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Call for Papers

New Perspectives on Transpacific Connections: The Americas and the South Pacific

Conference at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, 25-28 April 2013

Convenors: Eveline Dürr and Agnes Brandt, Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, LMU Munich

Recent changes in political and economic constellations in the Pacific Rim reconfigured power relations and patterns of exchange between the Americas and the Pacific region. Through agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) new conditions for trade and exchange are provided across the Pacific. As a result, regional and cultural spaces that have long been perceived as separate emerge as closely interconnected.

However, while transpacific crossings have accelerated over the past decade, such connections date back to colonial and pre-colonial times and have existed ever since. There is tentative evidence that pre-Columbian voyages across the Pacific created linkages between the Americas and Polynesia as early as AD 1300. In the sixteenth century, regular shipping routes across the Pacific connected the Philippines with New Spain. In more recent times, bilateral trade has intensified and South-South engagements are growing considerably. While commercial interests still play a pivotal role, cooperation increasingly extends beyond trade and comprises a wide range of activities in areas such as culture, knowledge, education, media, politics, the arts, and sciences.

Research on transpacific connections has focused on trading activities and on political relations. Consequently, the dominant disciplinary perspective is economics and trade. Anthropological contributions – and cultural and social sciences perspectives in general – are under-represented in this novel research terrain. Furthermore, the great majority of these recent investigations into transpacific relations focus on connections between the Americas and Asia, in particular on relations between Latin America and China, as a new emerging force in the region. Far less researched, however, are linkages that connect the Americas with the Southern part of the Pacific, including Australasia and South East Asia. A particularly under-researched field are transpacific indigenous connections, for instance, the export of successful models of cultural revitalization across the Pacific and their localized appropriation and reinterpretation by indigenous actors.

The aim of the conference is to bring different perspectives on cultural connections between the Americas and the South Pacific into dialogue and to explore a wide range of links between these cultural spaces. It aims to reach beyond Sino-Latin American collaborations and to include these rather neglected Southern linkages. It asks how these connections have developed over time, which local responses they have generated, and what impact these processes have in the region in terms of representational forms and strategies, and new cultural practices (e.g., spirituality, music, food, gender, lifestyle). Such a perspective is essential when discussing mobility and migration as these patterns have changed dramatically in recent years. For instance, whereas in the past migrants tended to be of lower education and class background, today they are often skilled and economically powerful lifestyle or professional migrants. As a result, both migration and representation patterns have been transformed.

By extending the focus beyond East Asia to the Southern Pacific region including Island connections with the Americas, this conference aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the new dynamics and shifting relations in the region. While it also wants to trace linkages with North America, it is particularly concerned with Latin America and South-South engagements. Furthermore, without neglecting the historical dimensions, the focus is on the diverse and unprecedented contemporary forms of cultural, social and economic encounters, and on the shifting physical as well as virtual representations of Latino/a and Pacific populations. Central topics to be discussed are:

- indigenous connections
- migration and new mobilities
- political/economical relations
- historical (dis-)continuities

We particularly invite actor-oriented contributions from anthropology and its neighbouring disciplines dealing with face-to-face encounters, relations from below, and direct transcultural interactions and relationships.

Provided we can secure funding, we will cover the costs for travel, accommodation, and conference participation for presenters.

**Please submit an abstract of 200-250 words in English by 15 June 2012 to:
transpacific-americas-2013@lmu.de**