



Connecting Materialities / Material Connectivities [mat ~ con]

International Symposium at the
Center for Advanced Studies (CAS), LMU Munich
9-11 February 2017

Organized by
PHILIPP SCHORCH AND MARTIN SAXER

Thursday, 9 February 2017

- 18:00-18:15 Welcome Note
Dr. Martin Saxer and Dr. Philipp Schorch, LMU Munich
Opening Mat-Con
- 18:15-19:15 Prof. Tim Ingold, University of Aberdeen (UK)
How materials correspond
- 19:15-19:30 Intervention 1: Felix Remter, TU Munich, and Dr. des. Miriam Remter, LMU Munich
Thick participation in the material entanglements of honeybees and their keepers
- 19:30-21:00 Reception

Friday, 10 February 2017

- 08:45-09:00 Registration
- 09:00-09:30 Dr. Philipp Schorch and Dr. Martin Saxer, LMU Munich
Introducing Mat-Con
- 09:30-10:45 **Session 1: Material (Re)thinking - Part 1**

Dr. Tom Widger, Durham University (UK)
Chemical philosophy, material connectivities, and chemical anthropology

Prof. Philipp W. Stockhammer, LMU Munich
The effectancy of things: an archaeological perspective
- 10:45-11:15 Intervention 2: Lisa Rail, LMU Munich
Tamga tash: a tale of stones, stories and travelling immobiles

- 11:15-11:45 Coffee Break
- 11:45-13:00 **Session 2: Material (Re)thinking - Part 2**
- Dr. Jennifer Clarke, Robert Gordon University and University of Aberdeen (UK)
Apocalyptic sublimes: material traces of disaster
- Dr. Gillian G. Tan, Deakin University (Australia)
Meditations on the material-connectivities of smoke in Tibet
- 13:00-14:00 Lunch Break
- 14:00-14:30 Intervention 3: Dr. Natalie Göldenboth, LMU Munich
Invocating the Gods: Barbie dolls on Santería altars
- 14:30-15:45 **Session 3: Temporal Materialities - Part 1**
- Prof. Mark Aldenderfer, University of California Merced (USA)
Stone and spirit: Material connectivities of ritual practice in Tibet
- Prof. Srinivas G. Reddy, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (India)
Stallions of the Indian Ocean
- 15:45-16:15 Intervention 4: Dr. Gabriele Herzog-Schröder, LMU Munich
Remembering and non-remembering among the Yanomami
- 16:15-16:45 Coffee Break
- 16:45-18:00 **Session 4: Temporal Materialities - Part 2**
- Julia Binter, University of Oxford (UK)
Imperial becoming - transatlantic trade and the politicization of the gift in the 19th century Niger Delta
- Dr. Alice von Bieberstein, University of Cambridge (UK)
Killing the messenger: 'Armenian' treasures in post-genocide Turkey
- 19:00-22:00 Conference Dinner

Saturday, 11 February 2017

- 09:00-10:15 **Session 5: Curating Environments - Part 1**
- Lorenzo Granada, Universidad de los Andes (Colombia)
Towards a fragmented ethnography: walking along debris in Armero, Colombia
- Dr. Adam Kaasa, LSE Cities, London School of Economics and Political Science (UK)
The materiality of erasure: circulations of tabula rasa urbanism in the 20th Century

- 10:15-10:45 Intervention 5: Marc Higgin, University of Aberdeen (UK)
Windows onto King Street
- 10:45-11:15 Coffee Break
- 11:15-12:30 **Session 6: Curating Environments - Part 2**
- Dr. Alessandro Rippa, LMU Munich
Curating Dulong: state, market and tourism in China's borderlands
- Dr. Juliane Müller, LMU Munich
Infrastructure, trade, and ritual landscape in Andean-Pacific South America
- 12:30-13:30 Lunch Break
- 13:30-14:00 Intervention 6: Anna-Maria Walter, LMU Munich
Interactive explorations around mobile phone connections in and to northern Pakistan
- 14:00-15:15 **Session 7: Forging Mat-Con - Part 1**
- Dr. Inge Daniels, University of Oxford (UK)
'Expressions of concern': New Year's cards and the webs of social, economic and spiritual connections in contemporary Japan
- Prof. Catrien Notermans, Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands)
Sending Pilgrimage Souvenirs to Africa: constructing powerful transnational connections out of trifling objects
- 15:15-15:45 Coffee Break
- 15:45-17:00 **Session 8: Forging Mat-Con - Part 2**
- Dr. Elia Petridou, University of the Aegean (Greece)
Materialising the border: clothes and cultural encounters at a refugee camp in Greece
- Dr. Amiria Salmond, University of Auckland (New Zealand)
Comparing relations: reassembling a corpus of taonga in and across museums
- 17:00-17:30 Coda (Plenary)

Venue:
Center for Advanced Studies
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Seestraße 13
80802 München

Abstracts Symposium

Connecting Materialities / Material Connectivities [mat ~ con]

Prof. Tim Ingold, University of Aberdeen (UK)

How materials correspond

It has been usual to think of the material world as a miscellany of objects, variably joined in interactive networks within which they can exert compound effects. Object-thinking, however, focuses on ready-made forms and properties at the expense of the flows, mixtures and transformations of materials of which every object is but a passing realisation. I argue that in processes of making, materials are not joined up, as objects are, but join with one another and with the kinaesthetic attention of the maker. To refer to this joining with, in which materials and makers are rendered answerable to one another, I use the term correspondence. Thus where objects interact, materials correspond. In correspondence, things are not added together from without but continually differentiate themselves from within. The word 'skill' originally referred to this idea of interstitial differentiation - of cleaving materials along the grain of their movement or becoming. I shall illustrate this idea through examples of the correspondence of materials in carpentry, masonry, weaving, calligraphy and musical performance. I show how the correspondence of wood and stone lies at the root of the classical Greek idea of harmony, how the correspondence of threads and traces in weaving and writing underpins the idea of the text, and how in choral music, voices correspond in melodic counterpoint. I conclude that a focus on the correspondence of materials, rather than on the inter-agency of objects, is crucial to the kind of rethinking needed to forge a genuine sense of environmental sustainability.

Intervention 1: Felix Remter, TU Munich, and Dr. des. Miriam Remter, LMU Munich

Thick participation in the material entanglements of honeybees and their keepers

The interrelations of human beings, honeybees and their shared environments have changed significantly during the last decades in the northern hemisphere. In this troubled interdependency, politicians, scientists, practitioners and activists, as well as different bee species, parasites and microbes started developing diverse and often opposing agendas to face this precarious situation. Materiality and connectivity play a multilayered role in the more-than-human entanglements in which we, as anthropologists, are always participating. By presenting two audiovisual examples, we want to open a space to experience the material integration of beekeepers and bees, and the immediate and long lines of connectivity emerging in the field. One is the highly engineered approach to honeybees as genetic material containing certain behavior and being fixed in pedigrees reaching all over the globe. The other is approaching the same bee as a feral animal to be "rewilded" and cured by "natural" selection. As being-in-the-world means experiencing with our bodily, sensory and emotional abilities, we argue that materiality should not be excluded through the purification process of both anthropocentrism and representation, and discuss the challenges and possibilities of thick participation and immersion in those assemblages.

Dr. Tom Widger, Durham University (UK)

Chemical philosophy, material connectivities, and chemical anthropology

My paper explores the relationship between anthropology and chemistry, each being understood as a specific kind of engagement with the material world. My argument is that anthropological discussions of material connectivities would benefit from a consideration of chemical philosophy, and the implications of its *absence* from the history of ideas in anthropology. I suggest Durkheim's influence led to the import of a Newtonian bias in anthropology that was notably *gravitational* in its approach to the social forces that he argued attracted and repelled people to and from one another. Finding that ideas and metaphors drawn from physics and biology have shaped anthropological thinking on both materiality and connectivity, I propose that a serious engagement with chemistry

would help us to look anew at what is at stake when describing things and their connections and movements in the world. To advance this position I discuss my research into western and Ayurvedic toxicologies as each offering chemically based theories of suicidality in the context of agrochemical pollution. My ethnography shows how theories of materiality and connectivity have long been integral to Sri Lankan understandings of suicide.

Prof. Philipp W. Stockhammer, LMU Munich

The effectancy of things: an archaeological perspective

For a long time, archaeologists conceptualized things as being stable and static. Although the active role of things in these human-thing-entanglements has increasingly been accepted, the respective potential of things in these networks is still been discussed in the framework of the concept of “agency”. I would like to analyse the complexity of human-thing-entanglements from a practice-oriented perspective and to focus on the interaction between both sides. In order to better understand these processes, I will discuss the issues of substance and materiality and the related changeability of things. This changeability of things is threefold, 1) due to the dynamic perception of things and their affordances, 2) due to the changing of things through time without any human interference and, 3) due to the changing of things during human practices with things. These changeabilities unfold their potential during the itineraries of things and result in ever new practices with them and the continuous attributions of functions and meanings by human actors. These changeabilities are the core of the “effectancy” of things, a concept aimed at overcoming “agency” as well as at a better understanding of the power of things. This approach will finally be illustrated with a short archaeological case study.

Intervention 2: Lisa Rail, LMU Munich

Tamga tash: a tale of stones, stories and travelling immobiles

Close to lake Issyk Kul, in northern Kyrgyzstan, and a little walk up the mountains, you can find the *tamga tash*: An inscribed stone, decorated with prayer flags, attracting a small but constant trickle of visitors. It is reachable thanks to its improvised touristic infrastructure, consisting of a small sign by the closest main road, with some elderly ladies and children guiding the unmarked way. As an old, heavy stone – as many old, heavy and heavily visited stones worldwide – it is immobile, but nevertheless induces movement. As a physically immobile yet narratively travelling stone, it poses an everyday riddle, touching the core of Mat-Con’s objective: Thinking through the curious intersection of materiality and connectivity, materials and stories, and their mutual constitution as part of lived realities’ fabric. How to grasp the relation of stony fixity and whirring posts on travel blogs transporting the stone afar? How to grasp the radiating/attracting force co-produced by the *tamga tash*? Following the stone’s idiosyncratic story – three-dimensionally invoked through a collage from texts, strings, images and a stone – invites to encounter and develop further thoughts on mediality, word and world, creativity, narration and emergent gravitational forces. Concrete (hi)stories and theories intertwine, like the installation’s components.

Dr. Jennifer Clarke, Robert Gordon University and University of Aberdeen (UK)

Apocalyptic sublimes: material traces of disaster

This paper will discuss works of art, and doing anthropology with art, in the wake of the 2011 ‘triple disaster’ in Japan. Dominant discourses around catastrophe often focus on the event, thus circulating interminable scenes of devastation, problematically locked into apocalyptic imagery. Thinking through responses to material traces of the disaster, I will explore works of art as works of translation rather than representation, reflecting on my art-anthropological practice alongside the work of other artists including Aono Fumiaki, who resuscitates detritus of disaster by transmuting damaged remnants – of lorries, boats, flooring, roads – into poetic hybrids, and examining his understanding of art as *naosu*, a concept that encompasses healing as well as ‘putting back into place’. My further aim in this paper is to develop an alternative theorisation of the ‘apocalyptic

sublime', drawing a crucial distinction between 'imminent' and 'immanent' apocalypse. I will explore this particularly in relation to nuclear radiation as the very definition of a 'hyperobject', which raises important questions about materiality and connectivity. Grappling with notions of excess and ways of witnessing, I hope to make a modest contribution to anthropology's speculative endeavours: engaged, creative practices that go beyond the documentation of existing realities.

Dr. Gillian G. Tan, Deakin University (Australia)

Meditations on the material-connectivities of smoke in Tibet

For Tibetan pastoralists, smoke is more than the result of their fire-making and heat-producing activities. On a fundamental level, smoke purifies. Heating juniper branches and special herbs creates smoke that cleanses polluted items, mitigates ill-fortune, pleases worldly deities, and binds communities. This paper draws on these preliminary insights to trace the material connectivities of smoke on the Tibetan plateau. These insights interweave with another perspective of smoke as composed of particulate matter – black carbon and other fine particles – that has detrimental effects not only for the human body but also on Himalayan glaciers. According to a growing literature, the smoke-producing activities of Tibetan pastoralists contribute directly to melting permafrost and decreased water quality in the Third Pole. Setting off on an imagined journey with smoke as it emerges from heated yak dung and juniper branches, wafts out of black tents, purifies mountain deities, and diffuses through the atmosphere before settling back into the ground, this paper elicits varying insights into what smoke does. In the process, it calls into question what smoke is. Eschewing substantialist accounts of being, Tibetan understanding and experience of smoke present an opportunity to explore the necessary interconnection between mental and material forms that both underlies indigenous Tibetan philosophy and enervates debate on the proper delineation (and the properness of such delineation) between the “mental” and “material”.

Intervention 3: Dr. Natalie Göldenboth, LMU Munich

Invocating the Gods - Barbie dolls on Santería altars

In the course of the transatlantic slave trade, the sacred beings of the Yoruba – the Orichas, had been transported to Cuba in the imaginary of their adepts. During colonial rule, they had found a new representational system in the catholic iconography of the saints. Nowadays, Barbie dolls populate the altars of wealthier Santería adepts in Cuba as le dernier cri of Afro-Cuban religious fashion and representations of the Orichas. But when we take a closer look, there is no Barbie doll-production in Cuba. Ken and Barbie are mostly gifts from relatives living in the USA, and together with their glamorous outfits, these objects are charged with their own unique message that first seems contradictory but at second glance is convenient: the confluent streams of money, commodities, ideas and family ties between Cuba and the USA are manifested in the Barbie dolls. Among other things, Orichas are assigned to bring wealth, journeys and an imagined better life in the USA. This intervention asks for the different layers that converge in the figure of the Barbie doll in the context of Afro-Cuban religions: the materiality of the object and its content, the cohabitation of diverging myths and the material domains to which the doll points to – constant transfers between materiality and reference, abstraction and concretization.

Prof. Mark Aldenderfer, University of California Merced (USA)

Stone and spirit: Material connectivities of ritual practice in Tibet

The Tibetan landscape is filled with the sacred—lakes, rocks, caves, and mountain peaks. These serve as foci for ritual practice today and likely into the deep prehistory of the plateau as well. Spirits, ancestors, and deities live in these places, and much of Buddhist ritual practice is directed at creating positive connections to them. Landscape and ritual form a dynamic creation and recreation of the sacred, and things – objects as simple as stones – are frequently the mediums through which connectivities are forged between people, places, and the entities that possess or inhabit them. In this presentation, I explore the rdo ring – the standing stone – as both an ancient and modern

medium of connection of landscape and spirit. In the deep, pre-Buddhist past, rdo ring were a mimesis that bound and connected the spirits and deities of mountain peaks to the social world of people below them. Today, while the deities live on in their mountain abodes, the stones no longer appear to serve that role. But stones, some fallen, some still standing, have found a new connectivity in humbler rituals that bind people to them and to different forces of life. The stones – hard and durable – are yet mutable, and have taken new form in a modern landscape in which the past still resonates.

Ass. Prof. Srinivas G. Reddy, Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (India)

Stallions of the Indian Ocean

Within a half century of Vasco da Gama's 1498 landing in Calicut, the Portuguese navy had effectively arrested control of all maritime trade in the Indian Ocean. With key ports secured in Africa, the Middle East and India, they became the new arbiters of an already well-connected trade network. During this time the most essential trade commodity for South Indian and Deccani empires was warhorses imported from the port of Hormuz. These animals were critical for battle, but they never fared well in an Indian climate, and knowledge of their care seems to have been limited to a select group of foreign specialists. Using this critical resource as a bargaining tool, the Portuguese cleverly pitted the Indian empires of Vijayanagara and Bijapur against each other as they vied to establish their own base in Goa. Using Indic literary sources and foreign travelogues, along with material remains from the ruins of Vijayanagara, this paper will explore the circulation, sale and deployment of warhorses in the early sixteenth century Indian Ocean, and the mechanisms by which this dynamic movement linked disparate empires, merchants, knowledge systems and cultural practices into a complex maritime network.

Intervention 4: Dr. Gabriele Herzog-Schröder, LMU Munich

Remembering and non-remembering among the Yanomami

Remembrance is a form of connectivity between individuals and social groups, and it is often material objects that trigger reminiscence as a connecting bond between individuals. This intervention points to the specific form of remembering and its variance - non-remembering - among the Yanomami (Southern Venezuela). Here the taboo of publicly naming the departed and the urge to destroy all his or her possessions is eminent. The *rahaka*-arrow head, a two-pointed bamboo-splinter with its equivocal meanings of war or killing as well as peace and diplomacy, is interchanged in encounters among Yanomami males. The arrow head corresponds with a small calabash-gourd containing the cinder of a dead which is consumed during funerary rites. The "artefacts" transport both: the idea of actively remembering and, as a social practice, its dis-membering. In their interaction, these objects show the fragile tendency to relate to, as well as eluding each other. The blurredness of the images in the background points to the ambiguous concept of Yanomami memory and, in this way, to the specific notion of connecting with the past and the importance of forgetting, of dis-membering the social relation via material matter.

Julia Binter, University of Oxford (UK)

Imperial becoming - transatlantic trade and the politicization of the gift in the 19th century Niger Delta

This paper looks at the role of gift exchange in a formative period of British-Nigerian imperial contact: the era of legitimate commerce (ca. 1820-1900). It examines the ways in which British imperial agents and African elites established, negotiated and contested relationships via gift exchange and stresses the processual quality of becoming imperial. It traces the transformation of gift exchange from commercial interactions in the first half of the nineteenth century to the political instrumentalisation of gifts during the "scramble for Africa" (1884-1914). It thereby looks at the divergent notions of reciprocity and contract among various British and African actors and analyses their different interests and expectations within the shifting political economies of the slow abolition of the transatlantic slave trade (1807-1866), legitimate trade in palm produce (1820-1900) and

colonialization (1884-1914). This analysis aims to shed light on socio-political transformations within West Africa's coastal communities and to understand historically grown political, economic and cultural interdependencies. By focussing on the materiality of these encounters, this paper seeks to emphasize not only the forces, but also the potentialities expressed and shaped by gift exchanges. Ultimately, it seeks to highlight the African agency that shaped West Africa's relationship with the world.

Dr. Alice von Bieberstein, University of Cambridge (UK)

Killing the messenger: 'Armenian' treasures in post-genocide Turkey

Hunting for what is commonly referred to as 'Armenian' treasures is a regular pastime for the mostly Kurdish population of the region of Moush, Eastern Turkey. In the context of the 1915 genocide, Armenians are believed to have buried their valuables in the hope of surviving deportation and eventually returning home. This belief now feeds a geographic imaginary that fills the land with potential riches. Based on ethnographic research with treasure hunters I ask how and in what sense the coveted objects enable a connection between the present-day inhabitants of the region and those deported and killed in 1915. The objects tend to be approached in a gesture that accords them a capacity to communicate, yet the messages they carry are investigated less for their genealogical value than for an economic worth that awaits their finders in some near or distant future. Rather than a connection to the original owners or makers, what is sought appears to be the ability to become linked to a market of antiques. As the objects' specific historicity becomes thus denied, what place is left to the ghostly figure of the Armenian as historical owner or maker?

Lorenzo Granada, Universidad de los Andes (Colombia)

Towards a fragmented ethnography: walking along debris in Armero, Colombia

This paper intends to understand how people who live near the rubble of Armero (Colombia), a city destroyed by an avalanche in 1985, relate to these residues and how the rubble of the city produces a fragmented landscape, composed by a myriad of remains that range from vestiges of colonial violence up to more recent debris from the avalanche. This text seeks to articulate the many ways in which this very landscape is capable of enchanting, seducing, betraying and even condemning the people who live in it. Following the paths and the traces of these residues, I stumble my way through "indigenous" skulls that bewitch men, piles of shattered debris that are erased by the passing of heavy machinery, and blank maps that account for the uncanny nature of rubble and its' illegibility. The result is a fragmented ethnography that tries to connect different ways of dealing with the negativity of space and the surprising powers of rubble in the midst of destroyed, produced, and re-made landscapes. Walking along the lines traced by debris, I intend to articulate a constellation of fragments, of broken objects, that relate to one another in most unexpected ways and inhabit an unstable, ever-changing landscape.

Dr. Adam Kaasa, LSE Cities, London School of Economics and Political Science (UK)

The materiality of erasure: circulations of tabula rasa urbanism in the 20th century

The idea of the tabula rasa, or the blank slate, persists as the starting point of most post-war urban planning. Though the notion of destroying or clearing a site to rebuild is a consistent theme in the long history of the city, specific arguments about slum demolition and modernist rebuilding set forth in The Charter of Athens (1943), and flowed through colonial and post-colonial lines in the 20th century. This paper uses the circulation of the idea of a modernist tabula rasa to examine the materiality of erasure, specifically the mass of materiality involved in demolition to produce the seemingly blank slate. In particular, it turns to three temporal junctures within the transatlantic journey of this idea: Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin for Paris (1925); Mario Pani's Nonoalco Tlatelolco in Mexico City (1964); and London's Heygate Estate (1961-1966) and Robin Hood Gardens estate (1972). By tracing an idea from origin to implementation through to the contemporary reckoning with these remnants of modernity, this paper raises questions about the materiality of historical

erasure. It does so to contribute to a scholarly debate about the globalised connection of the myth of tabula rasa as the starting point for urban projects, adding to political discussions about the production of the contemporary city.

Intervention 5: Marc Higgin, University of Aberdeen (UK)

Windows onto King Street

This work presents a portrait of one of the major road arteries running through Aberdeen, connecting the fishing ports and oil industries north to the harbour and cities south, drawn from a life lived living next to it. Its question is what this (relatively) immobile point of view brings to engaging with connectivity and materiality. Day and night, raw materials, equipment, manufactured goods, and waste pass by on lorries; people in cars, buses and taxis. This mode of connectivity is the circulatory system in which the economy of North-East Scotland is woven, transporting an ecology of materials shaped by the fruitfulness of gas. My interest here is the externalities of this system of payload, of those things accounted for and given value through exchange: the noise, the smells, the flotsam and jetsam, the soot and dust, the passing colours and bored faces, the changing lightshow - all that falls to the side and makes up this place and the atmosphere that permeates it. This 'surrounding vital quality' presents another, inadvertent and unaccounted, mode of connectivity and materiality. While sensors measure particle emissions and decibels, my aim is make visible the felt sense of this place on the road to somewhere else.

Dr. Alessandro Rippha, LMU Munich

Curating Dulong: state, market and tourism in China's borderlands

Since the launch of the Open Up the West Programme in 2000, the development of China's western provinces has been a priority for the central government. Today, amidst a worrying economic slowdown and Silk Road fantasies, China's borderlands assume new significance. This paper moves from the case of the Dulong Valley, one of Yunnan's most remote corners bordering Myanmar and Tibet. Since the first road to the valley was built in 1999, several modernising projects have changed the lives of local minorities. Moving from the analysis of the recent resettlement of all inhabitants of the valley into newly built villages, this paper identifies three interrelated processes currently shaping China's peripheries: renewed state presence in terms of both bureaucratic and social control; the increasingly prominent role of market forces; and tourism. In order to understand those processes, I employ the notion of "curation" to define the government's effort to create modern subjects through particular material interventions and the commodification of minority culture. While "curation" hints at the attempt to turn ideology into reality typical of many modernist projects, it does so by highlighting the material and aesthetic implications of such interventions, as well as addressing local engagement with China's developmentalist ideology.

Dr. Juliane Müller, LMU Munich

Infrastructure, trade, and ritual landscape in Andean-Pacific South America

The current Bolivian government is strongly concerned with large-scale, potentially interconnected material structures. Asphalted roads are among the policy priorities, key for Evo Morales' state-led "Patriotic Agenda 2025" to become an energy exporter. Yet, the new highways are extensively used by popular Bolivian traders for contraband imports sourced at Free Trade Zones in Pacific-port cities in neighboring Chile and Peru. Infrastructural projects are part of what we might call "curational interventions". Yet, these modernist projects are layered over prior "curational efforts" of local populations. In case of the Andean highland at the Bolivian-Chilean border, these curational efforts are highly relational, including human beings, mountain spirits and sacred places (*wak'as*). Historically inhabited by camelid herders and caravan traders, people have changed llamas for Volvos, but are still indebted to the mountains and draw the materiality of the highways into webs of reciprocal relations. Likewise, free zones at port cities are stuck between sea and desert in an ecologically fragile zone, open to ongoing material decay. Starting from a topological approach to

infrastructural relations, I will expose how material and ritual landscapes collide and collude with transportation and logistics infrastructure, and how new expressways mobilize goods, peoples, and Andean spirits.

Intervention 6: Anna-Maria Walter, LMU Munich

Interactive explorations around mobile phone connections in and to northern Pakistan

It is hard to think about some-thing which embodies mobility and connectivity better than mobile telephony. As an epitome of both concepts, it offers critical analytical value. Through telecommunication networks our mind travels over geographical and social boundaries. How can we conceptualize space and place in this framework? Do material practices still play a role in virtual connections? Do mobile phones redefine relationships? And, how are they negotiated in local cultural contexts? I do not want to suggest pre-fabricated answers but invite to explore these questions through my intervention. It strives to tease out the materiality of invisible links by involving the audience in the experience of mobile phone usage in the area of my research, Gilgit in northern Pakistan. The installation starts on a phenomenological level: A curtain of veils shields off a wedding ceremony in a private family setting and convenes a sense for the – rather disconnecting – practice of gender segregation. Ethnographic material then invites to discover young couples' increasingly virtual negotiation of intimacy. Finally, the mobile phone as subject of research becomes the instrument for exploration: My research assistant in Gilgit is available on WhatsApp and connects the academic audience with 'the field'.

Dr. Inge Daniels, University of Oxford (UK)

'Expressions of concern': New Year's cards and the webs of social, economic and spiritual connections in contemporary Japan

Based on an ongoing ethnographic project about amateur photography that I have conducted in Japan since 2010, this paper will explore the specific ways in which connectivity and materiality are interwoven in an extravagant ritual of exchange that unfolds yearly on January 1. On this one day more than 3.3 billion New Year's cards are being circulated by the Japanese postal services with an average of one hundred cards arriving into every single home. These ephemeral material entities embody the complex intertwinings of commercial and ritual rhythms of everyday life in Japan in that the majority of cards are produced and sold by the Japan Post Office which automatically enters recipients in a nation-wide lottery draw, while all carry some depiction of the zodiac animal that 'invites luck' throughout the coming year. Although a range of technological innovations such as new camera and printer technologies and sophisticated graphic design software packages have transformed the miscellaneous images depicted on the cards, they have successfully resisted the digitalization of their paper form. By focusing on these and other material processes involved in their production, distribution and consumption, I hope to demonstrate how these most humble of paper cards continue to be active participants in the creation, cultivation and fine-tuning of complex webs of social, economic and spiritual connections.

A/Prof. Catrien Notermans, Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands)

Sending Pilgrimage Souvenirs to Africa: constructing powerful transnational connections out of trifling objects

My study aims to understand why African migrant women who are deeply engaged in religious travelling, invest much time and money to acquire pilgrimage souvenirs and send these to their homelands. During their religious practices in which they integrate the souvenirs into divergent worldviews, the women imbue the objects with divine power to be applied in their societies of origin as well as to enhance their own social and religious position. In Africa, the power of the objects could be used to intervene in family matters or to cure, but also to combat evil forces and even to destroy people who are accused of using these. To the women themselves the practices of acquiring and sending of the religious objects result in forms of empowerment which help them to overcome

many of the difficulties they met as migrants. And by selectively sending the objects to relatives and wider religious communities in Africa, they secure their social position in Europe as well as in Africa. By transforming the meaning of the objects and transferring these to Africa they create a transnational as well as a transcendent network.

Dr. Elia Petridou, University of the Aegean (Greece)

Materialising the border: clothes and cultural encounters at a refugee camp in Greece

The presentation aims at highlighting material connectivities by focusing on the circulation of clothes at a Greek border refugee camp. In 2015, the Greek border island of Lesbos received more than half a million refugees and economic migrants, who represented about 60% of the total number of arrivals in Greece. Since March 2016, when the borders to Europe closed, more than 7,000 people have been trapped on the island while more continue to arrive. More than 100 NGOs and international organizations provide assistance to newcomers by organizing, among other, the provision of NFIs (non-food items) that include clothes, shoes and blankets. By focusing on the way clothes circulate (are donated, purchased and sorted out, delivered and received, used and discarded), the presentation will focus on how garments and textiles connect but also separate people by creating material borders. On the one hand, donating clothes creates a connecting bridge of aid and solidarity; on the other, inappropriate clothes create an intimate embodied experience of displacement and alienation. The presentation aims at highlighting ways in which the materiality of clothing affects both the formation of aid practices and the process of becoming a refugee.

Dr. Amiria Salmond, University of Auckland (New Zealand)

Comparing relations: reassembling a corpus of taonga in and across museums

Relations may be imagined not only as connections but as comparisons, that is, as contrasts and/or semblances within and between things that emerge or are transformed through being compared. While “relational” thinking is currently in vogue across a number of disciplines, the relations scholars have in mind are often of a specific kind. As Marilyn Strathern has explored, the idea of relations as connections has itself a distinctive pedigree, one that may work to obscure other (kinds of) relations within and among other (kinds of) things. Here I discuss some of the implications of these insights by comparing them with work undertaken in museums with members of the Māori tribal group Toi Hauiti to reassemble the corpus of their *taonga* (ancestral heritage).

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