

**19.05.2022**

09:45-10:30

Welcome

*Frank Heidemann and Philipp Schorch, LMU Munich*

Doing islandness

*Philipp Schorch, LMU Munich*

Throughout the rich presentations and discussions of the first workshop, it appeared as problematic to think through islandness as a noun, in isolation and without considering it in conjunction with an action word or verb. Deploying islandness alone might lead to essential, timeless and categorical demarcations and claims, which would contradict the empirical ambitions we pursue. Instead, we shall examine the *processes* through which islandness becomes constituted, and the *practices* through which it becomes enacted. We therefore proposed adjusting our frame of reference by zooming in on the *doing of islandness*, which offers several advantages for our purposes. First, an adjusted focus on doing implies practices and processes, which can be investigated through a variety of methods: ethnographic, historical, discursive, visual and so on. The doing itself is empirical and historical, that is, the practices and processes of islandness can be undone and redone. This approach makes sense for us, as we are interested in the lived realities and temporalities of islandness. Second, the suggested refinement is also meaningful on the metaphorical plane as ideas of islands or island settings, which inform the experiences of islandness among islanders, can also be undone and redone. These imaginative artifacts are human products subject to change, travel and individual interpretation and modification. We set out to contribute to the literature through our work on *doing islandness* with its dual empirical and metaphorical character, which enables us to draw diverse environments - islands, cities, mountain valleys - and regions - the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Highland Asia and Europe - through a common lens.

10:30-11:15

Rethinking the Caribbean through an archipelagic memory

*Sarah Nimführ, University of Arts Linz*

In the beginning of WWII, the Caribbean islands were one of the few places of refuge for Jews fleeing the Nazi regime. Many intended the Caribbean to be a short stopover, however, Jewish refugees opened up a new life and established self-sufficient communities whose Jewishness was entangled with the histories and memories of the islands. Aim of my presentation is to place entangled imageries, discourses, and practices in conversation with each other and show how they are constitutive of an archipelagic narrative of the Caribbean that also goes beyond the islands and shifts into the continental space. Referring to the “archipelagic memory” (Rajkomar et al 2022), that connects various sites that are multilocated, I will convey an approach, where the past is remembered archipelagically, as a series of fragmentary spaces, cultures, and histories that converge into a fluid space. Based on second- and third generation immigrant experience, I will give insights how a Caribbean narrative is defined and remembered. The Caribbean is a homogenous concept in an archipelagic world, that is, following Édouard Glissant, “written” by each other and results in a Caribbean identity as a relational part, as a lived experience in a world of relations. In this sense, I propose to rethink the Caribbean by drawing on a dialogical exchange of postmemory (Hirsch 2012) and archipelagic memory.

BREAK

11:45-12:30

Insularity, identity, and interrelatedness in the Italian Alps

*Alessandro Rippa, LMU Munich*

The trope of valley communities as secluded, isolated, and ultimately insular is an old one. This idea is tied to how valley communities often develop a strong sense of identity, distinguishing themselves from “lowland” centres and people. It is also connected to valleys’ particular environments, their uniquely vertical orientation, and not the least, the customary difficulty of accessing and crossing them. Lastly, insularity can also be a projection determined by the outside: valleys are often made into remote and under-developed places by outsiders, visitors, and (lowland) rulers. The notion of islandness developed in this series of workshops urges us to think through the experiential quality of everyday island life as a particular intersubjective reality bonding together human subjects, and their particular environment. This approach to practices and ideas of “dwelling” is particularly useful for thinking about valleys, too, and particularly for addressing the contested historical and everyday processes through which particular valley identities are formed. This paper aims to put this approach to islandness at work in the ethnographic context of Vallarsa, a valley in the Italian Alps. After detailing its history, shifting human-environment relations, and ongoing processes of self-representation, I show how valley communities’ sense of identity is continuously shaped by both insularity and interrelatedness.

BREAK

14:00-14:45

Between insularity and permeability; or, how islandness is done in other places

*Galen Murton, James Madison University*

In the 2021 *Thinking through Islandness* workshop, I proposed that we ‘consider how movements in space across maritime and alpine places can help us rethink the relationship between islands and mountains.’ The current provocation to move onward into new spaces of ‘doing islandness’ leads me to ask a new but related question: *where does islandness get done, and what does islandness look like (or feel like) in places that are not islands topographically speaking?* In this case, I again want to bring us back to alpine landscapes to see how and where the heuristic and experience of islandness applies across other social and physical geographies. A political geography approach to borders supports this analysis. Mountain ranges, like islands, are natural and physical formations that pose (and *impose*) the geographical conditions of insularity. In other words, both islands and mountains present real limits. These limits are political, social, environmental, and technical. And yet these limits are also always permeable – they are crossed, passed through, and transgressed. Thus, just as islands and mountains are routinely naturalized as earthly borders that frame and shape human interaction (or the lack thereof), they are also always interfaces, or spaces where things meet and cross and mix. By holding a dialectical tension between insularity and permeability, this next iteration of my ‘islands are mountains’ thesis again points our attention to alpine places to test, reconsider, and ask what islandness does, how we do it, and where it gets done. This is especially important, I hazard to say, when one is not in a maritime environment or what we often think of as a geographical island.

14:45-15:30

The coast is an island: Insularity and connection on two European coastlines

*Anna S. Antonova, LMU Munich*

An island is always defined by its coast. It is only at the margins, at the coast, that practices of islandness can acquire meaning, its insularities only notable when they are communicated with the outside. Islandness can thus only truly be approached through the connections that exist at its boundaries. The coast itself is an island. Coastal communities understand this duality viscerally. Scholarly traditions in both the marine social sciences and blue humanities have shown how social experience of the coast is as liminal as its material make-up, simultaneously insular and a point of connection. This contribution takes this conclusion further, arguing that embodying islandness can be defined through coastal communities' inherent awareness and even deliberate manipulation of their landscape's duality. Drawing on original research from two European coastlines, the Yorkshire East Coast and the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, this contribution illustrates how coastal communities narrate the material and metaphorical practices of islandness in ways that enable different social visions or political agendas. Reflecting on coastal communities' unique ways of navigating the dualities of islandness can help suggest responses to the Anthropocene and the contradictory queries it poses to environmental and political identities.

BREAK

16:00-16:45

Nomadic islands: Danube river, nation states and riparian communities

*Stefan Dorondel, Francisc I. Rainer Institute of Anthropology Bucharest*

This paper seeks to engage an ethnography of the hydrological and geomorphological processes in order to examine the political and economic consequences of the nomadic character of the Lower Danube islands. Fluvial islands, as opposed to the maritime ones, are constantly in moving. They merge with the river's bank or with neighboring islands, they change their architecture by elongation and move along the river in a rather short period of time. Moving islands means a constant changing of the thalweg, of the navigational path and for the local fishermen a constant negotiation and conflict with the border police. Uninhabited territories fluvial islands are yet essential for the riparian communities as locals used to exploit forest, graze their animals or practice agriculture on the rich in nutrients soil of the islands. Perceived as an "Ottoman River" until 1878, the Danube became a border after the Turkish-Russian-Romanian war whereas the islands of the Lower Danube became a national territory after the occurrence of the nation-states Romania and Bulgaria (in 1878). This geopolitical change affected the historical practice of exploiting wood, doing agriculture and animal husbandry on the islands. This paper asks the following question: what are the consequences of these constant movements for the nation-states and for local communities? How can we understand better the local history of these peripheral populations and how can we think with not only islands but with this continuous process called by geographers and limnologists the dynamics of Danube River islands? Based on long term ethnographic fieldwork (yet ongoing), on historical maps and satellite images I attempt to suggest that geomorphological and hydrological processes can be the subject of history and ethnography. Moreover, this perspective may bring new insights equally to the study of islands and to the "geological turn in anthropology" approach.

16:45-17:30

Afterwords

*Sujit Sivasundaram, University of Cambridge, and Gordon Winder, LMU Munich*

**20.05.2022**

09:45-10:30

Save Lakshadweep forum against the “inclusion of the contrary”

*Frank Heidemann, LMU Munich*

After our last workshop, in May 2021, the “#savelakshadweep” campaign organized protest by the people of the Lakshadweep against the Indian state, because a number of rules and “reforms” of the Hindu majority state were directed against the Muslim islanders. The Save Lakshadweep Forum raised their voice against the ban on beef in school canteens other moves to suppress or restrict Muslim influence. On the islands, the ban on alcohol was lifted and persons with more than two children were not permitted to contest in local elections. In the name of progress (especially for tourism infrastructure), the Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 (LDAR) proposes the power to relocate islanders from their property for any development project. I would like to argue that the underlying conception of state dominance is rooted in what Louis Dumont called “encompassment of the contrary”, a logical scandal, because A cannot be the opposite of B and includes B at the same time. The tricky politics of this encompassment is that the dominant part defines the categories which are included by the dominated part. Just as the English term “man” stands for “mankind” and for the opposition to “women”, thus including (and defining) the opposite, the Indian mainland state dominates and practically encompasses the island world by introducing Hindu values and economic reforms. I would argue that the ethnographic case of the Lakshadweep illuminates a dialectic relationship that is expressed in more general terms in the opposition of “island” and “*mainland*”.

10:30-11:15

Doing islandness in Ritchie’s Archipelago, India

*Ruhi Deol, LMU Munich*

This contribution explores how the practice of livelihoods and their discursive entanglements shapes the way islandness is constituted and enacted amongst archipelagic settlers in India’s Andaman Islands. For instance, the activities of forestry, agriculture, fishing, and tourism help islanders navigate their own islands and to form visceral connections with the (is-)landscape, but also connect islanders materially and discursively to other islands and/or continents. The islands of Havelock and Neil, located in Ritchie’s Archipelago, differ vastly in size, topography, resources, and in their settlement histories and livelihoods trajectories. Yet these neighbouring islands share an intimate relationship based on collaboration and competition in livelihoods, their connections with other islands, and with the Indian subcontinent. I use empirical research around livelihoods practices and islander perceptions of change to reveal these layers of interconnectedness and how they influence the ‘doing’ of islandness in the archipelago.

BREAK

11:45-12:30

The production of resort islandness in the Maldives

*Boris Wille, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*

The paper explores the Maldivian island resort as the epitome of crafted islandness. The introduction of tourism to the archipelago in 1972 not only triggered enormous economic transformations, but significantly it also reconfigured local understandings of what an island can be. New ways of inhabiting, exploiting and fashioning islands developed that at once drew on, created and catered for tourist desires and imaginations of tropical holiday paradise. The paper traces the evolution of the Maldivian island resort paradigm to scrutinise the epistemological, spatial, aesthetic and socio-political labour involved in turning once uninhabited marginal islands into leisure serving and revenue generating insular assets.

BREAK

14:00-14:45

Contours of a bygone island: Mapping pre-colonial nostalgia in Mexico City

*Raúl Acosta, LMU Munich*

Over the last few years, activists have been painting symbols in the centre of Mexico City to mark the contour of the island on which Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire, rose. The area they have mapped encloses vestiges of pyramids and other buildings where archaeologists continue to find valuable objects beneath colonial buildings. At the time the Spanish arrived to what is now Mexico, Tenochtitlan was located within a lake system surrounded by dormant volcanoes. The Aztecs, who led an empire that dominated a vast territory, had expanded the island through a system of chinampas, known also as “floating gardens.” Four straight avenues connected the island-city with lake shores. With the markings to remember the precolonial Tenochtitlan, activists shape a new wave of nostalgia. The symbolism of the island-city serves to address current environmental challenges of Mexico City, and also ideas of resistance to external influence or power. In remembering the bygone island, Mexico City activists seek to address a renewed sense of entitlement in the territory. They do so with hints of awareness of the environmental risks that come with the idea of human power over nature.

14:45-15:30

A land in the middle of the ocean: Dilemmas of shared sovereignty in Rapa Nui (Easter Island, Chile)

*Diego Muñoz, LMU Munich*

According to the official version, on September 9, 1888, the Rapanui chiefs ceded their sovereignty to Chile, forever and without reservation, while preserving their chiefly titles. This interpretation evokes a constitutive ambiguity: how can one cede sovereignty and, at the same time, maintain their chiefdom? This constitutive ambiguity is omnipresent in Rapa Nui's historical relations with the Chilean state. In my presentation, I will analyze—from a perspective of historical ethnography—the paradigmatic changes in the sovereignty doctrines applied by the Chilean state, and in the Rapanui readings of national and Indigenous sovereignty. I will begin with the initial annexation project of the island, which had a clear geopolitical component. Then, I will address the uncertain character of Chilean sovereignty which becomes evident in the policies of abandoning or incorporating the territory. The

different doctrines that the Chilean state has applied in relation to Rapa Nui— such as the *apprehensio*, *terra nullius*, tricontinentality or presential sea— show Chile’s changing interest in the island and its ‘strategic value’. My talk will conclude with examining the views, also ambiguous, of important Rapanui leaders on the cession, negotiation, and recovery of Indigenous sovereignty. Through a series of discourses and practices, and via their own institutions, Rapanui people are building a kind of shared sovereignty with the Chilean state, although it is not referred to by this term.

BREAK

16:00-16:45

Thinking and doing epidemic islandness

*Eva-Maria Knoll, Austrian Academy of Sciences*

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed islands as representing both natural quarantine units and powerful metaphors. Some island societies have fared somewhat better than landlocked countries and island-like resilience and vulnerability, it seems, are good to think with through epidemic times. Taking a closer look on historic and contemporary epidemics in the Maldives, I will discuss advantages and pitfalls of small island geography and island belonging in times of severe health crises. The Maldives’ case highlights defined island space, manageable population size and island community cohesion as qualities that allow for monitoring movements and for quick recognition of and effective response to outbreaks of infectious diseases. Yet once they set in epidemics travel fast through closely-knit communities on densely populated island ground. Moreover, the comfort of pandemic isolation goes hand in hand with cutbacks for supply chains and income generating flows of tourists. Landlocked Austria is the second ethnographic site I consult for thinking through, as well as experiencing and doing islandness in pandemic contexts. I suggest the notion of “epidemic islandness” to scrutinize and consider entanglements of the course of epidemics and health outcomes with island environments. Epidemic islandness addresses observable, experienced or imagined relations to physical or metaphorical islands or islanded entities.

16:45-17:30

Afterwords

*Frank J. Korom, Boston University and Sujit Sivasundaram, University of Cambridge*