesische.“ Er kommt zu dem Schluss: „In dieser Hinsicht legt ein im Paris des 19. Jahrhundert lebender Konservator der Bibliothèque

Nationale eine undogmatische Offenheit an den Tag, die man an vielen heutigen Sinologen oder an auf China blickende Philosophen vermisst, die sich einbilden, die „Differenz“, die unvergleichliche Eigentümlichkeit, des chinesischen Denkens und dessen Erzählweise erkannt zu haben und alternative Interpretationen von vornherein als ideologische Emanationen westlicher Herrschaftsansprüche verdammen.“

Die Rezeption Martin Heideggers in Japan ist Gegenstand der Beiträge von Monika Nawrot und Dagmar Dotting über die Kyōto-Schule und den Philosophen Watsuji Tetsurō. Schließlich sollen die Arbeiten von Walter Tydecks über philosophische Grundbegriffe des Buddhismus sowie der Tagungsbericht von Sarah Kissler „Zwischen Konfuzius und Kant“ über eine Kooperation von Sinologie und Philosophie an der Universität Bochum erwähnt werden, die auf die Diskussion um Menschenwürde im interkulturellen Kontext eingeht, dessen „leichtfertiger Gebrauch“ zu hinterfragen sei.

Dass Band 2 des Jahrbuches immerhin 13 Jahre nach Band 1 erschien, mag seltsam anmuten, ist aber angesichts der hochkarätigen Arbeiten zu entschuldigen. Es bleibt zu hoffen, dass der zweite Teil von Band 2 in einem deutlich kürzeren Zeitraum folgen und die Reihe bei gleich bleibender Qualität fortgeführt wird.

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Commerell, Hans-Jürgen; Feireiss, Kristin (Hgg.): Architectural Acupuncture as Driver for Rural Revitalization in China, Projects by Xu Tiantian, DnA_Beijing

Zürich: Park Books, 2020. 272 S., 38 EUR

Rezension von Johannes Küchler

Songyang – ein Landkreis im Südwesten der Küstenprovinz Zhejiang, etwa 150 Straßenkilometer landeinwärts von der Hafen- und Industriestadt Wenzhou, mit von 1.400 km² Fläche ausgedehnter als Hong Kong und mit ca. 250.000 Einwohnern eher dünn besiedelt. Er umfasst das Quellgebiet des Songyin-Flusses: Die Berge (500–1500 m) – nach drei Jahrzehnten der Aufforstung wieder grün – umrahmen ein breites Tal als Kernraum des Kreises. Man fühlt sich in den südlichen Schwarzwald versetzt. Die junge Kreisstadt erlebt gerade einen kräftigen Schub durch Wohnungsbau und Industrieansiedlung. Als Folge daraus ergab sich neben der Verdichtung im Tal eine Entleerung der Bergdörfer und Weiler. Dank des massiven Straßen- und Bahnbaus ist der einst abgelegene Kreis in wenigen Stunden von Shanghai aus zu erreichen.

Songyang – das steht hier als Synonym für die Peripherie jener spontan gewachsenen Industrieregionen Südostchinas, die sich, geprägt von kleinen und mittleren Betrieben, in den wasserreichen Tälern entwickelten. Die Nebenwirkungen sind bekannt: verschmutzte Gewässer, wilde Deponien, ein sorgloser Umgang mit dem kulturellen Erbe als tradierter Agrarlandschaft und Bauästhetik.

„The Songyang Story“, eine bibliophile Augenweide, zelebriert das Werk der Architektin Xu Tiantian: Sie schuf mit ihrem Team eher unspektakuläre Objekte, verstreut über das Kreisgebiet. Die Absolventin der Universitäten Qinghua und Harvard versteht sich als Therapeutin. Mit akupunkturartigen baulichen Eingriffen an sensiblen Punkten will sie zur Heilung einer vernachlässigten und vernutzten Region beitragen. Das Resultat bildet eine feinfühlige Variante des Bilbao-Effekts für den ländlichen Raum.

Das Herausgeber-Duo Commerell/Feireiss – Begründer der renommierten Architektur-Galerie Aedes in Berlin – betrachtet Songyang zu Recht als seine „discovery“. Die beiden nehmen es wahr als „outstanding revitalization programme [...] a model we want to pass on to the world“. Dieses verdienstvolle Motiv bestimmt die Struktur des Buches, eines Bildbandes mit einer Abfolge von Texten und großformatigen Fotografien. Martino Stierli (MOMA New York), die Architektin selbst und der Berliner Architekturhistoriker Eduard Kögel entwickeln in ihren Beiträgen die konzeptionellen Überlegungen zur „rural revitalization“. Es folgt, zeitlich geordnet für die Jahre 2015–20, die Vorstellung von 16 Objekten. Jede beginnt mit einem erläuternden Text (Lage und kultureller Kontext)

verbunden mit Bauzeichnungen, gefolgt von einer Sequenz großformatiger Bilder. Exemplarisch seien genannt ein Bambus-Pavillon in einem Tecanbauggebiet, eine Rohrzuckerfabrik, umgeben von Zuckerrohrfeldern, die Renovierung einer alten Wassermühle für Kamelienöl mit den alten Werkstoffen Natursteine, Stampfbeton und Holz.

In die Objekt-Präsentationen zwischengeschaltet sind Textblöcke. Der erste bezieht sich auf den baupolitischen Kontext: Zuerst skizzieren Kögel und Xu im Dialog das Prozedere von der Idee zum Plan bis zur Umsetzung. Dann kommt der Parteisekretär/Landrat Wang Jun zu Wort, den Xu Tiantian für ihre Arbeitsweise gewinnen konnte. Sein Text ist ein Beispiel für den ritualisierten Polit-Sprech der Kader, der sich über die Jahrzehnte kaum verändert hat. Herr Wang kann – ohne dies explizit auszusprechen – die Arbeiten von Frau Xu als Beweis dafür anführen, dass die aktuelle Vision der Partei von der „ökologischen Zivilisation“ in seinem Kreis konkret umgesetzt wird. Ganz im Sinne der Partei ist auch die Betonung der Partizipation. Herr Wang hat verstanden, dass die Architektin (nach anfänglichem Misstrauen und Missverständnissen) bei der lokalen Bevölkerung „ankam“. Ihr Erfolg war auch sein Erfolg.

Dem Partei-Chinesisch von Wang Jun folgt antithetisch ein Erlebnisbericht der begeisterten Saskia Sassen (Columbia U. NY). Mit dem Einfall, die gefeierte Stadtforscherin zu einem Ortstermin einzuladen, haben die Herausgeber Songyang auf die Weltbühne der Bau- und Planungsdebatte gehoben.

Noch zwei Bauten seien hervorgehoben: Ein Dorfmuseum widmet sich der Arbeiterwanderung im 19. Jahrhundert: Angehörige der Hakka, als ethno-linguistische Minderheit spät zugewandert und benachteiligt, fanden in einem engen Bergtal ein karges Auskommen. Viele mussten sich als Vertragsarbeiter auf den Zuckerrohr-Plantagen der Karibik verdingen. Terrassenförmig passt sich der Museumsbau einem Steilhang an, wobei die Wände aus dem anstehenden Gneis durch meisterhafte Steinmetzarbeit gestaltet sind.

Im zweiten Fall geht es um die Verwandlung einer 12-bogigen Natursteinbrücke aus der Mao-Zeit durch Holzüberdachung. Als Fußgänger- und Krämerbrücke bildet sie einen attraktiven öffentlichen Raum für die örtliche Bevölkerung und Besucher.

Im letzten Textblock diskutieren Eduard Kögel und der UN-Habitat-Mitarbeiter Remy Sietchiping das Wechselspiel zwischen Erfolgen auf der lokalen Ebene und den hehren Proklamationen auf der internationalen. Für das Habitat-Programm bietet sich Songyang an als Best-practice-Beispiel einer Umsetzung der *strategic development goals* vor Ort. Für den Kreis bedeutet diese Anerkennung eine Bestärkung, am eingeschlagenen Weg der Verstärkung der Stadt-Land-Verflechtung durch Wiederbelebung des lokalen kulturellen Erbes festzuhalten.

Diese Wiederbelebung bildet den Schlüssel für die Realisierung der Nachhaltigkeits-Trias ökonomisch-sozial-ökologisch. Sie gelang hier vorbildlich.

So demonstriert China *soft power* durch den schöpferischen Umgang mit globalen Fragen.

Abschließend sei noch auf zwei Defizite dieses Buches hingewiesen: Weder gibt es einen Hinweis auf *Fengshui*, noch entdeckt man irgendwo ein chinesisches Schriftzeichen! Sollte durch den Verzicht auf diese Sinizismen das Universale der Botschaft hervorgehoben werden?

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Uwe Behrens: Feindbild China. Was wir alles nicht über die Volksrepublik wissen

Berlin: edition ost, 2021. 221 pp., 15 EUR (paperback)

Review by Felix Brender

Not least since Xi Jinping's ascendancy, analyses of the "real China" have been selling like hotcakes. Behrens — one of the more recent iterations — grounds his text in the premise that media in the ever-so-elusive West grossly misrepresent China, painting a negative image of the country and failing to capture the positive development China has undergone. The stage set, Behrens ventures out to provide a different narrative of China, if not a more nuanced one, over a mere 200 pages. A logistics expert by training and profession, his findings rely on his experience as an entrepreneur in China spanning three decades: This is about the "real China", not an academic treatise.

This book is helpful in that it offers those with limited grasp of the Chinese language an insight into the central tenets and narratives of PRC governmental propaganda. Behrens' text is an unfiltered tour de force of Communist Party clichés and common places: China values harmony over hegemony (174 ff.); China's authoritarian governance is benign in contrast to the US prison system — as if one should be content with either (81); tracking in China is no worse than in Europe ("You will be surprised by who approaches you if you win the lottery", 71); Mao was a misunderstood but-he-meant-well manqué and 70 % good and 30 % bad (37); censorship is a non-issue since it serves societal harmony (75); China is developing — civilizing, even — Tibet and the locals better be grateful (193 ff.); the Uyghurs enjoy privileges the Han can only dream of and should reconsider their "chauvinist" (181) attitude towards Han Chinese migration to Xinjiang. Few of these will be new to researchers working on China; anyone engaging with China will inevitably have been confronted with these tropes.

Frequent exposure to these narratives can however not erase the countless factual inaccuracies and half-truths in this text, at times blurring into the conspiratorial: A single Japan Times article is cited as evidence that the People's Liberation Army did not open fire on demonstrators on Tiananmen Square in '89, trying to disprove any diverging reports (35 f.). On pp. 58 f., the author suggests that German Green Party's politician Reinhard Bütikofer's criticism of China's human rights record is connected to his being on the board of the Aspen Institute's Berlin outlet. Historical determinism sees Behrens argue that the makeup of China as a civilization state has not changed since Qin Shi Huang (98 ff.). This lack of contextualisation against the bigger picture is evident throughout the piece: China's Confucianist system was indeed relatively meritocratic, but the fact that family background did matter in enabling students to focus on study rather than work then and now — particularly now, in the age of the "princelings" — remains

undiscussed and unrecognised. Cases such as Bo Xilai's are dealt with in one paragraph: justified and indicative of China's drive to stamp out corruption. Sources are selected and quoted eclectically whenever deemed salient. On pp. 66 ff., for instance, Behrens cites Christian Göbel's (Vienna) work on the social security system to whitewash it, in the process greatly distorting Göbel's findings through strategic omission.

Beyond this, Behrens unfortunately contributes very little genuinely novel to the debate, and certainly does not offer a nuanced view of China — at best, it is a perspective less commonly heard in the West. It is no less ideologically tainted than the publications Behrens deplores as — arguably — biased, simply adopting a different ideological prism. Somewhat ironically, he himself debunks his main premise on p. 58, quoting broadcasts of Germany's equivalent of the six o'clock news, the *Tagesschau*, which on the whole, he notes, are rather appreciative of China. The book also serves as a timely reminder that academic practice, i.e. level-headed long-term, focused engagement does have its merits. Behrens' pick-and-choose attempt to reinvent the wheel might ultimately be more informed by the reverse culture shock he has experienced back in Germany (157 ff.): "It was all about material wealth" (158), finds Behrens, leaving the informed reader wondering how that might differ from materialist, socialist-in-name-only mainstream China today.

Overall, it is highly unfortunate that Behrens missed this opportunity to provide a more nuanced analysis accessible to a wider — or different — readership outside traditional academia by either regurgitating government narratives or selecting those readings with the greatest shock value to a Western reader. It is indeed correct that too often, China is viewed through a Western lens, and understanding China on its own terms is certainly beneficial. China's breakneck-speed economic development does warrant fair appraisal, as do first-hand accounts of how historical and policy shifts play out in daily life *on the ground*. Behrens, having lived in the country during the PRC's most seismic shifts could document these tumultuous times. Treating both China and the West as monoliths that they quite simply are not, Behrens does however not achieve a true contribution to the field. If anything, Behrens merely further widens the gap by essentialising, arguing for instance that the Chinese prioritised the community and public provision over individual rights, as if people in the West generally did not care about their communities and did not expect to have access to electricity and water. Finally, Behrens aims to cover a lot of ground, which sees this piece neglect depth over breadth, ultimately but scratching the surface.

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Zakaria, Golam Abu (Hg.): Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Gründungsvater, Sozialreformer und Visionär

Wiehl: Klemm+Oelschläger, 2020. 331 S., 22,80 EUR (Softcover)

Rezension von Siegfried Schmidt

Aus Anlass des hundertjährigen Geburtstags von Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 2020 und des bald fünfzigjährigen Bestehens von Bangladesch hat Dr. Golam Abu Zakaria, der in Deutschland lebende Herausgeber, ein Buch über den wichtigsten Politiker seines Geburtslandes Bangladesch veröffentlicht. Das 331 Seiten umfassende Werk, das im Verlag Klemm und Oelschläger erschienen ist, geht über die reine Darstellung des Lebens Sheikh Mujibur Rahmans hinaus und beleuchtet viele Aspekte der Entstehung und Entwicklung Bengalens und Bangladeschs schon vor der Staatsgründung 1971. Dazu tragen auch die im Anhang aufgeführten Reden, Grundsatzprogramme und Texte historischer Ereignisse sowie der Bildteil bei.

21 Autoren, zumeist aus Deutschland und Bangladesch, haben sich dieser Aufgabe gestellt und in vielschichtiger Betrachtungsweise ein interessantes, unterhaltsames und teilweise spannendes Buch geschrieben. Die unterschiedlichen Schwerpunkte bei der biografischen Darstellung vermitteln ein facettenreiches Bild von Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Durch die manchmal emotionale Herangehensweise einzelner Autoren und die in den meisten Texten offensichtliche Verehrung und Bewunderung Sheikh Mujiburs fehlt es einerseits einigen Texten an der notwendigen Distanz zum „Vater der Nation“, andererseits vermitteln sie aber, wie sehr Sheikh Mujibur Rahman heute wie damals Gefühle, Meinungen und Einstellungen beeinflusst hat und seine Ideen noch heute weiterleben.

Besonders lebendig sind die Darstellungen von denjenigen Autoren, die Sheikh Mujibur Rahman persönlich erlebt und wahrgenommen haben. Dabei gehen die Beiträge auch auf die Probleme ein, mit denen der junge Staat zu kämpfen hatte. Zusätzlich bekommt der Leser viele Informationen zur Politik Pakistans in Bezug auf den Umgang mit dem Ostteil des Landes, zur berechnenden, teils widersprüchlichen Politik der Großmächte sowie den Reaktionen aus einigen Ländern zum Unabhängigkeitskampf der Menschen in Bangladesch. Dabei bleiben auch nicht die damalige deutsche Politik und die Stellungnahme der deutschen Medien unerwähnt.

Immer wieder weisen die Autoren auf die Ziele von Mujibur Rahman hin: Gleichberechtigung aller Bürger inklusive des Schutzes von Minderheiten, Gleichberechtigung aller Religionen, eine gerechte Wirtschaftsordnung, Volksbildung und Volksgesundheit sowie die vier Grundprinzipien Nationalismus, Demokratie, Sozialismus und Säkularismus.

Besonders lesenswert ist der Beitrag des Historikers Syed Amirul Islam, der den Blick auf Mujibur Rahman erweitert, dessen Rolle als Staatsführer mit schier überfordernden Aufgaben aufzeigt, auf Widersprüche hinweist, aber vermutlich von vielen Bewunderern des ersten Premierministers Bangladeschs kritisch gesehen wird.

In einigen Artikeln wünscht man sich manchmal noch mehr Hintergrundinformationen, z. B., wenn es um die politische und wirtschaftliche Lage Bangladeschs kurz vor der Ermordung Sheikh Mujibur Rahmans im August 1975 geht. Der ausführliche, hervorragende Text von Wolfgang-Peter Zingel, beginnend mit der Zeit vor 300 Jahren, geht allerdings kurz auf die Lage vor dem Attentat ein und erhellt so in seiner sachlichen und kompetenten Art wichtige Aspekte dieser für Bangladesh einschneidenden Zeit.

Während Sharaf Ahmed anschaulich die Dramatik der Situation darstellt, als Sheikh Hasina, die heutige Ministerpräsidentin, und ihre Schwester in Deutschland von dem Mord an ihrer Familie erfahren, versucht Sujit Chowdhury, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman und Willy Brandt in einer vergleichenden Analyse darzustellen. Das gelingt ihm nur unvollkommen, leitet ihn aber zu der Feststellung, dass beide keine Übermenschen waren, sich jedoch mit aller Kraft für ihr Land eingesetzt haben und somit für viele Politiker ein Vorbild sind.

Bei den tabellarischen Daten der Biografie, die die Entscheidungen vom 25. Januar 1975 betreffen, hätte man sich noch mehr Hintergrundinformationen gewünscht.

Insgesamt ist das Buch eine lesenswerte Neuerscheinung auf dem Buchmarkt und auch für Leser, die sich nicht so sehr mit Bangladesch und seinem wichtigsten Politiker auskennen, informativ und interessant. Es wäre schön, wenn dieses Buch auch in englischer und bengalischer Sprache erscheinen würde, um es einer größeren Leserschaft zu präsentieren.

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Thomas Heberer: Die große Gemeinschaft. Der Reformator Kang Youwei

Esslingen: Drachenhaus, 2021. 250 S., 29 EUR, ISBN 978-3943314496

Rezension von Thomas Weyrauch

In fünf Dekaden hat sich Thomas Heberer um die Vermittlung eines neuen Chinabildes bemüht und hierbei gerade in den letzten Jahren prägende Werke zur chinesischen Geisteshaltung, wie etwa Lin Yutang's „Mein Land und mein Volk“, kommentiert und herausgegeben. Seine 2021 erschienene Arbeit zu Kang Youwei knüpft an diese Vorgehensweise an, indem er den Verfasser zwar maßgeblich zu Wort kommen lässt, ihn aber mit seinem Umfeld, den historischen Rahmenbedingungen und seinen Motiven kurz vorstellt und den Text erläutert.

Während Chinas Niedergang im späten 19. Jahrhundert war Kang Youwei innerhalb der Selbststärkungsbewegung Spiritus Rector einer Idee, die Monarchie zu modernisieren und zu demokratisieren. Seine Vorschläge fanden bei dem jungen Guangxu-Kaiser Gehör und mündeten in die „Hundert-Tage-Reform“. In der Primärliteratur sind in erster Linie Kangs Autobiografie, die 1967 von Lo Jung-pang in englischer Sprache unter dem Titel „Kang Yu-wei: A Biography and a Symposium“ herausgegeben wurde, sowie Kangs Hauptwerk „Datong Shu“ von Bedeutung, das 1974 von Horst Kube aus dem Amerikanischen übersetzt und von Wolfgang Bauer unter dem Titel „K'ang Yu-wei: Ta T'ung Shu. Das Buch von der Großen Gemeinschaft“ herausgegeben wurde. Daneben ist auch das Werk „A Mosaic of the Hundred Days: Personalities, Politics, and the Ideas of 1898“ von Luke S.K. Kwong aus dem Jahr 1984 nennenswert. Kurze Abrisse in deutscher Sprache zur Persönlichkeit Kangs, seiner Ideologie und der politischen Wirkung finden sich beispielsweise in Arbeiten von Franke, Trauzettel, Franz-Willing, Kuhn, Sattler-von Sievers, Kindermann oder Weber-Schäfer. Es ist deshalb verdienstvoll, dass Thomas Heberer ein umfassendes Werk zu jenem chinesischen Staatsphilosophen verfasst hat, das der Persönlichkeit, seines gesellschaftlichen Umfelds, seiner Geisteshaltung und schließlich seiner Wirkmacht gerecht wird.

Bereits das Impressum beruft sich auf das ursprüngliche Werk von Kube und Bauer. Insoweit ist die Übernahme des Titels unschädlich und gerechtfertigt, da sich die Idee der Großen Gemeinschaft (*datong* 大同) als Synonym für die Gesamtbetrachtung Kangs eignet. Ein Optimum hätte Heberer erlangt, indem er den chinesischen Ausgangstext übersetzt hätte, doch ist es vertretbar, den Datong-shu-Text aus der Kube-Bauer-Ausgabe zu übernehmen und ihn – gewissermaßen als Update – als Herausgeber gründlich zu überarbeiten und auf den Stand der Gegenwart zu bringen.

Diese Mühe der Textkritik hätte man sich jedoch durchgehend gewünscht, denn Heberer zitiert die Laozi-Übersetzung aus der Feder von Ernst Schwarz, der in Kapitel 80 des Daodejing den Alten Meister zur Suche nach Merkknoten auf eine

Lateinamerika-Reise schickte. Die Passage „使人复结绳而用之“ wird dort zu „Das Schreiben schafft ab, Lehrt die Menschen wieder Quippu-Knoten knüpfen“. Wo aber steht im Urtext etwas über die Abschaffung des Schreibens, wo verwendet Laozi ein Quechua-Wort? Es existieren durchaus bessere und modernere Ausarbeitungen zu dieser Passage im Daodejing, etwa von Derek Lee, Daodejing: A translation and interpretation of the text of Laozi, Kapitel 80, S. 192 „It will allow people to return to the use of knotted ropes“ oder von Wang Bi, Commentary on the Laozi, in Wagner, A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing, S. 383 „if the people could be induced to return to the knotted cords.“

Die konzise Darstellung der Vita Kangs durch Heberer wird zwar im Wesentlichen den historischen Abläufen und der Bedeutung des politischen Philosophen gerecht, dennoch ist es schade, dass Heberer etliche Details nicht aus dem Vorwort von Wolfgang Bauers Werk übernommen hat. Dies kompensiert Heberer jedoch durch – allein in der Einführung 133 – erläuternde Fußnoten, die Verwendung der heute gültigen Pinyin-Transkription und der Anfügung der chinesischen Schriftzeichen bei Personen- und Ortsnamen. Anerkennenswert ist zudem Heberers Vor-Ort-Recherche im Kang Youwei-Museum und am Grab Kangs in Qingdao bzw. bei Kangs Enkelin Kang Bao'e in Beijing.

In seiner Einführung verdeutlicht der Herausgeber völlig zutreffend, wie aktuell Kang Youweis Idee einer großen Weltgemeinschaft ist, und beruft sich auf Statements unterschiedlicher Politiker, Philosophen, Ökonomen und Historiker wie Frank-Walter Steinmeier, François Jullien oder Xi Jinping.

Die zehn Kapitel des Datong Shu in Horst Kubes Übersetzung übernimmt Heberer zwar weitgehend wörtlich, benutzt aber Pinyin-Begriffe und -Namen, fügt die chinesischen Zeichen in Klammern an und spart nicht mit Erläuterungen. Auch die Zwischenüberschriften aus der Bauer-Kube-Fassung werden übernommen und in Kapitälchen-Schrift wiedergegeben, wenn man von einem Formatierungsfehler auf Seite 87 absieht.

Sieht man von derartigen, zu vernachlässigenden Kleinigkeiten ab, so sind die politischen Vorstellungen des Datong Shu gerade durch Heberers Einführung und Kommentierungen für die gegenwärtige China-Betrachtung von hohem Wert. Kapitel für Kapitel können nämlich sowohl Unterstützer wie auch Kritiker der Staatsführung der Volksrepublik China Honig saugen bzw. Diskussionsgrundlagen gewinnen.

Heberers Auseinandersetzung mit dem Begriff der „Utopie“ und ihrer Definition begünstigt das Verständnis Kangs, wenn jener die nationalen Grenzen, Klassen-, Rassen- und Geschlechterschranken abschaffen, familiäre Zwänge beseitigen, die Erwerbsverhältnisse gerechter machen, die Verwaltung vereinheitlichen und modernisieren will bzw. Liebe auf alle Lebewesen auszudehnen und Glückseligkeit zu erreichen sucht.

Viele von Kangs Utopien kommen dem Leser vertraut vor, etwa Passagen zur Rolle der Frau, die an August Bebel erinnern, obgleich der deutsche Sozialist nicht das grausame Fußbinden bekämpfen musste. Viele wurden Realität, wie z. B.

Maos Volkskommunen. Einige sind weltweit für bestimmte Bevölkerungskreise hochmodern, wenn man an die vegane Ernährung denkt.

Es liegt auf der Hand, dass Kang in der Geschichte kontrovers bewertet wurde – etwa von dem 4.-Mai-Intellektuellen Hu Shi als alter konfuzianischer Reaktionär oder von Mao Zedong als Vordenker kommunistischer Heilslehren. Insoweit bietet es sich an, die Aussagen genauer zu betrachten. So könnte für die derzeitige KP-Führung beispielsweise die Berufung auf Kang Youweis Demokratievorstellungen zum Lackmustest werden: „Sobald die Regierungsform demokratisch geworden ist, geht die Tendenz zur Aggressivität automatisch zurück.“ (91)

Eine Gemeinschaft demokratischer Staaten generiert nach Kangs Vorstellungen schließlich ein Weltparlament. In diesem Zusammenhang nahm Kang zumindest rudimentär die Gründung des Völkerbundes von 1920 oder der Vereinten Nationen von 1945 bzw. die Ausarbeitung demokratischer Standards im Pakt für bürgerliche und politische Rechte aus dem Jahr 1976, den die Volksrepublik China leider noch nicht ratifiziert hat, vorweg.

Manche von Kangs Vorstellungen sind inzwischen widerlegt oder überholt, wie Heberer deutlich macht. Ideen von rassistischer Über- oder Unterlegenheit – sie entsprachen dem Stand der Wissenschaft und finden sich auch bei Kangs Gegner Sun Yatsen – machen ihn zum „Kind seiner Zeit“.

Fast zeitgleich mit Heberers Arbeit erschien übrigens Federico Brusadellis Analyse des Datong Shu beim niederländischen Verlag Brill unter dem Titel „Confucian Concord: Reform, Utopia and Global Teleology in Kang Youwei’s Datong Shu“, die sich zur Vertiefung der Kang-Studien und kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit der Materie eignet.

Aktuell nehmen die Spannungen zwischen den USA und China zu und wirken in der Staatengemeinschaft polarisierend. Ökologische Krisen und nicht zuletzt die Covid 19-Pandemie schreien jedoch gewissermaßen nach internationaler Kooperation. Kang Youweis Ideenreich sollte folglich wieder an Aktualität gewinnen. Die moderne Bearbeitung des Datong Shu durch Thomas Heberer hilft insofern weiter, als einige von Kangs Utopien auf einem guten Weg in die praktische Politik sind.

Johannes Klenk und Franziska Waschek (Hgg.): Chinas Rolle in einer neuen Weltordnung. Wissenschaft, Handel und internationale Beziehungen

Baden-Baden: Tectum, 2021. 302 S., 58,00 EUR

Rezension von Anno Dederichs

Der von Johannes Klenk und Franziska Waschek herausgegebene Sammelband „Chinas Rolle in einer neuen Weltordnung. Wissenschaft, Handel und internationale Beziehungen“ geht aus dem „China-Kompetenz-Projekt Hohenheim (CHIKOH)“ hervor, das im Rahmen der China-Strategie des BMBF zur Förderung von Projekten zu „Innovativen Konzepten zum Ausbau der China-Kompetenz an deutschen Hochschulen“ aufgesetzt wurde, und richtet sich an eine breite wissenschaftliche Öffentlichkeit. Dem diagnostizierten Mangel an „[...] wissenschaftlich abgesicherte[r] Evidenz zu vielen Fragen des Austausches mit China [...]“ (Klappentext) soll mit diesem Band Abhilfe geschaffen werden.

Im deutschsprachigen Raum steht dieser Sammelband direkt oder indirekt in Konkurrenz zu wenigstens zwei Publikationen: Zum Ersten und mit einem Fokus auf Wissenschaftskooperation, „Forschungs-Zusammenarbeit China-Deutschland“ (Steffi Robak et al. 2020, erschienen bei transcript), der Texte zu bildungs- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Fragestellungen mit einer interdisziplinären und komparativen Perspektive verbindet. Zum Zweiten mit einem Fokus auf gesellschaftlich-kulturellen Austausch, „China-Kompetenz in Deutschland und Deutschland-Kompetenz in China“ (Chunchun Hu/Hendrik Lackner/Thomas Zimmer 2021, erschienen bei Springer). Beide Bände umfassen Aufsätze von deutschen und chinesischen Autor*innen, so dass die Möglichkeit eines direkten Dialogs zwischen ‚beiden‘ Perspektiven gegeben ist.

Einleitend stellen die Herausgeber*innen klar, zu einer „differenzierten Sichtweise“ (S. 3) auf China beitragen zu wollen, die über die Zuspitzung einer allzu optimistischen („Chancen“) wie auch allzu pessimistischen („Herausforderungen“) Perspektive auf China hinausgeht. Dazu sei es wichtig, „[...] den eigenen Ethnozentrismus und die Perspektivgebundenheit [...]“ zu reflektieren, und anzuerkennen, dass es „[...] jenseits ‚unseres‘ westlichen Blicks auch andere, ebenso zutreffende Wahrnehmungen derselben Sache geben kann“ (S.3). Dieserart interkulturalistisch gewappnet, vereint der Band neben der Einleitung elf Beiträge in den drei im Untertitel genannten Bereichen Wissenschafts- und Innovationssystem (4 Beiträge), Handelspolitik (3) und internationale Beziehungen (4) – Chinesische Autor*innen sind nicht vertreten.

Den ersten Teil des Bandes eröffnet der Artikel von Sigrun Abels, der einen Abriss über die Entwicklung des chinesischen Wissenschaftssystems seit der vorletzten Jahrhundertwende und eine Einschätzung zu dessen aktuellem Stand gibt. Der

Aufstieg des chinesischen Wissenschafts- und Innovationssystems zu einer globalen Führungsposition, so warnt Abels, gehe mit verschiedenen Bedrohungen (Menschenrechte, Wirtschaft, akademische Freiheit u. a.) einher, die eine verbesserte Chinakompetenz in Deutschland notwendig machten.

Vor dem Hintergrund steigender Ausgaben für Forschung und Entwicklung sowie der Anzahl von Patentanmeldungen in China untersucht Philipp Boeing das Phänomen des dazu parallelen Produktivitätsrückgangs. Er kommt zu dem Schluss, dass „[...] market oriented reforms have been more important to Chinese economic performance than subsequent government intervention in these markets” (S. 45).

Leonid Kovachich zeigt anhand des Exports chinesischer Telekommunikations- und Überwachungstechnologie, wie China durch das Setzen technologischer Standards andere Staaten ökonomisch und technologisch von seiner Versorgung abhängig macht. Dieser Kurs führe offensichtlich zu einer technischen und politischen Blockbildung in der Welt.

Tania Becker betrachtet in ihrem Artikel Chinas Streben nach globaler Technologieführerschaft anhand von Künstlicher Intelligenz (KI) als „Werkzeug einer neuen Weltordnung“ (S. 104). Sie identifiziert fünf Anwendungsbereiche von KI in China: Gesichtserkennung, Autonome Fahrzeuge, E-Commerce, Medizin und Smart Farming, und liefert einen Überblick über die wichtigsten Entwicklungen und Player in diesen Bereichen.

Im Themenbereich Handelspolitik analysieren zunächst Matthias Fauth, Benjamin Jung und Oliver Krebs die Auswirkungen des 2018 von den USA durch hohe Zölle ausgelösten Handelsstreits mit China auf den ökonomischen Wohlstand der Bevölkerung.

Martin Bramel betrachtet die Besonderheiten „Phase-One-Deal“ zwischen den USA und China vom Januar 2020 und sieht diesen als Erfolg der US-Regierung im oben genannten Handelskrieg. Seine Schlussfolgerung, auch kommende US-Regierungen würden sich dem Ziel der Eindämmung Chinas verpflichtet fühlen, scheint sich unter der Regierung von Präsident Joe Biden bereits zu bestätigen.

Im letzten Text zur Handelspolitik analysiert Benjamin Jung die überwiegend positiven Effekte von Chinas Beitritt zur Welthandelsorganisation (WTO) in 2001, stellt aber heterogene Auswirkungen auf den bilateralen Handel zwischen China und anderen WTO-Mitgliedstaaten fest.

Den dritten Themenbereich des Bandes, internationale Beziehungen, eröffnet der Beitrag von Ágota Révész mit einer interessanten Analyse chinesischer Medienberichterstattung zu Beginn der COVID-19-Pandemie. Dieser Aufsatz ist einer von zwei Beiträgen des Bandes, in denen chinesischsprachige Quellen in größerem Umfang ausgewertet werden. Anhand des Wechselspiels chinesischer und westlicher Medienberichte vollzieht die Autorin die mediale Selbstpositionierung Chinas im globalen Kontext als moralisch überlegene Macht und die Vision einer neuen Weltordnung nach.

Bei der Auseinandersetzung mit der Internet Engineering Task Force – eine Schlüsselarena transnationaler Internet-Governance – beschäftigen sich David Weyrauch und Thomas Winzen mit der Frage, ob hier eine Bipolarisierung zwischen den USA und China bei der Standardisierung festgestellt werden kann. Sie schlussfolgern, dass die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den USA und China wie auch die Akzeptanz transnationaler Governance bei chinesischen Stakeholdern eher zunimmt.

Anhand einer Analyse von Reden in der United Nations General Debate zeigen Dennis Hammerschmidt und Cosima Meyer den Einfluss chinesischer Entwicklungshilfe auf die Kritikfähigkeit afrikanischer Staaten an den USA. Sie stellen eine Verschiebung und wachsende Isolation der USA im internationalen System fest.

Im letzten und sehr guten Beitrag zu internationalen Beziehungen – der zweite des Bandes mit einer hohen Anzahl chinesisch-sprachiger Quellen – beschreibt Ylva Monschein umfassend informiert den Verlauf der chinesischen Entwicklungspolitik und Armutsbekämpfung. Sie macht auf die großen Erfolge der Armutsbekämpfung durch China (im In- wie im Ausland) und deren große internationale Bedeutung aufmerksam sowie auch auf das armutsmindernde Potential der Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) als infrastruktureller Investitionsplan.

Insgesamt versammelt der Band interessante und teils sehr gute Beiträge. Die Aufteilung des Bandes in drei Themenfelder kann dabei nicht überdecken, dass diese Untergliederung konzeptuell nicht weiter relevant wird. Um seiner Zielsetzung gerecht zu werden, zu einer „differenzierte[n] Sichtweise“ (S. 3) auf China beizutragen und neben ‚westlichen‘ auch alternative Wahrnehmungen zu akzeptieren, hätte der Band mit Beiträgen chinesischer Autor*innen sicherlich stärker zu einem wissenschaftlichen Dialog mit China beitragen können. Gerade in Zeiten zunehmender politischer Spannungen scheint dies als China-Kompetenz ebenso wichtig zu sein wie die zweifellos relevanten Beiträge über China in diesem Band.

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Terbishdagva, Dendev: Im Jahr des Roten Affen. Ein Nomade zwischen Jurte und Brandenburger Tor

Berlin: Neues Leben, 2020. 479 S., 24 EUR

Rezension von Peter Schaller

Dendev Terbishdagva spannt einen weiten Bogen und erstellt eine Art Kompendium der Mongolei. Er berührt eine Vielfalt von Aspekten: die Geschichte und das archäologische Erbe, beginnend mit den Dinosauriern der Gobi; die Hunnen; natürlich Dschingis Khan, ohne den die Mongolei nicht denkbar wäre; die Zeit des Sozialismus und der Abhängigkeit von der Sowjetunion, was gleichzeitig aber einen Modernisierungsschub und die Öffnung der Mongolei zur Welt bedeutete; die Repression in den 1930er-Jahren und schließlich die Wende von 1989/90 hin zu einer von Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft bestimmten Gesellschaft.

Dieses weite Panorama verwebt Terbishdagva mit seinem Werdegang eines einfachen Hirtenjungen, der in der Mongolei nach oben steigt: Ingenieurstudium in der DDR in der zweiten Hälfte der 1970er-Jahre, leitende Position im größten Fleischkombinat des Landes in Ulan Bator in den 80er-Jahren, Rückkehr nach Berlin 1988, wo ihn und seine Familie die deutsche und die mongolische Wende überraschen. Er baut in Ulan Bator zusammen mit seiner Frau ein erfolgreiches Importgeschäft hauptsächlich mit deutschen Produkten und eine Wurstproduktion auf. 2000 geht er in die Politik, wird Botschafter in Deutschland und schließlich Minister und Vize-Regierungschef. Bis zu den Wahlen 2020 hält er seinen Platz im mächtigen Parlament.

Zwei Fragen bewegen den Autor: Was ist die Mongolei und wohin sollte sie sich entwickeln?

Seine Beurteilung der Nachwende-Geschichte ist deutlich. Die Mongolei wurde das Opfer internationaler Entwicklungs- und Finanzinstitutionen, die das Land nach Schema F behandelten, und Objekt der Begierde der eigenen politisch-ökonomischen Elite, nämlich der alten Nomenklatura und skrupelloser Individuen, die die Tugenden des Nomaden und die mit dem Himmel und der Erde verbundenen Tradition verloren haben und sich bereichern. Die Mongolei ist ein „Weideland der Korruption“ und die Demokratie ist eine „behinderte“. Dies steht im Gegensatz zu dem politischen Mantra des Westens, wo man die Mongolei als „Oase der Demokratie“ lobt.

Es ist nicht ohne Gefahr, ein System so harsch zu kritisieren, das man selbst 20 Jahre lang in vorderster politischer Front mitgestaltet hat. Aber der Autor war schon ein wohlhabender Mann, bevor er in die Politik ging. Er wurde nicht Abgeordneter, um reich zu werden. Zur Kritik, der er als Politiker naturgemäß ausgesetzt ist, zitiert er ein mongolisches Sprichwort: „Man soll nicht unter Leute

gehen, wenn man Angst vor Gerede hat“. Ein Einzelner, so seine Einsicht, kann einem Land nicht allein die Richtung vorgeben.

Die Koordinaten, in denen er die Wirklichkeit vermisst, sind für Terbishdagva das Reich Dschingis Khans und die Nomadenkultur. Er träumt nicht von einem Revival des mongolischen Großreichs, sondern dem damit verbundenen Kosmos der Werte und der geistigen Orientierung, der den Mongolen entspricht: „Was sich für die Zukunft der Mongolei als viel wichtiger erweisen könnte, ist das kulturelle Erbe einer weltoffenen, Grenzen überwindenden Politik des Ausgleichs und der Verständigung.“

Es passiert nicht oft, dass sich ein mongolischer Politiker so ausführlich zu seinem Leben und seinem Land äußert und dies auch in Deutsch zugänglich ist. Dabei ist es nur logisch, dass der Autor sein Buch auch auf Deutsch veröffentlicht, denn Deutschland ist neben der Mongolei der zweite Bezugspunkt seines Lebens. Nicht nur wirtschaftlich, sondern auch geistig: Die in Deutschland maßgeblichen Werte und Orientierungen sind ihm seit seinem Studium an der Humboldt Universität ein Vorbild. Seine privaten und politischen Kontakte nach Berlin und darüber hinaus sind vielfältig. Dieses Pendeln zwischen zwei Welten drückt der Untertitel aus: Ein Nomade zwischen Jurte und Brandenburger Tor.

Die Darstellung wechselt ab zwischen persönlichem Erleben und der Diskussion komplexer geschichtlicher Entwicklungen, was die Orientierung mitunter erschwert. Das Buch ist aber ein Gewinn, wenn man tiefer in das Land einsteigen will.

Am meisten dürfte der Laie von den Schilderungen des Lebens der Hirtennomaden und ihrer Sitten und Gebräuche profitieren, die einen Einblick in eine von der unsrigen so unterschiedliche Lebensweise geben.

So beschreibt Terbishdagva, dass Säuglinge in „der klaren Brühe eines Markknochens gewaschen und anschließend mit grünem Tee abgespült werden“ oder er schildert, wie man nach Nomadenart die gekochten Knochen säuberlich abnagt und sie dann aufricht, um das Mark zu essen.

Auch die über das ganze Buch verstreuten mongolischen Sprichwörter haben ihren Reiz: „Wer mir etwas vorschreiben kann, der kann auch einen Hund melken.“

In den letzten Teilen seines Buches beschreibt Terbishdagva zutreffend die grundlegenden Mängel der mongolischen Demokratie, die Ich-Bezogenheit der Masse der Politiker und die Macht- und Verteilungskämpfe einer Elite, die hauptsächlich ein Werteproblem hat.

Ist die Mongolei noch zu retten? Diese Frage mag dramatisch klingen, aber sie berührt den Kern. Des Autors – angesichts der Probleme allerdings idealistische – Lösung ist das Konzept der „Fleißigen Mongolei“, nämlich der Aufbau aus eigener Kraft, geleitet von der Besinnung auf die wertvollen Elemente der eigenen Tradition, verbunden mit der Bereitschaft, hart zu arbeiten und nach einer „wachen Ethik“ zu leben. Vor allem muss sich die Elite ändern, denn: „Wenn die Obrigkeit

den Sitz des Kaisersessels nicht finden kann, dann findet ihn der Untertan auch nicht.“

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L. N. Venkataraman: The Social Construction of Capabilities in a Tamil Village (with a Foreword by William R. Jackson)

Himayatnagar, Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2021. XIX + 190 pp.

Review by Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam

In 1953, then Tamilnadu Chief Minister Rajagopalachariar suggested a controversial education reform: instead of following the academic syllabus, children should for part of the school day be instructed in their parents' caste occupation, because that might sooner secure them an income in the face of a glut of educated youth. The proposal was furiously mocked and spurned by the Dravidian parties as *kula kalvi tittam* (caste vocation plan), to be subsequently buried quietly and never put forward again. It was seen as preventing children from the lower castes to climb out of poverty, aspire to an academic career and to social mobility and as cementing the dominant position of Brahmins in the academic professions and the crucial civil service. Education in the sense of schooling, book learning and attaining an academic degree is now generally taken as a panacea for all ills, economic and social. That this is not the case has long been argued about in the literature. While education can provide a path out of poverty and towards social mobility, it also always has a clear filter function.

The author of the study under review shares this ambivalent view of education. With the example of a village in Tamilnadu, he specifically highlights the fact that mere education does not help the poor and low-caste to achieve social mobility, whereas for the Brahmins and the dominant castes it does so only to a limited extent. In other words: education does neither flatten social hierarchies nor by itself reduce poverty.

In the introduction, the author takes issue with Amartya Sen's famous theory of capabilities which regards education as a crucial factor to provide the individual with life chances and freedom of choice to utilise these. He does not dismiss this approach but argues that the theory does not sufficiently take into account the social setting and environment of individuals and the intersectional constraints and disabilities they are exposed to. Caste and class, he says, often intersect to exacerbate social and professional disadvantages and thus obstruct or prevent the development of capabilities and functionings. Capabilities are, as he says in the title of the study, as much socially constructed as the functionings that are assumed to arise therefrom.

The argument is developed in nine chapters. The village he researched is the same one that André Beteille investigated for his path-breaking study "Caste, class and power" of 1965. The author wants to find out how the village and the people have changed since then and finds some remarkable differences. He states that the study should now rather be termed "Caste, class and education". He points out that quite

decisive social changes have taken place in the village since Bêteilles work, not least due to policies that favour the “Backward Classes” (BCs) and make it punishable to denigrate them. But he emphasises that politics has not been able to eradicate social hierarchies and intersectional discrimination. Merely changing the name by which a caste is addressed and make a derogatory name punishable takes away some overt discrimination and oppression, but not the covert and insidious workings of it.

While outlining the changes that have taken place, he shows that education, though all inhabitants in the village agree on its crucial relevance, in many cases has not had the desired effects. Considerable educated un- and underemployment can be observed. Whereas the Brahmins have dealt with that by mostly moving to the big cities, among them Chennai, the “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs) have stayed in the village, sometimes commuting into the next big town for work, and moved into the houses and erstwhile positions of the Brahmins. The BCs have remained stuck to a large extent and aspire at most to landed property in order to secure a modicum of livelihood. Further, the author describes a two-tier system of education: that in the government village school where the quality is dismal, and that in private establishments where mostly skills for a very restricted job market are taught. Thus, the author concludes, education fails young people in the village in both respects: it neither creates capabilities in the sense of life choices for the individual nor provides functionings for the job market. This is due both to the formal organisation of education and its content. Education is considered a business providing skills on the way to employability.

The narrowness of education, both government and private, shows in the degrees the young people collect: mostly B.com., BBA and such which at most provide formal skills geared to a quite limited range of jobs. While the Brahmins have at least networks that can help them access opportunities, the BCs have to fend for themselves and subsequently cannot utilise their functionings and capabilities. Many of the latter have acquired an incredible number of skills and degrees, but still have to accept low-paid and low-prestige jobs to survive. The gender aspect is of particular interest here: women of all castes are even more restricted in their life choices despite a high degree of education.

What remains largely implicit in the argument is the question of the function and meaning of education in general. What is it supposed to achieve, what type of functionings and capabilities should it provide? And which of these does it actually provide?

The study is well grounded theoretically and the author has been able to operationalise his approach adequately. His being a native speaker is a major advantage that provided him direct access the villagers without the help of an interpreter. In an annex to the study, he provides a summary and a critique of approaches in development sociology. While he again affirms Sen’s capability approach, he argues that it does not go far enough because it looks primarily at the

individual and leaves out the limitations of this approach that consist in intersectional discrimination and social hierarchies.

The language employed in the study is, however, often opaque and overcomplex, occasionally making it difficult to get the author's point and sometimes obstructing an understanding of the considerable merits of the work. Also, while it is certainly interesting to re-investigate a research field after a gap of a few decades, the insight that education is not the highway to success and mobility it is often made out to be cannot remove social disadvantages by itself, is, although important, as remarked earlier, not altogether new. The case study on the whole confirms findings that have long been known and researched in the abstract and on the ground. In this context one might ponder whether after all *kula kalvi* properly implemented for all groups of pupils and not forced upon any one group, or a thorough change of educational content with less emphasis on book learning might not be a better avenue to create capabilities and life chances.

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Hirn, Wolfgang: Shenzhen. Die Weltwirtschaft von morgen

Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2020. 286 S., 25 EUR

Rezension von Sina Hardaker

„Die Damen und Herren sollten mal die Richtung wechseln.“ (7) Hirn spricht in erster Linie von Politikern und Zeitungsredakteuren, meint aber letztendlich uns alle: Anstatt die Zukunft im kalifornischen Silicon Valley zu suchen, rät er unverblümt, solle man sich auf den Weg nach Shenzhen begeben. Denn, „Beijing ist die Stadt der Vergangenheit, Shanghai die Stadt der Gegenwart, aber Shenzhen ist die Stadt der Zukunft“ (12). Hirn, der Volkswirtschaftslehre und Politikwissenschaften in Tübingen studierte, hat u. a. mit „Chinas Bosse“ (2018) bereits Bücher zu China veröffentlicht. Er arbeitet seit 1985 als Reporter beim Manager Magazin und reist laut eigener Website seit 1986 regelmäßig in die Volksrepublik.

Shenzhen, im Süden der Provinz Guangdong am Perlfluss gelegen, steht im Zentrum seines aktuellen Buches, das versucht, „allen Facetten dieser Metropole gerecht zu werden“ (10). Ein ambitioniertes Ziel, das er (nur) in Teilen erreicht. In zehn Kapiteln, die unabhängig voneinander bestehen, hat er etliche interessante Geschichten und Hintergründe über diese außergewöhnliche Stadt zusammengetragen. Er skizziert zunächst den oft beschriebenen kometenhaften Aufstieg der Sonderwirtschaftszone, die als erfolgreichstes Modell weltweit gilt. Nach einer Neuorientierung in den 1990er-Jahren, weg von Billigprodukten aller Art zu Hochtechnologieindustrien, hat sich in gerade einmal 40 Jahren (!) eine Ansammlung von kleinen Fischerdörfern zu einer Megacity mit über 12 Millionen Einwohnern entwickelt. Shenzhen gilt als die am schnellsten wachsende Stadt in der Geschichte der Menschheit. Als Modellstadt und Reformlabor profitierte sie in besonderem Maße von der Reform- und Öffnungspolitik des Landes. Sie ist eine Stadt der Superlative: die höchste Dichte an Start-Ups (die zu den wertvollsten der Welt zählen) und an Patentanmeldungen in China, 67 Milliardäre, ein Durchschnittsalter von nur 30 Jahren, ein ÖPNV, der komplett (18.000 Busse) auf Elektromobilität umgerüstet ist und in der „du sozusagen morgens eine Idee haben und am Abend schon den Prototypen in der Hand“ halten kannst (10). Der Standortvorteil Shenzhens liegt, das betont Hirn mehrfach, am „Shenzhen Speed“ (55). Die Stadt profitiert von ihrer Nähe zur Hardware, zum gigantischen Produktionsnetzwerk in ihrem Umland. Zudem ist die Verwaltung Shenzhens sehr technologieaffin und unterstützt Innovationen, agiert laut Hirn eher als Dienstleisterin anstatt als Regulatorin. Folglich stelle Shenzhen inzwischen das Silicon Valley in den Schatten.

In Nanshan, einem der größten Bezirke Shenzhens, haben 125 börsennotierte Unternehmen ihren registrierten Sitz. Nicht nur einige der wichtigsten chinesischen Unternehmen, wie DJI, Huawei (größter Arbeitgeber der Stadt mit 80.000

Mitarbeitern), BYD, Ping An und Tencent, sondern auch ausländische Firmen, von Airbus über Apple, Intel sowie Microsoft sind mit großen Forschungsabteilungen vertreten. Hirn zeigt auf unterhaltsame Weise vielfältige Facetten der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung Shenzhens auf und thematisiert u. a. die Gründerszene, künstliche Intelligenz, Smart Cities, Kameraüberwachung, Elektromobilität, Universitäten und Forschung sowie Architektur und Kunst. Interessant und gelungen ist dabei die Darstellung der Köpfe, die hinter den Firmen stecken. Dies mag zuweilen an sein Vorgänger-Buch „Chinas Bosse“ erinnern, nichtsdestotrotz gestalten die häufig unvermittelten Einschübe und Szenenwechsel mit nacherzählenden Interviews eine kurzweilige Lektüre. Dennoch scheint sich dem Leser ein bestimmtes Bild durch die selektierten plastischen und teils beeindruckenden Beispiele aufzudrängen (wie Roboter verstärkt den Alltag beherrschen, wie Zutritt zunehmend per Gesichtserkennung geregelt wird oder wie Drohnen Verkehrssünder verfolgen), das sich sicherlich nicht im gesamten Stadtbild widerspiegelt.

„Wer wissen will, wie – im Guten und im Bösen – die Welt von morgen aussehen könnte, der muss nach Shenzhen fahren“ (8). Nur in einer Handvoll kurzer Beispiele werden die Schattenseiten der Stadt, z. B. der teure Wohnraum (195), sowie einige ihrer Innovationen erläutert. Blass bleibt etwa die Ausführung, warum es zu wenige Schulen in der Stadt gibt. In den letzten Kapiteln beschreibt Hirn das Verhältnis zu Hongkong, erläutert, warum Shenzhen dessen Niedergang mitverursacht hat und wie die Stadt davon profitiert. Zudem erörtert er die Greater Bay Area, ein Gebiet, das bis 2035 zum größten Wirtschaftsraum der Welt zusammenwachsen soll. Erst hier geht es im Grunde genommen um die Weltwirtschaft von morgen, wie es der Untertitel des Buches reklamiert.

Hirn bemüht sich grundsätzlich um Neutralität, er verfällt weder in Lobeshymnen für die chinesische Stadt, noch schreibt er alarmierende Warnrufe vor der oft beschriebenen chinesischen Macht. An einzelnen Stellen hinterlassen seine persönliche Kommentierung bzw. plakativen Aussagen Fragezeichen: „Können Chinesen kreativ sein?“ (202); „So weit ist es also gekommen: Deutschland ist der Schüler und China der Lehrmeister“ (105). Einige Aussagen bleiben vage. Nur selten werden Quellen genannt. Am Ende des Buches finden sich zwar ein Personen- und Unternehmensverzeichnis sowie Literaturhinweise in Form von Büchern und Zeitschriftenaufsätzen (insgesamt 46), diese sind aber mit den Aussagen im Buch leider nicht verknüpft. Damit ist es kaum möglich, den Belegen für die gemachten Aussagen nachzugehen.

Kurzum, der Autor lässt klar erkennen, dass wir in Europa bzw. in Deutschland in Bereichen wie künstliche Intelligenz und E-Commerce bereits Jahre, wenn nicht Jahrzehnte zurückliegen. China, insbesondere Shenzhen, wird im Rahmen der Gestaltung der digitalen Zukunft ein entscheidendes Wort mitreden. Dies wird in diesem Buch für die breite Öffentlichkeit kurzweilig dargestellt.

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NEUERE LITERATUR ÜBER ASIEN

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