



**Report on the 5th International Crossroads Asia Conference
Area Studies' Futures
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Center for Development Research, Bonn**

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About the 5th International Crossroads Asia Conference



Conference participants in discussion during a break

On 22-23 September 2016, the Crossroads Asia competence network, funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF), organized its 5th and final International Conference: Area Studies' Futures, at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) in Bonn. With more than 30 scholars from India, Russia, Serbia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, the UK and beyond, and researchers from various academic disciplines, the conference offered a forum for fruitful discussions and addressed challenging questions in Area Studies; among them were:

- How do globalization, digitalization, urbanization and migration challenge concepts of 'areas'?
- How does space intersect with a sense of belonging, and how do spatial constellations shift through time?
- How can Area Studies account for the Anthropocene?
- What can contribute to overcoming epistemic hegemonies, ethnocentrism and "othering"?

Since its establishment in 2011, the Crossroads Asia network and its partners and guests have critically examined conventional approaches to research in an effort to challenge epistemic regimes and knowledge production and – finally – contribute to cultivating novel conceptual and methodological practices in Area Studies. The 5th International Crossroads Asia conference was a platform that projected the gradual evolution of the journey of re-thinking Area Studies within and beyond the network, and the outcomes of this journey.



The audience listening to discussions during a panel

Keynote. *Decommodifying Knowledge: Recuperating the Interdisciplinarity of Area Studies*

Summary by Epifania Amoo-Adare, Catherine Reynolds and Aizhamal Marat

One of the highlights of the Area Studies' Futures Conference was the keynote lecture by **Shelley Feldman** (Cornell University) on *Decommodifying Knowledge: Recuperating the Interdisciplinarity of Area Studies*. Feldman started with an overview of how Area Studies, in particular in the United States, is confronted with and limited by the institutionalization of normative knowledge. Gatekeepers in academia, she argued (e.g., journal editors and those who make hiring decisions) largely shape what is considered to be appropriate knowledge and thereby inhibit intellectual creativity. In particular social sciences have suffered from this, she argued, in that they have become narrower, as "empirical" has become a code word for "quantitative".

Feldman also discussed the more general and widespread commodification of knowledge, to which Area Studies has contributed by serving geopolitical ends. Commodification of knowledge is about the rejection or ignoring of particular kinds of knowledge, according to Feldman. For her it also encompasses the appropriation of knowledge, such as local knowledge, which loses its meaning when extracted from its context as part of a set of assumptions and understandings, she argued. Thus, knowledge commodification not only obscures the origin of particular forms knowledge, but also controls whose knowledge counts. Another manner in which knowledge is commodified, Feldman added, is through partnerships between academia and industry where ideas and knowledge are put in the service of the market.¹ While recognizing that practical and applied knowledge can make critical contributions to how we live, Feldman cautioned that knowledge production for understanding and knowing the world better may be marginalized as funding sources and institutions of education prioritize the practical application of research.

Rather than dwell on criticisms of and challenges confronting Area Studies, especially its early establishment as a means to achieve geopolitical goals, Feldman encouraged scholars to proactively articulate what Area Studies can offer, i.e. its specific potentials. She argued that Area Studies can offer, above all, an arena of enquiry for thinking interdisciplinarily and thus from the points of view of the retrenchment of many of the disciplines, which in turn enables thinking outside the box and taking intellectual risks. Interdisciplinary thinking further allows students and faculty to draw on a wealth of tools and resources, she argued, citing as examples languages and literature, new cultural and social understandings, and spiritual and philosophical inquiry. She underlined the overall potential of interdisciplinary approaches to offer new imaginaries and novel readings of our social worlds.

Area Studies should be approached increasingly as a mode of intervention for decommodifying knowledge and challenging epistemic hegemonies, Feldman argued in conclusion. To this end, she emphasized the importance of developing terms that are specifically useful and precise in particular contexts, rather than employing 'universal' categories and ways of knowing. She appealed to the need to use concepts productively and self-consciously rather than automatically or by default. She cited as an example the notion of "mutual constitutiveness", a mode of thought that, despite being rich in descriptive power, is not often used as a tool of understanding to help us see the world relationally. An application of this mode of thought would imply that it may be more productive to talk about "an individual of society" rather than distinguish between "an individual and society" – acknowledging that individuals and society are mutually constitutive. In the context of concept-framing, Feldman also noted that translation demands that we recognize other ways of being and thinking across communities. She also called for the valorization of reflexivity as a social practice and emphasized the need to be self-critical and acutely politically aware. Finally, she referred to, and warned against, the "the violence of abstraction", meaning the taking of categories and applying them indiscriminately across place and time.

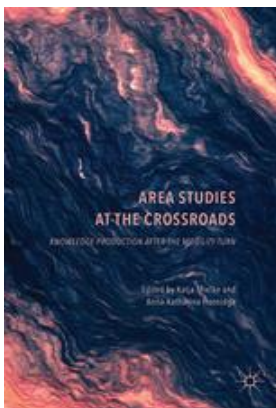
Following Feldman's keynote, there was plenty of time for discussion. Topics of discussion included cooperation between Area Studies and other disciplines, feminist interventions in Area Studies, and grounded theory. On the first topic, Feldman stressed that improved funding of Area Studies (secure funding rather than soft funding) would help it gain equal standing with other disciplines. In regard to the second question, she reiterated what she had noted in her keynote, namely her finding that

¹ She cited Gigi Roggero of the autonomous Marxist group on this point.

there is less feminist critique of Area Studies than one would expect; however, she mentioned that there are important terms that are relevant for Area Studies from feminist contributions to research and theory, e.g. Haraway's idea of "situated knowledges". On grounded theory, Feldman stated her view that it cannot be dismissed as simply descriptive. Thinking inductively from the field upward to theory, she said, promises new ways of thinking and new forms of knowledge production. However, she brought the focus of the discussion back to what, for her, are the central questions behind undertaking research: who wants to or does not want to hear it? Who will fund it? How may changing funding requirements influence a researcher's decision to proceed? She encouraged the audience not to shy away from asking political questions. Additionally, she noted that it is far too easy to critique the hegemonization of knowledge without fully understanding what it actually means.

Book Presentation. *Area Studies at the Crossroads: Knowledge Production after the Mobility Turn*

Summary by Lutz Rzehak



The book [Area Studies at the Crossroads. Knowledge Production after the Mobility Turn](#) (Palgrave, 2017) was presented by the editors **Katja Mielke** (Crossroads Asia and BICC) and **Anna-Katharina Hornidge** (Crossroads Asia, ZMT and University of Bremen) on the opening day of the Area Studies' Futures Conference. The book is an outcome of the first four years of empirical and theoretical research of the BMBF-funded Crossroads Asia project and thus reflects varied discussions within the network on rethinking area studies. At the same time, many of the contributors to the book are external partners and guests of the network. The book aims to recast area studies as an ethical-political project looking self-reflexively at how local dynamics are affected by and affect the mobility of people, capital, goods, ideas etc. It encompasses case studies from various traditional "regions" (i.e., Africa, Latin America, Asia).

Mielke began the book presentation by illustrating its effort to take the *interaction of people* as the basic unit of investigation, while using mobility as a lens and departing from a figurative understanding of the social construction of space. She also stressed the book's aim to consider epistemological, theoretical and pedagogical implications of the rethinking of area studies, by focusing on inequalities in knowledge and theory-production. The volume furthermore "pokes its fingers in two wounds", Mielke explained. It firstly wishes to work against hegemonic knowledge ordering between the North and the South and illuminate a multi-centric world. Secondly, it raises the concern that area studies are at the risk of becoming instrumentalized. **Hornidge** built on Mielke's introduction by stressing that the book also aims to provide a foundation for a more theoretical/analytical and interdisciplinary approach to area studies, especially via efforts to develop mid-range concepts. She further stressed the need for mobile and transregional area studies methods. She noted, however, that institutional changes are needed (including to funding structures) before novel research practices can be put in place. Finally, Hornidge appealed to the audience to construe area studies as a "peace building" endeavor.

Following the introduction to the book, Mielke and Hornidge invited three informal critical interventions to be made by:

- **Epifania Amoo-Adare** (Crossroads Asia member, Senior Researcher at the Center for Development Research and one of the contributors to the book)
- **Shelley Feldman** (Professor Emeritus at Cornell University and the keynote speaker)
- **Patrick Köllner** (Director of the Asian Studies Institute of the German International Institute for Global and Area Studies, Hamburg)

Epifania Amoo-Adare began by appreciating the book as an effort to highlight the “in-between spaces” of knowledge production and contribute to a de-colonialization of knowledge. Amoo-Adare cautioned, however, that a de-colonial approach to rethinking science not only entails a critique of universities in the west but also of universities that have been westernized in their way of thinking and teaching. She stressed the book’s key achievement as the tools that it gives the reader to question what valid knowledge is. **Shelley Feldman** appreciated the book’s uncommon approach to looking at mobility, by investigating not just what triggers migration and where migrants land, but also what happens in between and how those who do not move are changed through the mobility of others. She also fully agreed with Hornidge that funding structures help to reproduce the hegemonic position of particular disciplines within science. Finally, she appreciated the book’s micro-units of analysis and in particular the conceptualization of borders and boundaries as existing not just between nations, but, for example, between neighbors. She ended by expressing the desire for the book to generate further discussion on how to work against the hierarchization of knowledges and rethink the relationship between disciplines. She tied this need to her own work on the commodification of knowledge and the struggle to put philosophical knowledge on par with the highly sought after “practical” knowledge. Finally, **Patrick Köllner** lauded Mielke and Hornidge’s volume as a testimony to the diversity and vitality of the rethinking of Area Studies in recent years. He stressed how important meta-level reflections are for gaining an understanding of “where we stand” and praised the book for being “more than the sum of its parts”. Köllner then made four in-depth remarks, namely 1) that middle-range theory-building and the use of concomitant concepts represent the best that Area Studies and related research can strive for in theoretical terms, in view of the failure of many grand theories and so-called covering laws; 2) that the usefulness of comparative approaches depends not only on one’s ontological assumptions and epistemological commitments but also very much on the objects of research and the particular research questions posed; 3) that there is, in his view, an “obsession” in Area Studies with so-called intellectual ‘turns’², and a need to question whether each named ‘turn’ was really accompanied by the magnitude of change the name implies (as opposed to being a mere (re)discovery of an existing



Epifania Amoo-Adare in discussion with Shelley Feldman concerning the book presented by Anna-Katharina Hornidge and Katja Mielke

² Köllner listed over 30 such ‘turns’ he had found mentioned in area studies literature.

perspective); and 4) that, alongside reflexive, integrative and analytical Area Studies approaches, he believes “proper descriptions” are just as important as initial stepping stones for knowledge generation.

Tour of the City of Bonn

Summary by Robin Rudolf

The Center for Development Research (ZEF), host to the Area Studies’ Futures Conference, is located in the heart of the former government district of Bonn. On the first evening of the conference, a group of participants took an opportunity to learn more about this fact on a guided historical tour of the town, generously sponsored by the *Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn*. A local tour guide answered questions such as: How did Bonn end up as the very small capital of West Germany after World War II? And how did the city fare with the transition when the capital moved to Berlin after reunification?



Robin Rudolf with participants of the city tour

Following its tour of the government district, the group also visited Bonn’s town center to discover its historical roots, e.g., as a Roman military town 2000 years ago, later as the seat of the powerful Archbishops of Cologne and attracting artists and millionaires during the 18th to 19th century Rhine romanticism. Also, current and contentious city developments were covered. Lively exchange and questions throughout the tour demonstrated that the participants were familiar with the idea of uncovering the many layers of place.

Panel 1a. Deconstruction of Western Knowledge and the Category ‘Other’

Summary by Elena Smolarz

Debates on the re-thinking of Area Studies have led to considerable discussion on how to bring local knowledge to the forefront and overcome Western hegemony. It remains a challenging task to combine epistemologies in a world that is still governed by the structures of Western academe and capital. Panel 1a, chaired by **Dietrich Reetz** (Crossroads Asia and ZMO) took a closer look at these challenges and pointed out opportunities that exist for bridging epistemic boundaries.

In his talk on **Eurocentric epistemic structures** from a South Asian or specifically Indian perspective, **Anindya Sekhar Purkayastha** (Kazi Nazrul University) argued that hegemonies of Western knowledge production derived from conventional Area Studies persist, in spite of the re-thinking and reformulation of the latter. He suggested a need for greater epistemic equality, and a more dignified reception of Asian philosophy, not only as an “ethnophilosophy”, but as “equal epistemic partners”. One important measure for doing so, he argued, is discursive knowledge production. In the

discussion that followed his presentation, participants supported his call for greater recognition of local philosophical traditions, especially through the reorganization of power structures within university systems in the form of creating new departments and professorships. The next question related to post-modern and post-colonial studies and their intention to critically examine colonial perspectives. Purkayastha stated that these approaches were established in the USA and influenced by Western epistemology. A better approach, he argued, would spotlight local philosophical and epistemic traditions and consider the interests and perspectives of involved scholars.



Anindya Sekhar Purkayastha and Dietrich Reetz listen to questions from the audience.

In the next talk on the term “sultanism” as a descriptor of **politicized culture in Turkmenistan**, **Zarifa Mamedova** (TU Dortmund) examined contemporary research on forms of authority in Turkmenistan and the creation of “independent Turkmens”. The application of the term sultanism, used according to the interpretation of Max Weber without taking into account cultural and historical heritage of Turkmens, can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of historical reality, Mamedova argued. Systematical consideration of the political notion of sultanism in the context of modern Turkmenistan should include studies on culturally and historically based legitimation, on ideological processes and on the perception of these processes by common people. The discussion that followed focused on how to find a balance between producing broadly understandable knowledge of a local situation and avoiding limited categories of thought pre-conceived by Western scholars.

Changing the focus to **shifting epistemic cultures in rural areas of Tajikistan**, **Andreas Mandler** (ZEF and University of Bonn) presented his study of smallholder farmers’ perspectives on agricultural advisory services in remote places. His findings showed that traditional local narratives relating to land use and land ownership dominate agricultural discourse. The local population does not trust in external advice and expertise nor does it desire to conform to expectations regarding “professionalization” of individual smallholder agriculture. The discussion of Mandler’s findings took a closer look at the experiences and expectations of the farmers. Participants asked for an explanation of (multiple) notions of “professional farmer”, and asked how Mandler’s findings might differ had he explicitly taken a gender perspective. Further questions dealt with the specification of providers of professional knowledge as well as experiences of collectivization and their influence on farmer behavior today. Mandler stressed that farmers expressed a greater need for security and the regulation of land ownership questions than for external advisory services. A few examples of traditional local narratives relating to land ownership, so-called “*bobogi* stories”, as relayed by Mandler rounded off the panel.

Roundtable 1b. Reshaping Places – Mastering Uncertainty: A Second Take on Area Studies in the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

Summary by Larissa Saar

Chaired by **Claus Bech Hansen** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF and University of Bonn), this roundtable focused on the conception of the Baltic Sea Region before and after the Cold War.

First, **Rebecka Lettevall** (Södertörn University) presented her research on the **need for critical Area Studies**. She began by explaining how, during the Cold War, areas in “the West” were seen as “mosaics” with different cultures and languages, whereas “the East” was seen as one uniform bloc. In the study of this Eastern bloc, the West used to reach out to the East for security interests, cultural interests, and development. After the end of the Cold War, many universities in Sweden held on to modes of research heavily influenced by Western theory. The then newly established Södertörn University took a different approach that was more interdisciplinary, including feminist, social scientific and environmental study and that took into account that theories that were founded in the West cannot always be applied to the East. The goal of the university is therefore to work with researchers from the East on Critical Area Studies, taking a broader perspective in order to avoid Area Studies standing outside everything else.

In the second contribution, **Kazimierz Musiał** (Södertörn University) highlighted the significance of **linguistic competence** in Area Studies. Quoting Wilhelm von Humboldt’s observation that, “*Die Sprache ist das bildende Organ des Gedanken*“, Musiał pointed out how language not only presents, but also produces thought. It is therefore important to note that language has become nationalized and is not value-free, he said. “Observing West vs. Observed East” has furthermore become a naturalized truth in the West, with the dominance of English, the presenter argued. Musiał noted positive developments, such as institutional initiatives after 1991 that were meant to overcome the Soviet era and its heritage, as well as declarations officially recognizing the value of “endangered” languages by the UNESCO³, followed by implementing policies in the EU, which have made linguistic competence a political issue. However, Musiał cautioned, a recent reduction of language teaching due to a decline in public spending is a serious risk for Area Studies.



Jenny Gunnarsson Payne presents her talk on the problem(s) of representation in Area Studies.

The presentations were concluded by the talk of **Jenny Gunnarsson Payne** (Södertörn University) regarding **problem(s) of representation** in Area Studies. To overcome problems of representation, Gunnarsson Payne argued, one must recognize its three distinct dimensions. The first aspect of representation, *Vertretung*, means to act for someone in the form of representation as a deputy or agency that is being represented. This can also encompass political representation, in which one’s interests are re-presented in a different context. The second aspect is

³ For example, as included in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Art. 2a). See <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/home>.

Darstellung, which relates to there being no pure object language, meaning that there is no transparency between the object and its name. *Darstellung*, therefore, has a productive function. In representing (*darstellen*), the researcher acts as a representative (*Vertreter*), and as such, the researcher needs to acknowledge that their representations will always, necessarily, transform that which is sought to represent. The final aspect of representation is *Vorstellung*. It describes a process that is represented by signifiers, but that cannot be present, and that here is not arbitrary but follows a “logical repression”. Critical research, according to Gunnarsson Payne, needs to take into account that any representation includes fictive elements.

After the panelists’ presentations, the discussion was started by Bech Hansen who critically inquired whether a ‘re-invention’ of the Baltic Sea region might be taking place, what that would imply and what the reasons for a reinvention would be. Lettevall remarked that all areas are imagined somehow and that the Baltic Sea region is now in a new context and a new historical situation. Musiał defined an area as a “spatial domain that is politically defined”, with the Baltic Sea region being politically defined for peace-building and to form a framework in which to contain the developments after the end of the Cold War. Noting the small focus on post-socialist countries in geographic conferences, the question of the success thereof in worldwide academia, as well as the place of academia in the successful representation, was raised. Lettevall placed Area Studies research as a sub-stream of the disciplines, and stressed that the goal should be for mainstream interest to arise. Gunnarsson Payne related this to gender studies, whose visibility started to increase after growing pressure to publish in English. Musiał saw the Baltic Sea region as a victim of its own success, which by managing to build peace lost its appeal; he also noted that the region has fallen prey to the “cognitive colonization” of Western scholarship.

A comment from the audience then noted the challenge of where to draw the line for the use or usefulness of small languages. It was also observed that while the world is becoming more linked, it is also becoming more compartmentalized. To this Musiał replied that the invention of areas is always for a political period with a “temporary closure” and with the emergence of new gravity centers, areas are also re-invented. Noting the interconnectedness of power and language, the attempt of spreading Chinese as a new *lingua franca* was mentioned. Lettevall responded that the success of a *lingua franca* largely depends on funding of related activities within universities, which is often politically influenced. Gunnarsson Payne mentioned the mutual influence of researcher and researched as a form of bipolar instead of unipolar research. Musiał saw the success of “language imperialism” as depending on the perception of the imperialist power, and questioned whether establishing the use of Chinese as “normal” could be achieved.

Panel 2a. Shedding Light on Agency and the Social Construction of Space

Summary by Aizhamal Marat and Catherine Reynolds

The presentations of the speakers in panel 2a, chaired by **Anna-Katharina Hornidge** (Crossroads Asia, ZMT and University of Bremen), focused on the conceptual and methodological implications of a multidimensional understanding of space. They also considered other research frameworks in Area Studies that may contribute to answering criticisms the field has received in recent decades.

Henryk Alff (Crossroads Asia and Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography) and **Andreas Benz** (Crossroads Asia and University of Augsburg), in their opening talk on the **multidimensionality of space**, presented a conceptual and research framework for reading space. Inspired by pioneering works of Leitner, Sheppard, Jessop, and others, the presenters suggested space be interpreted as a combination of place, network⁴, territory⁵, mobility (and immobility), and socio-spatial positionality⁶. The authors argued that this analytical framework – where each of the components of the framework adds a necessary dimension, and the synergies among the perspectives are considered – can help overcome spatial bias and container-thinking in Area Studies research. Based on an empirical study of female student migration in Gilgit-Baltistan (northern Pakistan), the presenters tested the utility of the framework and the interplay of the five components. Alff and Benz concluded that this framework for a multidimensional reading of space not only helps to understand individual figurations, but it also helps to understand the larger social, economic, political and cultural structures in which examined phenomena are embedded, such as power dynamics and manifestations of religious identities.

In the following presentation, **Patrick Köllner** (GIGA, Hamburg) talked about the rationale for and contributions of **Comparative Area Studies (CAS)**, an analytical approach that combines the context sensitivity and deep knowledge of places characteristic of Area Studies with the explicit use of comparative methods to generate better insights into the chosen cases as well as novel contributions to general disciplinary and theoretical debates.



The panelists discuss the social construction of space.

Based on a book project with 13 contributions by authors from Germany, the UK and the USA, Patrick Köllner presented his insights into CAS. Not only can comparative methods generate theoretical contributions to so-called systematic disciplines, according to Köllner, but CAS can also enhance an understanding of the interrelated global system of regional interactions and hierarchies. GIGA tries to actively promote the CAS approach, Köllner explained, by encouraging research that brings together or cuts across work done by specialists on Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia/Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the MENA region (cf. <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/comparative-area-studies>). Despite its recent emergence in scholarship, CAS has ambitious goals and great potential, Köllner argued. However, Köllner stressed that CAS was not the only suitable approach to advance Area Studies, but only one of a number of promising approaches existing in the field. Following Köllner's presentation, there was a lively discussion on what ontological frameworks need to be in place before meaningful comparison can take place. In this context, one audience member memorably remarked that, although it is often stated that one cannot compare apples and pears (or apples and oranges), trying an apple can help you understand the taste of a pear.

⁴ For example, migration networks providing mutual support, or infrastructural networks such as the Karakorum railway.

⁵ This implies looking at space with respect to questions of governance, i.e. regarding claims of juridical and political normative power. The authors acknowledged that notions of territory not taken into account as social constructions can lead to methodological territorialism and conceptual homogenization of what is 'inside'.

⁶ Informed by Eric Sheppard's reading of it.

Martin Sökefeld (Crossroads Asia and LMU Munich) followed Köllner with a talk reconsidering the importance of the **“state” as a concept for Area Studies research**. Sökefeld started with an overview of his sub-project from the first phase of Crossroads Asia, which could not be realized due to the state’s intervention making the sites for study inaccessible. In early stages of the network, the network members consciously avoided “container-thinking” and methodological nationalism, and thus gave less attention to the state as a concept; however, as Sökefeld argued, the state has real implications for research praxis, the everyday life practices of people, etc. Sökefeld suggested taking a figurative approach to the state, instead of seeing it in a conventional sense. Quoting Radcliff Brown, Sökefeld stated that there is no such thing as a power of the state, as there are powers of various actors, kings, etc. Based on the case of the Pakistani state, Sökefeld applied theoretical perspectives that consider “the state” as a construction that arises from discourses and everyday practices, which are complex in their nature, since they do not represent a single unitary actor. The figurational Crossroads Perspective applied in understanding the state may inform the research process, which also has its relevance to understanding political figurations and entanglements, which are not limited to the imaginary of a single actor or a container demarcated by political borders.

Panel 2b. *Space, place and time*

Summary by Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi

Chaired by **Herman Kreutzmann** (Crossroads Asia and FU Berlin), the panel on space, place and time focused on the inherent dynamism of places by exploring them as temporal, inherently instable “events” which occur when historically specific nets of social relations intersect. This focus on the temporality of place is crucial in grasping the temporality of places, including “areas”, and in foregrounding the need to attend to ways in which places are made and unmade. The three individual papers highlighted the inherent instability of place and its historical contingency by drawing on case studies from northwest China.



Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi points out the location of her research on the dynamism of space.

Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi (Crossroads Asia and LMU Munich) explored in the opening talk how changing relationships of ethnicity, capital and politics re-make **places in southern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**. On the example of Qirmish Ata *mazar*, tomb-shrine of sultan Qirmish Ata, that has been transformed from an Uyghur place of worship into a resort for Han Chinese tourists, she drew attention to the inherent dynamism of places as they are made and unmade by changing socio-spatial relationships.

In the second paper of the panel, **Thomas White** (Cambridge University) focused on the making of a specific type of place, the **Chinese state territory**, in the aftermath of the Communist take-over in China in 1949. While infrastructure is typically used by the state to mark borders and increase connectivity within these borders, in regions like Inner Mongolia, where White’s study is located, extensive deserts make this close to impossible. As he demonstrated, faced with the impossibility of using infrastructure to delineate the territory, the state has creatively explored the potential to make

use of animal territoriality, especially of camels, for state purposes. White demonstrated how human-non-human “comradeship”, between the Chinese border soldiers and camels, has been explored by the Chinese state in its territorial projects.

The last paper in the panel by **Madlen Kobi** (Ethnographic Museum, Zurich University) focused on one of the most ephemeral places: **the construction site**. Based on her research in Xinjiang, Kobi discussed the construction site as a place with ‘gathering power’. Walled and with restricted access, a construction site appears to be a clearly delineated and enclosed place. However, by tracing the trajectories of the materials and people which converge at the construction site, Kobi revealed the inherent porosity and temporality of this place as it is constituted by relations to elsewhere and dynamic processes at the trans-local scale.

The discussion after the presentations oscillated around questions of capital and land ownership in processes of spatial transformations in China, and the role of the state in these processes. Further, the audience was interested in trajectories of building materials in China’s urbanizing areas; human-non-human interactions and challenges of representing inter-species interactions. Last, culturally specific perceptions of non-human animals were discussed, as well as the complex relationship between animal territoriality and state territorialization.

Panel 3a. *Exploring Methodological Limits and Possibilities in Area Studies research*

Summary by Katja Mielke

The three presentations in the panel on methodological limits and possibilities in Area Studies research, chaired by **Eva Youkhana** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF and University of Bonn), illustrated how globalization-induced power structures create disjuncture between the vocabulary and concepts relied on in analyzing local processes, on the one hand, and the effects of particular phenomena as perceived by local individuals and groups, on the other hand. Studying urban rehabilitation projects (H. Cermeño), processes of urban transformation (E. Trubina), and the agri-food system and resulting consumption patterns (C. Reiher & S. R. Sippel) from a process-oriented perspective, the presenters were able to differentiate the interests of the actors involved and provide an intricate picture of power dynamics between the global⁷ and the local, taking into account multiple entanglements. From this approach, questions of ‘area’ and of conducting Area Studies were not the heuristic tools of primary importance. Instead, classical area expertise relating to language and cultural competence was drawn upon to inform the interdisciplinary analyses of the respective topics and contextualize each within existing research derived from multiple locations, in order to advance knowledge in the respective fields. In this respect, the presentations illustrated limits of heuristic lenses. Among the ideas problematized were certain regions and temporal markers such as post-socialism and post-colonialism, pre-conceived ideas of urban development, or food and nutrition studies narrowly anchored in a traditional disciplines.

⁷ By dynamics, both structures and discourses are implied.

Elena Trubina (Ural Federal University) advocated the approach of planetary urbanization as a useful conceptual inroad to studying **contemporary urbanization processes** in what was formerly called ‘**the second world**’. This approach allows navigating scales and dynamics of urban transformation without subscribing to one coherent trajectory of development at any given scale (i.e., urban, local, meso, etc.) or regional reference point. Instead, the concept of planetary urbanization highlights the fact that places that were traditionally deemed non-urban are effectively part of planetary urbanizing processes. She identified negligence in urban studies to take into account the experiences of urban dwellers and insights of urban scholars in parts of the world commonly referred to as Eastern Europe and Central Asia.



Elena Trubina elaborates on challenges for comparative urbanism while Helena Cermeño listens.

According to Trubina, urban scholars subscribe too narrowly to Northern mainstream readings of cities and urban transformation processes. It would be academically more fruitful, Trubina argued, to find new categories and identify points of friction between conventional urban studies knowledge and empirical insights that do not seem to fit existing concepts.

Helena Cermeño (ZEF and University of Bonn) introduced her thinking on “access-assemblages” as a “methodological orientation” useful for understanding **resource flows** and the actors and **dependency relations** involved therein. Her analysis touched on processes of social inclusion and exclusion in the urban realm, based on narratives of two neighborhoods (*mohallas*) of Lahore’s Walled City. Cermeño showed how the underlying social grids of these two places – multiply entangled with the outside beyond the Mohallas’ and Walled City’s territorial limits – shifted when exposed to urban rehabilitation measures. Taking a process perspective on flows and actors’ interests, Cermeño highlighted the manifold conflicts and contestations manifest in politics unfolding from the improvement project. Applying the assemblages approach to development studies, Cermeño argued, can aid scholars’ understanding of power and access issues; its novelty lies in the combined investigation of processes of social exclusion and inclusion, on the one hand, and materiality and infrastructures (such as buildings and artefacts of development), on the other hand.

Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin) and **Sarah Ruth Sippel** (University of Leipzig) introduced their recently edited volume on “contested food” (*Umkämpftes Essen*), arguing that the unpacking of **local food consumption** in most different regions of the world through in-depth, locally-sensitive knowledge generation yields a fertile ground for detecting similarities in the structures underlying food-processing, transporting and marketing channels. By way of comparison, these insights can be brought together and enhance the still young and growing academic field of food studies. Sippel and Reiher advocated for a focus on how global power structures affect local patterns of consumption and processing of food. They emphasized the need for a dialogue about different cases as the way forward to systematize situational insights in the field and ultimately (as a meaningful side-effect) contribute to consumer protection efforts.

Roundtable 3b. *Intersections of Area Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, Cold War Studies and Future Studies. Taking the Example of Development Discourses.*

Summary by Antía Mato Bouzas, Catherine Reynolds and Larissa Saar

Roundtable 3b, chaired by **Shelley Feldman** (Cornell University), took development discourses as an entry point for looking at different frameworks of knowledge production, including Post-Colonial Studies, Urban Studies, Cold War Studies and even Marine Science. Panelists demonstrated commonalities and contradictions among these frameworks, and highlighted what role Area Studies can play in enhancing their analytical power.

The first presenter was **Wolfram Schaffar** (University of Vienna), who demonstrated how different terms like “indigenous” can pose a problem for **post-colonial and post-development theories**, which depart from a global understanding of colonialism and its legacies. It is only through an Area Studies approach, Schaffar argued, referring to an approach that takes into account area-specific historical developments, that one can fully understand how concepts of ethnicity and indigeneity have been taken up differently in different parts of the world. Concretely, he illustrated how “indigenous” approaches to development, such as *buen vivir* in Ecuador, or the principle of a Sufficiency Economy in Thailand, are embodied or appropriated by very different groups of actors. Too often, international actors such as development NGOs conflate all “indigenous” approaches to development as being uniformly anti-capitalist and anti-establishment, whereas the real picture is far more complex and depends on historical legacies.

In taking up the question of how Area Studies can contribute to debates on development, **Ines Stolpe** (University of Bonn) highlighted the need for **pluralism and transnational literacy** in post-colonial and (post-)development thought. Taking the example of Mongolia, Stolpe showed how still existing Cold War dichotomies tacitly endorse misconceptions that the country must either belong to the developing global South or be an underdeveloped part of the global North, neither of which is an apt description. Similarly, the notion of what constitutes (post-)colonial Mongolia is elusive, despite the fact that it is often taken for granted to exist. This complexity is rarely taken into account in mainstream post-colonial scholarship. Turning toward emic notions of development, Stolpe drew a connection to Schaffar’s reflections on “indigenous” perspectives. Stolpe discussed how nomadism in Mongolia as a phenomenon is tied in various discourses to identity, history, sustainability, emancipation, and stagnation vs. progress. Positive framings of nomadism often diverge from an acceptance of nomadic lifestyles in practice. She concluded that Area Studies approaches can help uncover such entanglements by highlighting the complexity of interconnections.

Sandra Kurfürst (GSSC, University of Cologne) in her presentation turned the discussion to the field of **urban studies and its underlying bias in theory production**. Northern cities, she argued, are often cited as icons of modernity, while southern megacities in the global South are approached via development theory. Kurfürst called attention to the variety and complexity of urban life and the need to diminish north-south dichotomies. Achieving this, she argued, is a collaborative and interdisciplinary project, due to power asymmetries in knowledge production relating to varying degrees of access. She pointed out that novel objects of inquiry are needed, such as an examination of the linkages between sacrality and state authority as manifested in urban space in parts of

Southeast Asia. A final aspect mentioned by Kurfürst was the need for renewed conceptualizations of the interrelationship between the rural and the urban, which are often far more interlinked than mainstream scholarship proposes.

The final input before the discussion came from **Anna-Katharina Hornidge** (Crossroads Asia, ZMT and University of Bremen), who highlighted similarities and contrasts between the **study of the ocean** and Area Studies. She began by exploring the notion of “**othering**” as it relates to the ocean and Marine Studies. Oceans as an invented area, she pointed out, are often conceived as wilderness, i.e. as vast expanses of unknown/uncharted space, despite being highly industrialized zones, crisscrossed by a multitude of transport routes. The ocean, wrongly perceived as a “non-place” is highly significant in regard to geopolitical and economic interests, and there are many ongoing territorial struggles and even neo-colonial ambitions. The *study of the sea*, furthermore, is a social border zone between the disciplines, involving biologists, chemists and social scientists; success of fieldwork depends on the carefully considered constitution of experts. The goal for Marine Studies and Area Studies in general, Hornidge argued, should be to focus attention on movements and flows, not only across waterways, but from land to sea. As with Area Studies in general, Marine Studies should focus on processes and shifts as much as on states of being, helping to understand how new spaces are defined. Movements, according to Hornidge, are too often presented against the backdrop of rigid political and ideological maps, which create or recreate containers.



Sandra Kurfürst, Wolfram Schaffar and Ines Stolpe listen to the presentation by Anna-Katharina Hornidge.

The discussion started with a question from Feldman concerning the potential of being at sea in terms of one’s ability to abandon familiar concepts. Hornidge saw the hierarchy on the ship combined with a strong sense of community to be rather fruitful for interdisciplinary idea development. The skepticism in post-development discourse, according to Feldman, similarly fosters a creativity that can help to break up existing categories instead of putting things in the same frame under a different name. It should be a central goal of Area Studies, she argued, to identify “new logic” instead of making sense of the unknown by forcing it into known patterns. The discussion went on to express the need for the communication of research findings to be understandable, considering teaching as a central platform for fruitful exchange. Here, the idea of political activism as a mode of scholarly expression and a venue for thinking creatively was raised. This drew the discussion to multilingualism, which was seen as central to incorporating “new logic”. Any knowledge expressed in or translated to English tends to reproduce familiar patterns of thought. Feldman finally remarked that there are similar conversations on these issues in the North and South, and focusing on the researcher’s place of birth or of residence is beside the point. The critique must be mediated and institutionalized through the establishment or strengthening of Southern sceneries of knowledge production, she said.

Panel 4a. *Re-constructing Positionalities in Area Studies Research*

Summary by Andreas Benz

In four presentations followed by lively discussion, Panel 4a, chaired by **Epifania Amoo-Adare** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF and University of Bonn), dealt with questions related to positionality, including of researchers, within scientific knowledge production. Positionality was considered along the lines of gender, nationality, community-level ties, institutional affiliation, intellectual training, upbringing and other aspects of personal circumstances and experiences. The relationship of positionality to the power-knowledge nexus was discussed, as well as the practical implications of the understanding that all knowledge is specific, limited, partial and situated.

Elena Smolarz (Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn) focused her examination of positionality on knowledge production in the context of the **Russian colonial enterprise in the Kazakh steppe** in the first half of the 19th century. She outlined how imperial colonial discourse at the time, influenced by czarist academic discourse, underlined and perpetuated a constructed dichotomy between ‘barbarian nomads’ and ‘civilized settlers’; in contrast, Smolarz’s analysis of entanglements in the Kazakh steppe and Central Asia in the 19th century suggests instead the existence of cooperation networks and practices between colonial settlers and the autochthonous population. Smolarz concluded that there is a need for scholars of East European history to revisit and closely scrutinize accepted accounts of interaction in the Kazakh steppe, while paying more attention to the complexity of social and cultural connections and building on an awareness of how actors with powerful positionalities skew sense-making and knowledge generation. Finally, Smolarz traced shifts through time in the use of the spatial concepts ‘borderland’ and ‘frontier’. She argued that how these concepts are applied in Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet academic studies of the Kazakh Steppe reveal the positionalities of particular academic actors and show how processes of academic knowledge production are inevitably bound up in power dynamics.



Lenny Martini and Epifania Amoo-Adare in discussion with other participants following their panel

Lenny Martini (ZEF, University of Bonn) reflected in her presentation on her own positionality as a female, Indonesian and Sundanese PhD student doing fieldwork with **local knowledge communities in the city of Bandung, Indonesia**, on the topic of urban development. She pointed out that her positionality as an academic, who never actively participated in local knowledge community activities (despite having lived in the south part of Bandung for thirty years), offered a way of thinking about the city’s development that was different from local realities. She noted major differences and even contradictions between the narratives of urban life she had experienced in her thirty years in Bandung and those of her respondents. On the other hand,

her positionality as a member of the Sudanese ethnic group offered her the advantage of particular access to local social networks based on the principles of a local informal institution called *pancakaki*. This privileged access to her respondents would have been impossible for non-Sudanese researchers, she argued. The audience lauded Martini’s efforts to create awareness for the value of local

knowledge on Bandung, recognizing that Indonesian academic work has been dominated by Western knowledge and concepts.

Jelena Gledić (University of Belgrade) examined positionality from the standpoint of **ethnic and cultural group categories** used as the basis of empirical research on **“Asians”**. Findings from her meta-study of hundreds of empirical research papers from area studies published in high-ranking international journals showed that criteria used to classify “Asian” or “East Asian” populations were often flat and failed to consider positionality. That is to say, there was little reflection on the categories employed by the researchers, and there was a lack of general discussion on the sampling methods (based on these categories) in many studies. Gledić concluded that scholars of Area Studies and neighboring disciplines often tend to blend nations into collective labels indicating ethnic and cultural belonging. Also, that they do so inconsistently and with little debate on the issues in determining belonging to “areas”. The research thus fails to take into account trends of multiculturalism, globalization and mobility in the contemporary world and instead reiterates and solidifies skewed concepts and worldviews stemming from more conventional Area Studies approaches, with consequences for national and international politics. In answer to a later question from the audience, Gledić further stated her belief that this scenario results from strategic choices made by those seeking publication opportunities to conform to the expectations of funding institutions and scientific journals.

Bianca Boteva-Richter (University of Vienna) concluded the panel by considering the notion of place, specifically of **“home”, in relation to a migrant’s positionality**. Boteva-Richter argued that a sense of “home” perceived by migrants is less determined by a specific place of origin, but rather by the establishment, maintenance or interruption of their intersubjective social connections, which can link them to multiple places constituting their surroundings. Referring to Heidegger, Watsuji and Gadamer, Boteva-Richter further underlined the importance of language in building these intersubjective networks. Both Heidegger, who refers to language as the “house of being”, and Gadamer, who talks about the “unprethinkability” of home, stress an intricate relationship between language and the perception of location, Boteva-Richter argued. The speaker concluded by stating that a place only becomes home in and through intersubjective relations, constituted (also) by language. In the case of migrants, especially those in exile, narratives of (a lost) home can become a home itself, while the location of origin paradoxically becomes, through intersubjective interruptions and through misuse of power structures, a deserted place or, in her words, an “un-place”. In conclusion, Boteva-Richter warned against employing essentialist notions of place, i.e., equating locations with particular bounded territories, but stressed that places are nevertheless where the people live their lives, and where inter-subjective networks are built.

Following the four presentations, Epifania Amoo-Adare posed the following question to all of the panelists: Do you see any promising new models of knowledge emerging that can advance our understanding of the in-betweenness (i.e., situated-ness between numerous positionalities/subjectivities) of any scientific endeavor? Gledić answered that researchers should maintain a reflexive style of doing research – similar to the approach of the Crossroads Asia network, even if funding and publication schemes are averse to it, and even if the research must be conducted in one’s free time. Boteva-Richter encouraged further study of intersubjective time and intersubjective place, i.e. how people are connected across multiple times and places through ancestors, narratives and experiences of the past applied to the present and future. Martini advocated for connecting the dots between disciplines, researchers and ideas, stressing better utilization of tools for

interconnecting (e.g. through blogging and other online activity) and targeted development of communicative skills and activities among academics in Indonesia. Smolarz pointed out that the balancing of emic concepts with academic terminology – the latter often shaped by Western scholars – is akin to conducting inter-religious dialogue. Both are possible, Smolarz explained, given an awareness of positionality by all and a greater self-confidence of users of non-Western epistemologies.

Panel 4b. *Borders and the Politics of Belonging*

Summary by Henryk Alff and Larissa Saar

The panel, which was chaired by **Conrad Schetter** (Crossroads Asia and BICC), examined the implications of positionality from the perspective of people moving at the margins of the mainstream society of the nation-states they live in. The presentations focused on how their sense of belonging conceptualizes, how it develops and how it is used and influenced as a political tool.

The first presentation by **Eva Youkhana** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF and University of Bonn) looked at **conceptual shifts in studies of belonging** and the politics of belonging, taking the example of Latin American migrants in Europe. In examining this, she put a particular focus on Spain and how ethnicity and belonging are reproduced in this context. The main source of her findings was the collaborative and BMBF-funded Area Studies project *Research Network for Latin America: Ethnicity, Citizenship, Belonging*. The project largely dealt with the entanglements of ethnicity, citizenship and belonging – how they are connected and how they affect each other. These can be seen in empirical examples of community movements, e.g. in urban art or street art depicting the Virgen del Cisne. Here, material culture is used as a technique of representation. The research ultimately produced a new understanding of belonging and a novel perspective on how it materializes.

This was followed by a presentation of **Antía Mato Bouzas** (Crossroads Asia and ZMO) on “(B)ordering and the Politics of Belonging”. The aim of the paper was to discuss how the concept of belonging could be a useful analytical tool to study the **spatial dimension involved in conflicts over borders**. In so far as belonging entails membership, the paper examined the relationship of belonging and identity. Similar to the shift away from container thinking when conducting research on areas from the perspective pursued by Crossroads Asia, belonging is here seen as a force to challenge state borders. Political space is finally created and determined through a politics of belonging.

The following presentation by **Seema Kazi** (Center for Women’s Development Studies) dealt with borders, conflict and belonging in the **comparative case studies of Kashmir and Manipur**. This picked up perfectly the previous notion of politicizing belonging, by looking at areas in which political belonging is highly contested. Kazi argued that in both studied cases the ongoing conflicts are essentially about a sense of belonging that is shaped by history, memory, ethnic identity and a sense of collective destiny, which is at constant odds with what she called “an ahistorical, culturally denuded concept of individual citizenship”. In her estimation, both conflicts can be traced back to India’s failure to respect or accommodate ethnic difference and aspiration. Despite being historically removed, ethnically different and geographically distant from mainland India, Kazi further argued, these two ethnic homelands ‘created’ by the partition of India have transformed into militarized

borderlands where conflicting ideas of identity and belonging are, in her words, “played out in blood”.

The fourth presentation, on **belonging to places in the Pakistan-Iran-Afghanistan borderlands**, by



Just Boedeker presents his research to a full audience.

Just Boedeker (Berlin), discussed Baloch claims to various spaces, putting special emphasis on their challenging of the territoriality of space and the interstitial or liminal role of the Baloch toward the state or states they live in and the political authority that controls them. Boedeker stressed the preference of Balochi borderland dwellers to inhabit what he called “ungoverned spaces”, which is inscribed in their identity as a people defying state authority. Nevertheless, there is also a tendency among Baloch mobile actors to promote a sense of belonging to certain localities and even to “perform”

a sort of Baloch nationalism. This, however, is conceptualized in varying ways and is dependent on the political context.

The final presentation was held by **Gennaro Errichiello** (Loughborough University) on politics of **belonging among the Pakistani Community in Dubai**. In his presentation, Errichiello discussed the role of the Pakistani migrants’ association for preserving their national identity and therefore for fostering a sense of belonging to a distant community among its members – despite them coming from very different segments of Pakistani society. This phenomenon was looked at against the backdrop of Pakistanis not being able to acquire full citizenship of the United Arab Emirates and thus lacking access to full social participation in the state they live in.

After the five presentations, the discussion was opened by Schetter by inquiring how belonging and appropriation relate to each other. According to Youkhana, belonging is not only negotiated in the appropriation of space, it also materializes in it. Belonging is rather processual and therefore open to conceptualization in political work. Mato-Bouzas noted how belonging is about connecting to the “other”, which is again in contrast to identity (which is more self-referencing). Answering a related question on whether “Kashmiri” identity is more about symbolism than about nationalism, Mato-Bouzas remarked that, when taking into account “identity”, one has to consider the matter of who is in control, which leads to nationalism. Kazi agreed to nationalism being important, although she stated emphatically, “They don’t want to be Indian or Pakistani; they want to be Kashmiri!” As a result of “identity” having become a highly politicized term, belonging has been frequently used as a means to avoid using “identity”, Schetter further observed, posing the question as to whether it is only a matter of time before “belonging” becomes equally politicized. Youkhana once again stressed that belonging is an inherently different concept (process oriented), not just another word for the same idea. Finally, Schetter raised the role of class in power relations, especially in the Pakistani community in the UAE. Errichiello elaborated this by highlighting how “gated” or “guarded” spaces are both spatial and metaphorical: the space of the Pakistani community is at the same time gated and exclusive, but simultaneously porous to cross-class exchange. Social interactions in the Pakistani community are thus particularly useful for exploring social hierarchies in general.

Video Interviews with Conference Participants

[Prof. Dr. Anna-Katharina Hornidge](#) on epistemic hegemonies and the interrelation of area studies and the disciplines.

[Prof. Dr. Vincent Houben](#) on redefining “area” as a relational, multi-scalar concept for understanding processes of globalization.

[Prof. Dr. Patrick Köllner](#) on comparative area studies and their role in the future of area studies.

[Prof. Dr. Martin Sökefeld](#) on the relevance of the state and its deconstruction for area studies.

Attachment 1. List of Conference Participants

Participants of the 5th Intl. Crossroads Asia Conference - Area Studies` Futures 22 - 23 September 2016 at the Center for Development Research (ZEF)				
	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	INSTITUTE	NATIONALITY
1	Alff	Henryk	Crossroads Asia and Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography	German
2	Amoo-Adare	Epifania	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn (ZEF)	Ghanaian- British
3	Annan	Adjoa	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Ghanaian
4	Baltzersen	Johnny	University College UCC	Danish
5	Banerjee	Suparna	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Indian
6	Bech Hansen	Claus	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn (ZEF)	Danish
7	Benz	Andreas	Crossroads Asia and University of Augsburg	German
8	Bitá	Roxana	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn (ZEF)	Romanian
9	Blumert	Christoph	Crossroads Asia and Bonn International Center for Conversion	German
10	Boedeker	Just	Berlin	German
11	Boteva- Richter	Bianca	University of Vienna	Austrian
12	Cermeño	Helena	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Spanish
13	Chaudhry	Rabia	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Pakistani
14	Chinchilla	Gina	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Colombian

15	Crugler	Thomas	WWU	German
16	Demes	Helmut	University of Duisburg-Essen (East Asian Studies)	German
17	Eguavoen	Irit	University of Bonn (ZEF)	German
18	Errichiello	Gennaro	Loughborough University	Italian
19	Feldman	Shelley	Cornell University	US- American
20	Fleschenberg	Andrea	Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad	German
21	Frey	Sandra	Nomos Verlag	German
22	Geserick	Rolf	German Aerospace Center	German
23	Gledić	Jelena	University of Belgrade	Serbian
24	Gunnarsson Payne	Jenny	Södertörn University	Swedish
25	Hornidge	Anna-Katharina	Crossroads Asia and Uni. Bremen and Leibniz-Center for Tropical Marine Ecology (ZMT)	German
26	Hossain	Mohammad	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Bangladeshi
27	Houben	Vincent	HU Berlin	German
28	Isaac	Mbeche	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Ethiopian
29	Ivars	Benoit	University of Cologne	French
30	Joniak-Lüthi	Agnieszka	Crossroads Asia and LMU Munich	Polish
31	Jüssen	Lara	University of Bonn (ZEF)	German

32	Kaiser	Markus	DKU, Almaty	German
33	Kazi	Seema	Center for Women's Development Studies New Delhi	Indian
34	Kelboro	Girma	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Ethiopian
35	Kobi	Madlen	Zurich University	Swiss
36	Köllner	Patrick	GIGA Hamburg	German
37	Kreutzmann	Hermann	Crossroads Asia and FU Berlin	German
38	Kumar	Amit	University of Bonn (RLC and ZEF)	Indian
39	Kurfürst	Sandra	University of Cologne (GSSC)	German
40	Lachenmann	Gudrun	University of Bielefeld	German
41	Le	Tho	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Vietnamese
42	Lettevall	Rebecka	Södertörn University	Swedish
43	Mamedova	Zarifa	TU Dortmund	Turkmen
44	Mandler	Andreas	University of Bonn (ZEF)	German
45	Marat	Aizhamal	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Kyrgyz
46	Martini	Lenny	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Indonesian
47	Mato-Bouzas	Antía	Crossroads Asia and ZMO Berlin	Spanish
48	Metchanun	Nawaphan	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Thai

49	Mielke	Katja	Crossroads Asia and Bonn International Center for Conversion	German
50	Müller-Mahn	Detlef	University of Bonn (Development Geography)	German
51	Musiak	Kazimierz	Södertörn University	Polish
52	Mwaka	Innocent	University of Cologne	Ugandan
53	Nadjmabadi	Shahnaz	University of Tübingen	Iranian
54	Neuss	Hendrik	German Aerospace Center and German Federal Ministry of Education and Research	German
55	Nokkala	Nelli	University of Cologne	Finnish
56	Purkayastha	Anindya Sekhar	Kazi Nazrul University	Indian
57	Reetz	Dietrich	Crossroads Asia and ZMO Berlin	German
58	Reiher	Cornelia	FU Berlin	German
59	Rentsch	Stefanie	Forum Transregionale Studien	German
60	Retat-Armin	Maike	University of Bonn (ZEF)	German
61	Reynolds	Catherine	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn (ZEF)	US- American
62	Rzehak	Lutz	Crossroads Asia and HU Berlin	German
63	Saar	Larissa	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn (ZEF)	German
64	Saleemi	Sundus	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Pakistani
65	Schaffar	Wolfram	University of Vienna	Austrian

66	Schetter	Conrad	Crossroads Asia and Bonn International Center for Conversion	German
67	Schiele	Kerstin	University of Bonn	German
68	Shrestha	Shova	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Nepali
69	Sippel	Sarah Ruth	University of Leipzig	German
70	Smolarz	Elena	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn (IOA)	Russian
71	Sökefeld	Martin	Crossroads Asia and LMU Munich	German
72	Stolpe	Ines	University of Bonn (IOA)	German
73	Taube	Markus	University of Duisburg-Essen (East Asian Studies)	German
74	Than	Beatrix	Zentrum Operative Kommunikation der Bundeswehr	German
75	Than	Ralph	Zentrum Operative Kommunikation der Bundeswehr	German
76	Trubina	Elena	Ural Federal University	Russian
77	von der Pütten	Jann Christoph	Zentrum Operative Kommunikation der Bundeswehr	German
78	Wazni		University of Marburg (Islamic Studies)	Indonesian
79	White	Thomas	Cambridge University	British
80	Youkhana	Eva	Crossroads Asia and University of Bonn	German
81	Zhang	Liwen	University of Bonn (ZEF)	Chinese
82	Zins	Blanche Cathérine	University of Marburg (Centre for Conflict Studies)	German

Area Studies' Futures: The 5th International Crossroads Asia Conference

University of Bonn, Germany, September 22-23, 2016

Abstracts welcome until: March 31, 2016

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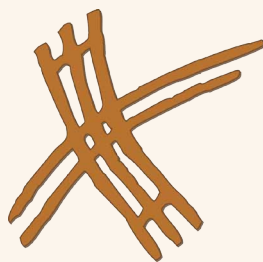
The field of area studies (AS) as traditionally conceptualised, organised and taught at universities has long been subject to worldwide debates, especially since the end of the Cold War. Conventional approaches to AS have been criticised for ethnocentrism and methodological obsolescence, creating fixed geographical 'areas', and solidifying regimes of (Western) power and hegemony. Consequently, AS have been described as unsuitable for the study of the modern world, processes related to globalisation, and the increasing (im-)mobility of people, goods and ideas.

In 2011, the interdisciplinary research network **Crossroads Asia** was launched to tackle the question of how to conduct and position AS in the 21st century. In an effort to rethink AS – overturn misconceptions of 'the Other' and challenge epistemic regimes – the network has scrutinised traditional concepts and methods of AS and has explored novel research approaches related to multiple spatial realities, (im-)mobilities and (im-)mobilisation, borders and boundary-making/-weakening, and positionality. With project culmination in 2016, the network intends to synthesise its research results into an interdisciplinary research approach for the production of knowledge on a more interrelated world, and to enhance debate among scholars rethinking AS.

The 5th International Crossroads Asia conference provides a platform for sharing and discussing conceptual and methodological innovations in AS research that transcend traditional disciplinary approaches. How has the rethinking process changed AS? How do globalisation and migration challenge concepts of 'areas'? How does digitalisation alter social space and identities? How can AS account for the Anthropocene? How can AS contribute to overcoming epistemic hegemonies? These are some of the questions that we want to address; thus, we encourage contributions related to the following non-exhaustive list of themes:

- conceptualisations for mapping the spatial complexity of social and non-human interactions in the Anthropocene, as highlighted by climate change or digitalisation,
 - » including the multidimensionality of space and flows (figurations, entanglements, frictions, assemblages, networks, scapes, etc.);
- methodological and theoretical intersections between AS, post-colonial studies, future studies, gender and women's studies, queer studies, and other critical approaches; and
- positionality, power constellations and hegemonies of knowledge in AS research.

We invite scholars from AS and all other disciplines within the social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, etc. to submit proposals for conference contributions. The conference will include panels, roundtables and smaller, more interactive discussion groups. Alternative forms of expression around the proposed topics are also welcome. **Please send an abstract (max. 300 words) and a one-page CV to crossroads@uni-bonn.de by March 31, 2016.** The conference is free for all participants; limited funds are available to sponsor the travel of selected presenters. If you wish to be considered for sponsorship, please let us know and briefly explain your case.



5th Intl. Crossroads Asia
Conference: Area Studies` Futures
22 - 23 September 2016
at the Center for Development
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Thursday, 22 September

10:30-12:30 PRE-CONFERENCE ROUNDTABLE

Situation der Area Studies in Deutschland (in German, in collaboration with **CrossArea e.V.**)

13:00 -14:30 Registration

14:30-15:00 WELCOME ADDRESS

Claus Bech Hansen (Crossroads Asia Coordinator)

15:00-16:15 PUBLIC KEYNOTE LECTURE

Shelley Feldman (Cornell University), *Decommodifying Knowledge: Recuperating the Interdisciplinarity of Area Studies*

16:15 -16:30 Coffee Break

16:30-18:00 BOOK PRESENTATION

Area Studies at the Crossroads. Knowledge Production after the Mobility Turn, edited by **Katja Mielke** (Bonn International Center for Conversion) and **Anna-Katharina Hornidge** (Leibniz-Zentrum für Marine Tropenökologie (ZMT) and University of Bremen)

18:30-20:00 TOUR OF THE CITY OF BONN

Cultural and historical highlights. Please register in advance.

Friday, 23 September

08:00-09:00 Registration

09:00-10:30 SESSION I QUERYING POWER CONSTELLATIONS AND DESTABILIZING EPISTEMIC REGIMES

Panel 1a. Deconstruction of Western Knowledge and the Category 'Other'

Chair: **Dietrich Reetz** (Crossroads Asia, ZMO Berlin)

Anindya Sekhar Purkayastha (Kazi Nazrul University): *Developmentalism, the Anthropocene and Associated Eurocentric Epistemic Structures in South Asia with a Specific Focus on India*

Zarifa Mamedova (TU Dortmund): *"Sultanism" and Political Culture in Turkmenistan*

Andreas Mandler (ZEF, University of Bonn): *Understanding Knowledge Hegemonies in Local Epistemic Cultures. Findings from Smallholder Farmers in Tajikistan*

Roundtable 1b. Reshaping Places – Mastering Uncertainty: A Second Take on Area Studies (AS) in the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

Chair: **Claus Bech Hansen** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF, University of Bonn)

Rebecka Lettevall (Södertörn University): *How Challenges to AS, not Least from Globalization, Call for Critical Area Studies*

Jenny Gunnarson Payne (Södertörn University): *Fieldwork on Transnational and Trans-local Phenomena with Examples from Reproductive Medicine*

Kazimierz Musiał (Södertörn University): *Reflection on Language Use and Linguistic Competence in Pursuing Critical AS*

10:30-10:45 Coffee Break

10:45-12:15 SESSION II MAPPING THE SOCIO-SPATIAL COMPLEXITY OF HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN INTERACTIONS

Panel 2a. Shedding Light on Agency and the Social Construction of Space

Chair: **Anna-Katharina Hornidge** (Crossroads Asia, ZMT, University of Bremen)

Henryk Alff (Crossroads Asia, Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography) and **Andreas Benz** (Crossroads Asia, University of Augsburg): *The Multi-Dimensionality of Space: Challenging Spatial Bias in the Production of Places*

Patrick Köllner (GIGA Hamburg): *Comparative Area Studies: What It Is, What It Can Do*

Martin Sökefeld (Crossroads Asia, LMU Munich): *Crossroads Studies and the State: Anthropological Perspectives*

Manja Stephan-Emmrich (HU Berlin): *Digital Mediations: iPhones, Emotions and Piety in the Spatial Biographies of Tajik Student Travelers in Dubai*

1a - 4a: Room 0.008
1b - 4b: Room 0.009

2b. Space, Place and Time

Chair: **Hermann Kreutzmann** (Crossroads Asia, FU Berlin)

Agnieszka Joniak-Lüthi (Crossroads Asia, LMU Munich): *The Temporality of Place: Shifting Spatialities in China's Inner Asian Borderland*

Thomas White (Cambridge University): *Recognising the Service of Camels to the Nation: Spatial Politics and Non-Human Animals in China's Multiethnic Borderlands*

Madlen Kobi (Zurich University): *An Ethnography of the Construction Site: Approaching Regional and Spatial Connections of Urban Places in Northwest China*

12:15-13:45 Lunch Break

13:45-15:15 **SESSION III** **CRITICAL CONCEPTUAL AND** **METHODOLOGICAL INTERSECTIONS WITH** **AREA STUDIES**

Panel 3a. Exploring Methodological Limits and Possibilities in Area Studies Research

Chair: **Eva Youkhana** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF, University of Bonn)

Elena Trubina (Ural Federal University): *Area Studies as the Challenge for Comparative Urbanism*

Helena Cermeño (ZEF, University of Bonn): *Access to the City: a Comparative Research of Urban Assemblages in Amritsar (India) and Lahore (Pakistan)*

Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin) and **Sarah Ruth Sippel** (University of Leipzig): *Food and Area Studies: A New Research Agenda for Analyzing Power in the Global Agri-Food System*

Roundtable 3b. Intersections of Area Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, Cold War Studies and Future Studies, Taking the Example of Development Discourses

Chair: **Shelley Feldman** (Cornell University)

Anna-Katharina Hornidge (Crossroads Asia, ZMT Bremen)

Sandra Kurfürst (GSSC, University of Cologne)

Wolfram Schaffar (University of Vienna)

Ines Stolpe (University of Bonn)

15:15-15:45 Coffee Break

15:45-17:15 **SESSION IV** **POSITIONALITY AND THE SPACE(S) OF** **KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION**

Panel 4a. Re-constructing Positionalities in Area Studies Research

Chair: **Epifania Amoo-Adare** (Crossroads Asia, ZEF, University of Bonn)

Elena Smolarz (Crossroads Asia, University of Bonn): *Frontier, Borderland, Space-in-Between. Conceptualizing the Space of Encounter and Interaction in the Kazakh Steppe of 19th Century Academic Discourse*

Lenny Martini (ZEF, University of Bonn): *A Positionality Reflection of a Native Researcher in Bandung, Indonesia*

Jelena Gledić (Belgrade University): *Shaping Science: Area Studies and Empirical Research of "Asians"*

Bianca Boteva-Richter (University of Vienna): *Home and Homelessness in and Through Migration. The Un-Place as the New Global Localisation*

Panel 4b. Borders and the Politics of Belonging

Chair: **Conrad Schetter** (Crossroads Asia, Bonn International Center for Conversion)

Antía Mato-Bouzas (Crossroads Asia, ZMO Berlin): *(B)ordering and the Politics of Belonging*

Just Boedeker (Berlin): *Longing for a State – Belonging to an Anti-State and, Above All: Being Betwixt and Between*

Gennaro Errichiello (Loughborough University, UK): *The Politics of Belonging. The Pakistani Community in Dubai*

Seema Kazi (Center for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi): *Borders, Conflict, Belonging: Kashmir and Manipur*

Eva Youkhana (Crossroads Asia, ZEF, University of Bonn): *A Conceptual Shift in Studies of Belonging and the Politics of Belonging*

17:15-17:30 **CLOSING REMARKS**

HOW TO REGISTER

Please send an e-mail by **15 September 2016** to crossroads@uni-bonn.de with your full name, affiliation and e-mail address, with the subject line "Registration for Crossroads Asia Conference 2016." All conference events are free. Let us know in your e-mail if you would like to join the city of Bonn tour.

HOW TO GET THERE

From Bonn's main train station, take one of the following underground lines to the station *Heussallee-Museumsmeile*:

U16/63 (toward Bad Godesberg)

U 66/68 (toward Bad Honnef - Ramersdorf)

From the station *Heussallee-Museumsmeile*, Walter-Flex-Str. 3 is a 3 min. walk.

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