

TRANSREGIONAL ACADEMY: HISTORIES OF MIGRANT KNOWLEDGES IN AND ACROSS THE TRANSPACIFIC

Conference at GHI Pacific Regional Office, UC Berkeley, May 28 to June 4, 2019. Convened by the Forum Transregionale Studien (FTS) and the Max Weber Stiftung (German Humanities Institutes Abroad) in cooperation with the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington DC (GHI PRO) at UC Berkeley, the Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (CALAS), and the Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley. Organized by the Pacific Regional Office in cooperation with Isabel Richter (DAAD visiting professor, UC Berkeley) and the Goethe-Institute San Francisco. Steering Committee members: Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute Washington), Andrea Westermann (GHI PRO), Akasemi Newsome (Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley), Ryan Jones (University of Oregon), Katerina Teaiwa (Australian National University, Canberra), and Albert Manke (Bielefeld University). Participants: Mitiana Arbon (Australian National University, Canberra), Hayley Brazier (University of Oregon), Wei-ti Chen (College of Charleston), Sarah Comyn (University of Dublin), Ruth Faleolo (University of Queensland), Sylvia Frain (Auckland University of Technology), Connor Hamm (UCLA), Bianca Hennessy (Australian National University, Canberra), Karin Louise Hermes (Humboldt University, Berlin), Rebecca Hogue (University of California, Davis), Botakoz Kassymbekova (FTS, Berlin), Rachel Lim (UC Berkeley), Talei Lucia Mangioni (Australian National University, Canberra), Kristin Oberiano (Harvard University), Emma Powell (Victoria University of Wellington), Nathaniel Rigler (Victoria University of Wellington), Samid Suliman (Griffith University), Tammy Tabe (University of the South Pacific), Daniella Trimboli (Deakin University), Vanessa Warheit (filmmaker, Berkeley), Danny Zborover (Institute for Field Research).

This week-long Transregional Academy hosted 24 scholars with an interest in history from all fields, including (art) history, literary studies, geography, environmental humanities, sociology, political science, anthropology or ethnic studies. The aim of Transregional Academies is to offer an extended workspace for scholars with different regional and disciplinary expertise to present and connect their work to international peers, to question and experiment with conceptual and methodological frameworks in regional and transregional contexts. In our everyday work, we typically archive away for later consideration what we read, saw, and discussed about standard

(or not so standard) vs. decolonial scholarship that together form today's humanities: Yet we sincerely hope that we all think and write slightly differently about "the Transpacific" the next time we venture into research contributions. One finding of the week surely was that the participants got a sense of the importance of "time" for their research. Time is of the essence. We repeatedly discussed the culturally specific meanings and realizations of time or divergent notions of "the past" different societies maintain(ed). Perhaps more importantly: the discussions only highlighted the time-consuming workload ahead of us when it comes to embracing all the knowledge in and contradicting academia.

We might agree with what Brazilian scholar Eduardo Viveiros de Castro stated in 2004: "Common sense is not common. That is why anthropology exists. The incommensurability of clashing notions is precisely what enables and justifies it ... Since it is only worth comparing the incommensurable, comparing the commensurable is a task for accountants, not anthropologists."¹ But how do we as scholars come to terms with incompatible knowledge underlying (indigenous or imperial) science, history writing, community building, or the Pacific islanders' dancing? We asked: do any narratives or media make the task easier? How do the very actors we study deal with contradictory logics? How do we not just compare and comprehend the incommensurability between ways of thinking and apprehending the world, but make this understanding the starting point for true collaboration across academic landscapes and cultural geographies?

The Academy put the topics of migrations and knowledge center stage. Scholars of migration studies have focused on questions of knowledge for a long time. Consider the well-analyzed logics of bureaucratic and societal classification and reclassification of those who newly arrive. In yet another field of migration studies the epistemological dimension has gained some prominence: refugees and migrants render the concept of state territoriality not only visible but also more fluid. Perhaps even more so in the spread-out archipelagic states of the Pacific. Issues of territory, place, or soil take on specific meanings here. Migrations, islands, and seascapes have been closely linked via seafaring, trade and family networks as have migrations and radical environmental change — from resource extraction to nuclear fall-out and global warming. Consequently, we kept asking: How do people assess and assert their options and navigate the en-

1 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Perspectival Anthropology and the Method of Controlled Equivocation", *Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America* 2 (2004)1, 10-11.

tangled scenarios of flight, migration, and mobility? Why do people leave in the first place? Why do they stay put or routinely return?

Over the course of the week, participants presented and workshopped their respective papers, each of which situated and explored “the Pacific” in varying ways in three smaller groups. In group A, Mitiana Arbon’s paper examined how art auction houses ascribe value to Pacific art via Western value systems and offered ways to disrupt these attributions. Samid Suliman’s paper examined how climate change is causing different worldviews to collide in the Pacific, requiring us to think about migration structures in collaborative — and possibly regional — ways. Rachel Lim’s paper focused on the Korean diaspora in Mexico, and asked questions pertaining to the circulation of migrant knowledge as well as claims to diaspora via embodied and corporeal practices of “Koreanness.” Hayley Brazier was grappling with cartographic issues of the sea floor, specifically, how the notion of the deep sea is dominantly mapped by Western European frameworks and how this space might be visually storied alternatively. Daniella Trimboli’s paper examined how whiteness lands in particular ways in Australia and how this is contested or reaffirmed through digital, diasporic interventions. Finally, Connor Hamm’s paper tried to establish ways to use Pacific-based art on climate change to intervene in Western art history, and, ultimately, how the terms of “humanness” might be rearticulated through Pacific-based art projects.

In group B, Tammy Tabe examined the colonial history of the Gilbertese relocation to the Solomon Islands, which the British Colonial Administration declared a humanitarian aid project mitigating environmental migration due to recurrent droughts. Tabe explained that settlers, in contrast, saw this as a forced migration due to the nuclear testing conducted on Christmas Island, which was silenced in the colonial archives. Similarly, Rebecca Hogue juxtaposed activist materials testifying to Pacific women’s knowledge about the extent of nuclear testing and its infrastructure across Micronesia and Polynesia to popular U.S. media reports from the mid-1940s that emphasized the U.S. Navy’s justification for forced migration “for the good of all mankind.” Kristin Oberiano dealt with the relationship between Filipino immigrants and the indigenous Chamorro people in Guam/Guahan after World War II in order to show how the United States empire, settler colonialism, and militarism are historically intertwined in the Pacific. Oberiano’s project is about the complex ways both migrants and indigenous peoples search

for belonging in the Transpacific. Bianca Hennessy analyzed how place is conceptualized in Pacific Studies focusing on the interplay between the twinned forces of belonging to place and movement of people between places (roots and routes). Her ethnographic research in Pacific Studies departments showed how intellectual communities implicitly frame their notions of place through the lens of their favored epistemic approaches. Sarah Comyn analyzed the literary sociability created by colonial mechanics' institutes established in gold mining districts across the Transpacific. She reconstructed the transnational literary networks formed by events such as Mark Twain's lecture tour of Australian mechanics' institutes in the 1890s, and its practices of inclusion and exclusion. Sylvia Frain explored the creative approaches to climate change action produced on digital platforms as visual and textual content to explore how indigenous oceanic futures challenge persisting political arrangements of the Micronesian region, which continues to be controlled by the United States for naval exercises and expanding military bases. Nathaniel Rigler analyzed the identity construction and maintenance by both Pacific Islanders and Western consumers through coconut oil consumption as a legacy of post-1960s Pacific Islanders' migrations to Pacific Rim nations. Coconut oil is an interesting commodity in this respect because it simultaneously retains indigenous meaning and reflects new luxury status.

In group C, Ruth Faleolo described her mixed-methods approach in examinations of Samoan and Tongan migrants crossing from New Zealand to Australia. Faleolo's descriptions of her research to-date revealed a curious new development: e-Talanoa — a mutual knowledge-sharing and knowledge-forming practice wherein Faleolo undertook extended conversations with research participants via social-media platforms. In arguing for culturally responsive and respectful engagement with Pasifika peoples, Faleolo described how social-media platforms enabled the observation of, and admission to, moments often inaccessible. Within indigenous Pacific epistemological and methodological practice, the researcher accepts that they are never truly objective given their kuleana (or responsibility) to the work and thus, the people and places their work affects. Karin Louise Hermes' account of Kānaka Maoli and allied resistance and activism through the arts and demonstrations for and at Mauna Kea on the island of Hawai'i, reminded us of this. Emma Powell presented on genealogical method ('akapapa'anga) in the Cook Islands context. She recounted how her grandmother had gathered her placenta from

an Auckland hospital and subsequently buried it on land purchased when her grandparents first migrated to New Zealand. She went on to explain how such acts demonstrate the different scales of geography, mobility, and relatedness being invoked by Cook Islands Māori people in contrast to economic and development models of diaspora. Talei Luscia Mangioni proposed a similar, latticed network of relatedness between people and place. In her multi-sited research, she traced how the genealogies of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement were haunting her own academic orbit. Using the nuclear science program of the University of California, Berkeley campus as a beginning reference point, Mangioni traced key historical intersections between American actors in the development of nuclear science and her own institution, the Australian National University (ANU). Danny Zborover described costumed festival participants assuming the roles of pechelunges (pirates), negros (The Black Ones), turcos (Turks) and others at the annual San Pedro festivities in Huamelula, Mexico. He explained how the research had revealed that aspects of the festival represented much older Chontal histories of colonialism, mobility and globalization. Wei-Te Chen then went on to discuss the entrepreneurial spirit that has long motivated Japanese medical professionals to pursue opportunities in the far parts of empire. Wei-ti Chen's discussion of the Taiwanese and Japanese expansionist project during the early twentieth century decentered the prominence of state power showing that, in particular, Japanese medical professional migrants were exercising agency at the height of imperialism, independent of state machinations. During additional sessions, we had curated conversations about academic blog posting and watched three films, including one by Berkeley-based filmmaker Vanessa Warheit (*The Insular Empire*, 2010) who joined in the conversation. The screening closed a film series taking a "history from below" look at migration. The Pacific Regional Office organized this series over the spring with DAAD-professor Isabel Richter from UCB's department of history in collaboration with the Goethe-Institute San Francisco (<https://www.ghi-dc.org/events-conferences/event-history/2019/lectures/gehen-bleiben-whether-to-remain-or-to-leave.html?L=0>). A field trip to Angel Island, a former Immigration Station, provided an opportunity to reflect on our topics in a historic setting.

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² This report is a revised compilation of the authors' individual contributions for the academic blog <https://academies.hypotheses.org>.

