ROUTLEDGE

ENGAGING WITH...

ENGAGING TRANSCULTURALITY

CONCEPTS, KEY TERMS, CASE STUDIES

EDITED BY **LAILA ABU-ER-RUB, CHRISTIANE BROSIUS, SEBASTIAN MEURER, DIAMANTIS PANAGIOTOPOULOS,** AND **SUSAN RICHTER**

Engaging Transculturality

Engaging Transculturality is an extensive and comprehensive survey of the rapidly developing field of transcultural studies. In this volume, the reflections of a large and interdisciplinary array of scholars have been brought together to provide an extensive source of regional and trans-regional competencies, and a systematic and critical discussion of the field's central methodological concepts and terms.

Based on a wide range of case studies, the book is divided into 27 chapters across which cultural, social and political issues relating to transculturality from Antiquity to today and within both Asian and European regions and their relational entanglements are explored. Key terms related to the field of transculturality are also discussed within each chapter, and the rich variety of approaches provided by the contributing authors offers the reader an expansive look into the field of transculturality.

Offering a wealth of expertise, and equipped with a selection of illustrations, this book will be of interest to scholars and students from a variety of fields within the Humanities and Social Sciences.

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Introduction

Engaging transculturality

Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos and Susan Richter

The dramatic increase in the density and speed of global circulation and interconnectedness as well as the political and economic shifts and ruptures accompanying the end of the Cold War in the outgoing twentieth century have fundamentally challenged the viability of scholarly approaches that took the nation state as their default mode. Scholars in the humanities and social sciences have begun to respond to challenges that are not contained within geographical compartments, thereby tending to transgress disciplinary boundaries. This new line of thought questioned the centre-periphery dichotomy by demonstrating its Eurocentric pedigrees, as deriving from a position that claims alleged superiority by means of holding the monopoly over knowledge, economy and civilization. Postcolonial theory has largely, and rightly, critiqued such approaches by arguing that a decolonization of knowledge needs a critical re-mapping of traditional monolithic concepts. It was in this context of postcolonial research attitude that transculturality first arose, contesting traditional master narratives and enabling researchers to view research fields from different points of view, for instance by exploring ongoing colonial geographies, subaltern agency and the periphery as a site of theorization (Roy 2011). One of the principal assumptions of transcultural studies has been that a 'culture' is constituted by processes of interaction, circulation and reconfiguration. Despite the fact that culture has been considered as genuinely processual in other scholarly fields within the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Appadurai 1995) the impact of a transcultural approach had major effects in that it led to a recalibration of area studies authority and the methodological disciplines. From this perspective, culture is constantly changing, moving, adapting – and is doing this through contact and exchange beyond real or perceived borders.

It is this inherent transculturality of cultural phenomena and practices that requires disciplines in the humanities and in particular in cultural studies to elaborate adequate analytical tools equipped with methodological reflexivity in order to facilitate a multidimensional approach that treats polarities and simple binaries with utmost caution and highlights diverse and scalar relationalities instead. Focusing on transculturality both as a historically embedded phenomenon of relationality and as a theoretical concept and method, this volume addresses scholarly challenges that have a deep resonance with political, social and cultural issues in our world, such as structural asymmetries and economic inequalities, migration or social transformation. Drawing on a decade of interdisciplinary research at Heidelberg University, it demonstrates the impact

of transculturality on a wide range of fields in the form of a critically reflexive research perspective and practice.

Genealogy of a term

The history of transculturality as a research concept can be traced back to 1940 when the ethnographic study *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Original title: *Contrapunteo Cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*), written by anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, was published with an introduction by his famous colleague, Bronislaw Malinowski. Ortiz was one of the pioneers challenging stable and static definitions of 'culture' as geographically bound entities long before the so-called cultural turn in the 1970s and 1980s. His monograph is a critique of colonialism, explained through case studies on tobacco and sugar, and through a historical analysis of Cuban national culture as a result of transformative processes caused by the (im-)migration of various peoples over centuries. On the first page of the introduction to his book, Ortiz explains why he dismissed the term 'acculturation' used in other anthropological accounts for investigating the political and cultural situation of Cuba during his time. Instead, he employs 'transculturation', a term that, as he elaborates later, can be used

> [. . .] to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life. The real history of Cuba is the history of its intermeshed transculturations.
>
> (Ortiz 1995: 98)

Ortiz compares cultural transformations caused by colonial encounters with the education of a child. Though being the offspring of two persons, children are never simple copies of their parents. They develop their own nature against the backdrop of what they learned and experienced, but are always characters in their own right. As Monica Juneja argues in this volume, Ortiz's study, though not being widely received in academia for decades, still holds valuable lessons for research about networks of power and identity formation in a contemporary world coined by people, material objects, media and ideas on the move. His complex 'analysis of political and cultural boundaries as artifices of power' (Juneja, this volume) remains relevant for enquiries in the humanities and social sciences. However, the potential of Ortiz's theory was not recognized until the 1990s. The turning point came with Marie Louise Pratt's monograph *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, in which she introduces the term 'contact zone'. This paved the way for Ortiz's rediscovery (Pratt 1992; see also Firges and Graf, in this volume).

Similar to Ortiz, Pratt's research revolves around imperialism, colonial encounters and cultural transformation. Her interest lies in changes in the allegedly 'weaker' society caused by cultural contact, particularly by the 'tremendous historical force [that] has been wielded by the European ideologies of territory and global possessiveness' (Pratt 1992: 11). By looking at alterity discourses in European travel writing about non-Western 'others', she addresses dynamics between the European 'metropole' and the non-European 'periphery'. Like Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint*, Pratt's account addresses relational identity formation and intersectional power structures in spaces of cultural exchange. For her, transculturation happens in the 'contact zone', which she describes as a

> [. . .] space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.
>
> (Pratt, 1992: 6)

Pratt's argument about porous and dynamic spaces coined by mobility that transcend regional identification promotes new modes of perception and production in a 'contact perspective' (Viehbeck 2017: 11) necessitating new conceptions of culture. In this respect, it resembles influential post-colonial theories written at the beginning of the 1990s, for instance Homi Bhaba's notion of a 'third space', a concept he developed to study mimetic processes of appropriation and translation, and to demonstrate the processual nature of crosscultural interaction and identification (Bhabha 1994) or Arjun Appadurai's concept of diverse deterritorialized 'scapes' that must be distinguished in order to understand the complexity of cultural processes in the context of modernization and globality (Appadurai 1995). Like the works of Ortiz and Pratt, these approaches stress the importance of cultural production as meaning-making and central for the understanding of either colonization or economic globalization. They highlight the inherently processual character of culture and also the role of migration and media in the production of trans-regional and trans-national identifications.

Transculturality, as the German noun *Transkulturalität*, first appeared in an article by German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch just after the demise of the Cold War (Welsch 1992), and at the same time when Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* was published. A few years later, two edited volumes contained revised versions of Welsch's article in English (Welsch 1996, 1999). By means of distinguishing the concept of transculturality, which the author sees as most adequate to describe the 'puzzling form of cultures today' (*ibid.*), from inter- and multiculturality, he responded to societal debates on the impact of globalization and migration on national culture in Germany. Consequently, Welsch's theory has been widely received – as well as critiqued – within German humanities and social sciences, particularly in the fields of media and communication studies (Hepp and Löffelholz 2002; Hepp 2006; Schachtner 2015; Stehling 2015; Düvel 2016), gender studies (Mae and Saal 2007), literary and cultural studies (Blioumi 2006; Blumentrath *et al.* 2007; Specht 2011; Gremels 2013; Ernst and Freitag 2014; Butt 2015), anthropology (Schlehe 2005; Kohl 2013), (ethno-)psychiatry (Nadig 2004; Wohlfart and Zaumseil 2006) and educational studies (Datta 2006; Takeda 2012; Darowska *et al.* 2014; Eremjan 2016; often identified with intercultural learning or communication).[1] Welsch has often been criticized for retaining segregate cultural entities, instead of culture in singular, to address the relational formation of identities in past and present (Maran, in this volume). At the same time, he considers the term 'intercultural' as inappropriate, even though, as Britta Saal points out from the perspective of gender studies, the perception of differences and the felt need to bridge these through dialogue between communities is integral to the contemporary societies that Welsch addresses (Saal 2014: 34f.).

For the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context', Welsch's *Transkulturalität* provided a fruitful starting point for critical discussion. These debates impact the inherent interdisciplinarity of the university's collaborative research approach in the emerging field of 'Transcultural Studies'. They expressed a shared concern within diverse academic disciplines to include multiple and self-reflexive perspectives with respect to concepts and research subjects. The idea behind this was to unravel complex societal and cultural phenomena, responding to paradigmatic shifts around the turn of the new millennium, when the geographies of economic and political power were transformed and when in the advent of the internet and social media translocal connectivities were further intensified, disrupted and diversified. There

are two fundamental points of Welsch's concept that, in our view, need amending. First, transculturation is detectable even in pre- and protohistory, as Stockhammer as well as Maran underline in this volume; thus, the limitation to the present and recent past suggesting an intrinsic connection to globalization theory cannot hold true. The central problem with Welsch's theory remains, however, his conception of culture. Welsch developed *Transkulturalität* in a critical engagement with the German Enlightenment philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder's concept of culture, i.e. the close conjunction of a people and its culture. Herder had used the metaphor of a people as a sphere with its stable culture as a gravitational centre guaranteeing its inner cohesion – also framed as identity – and demarcation to the outside. While Welsch partly deconstructs Herder's concept, he retains the analogy of the sphere and thus the essentialization of bounded cultural entities, only partly relativizing their homogeneity by pointing towards processes of multi- and interculturality (Herder 1989 [1784]; Welsch 2000: 330). The analysis of interaction between two or more cultures therefore still serves as a means to substantialize perceptions of cultural difference. Following these critiques, a transcultural perspective needs to focus on the very interactions, or rather, the multiple dis/connectivities, taking into account agents and their actions. Coming to terms with transculturality thus means to substitute the container concept of culture with one that considers relational cultural processes of interaction, interstices and disjunction.

Coming to terms with transculturality

Transcultural presuppositions

The dual usage of 'transculturality' as a theoretical term and historical phenomenon has led to some irritation about the concept. Yet, they are but two sides of the same coin: transculturality points to a set of fundamental, universalistic assumptions with the potential to reorient research on the full range of human experience. In order to make that reorientation productive and more concrete, transcultural research has appropriated a range of methodologies and terminologies.

Transculturality is built on the understanding that cultures in the widest sense have never evolved as distinct entities or even primarily by interaction of separate units. Rather, entanglement, exchange, porosity and hybridization have always been an instrumental part of the ongoing definition and development of cultures. The syllable trans- (as opposed to, for instance, inter-) points in that transgressive and translatory direction: borders create border-crossing, in dividing they simultaneously connect. Ostensibly, there is a paradox at the heart of transculturality: in order to point to the transcultural, one first has to assume separate cultures, while simultaneously negating their existence. Pointing to a 'third' or a transitory and liminal space 'in between', whose constitution and location can only be defined in relation and opposition to the self-contained units it professes to replace, cannot resolve this dilemma. Moreover, how can one deny what has been a real and defining element for human perception and human action – the nation, the ethnic group, the tribe? The paradox can, we think, be dissolved by means of a conscious shift towards a processual and multi-sited perspective (Bhabha 1994; Appadurai 1995). Even and especially in their transgression are borders instrumental in an ongoing – in fact: interminable – process that constantly shapes and reshapes the social reality of cultural entities. Borders are performed, acted and discussed and thereby define and redefine cultures. They create difference, but also tend to magnify this difference and blank out similarity and connection. Therefore, in a transcultural view, nothing is truly static, rather, we only get to see snapshots of processual dynamics of (trans)culturation.[2] At the heart of transculturality

lies an ontological conviction that comes with a universalistic claim: a transcultural perspective is, in our view, a more adequate mode of approximating reality. Transculturality has developed as an antithesis to a national approach that implicitly or explicitly accepts nations as given entities, in, between, or towards which culture is said to have developed (methodological nationalism), identifying 'cultures' with geophysical units framed by territorial boundaries. Rather, nations and their borders are dynamically changing cultural formations among others.

At the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence, we based our research on the shared conviction that everything, any action, any event, any idea or material object is – at least in principle – transcultural. In this sense, transculturality, even in its inherent anti-essentialist stance, borders on theories of origin. By replacing the national paradigm, it becomes an *a priori* itself, almost approaching the status of what Giorgio Agamben calls an *urphenomenon*, neither solely an abstract idea nor particular reality, but bridging phenomena and their conception. According to Agamben, such *urphenomenona* are marked less by their historical, but rather by their paradigmatic and ontological content, as a constitutional precondition of knowing (Agamben 2009). We propose to view transculturality as a paradigm in this very sense. Michel Foucault and Thomas S. Kuhn determine paradigms as concrete historical conjunctures which develop normative and regulating force. To Kuhn, a paradigm constitutes the criterion of scientific truth, a regulative determining the valorization of scientific statements and even determining what comes under consideration at all. A paradigm shift, according to Kuhn, questions prior explanations and their very framing (Kuhn 1962). While Kuhn's concept primarily aimed at the hard sciences, Michel Foucault has provided insights that facilitate its application to the ostensibly softer subject matter of the humanities, by pointing to the power effected by a constellation of statements, the shifting of which can radically redraw the boundaries of what can be said – and of what can be known (Foucault 2002 [1969]).[3] In our view, this applies to transculturality. We hold transculturation to be a fundamental social and societal process that permeates not only large socio-political entities, but any kind of socio-cultural group culture. The perspective effected by this presupposition discloses the rhizomatic patterns (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12) of cultural entities of different kinds permeating and shaping each other by their multi-layered connection, non-linear temporalities and transgressions. Transculturality opens up a universalistic, holistic and deconstructivist view on the world that is dimensional in character. We therefore argue that a transcultural perspective can (and should) always be part of the heuristic set, as it opens up an additional dimension of analysis that has the potential to radically shift the resulting picture.

Paradigmatic shifts

Engaging transculturality responds to a series of programmatic paradigm shifts that have surfaced and further 'condensed' interdisciplinary debates in the past two decades. Like the various paradigm shifts that were coined by 'turns' such as the 'cultural turn' (see Bachmann-Medick 2014), the 'spatial turn', or the 'mobilities turn' (Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller 2017), the prefix trans- indicates a change, or widening, of perspectives in the humanities and the social sciences. A multi-perspectival repositioning helps consider, locate and trace the various 'entry-points' or a study of cultural exchange and translation (Asad 1986). In the past decades, approaches taking up these lessons flourished as antithesis to the 'one-way-road' of geophysical mapping of nations (methodological nationalism) and regions (area studies), which can be traced back to the rise of academic disciplines and concepts emplacement in Eurocentric imperial and colonial imaginaries, historiography and politics of the nineteenth century. In the critical approach towards this container-model-perspective, postcolonial studies played a major

part in bringing to the surface and repositioning asymmetries, also by calling for new concepts (Huggan 2013). However, transculturality departs from (post-)colonialism not least by widening the focus and becoming a primary anchor of theorizing culture, and identifying traces of transculturation across all times and spaces.

Transculturality has been a springboard for disciplines such as art history and anthropology, for instance, to gaze outside their 'box' – the first by critically examining their 'naturalized' toolbox of concepts such as 'creativity', 'original' and 'copy', 'influence' or 'borrowing' (see Kravagna 2017, often used in a discourse around 'burden of representation', see Mercer 1990; Juneja 2011), the latter by challenging its own terminology and narratives of empowerment by means of terms such as 'indigenous', 'traditional' or 'authentic' in light of the discipline's own colonial or orientalist history (see Fillitz 2010). Thereby, notions of ownership and property became important points of contestation in both disciplines. Art history and anthropology alike have sidelined issues of global connectivities and circulation until the late twentieth century, both have tended to compartmentalize 'traditional' versus 'modern' and 'high' versus 'low' art, attending to agency, materiality and politics of representation with a new sensibility for area expertise and multiperspectivity in their respective disciplinary temporalities and tensions (see Hall 2006; Harris 2006).

In the context of the 'transcultural turn', the crucial role of cultural anthropology cannot be overestimated. This discipline has led several pioneering debates generating dramatic transformations in the self-perception and critical reflections of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences that have become key postulates of transcultural studies today and impacted a rethinking of area studies (Houben 2017). One reason being the self-critical reception of 'ethnology's' colonial past, as a discipline that became instrumental for legitimizing and 'giving evidence' to colonial and racial ideologies and rhetoric since the 1980s. In particular, the 'writing culture-debate', also known as 'crisis of representation' (Clifford and Marcus 1986), laid foundations for a re-positioning of empirical research's role in affirming ethnic and racial stereotypes, cultural difference (as particularity) and the role of modernity-narratives therein ('alternative modernities'). Impacted by French post-structuralist debates on power, a more Anglo-American discourse on post-colonialism, and a predominantly Western European engagement with post-modernity as the end of 'large narratives' (also in terms of scientific epistemologies), anthropologists shaped explorations of connectivities (Hannerz 1996), cultural practice (Appadurai 1995), the need to rethink spatial politics of de-colonization (Chow and de Kloet 2014), multi-locality and the challenge of methodological adjustment (Marcus 1995; Geschiere and Meyer 1998; Falzon 2009). Anthropology's longstanding essentializing notion of 'modern', 'Western' cultures versus 'non-Western', 'indigenous' cultures has been much critiqued and reflected (see Inda and Rosaldo 2007; Tsing 2005). It is interesting that other disciplines, such as history and art history have turned to this ethnocentric epistemological divide and dilemma later, from different positions, and yet, with a seemingly similar pledge for repositioning concepts and methods, turning to agents and agency, objects and mobilities, calling for political stance and awareness of modernity's multitude (Kravagna 2017: 15). This explains the emphasis of transgressive studies on processes and moments of encounter, exchange and even 'clash', on locality and synchronic as well as diachronic scales of encounter (Strathern 1995), if not even 'jumping scales' as a method to reposition geographies of power and ignorance, as Willem van Schendel (2002) proposes.

In recent years, history, too, has been strongly affected by, and in turn become instrumental for, the transcultural turn. Historians have increasingly challenged the Eurocentric and yet universalized and universalizing historiographic approach that had become a dominant narrative of the academic discipline in the nineteenth century – and by which particular perspectives and

histories from and about Asia or Latin America, for instance, have been excluded or turned into mere 'decorum'. Likewise, Europe, from such a monolithic vantage point, has hardly been seen as shaped by its colonial, imperial, international relations, or from its 'peripheries'. A history of and epistemological sensorium for transculturation challenges 'fixed' binary oppositions such as 'centre' and 'periphery', 'origin' and 'derivate' and seeks to dwell in interstitial contact zones, reflecting on translation processes. Postcolonial perspectives allowed for a release of, and approach towards, 'other', predominantly subaltern voices, proposed 'new languages' that could articulate non-European perspectives, pointing towards intense, often intangible entanglements of the kinds Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), Sebastian Conrad, Shalini Randeria and Regina Römhild (2013), have stressed in their writings about Europe's relational position in a colonial, imperial as well as postcolonial context. In doing so, they aimed at de-centring Europe and de-colonizing disciplines such as history or anthropology (see also Chow and de Kloet 2014). From such a standpoint, recognizing and tracing Asia's presence in Europe is as relevant as studies on how Europe (also as an idea) impacted, and impacts, Asia.

The national framing of historical research had, in fact, long been cause for epistemological unease among historians. Progressively, the discipline shifted its focus by stressing first the European, then the transnational, and finally the global dimensions and applying its findings also to ostensibly domestic matters, while keeping track of methodological implications. Since the 1980s, this found expression in new methodological advances, concerning, for instance, the construction of 'the other' (Todorov 1985), or the nature of 'cultural transfer' (Espagne 1997; Middell 2001) and leading to debates on a social history of cultural exchange and the mechanisms of acculturation (Middell 2001; Espagne 2006). Taking up suggestions of the (initially inner-European) *histoire croisée*, global history set out to overcome worldviews shaped by old patterns and regional contingencies (Komlosy 2011: 14). Since the 2000s, global history has become first an accepted additional dimension for historiography (Middell 2002; Conrad *et al.* 2007) and, finally, a necessary vanishing point of historical synthesis (Crossley 2008; Osterhammel 2014).

Such vantage points allow for going beyond a rhetoric of 'influence' (of 'A' on 'B'; such as 'European modern art' on 'non-Western modern art') or static and linear 'diffusion' (from 'A' to 'D', 'E' and 'F'; with concepts such as 'democracy', or 'citizenship', but also with institutions; see Flüchter and Schöttli 2015). Conrad and Randeria's appeal to understand nation-building as something intrinsically transnational and entangled was one approach that facilitated a more differentiated understanding of the ways in which social and political networks, institutions and ideas connected across the spatial and conceptual boundaries of the nation-state. It goes without saying that asymmetrical tensions, hierarchies and contestations impacted connectivities as much as disconnectivities, firm ties as much as ruptures. 'Global history did not mean telling the story of everything in the world. What was global was not the object of study, but the emphasis on connections, scale and, most of all, integration', writes Jeremy Adelmann.[4] This, however, does not mean that all is well and either seamlessly connected, or openly accessible for everyone alike: there are substantial asymmetries in the distribution of goods and other forms of capital, and a global history, as much as a vernacular anthropology, would want to address the ruptures, frictions, inequalities and disconnectivities of 'flows' as much as the turns towards new nationalisms or/and nativisms (see, for instance, Hochschild 2016).

A transcultural history pushes the boundaries of European-trained historians and other disciplines as much (in terms of regional and linguistic competences; see Herren, below and in this volume) as the questioning of concepts such as 'origin' and 'originality' across all fields alike. One central aim in this process would be to de-universalize the 'big disciplines' and to de-fragmentize the 'small' disciplines (that are often still perceived as empirical extensions of the large disciplines but not as substantial forces of theorization). As Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen

de Kloet argue in their special issue on academic responses to Europe's relation to 'rising Asia' (for instance to Chow's thought-provoking book *Asia as Method* and more recent nativist interests in and from Asian countries that facilitate 'reverse' culturalist compartmentalization):

> Taking Europe as power, and Europe as theory, we argue for better understanding, dialogue and cross-fertilization between cultural studies and area studies. The former needs the latter's sensibility to spatial and cultural context, as much as the latter needs the former's theorizations.
>
> (Chow and de Kloet 2014: 4; on new Asianism, see also Yu 2013)

The challenge is that in the light of the asymmetries, a repositioning of Eurocentric roots of many concepts employed today must also not just mean to reverse the gaze and end up reifying (Pan-)Asianism or even smaller units of essentialized – 'isms' (e.g. indigenism, nativism). Indeed, write Chow and de Kloet, 'the advocacy for a return to indigenous theory and culture usually masks, with the violence of "the West," the violence of the cultural politics that is within an indigenous culture' (Chow 1998: 9, emphasis in original; quoted in Chow and de Kloet 2014: 9).

As seen by these brief and exemplary forays,[5] the transcultural turn at the very least contributes to a softening of disciplinary borders, maybe even questions their institutional framing. It has been our experience in Heidelberg that transcultural research indeed profits from interdisciplinarity. The goal is to open the often institutionalized and conceptual boundaries between the 'systematic disciplines' (e.g. history, philosophy, political science) in the humanities and the social sciences and the so-called 'small disciplines' and 'area studies' that engage with premodern and/or non-Western research fields and questions, quite in accordance with Sheldon Pollock who calls for a 'broader reconfiguration in the academy that divided area-based and discipline-based knowledge' (Pollock 2016: 919) and argues that, 'disciplines need to be arealized no less than areas need to be disciplined' (*ibid.*: 915).[6] Rather than abandoning the 'era' of area studies because of criticisms to enforce European imperialist orientalism, on the one hand, and Cold War agendas based on an American hegemony versus 'knowing the enemy' rhetoric, on the other hand, a 'third' wave of area studies has been proclaimed by some protagonists in the fields of cultural studies. This rejuvenation underlines the importance of considering area studies in a 'global' sense (Hornidge and Mielke 2017; Jackson 2003) and adding substance by providing critical tools for re-mapping the 'geographies of power' (van Schendel 2002). We argue that a transcultural approach is central for the success of such a repositioning.

Practising the transcultural turn

The above-sketched paradigmatic shift generates and informs approaches across the humanities highlighting cultural relationality. In order to do so, transcultural approaches as practised by the authors in this volume necessitate a non-essentialist, multi-scalar and self-reflexive shift of perspective. Transculturality challenges notions of 'container cultures' and concepts often coined from a diffusionist or Americo-Eurocentric perspective. This involves a repositioning of spatial concepts with respect to the overlapping fields of entanglement or/and relationality of cultural practice, and a critical discussion of supposed binary oppositions such as local and global or centre and periphery. It also investigates concepts that touch upon practices of boundary-drawing, on borders, borderlands or contact zones as well as the emergence of de- and re-territorialized spaces or networks of interactions (*scapes*, *scales*; see Firges and Graf, in this volume; Appadurai 1995; van Schendel 2002). As sketched above, a central premise of the 'transcultural lenses' is a processual and multi-sited view of cultural practice, such as the

'process geographies' coined by Arjun Appadurai (2010). Thus, multiple geographically flexible networks can be identified that work dynamically across scale, at multi-directional and -temporal speed.[7] Hence, this allows for the study of 'deep' locality and globality, as well as connectivities and ruptures, speed and inertia, rather than assuming a steady smooth flow between geographically fixed poles.

Connectivities are dynamic relations and processes connecting not only modern nation-states and other societal institutions, but also past societies, languages, institutions, markets, media and much more. A transcultural approach, as we understand it, must focus explicitly on connections and relations, discontinuities and frictions, not only among nation-states and their predecessors (kingdoms, empires) but also among stateless societies, transnational organizations, institutions, languages and media. It shifts the gaze toward interstices, transitions and exchanges, and thus repositions any studied case in a space of relationality and contingency. These vantage points ensure underlining entanglement and relationality while also acknowledging dynamics of enclosure, friction and dissonance. A transcultural lens focuses not merely on the fact that two sites are connected, but also on how the connections transform what is being connected, and who is involved (and who excluded). This connecting relationality impacts research in, as well as infrastructure of, this network. It must take into account a repositioning of boundaries from a multi-perspectival and translocal radar, and it must be able to move across and connect scales:

> a transcultural approach requires more of an insight into shifting borders than into the additive history of European nation states and cultural legacies. [. . .] A spatial definition of Europe cannot provide a substantial answer to the question of transcultural history, whereas the issue of how and under which historical circumstances the idea of Europe developed and came under pressure is more fertile.
>
> (Herren, Rüesch and Sibille 2012: 97, 98)

Without side-lining the importance of the nation-state in the contemporary world, a transcultural approach thus challenges methodological nationalism, as well as the 'zoning' of the world into 'developed' and 'less developed', centre and periphery, universal and anecdotal as a key assumption of area studies. It is important to stress that transculturality – even when perceived of as global entanglement and (at the very least) intense interaction between world regions – not only concerns the 'globalization' of the last one or two centuries. Rather, it can be uncovered throughout human history. Nor can we discern a teleological trend towards ever-closer connection throughout history. For instance, the very institutionalization of nation-states has done more to disconnect than to connect (see Herren, in this volume). A transcultural view of historical processes over centuries brings out the centrality of emulation as a site of cultural practice across different regions and position imitation – or mimesis – in a field of creativity and demotic subversion in order to deal with domination and difference. It enables a radical examination of embraidedness by expanding diachronic and synchronic approaches to pre-modern material and contexts (see Flüchter and Schöttli 2015). Such global connectivities, contact zones and cultural transfers (Firges and Graf, in this volume; Espagne 2003, 2006: 17) have so far often been ignored because of an embeddedness of the research in territorial concepts grown from a suggestive ground of methodological nationalism.

Multiple temporalities and spatialities play a crucial role in transcultural approaches. Exploring moments and processes of transculturation in a diachronic and synchronic manner often means operating across regional and temporal, but also disciplinary, scales in such a way that relations and connectivities can be traced and brought into conversation, that comparison becomes possible without running the danger of comparing 'pears with apples'. Not coincidentally have

important positions in this field been made by tandems or teams of historians, anthropologists, scholars of literature or religion – in all those fields, certain limitations have been experienced especially since the 1990s, that intellectual and regional 'monocultures' cannot capture the fabric of world-making any longer (there are, of course, earlier interventions, e.g. by F. Ortiz, or by art and cultural historian Aby Warburg (see Weigel, Gaines and Wallach 1995), who, in their own fields, challenged the conventional disciplines and discussions on 'culture' by focusing on transgression and translation, also in their political context).

Especially for studies that depend on material and visual culture, such as pre-modern archaeology, a transcultural approach makes possible the tracing of multi-directional trafficking, thus rethinking mobilities that might have previously been studied in a more linear context, grounded on assumptions such as 'origin/ality' and 'influence'. For example, the circulation of Buddhist rituals and translations, material culture and ritual experts across Central and East Asia around the sixth to twelfth centuries BCE reveals unexpected process geographies, mobilities and 'connectivities' (Andreeva, in this volume; Appadurai 2010).

Connectivities prompt us to focus on entanglements, transactions, transgressions, mediators that are operative between locales and regions – and equally, on ruptures, antagonisms and closures leading to *dis*connectivities (Wenzlhuemer, in this volume). While connectivities are a relevant heuristic lens for research, and rope in other important methodological approaches, such as comparison (see Epple and Erhart 2015), they are essential to thinking and further impact the fabric of our network: knowledge production both constitutes and transforms those who are connected. Many entanglements and connectivities remain intangibly 'hidden' when using a regionalist or national vantage point, as Nikolas Jaspert, Madeleine Herren or Bernd Schneidmüller underline in this volume. Connectivities and entanglements require an understanding of arrival and departure points, but more than that, of the relational space in-between, of the quality, spatiality and temporality of relationality.

This leads to the task of mapping transculturation, by tracing the genealogy of practices and ideas. In this light, 'knowledge production' can be understood as a dialectical and multilateral process: the point is not only to acknowledge that ideas and practices were regularly transmitted, but to explore the various modes of that transfer. Depending on the intentions of agents, power levels involved as well as situational contexts, such processes can be differentiated as adaption, appropriation or imitation (see Banerjee, Flüchter, both in this volume). These can take the form of a conscious construction of models based on a partial knowledge of the other, or they can evolve in practical interaction (e.g. in contact zones), which in turn may necessitate ex-post justification. Both ideas and practices migrate not only spatially, but also over time. Seemingly discontinued, they often lay dormant in the cultural imaginary, to be taken up in radically different contexts. In a transcultural approach, ideas and practices cannot be described as clearly segregated modes; rather, they are mutually dependent, as practices inspire ideation, while agents need to anchor practices in ideological frameworks. Cultural translation helps to understand the complexities of every step.

The unravelling of processual relationalities necessitates identifying the agency of individual actors, groups or material objects. Individuals or groups are the real 'protagonists' of transcultural interaction determining – with their intellectual background, social role, expectations and interests – the character and intensity of border-crossing processes. While transcultural connectivities can potentially affect any member of a given society, there are groups – or types – of agents which merit special attention, because they may play a central role in the circulation of an idea, or a matter. From subaltern history to global history, from translation studies to anthropology, the diversity of social agents as 'brokers' or 'mediators' is undenied, yet challenging, since the ways of researching elite or vernacular practices differ and require a set of different

methods at hand (see Herren, Jaspert, both in this volume). Postcolonial theories have impacted much on the repositioning of concepts and research methods. However, a transcultural history, for instance, would also go beyond a subaltern history. The latter would for instance not consider a whole range of cultural brokers such as judges, diplomats and traders, nor priests or missionaries, nor artists, anarchists or seafarers as adequately fitting the category of the 'subaltern'. Instead, they too turn invisible in many studies once they have crossed geophysical or conceptual boundaries and vanished into the distance, not graspable but from a transcultural perspective. So, such a transcultural vantage point on such border-crossing agents brings in new considerations with respect to mobilities, temporalities and space.

Novel hermeneutical tools from the field of material studies have opened new ways for understanding the active role of things in networks of human-object-interaction (Latour 2005). This active role becomes most apparent in the case of exotic objects often accredited with a magnetic power, which by their very materiality shape the character of specific cultural practices. Things can develop an agency of their own and materially constitute a structure by acting as conditions of practice. When moving into different social, spatial or temporal contexts, objects are reconfigured in, and in turn configure, new webs of meaning (see Stockhammer, in this volume). As such, they function as materialized mediators between real, imagined or idealized cultural contexts.

Tracing these reconfigurations goes much further than to state that something 'is' hybrid (see Michaels, in this volume). The 'biography' and migratory circulation of an image, an object or a media technology can help us zoom in on transculturation (see Kopytoff 1986). A major challenge is to consider, trace and contextualize the rhizomatic fabric of such meandering itineraries, the social agents and institutions associated with them en route and in different intensities and relations. Moreover, often certain scales and qualities of circulation and mediation depend on an array of mediascapes, including different media-competent agents, and must be distinguished as much as temporal and historical depths (see Mittler, in this volume).

In a highly mobile and multi-directional field such as the international art world, a transcultural and relational approach becomes an adequate tool to tackle non-Western art beyond the 'burden of representation' (Mercer 1990). Especially from an anthropological viewpoint, like Bublatzky's (in this volume), the importance of place-making and spatial imaginaries is of substantial relevance, since the study of different speeds and halts in contexts of entanglement and relationality is as important as circulation and mobility. The 'substance' of places is impacted by them, after all, and thus the anthropologist offers the concept of 'translocation' (Freitag and von Oppen 2005) as a complementary tandem partner to that of transculturality as a lens. By no means does this delete 'othering' practices, museums are crucial 'hubs' of such cultural and ethnic distancing. But the acts of exhibiting are acts of translation and appropriation, which requires understanding of agents' agendas and competences. Monica Juneja's chapter on art history and/as world-making shows how institutions, museums, markets and ideas may serve as a web that allows for the shaping of an 'alternative conception of globality to be able to effectively theorize relationships of connectivity that encompass disparities as well as contradictions, and negotiate multiple subjectivities of the actors involved' (Juneja, in this volume). Genealogical routes along which art objects or idols travel are one point of investigation, as well as the transculturation through appropriation into a particular local context. But these journeys too need halts, stages, arenas – in metropolitan cities across the globe, in sites that 'host' – or hide – them for a time, in a special way. Certainly, experiential places such as the international art event *documenta* in Kassel, the *Venice Biennale* or the newly built *Humboldt Forum* in Berlin contribute to the transculturation of art-works from elsewhere – and stress the need for a transcultural lens – to 'get hold' of them without fixing them in a corset of

interpretations. Museums across the world have different trajectories of collecting, exhibiting, contextualizing 'their' objects, and have in recent years become a central 'hub' of investigation for many scholars and visitors.

Finally, by discarding phantasms of ownership by origin, a transcultural view highlights the *longue-durée* globality of certain discourses impacting on the application of research terminology. Concepts which have been taken up, adapted, and mirrored in different world regions for several centuries can hardly be reduced to some ostensible nineteenth-century European core (see Krämer, in this volume). In the case of descriptive or analytical vocabulary, rather than pausing at the thought of an ingrained European academic hegemony, it is rewarding to trace their ever-contested semantic dynamics (see Raina, in this volume).

The structure of this book

What this book does not aspire to do is to provide a systematic companion on transculturality, since any attempt to formulate a closed canon would disregard the fluidity of the term itself, which may be part of its very productivity: the same presuppositions have impacted different disciplines and research fields in particular manners. This transgressive, transformative and transversal potential of transculturality as research practice and heuristic lens is what we aim at bringing fruitfully together in this multi-perspectival volume. The chapters presented here demonstrate the potential of transcultural research and simultaneously make its lessons accessible, thereby providing a large toolkit for future research.

At the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence 'Asia and Europe in Global Context', we have conducted and discussed multidisciplinary transcultural research for a decade without a predefined normative methodology or fully unified terminology. The aim of this volume is to render our experience palpable and indeed applicable for a wide range of research fields by delivering concrete stimuli to transcultural research. In order to do so, we have asked the contributors to take a conscious theoretical and methodological approach by reflecting on theoretic foundations, methodological tools and terminology of their research and relate them to transculturality, while demonstrating their practical potential by means of a case study. Instead of trying to define one closed method, we thus aim at tapping into transculturality's potential for a wide range of research. All articles contained in this volume provide exercises in concretization of the transcultural paradigm in methodological application. A premise for that is to explicate what role exactly the transcultural perspective played for the respective research endeavours. The subtitle 'concepts, key terms, case studies' encapsulates the heuristic means by which we address this challenge: as a first step, we've asked our authors to pick and elaborate one or more key terms or research concepts which – in their view – can unlock the potential of transcultural research. Each author critically discusses their concepts, demonstrating their hermeneutical potential by means of an informative case study. This sets the ground for a general critical evaluation of their transcultural approach including its limits, with a view on fruitful synergies with other disciplines, and towards future areas of study.

Such an inductive procedure may be said to preclude a systematic epistemological mapping of transcultural methodology; it forgoes any claim for a definite metatheory of the chosen key terms. What it may lack in comprehensiveness, it makes up for in comprehensibility. The chapters can be read as exemplary exercises in transcultural research design and its outcome. While the methodological mix is potentially unbounded, the chapters reveal an open canon of methodological instruments and heuristic tools adapted to concrete disciplinary needs. Nevertheless, a joint understanding of what transculturality means permeates these texts – across all disciplines, the transcultural view evidently does highlight and problematize similar issues.

Our contributors pursue the goal of this volume with an impressive range of case studies allowing them not only to explore different fields and methods of transcultural research but also to substantiate and expand the hermeneutical value of the new paradigm by introducing new terms (*transcultural moment*, *transcultural function*, *transcultural lens* and *transcultural scale*) that enhance its applicability and sharpen our analytical perspective. Due to the intrinsic plurality of transculturality, it is difficult to arrange this collection of chapters into a neat structure which corresponds to established principles of categorization relating to time, space, methods, fields of knowledge, or the like. A suitable vantage point for a sensible framing of the individual chapters is provided by the twofold nature of transculturality, which refers to a historical phenomenon/process – providing as such a concrete object of investigation – and at the same time to an analytical mode. Based on the dual dimension of the term, the chapters are grouped in five sections, which revolve around crucial issues of transculturality either as historical reality or as a methodological toolset.

Part A: Delineating transculturality

The volume opens with approaches that focus on the foundational parameters of transculturality, such as hybridity, asymmetry and dis-/connection as well as on concepts that are very closely related to and yet must be understood as 'holding against' this term (e.g. culture, civilization). By zooming into Indian mythology and history, **Axel Michaels** demonstrates the methodological weakness of the 'hybridity' concept. He explains why transculturality provides a more advanced and differentiated analytical tool for exploring cultural 'entanglement' versus 'fusion'. The innovative approach, as the author stresses, focuses on connectivities, which do not always reveal themselves easily, nor do they point to a naïve 'mixture'. In an attempt to overcome the transcultural *aporia*, Michaels differentiates three forms of transculturality, those being 'open', 'hidden' and 'methodological transculturality'. Whereas the first corresponds to the traditional term 'cultural hybridity', the second elucidates complex entanglements that are not visible at the surface of cultural interaction, and the latter refers to the method itself as a default mode or heuristic concept. Sinologist **Rudolf G. Wagner** discusses asymmetry as one of the driving forces of transculturality. At its most basic level, asymmetry defines a fluctuating dynamic relationship between two components that moves towards symmetry and balance. Based on the ubiquitous quality of asymmetry as fact and of symmetry as a 'lofty goal', Wagner implements both concepts as analytical tools. Following his clear-cut thesis, transcultural interaction can be perceived as a history of asymmetrical relationships between two parts releasing forces for maintaining, enhancing, reversing or balancing them out. In focusing on the dynamics of these complementary processes, Wagner outlines some basic parameters of asymmetrical relationships relating to the construction of binary others, 'pull' and 'push' processes (underlining the significance of the first), and especially phenomena of 'massive translation' in the course of which asymmetrical forces release the highest levels of energy and agency. Global historian **Roland Wenzlhuemer** looks at connections less in a descriptive manner but rather as a powerful analytical concept. He contains that they should be studied as historical phenomena in their own right. Contrary to traditional approaches which conceptualize connections from their endpoints, highlighting not the connections themselves, but that which is connected, the author shows that the former actually act as mediators rather than mere intermediaries and may have a strong impact on the latter. The main theoretical premise of transculturality, i.e. the inclination to overcome the monolithic concept of 'culture'/'civilization' and to develop more dynamic, complex and processual analytic tools is treated by the authors of the next two chapters. Taking as his main point of departure the traditional differentiation of archaeological

cultures as co-existing bounded entities with territories which can be clearly delineated on maps, **Joseph Maran** demonstrates that such a substantialist/essentialist concept of culture is rather an epistemological construction than a historical/archaeological reality. The alleged homogeneity, uniformity and stability of such 'cultures' turns out to be a cut and dried conceptual jacket that blends out the transformative power of the agency and the heterogeneity which is inherent in any given society as well as the entanglements between them. According to Maran, the traditional concept of 'cultures' in the plural should be replaced by 'culture' in the singular, fostering a dynamic approach that focuses on the contingency, openness and 'performative' aspects of societies. The latter should be perceived as the means through which people shape and create what they regard as their lifeworld. In the same vein, **Daniel G. König** deconstructs the nation-centred notion that individuals and entire societies form part of immutable and impenetrable monolithic macro-historical cultural entities called 'civilizations', a term which considerably overlaps with that of 'culture', mostly referring to the field of technological achievements of the latter. The historian discusses the study of civilizations as a forerunner of or antithesis to transcultural studies and pleads for a supranational interpretation of world history, which highlights the transformation of large and complex spatio-temporal socio-cultural systems. That such simplistic models or monolithic conceptions of pure cultural entities have their origins in the nationalist and racist theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is insightfully demonstrated by historian **Bernd Schneidmüller**. As he explores medieval forms of migration as a vehicle for the transformation of the 'Old World', the author explicates the agency of the aforementioned counter-forces: The new order was based not on static concepts but on a dynamic development generated by ruptures and the willingness for change. Contrary to traditional historical narratives in the nineteenth century that proclaimed the 'indigenous origins' of European peoples, medieval ethnogenesis emerges in Schneidmüller's view as a multidimensional result of cultural flexibility and hybridization in a turbulent period during which societies were constantly on the move. **Madeleine Herren**'s contribution broaches similar issues, yet in her case the historical setting is that of modern Europe. The global historian's main question is whether transculturality can be discussed not only as a scholarly tool but also as a political rationale according to which social coherence could be based on diversity rather than a presuming cultural, linguistic and political authenticity. Pertaining to challenging qualities of transculturality from a historiographical perspective, one of which is the lack of a temporal dimension, Herren stresses that a transcultural lens emphasizes an ongoing and continuous disentanglement of the world in the twentieth century, which is in apparent contrast to the dense exchange mechanisms developed along with the global flow of information, commodities and money.

Part B: Transcultural spaces and agents

The second section includes three chapters that underline the importance of considering transcultural spaces and agents. **Pascal Firges** and **Tobias P. Graf** discuss Pratt's contact zone as an analytical tool for exploring border-crossing by a special emphasis on human agency and the significance of the subaltern. Looking at Istanbul as a transcultural hub, the authors understand a contact zone not as a geographically bounded area but as a dynamic social space which is constituted by interaction between human agents and is thus no less mobile than the latter. Their approach leads to a microanalysis, a continuous 'zooming in' which ends up at human beings as true constituents of the contact zone. One of the most virulent types of contact zones is the bazaar which, as **Frank Grüner** demonstrates in his chapter, enables us to study transculturality 'in a nutshell'. As an urban microcosm providing an ideal arena for intense

transcultural encounters, the bazaar evolves unavoidably as one of the main foci of social interaction in cosmopolitan cities. This thesis is carried further with the discussion of a striking example, that of the bazaar at the city of Harbin, which constituted a versatile multicultural social shape, cherishing joint activities between different groups that overcame linguistic and cultural differences. The decisive role of individuals as mediators in complex forms of transcultural entanglements is highlighted by **Nikolas Jaspert** in his study on cultural brokers in the Mediterranean region during the Medieval period. By focusing on a selection of remarkable individual careers of mercenaries living in societies in constant flux and without any clear-cut boundaries, the author distinguishes between 'manifest brokers', those who intentionally perform acts of mediation or brokerage, 'latent brokers', meaning individuals who did so unintentionally as a by-product of other activities, and 'oppositional brokers' not performing or facilitating transculturation involuntarily, but in fact contrary to their actual objective. It is mainly the latter category that clearly demonstrates the complexity of transcultural phenomena which seeks for an appropriate multipolar analytical approach.

Part C: Transcultural temporalities

The crucial question whether transculturality can have a temporal dimension is taken up by **Milinda Banerjee** who explores the transcultural afterlives of concepts. What happens when texts and arguments are moved out of their historical contexts and revivified by other voices in other climes and times? To answer this, Banerjee argues against an excessively contextual approach introducing the term 'transversal' as a heuristic mode of analysing forms of concept-production and argumentation which cross various kinds of borders. In his view, authors, texts, concepts and arguments refuse to be walled in; they escape their historical contexts and affect later instants. These successions of 'trans-' movements, cross not only 'cultures', but also formations of power, temporalities and spaces and scales of thinking. They push us towards considering a transversal history as a supplement to a 'transcultural (intellectual) history' with 'transversal (intellectual) history'. An impressive example for such a transcultural afterlife of concepts is presented by **Jan Scholz** who is examining the revival of Greco-Roman rhetoric in twentieth century Egypt as fostered by the foundation of the new academic department for Islamic preaching and guidance. As Scholz shows, the Greek tradition of rhetoric was initially received by the Arabs in an exclusively literal sense as a part of logic. It was only in the twentieth century that rhetoric gained new attention and was increasingly being focused upon from a performative perspective, thus – Scholz argues – in its 'original' meaning, which encompassed the vocal and bodily performative dimension. Transcultural temporalities are also at the heart of **Hans Harder**'s chapter. By employing a reflexive/reciprocal approach, he explores how literary genres in South Asia were not bound to their cultural context but had the ability to transgress linguistic and cultural boundaries. Harder defines these instances of a genre's transition as the 'transcultural moments', a notion which helps us to comprehend trans-culturality as a process. The author argues for a scaling down of our analytical focus to a micro-level of observation, at which it is possible to thoroughly investigate all parameters of the transcultural momentum including the author, the readership and the respective literary environment.

Part D: Transcultural semantics

Border-crossing processes unfold their transformative potential especially in cases of cultural translation and appropriation, which are treated in the six chapters of the fourth section.

Although the individual chapters treat different subjects and draw on quite different materials, they address comparable issues revolving around the transcultural function of translation, a function that aims at negotiating difference, yet demands porosity. This section opens with **Antje Flüchter**'s discussion of key issues that have emerged from the cultural turn in translation studies. She explores their applicability to the field of transcultural studies. The historian focuses on the work of early modern Jesuit missionaries in India as it is reflected in a large corpus of reports, letters and historiographical studies. Special attention is given to the issue of marriage as a social institution and Catholic sacrament. Flüchter's lucid analysis of the Jesuit translation strategies extricates the significance of adequate textual and conceptual grids for translating the other to a European audience, and vice versa for translating Christianity in the missionary context. She further considers domestication and foreignization as two options of the translation process, highlighting the latter as the main force for the creation of transcultural forms. **Roberta Tontini**'s elaborations on Sharia norms in China provide an equally evocative study of the same topic, now in an Islamic context. The sinologist introduces her analysis with an enlightening discussion on the notion that cultural *translation* shares with t*ransculturality* the semantic association of culture and transfer as concurrent functions in the process of translating meanings across different contexts. The processes whereby exogenous features are invested with endogenous meaning and experience a radical semantic reinterpretation can be observed in the work of Muslim scholars in China who used Confucianism to explain the message of the Qur'an. Tontini concludes that the cultural translation of the Islamic law in the Chinese context was essential for its – largely unobserved – survival until our days. A similar form of syncretism is treated by Japanese historian **Anna Andreeva** who explores the mytho-histories of premodern Japanese shrines as sites of religious translation, material circulation and appropriation, but also as politico-social transit zones. The adoption of Buddhist combinations of deities, rituals and practices in the religious life of these localities and the subtle reconfiguration of Buddhism to suit Japan's religious concepts was generated, as the author convincingly argues, by exclusively local needs. Oscillating between transregional resemblance and (regional) difference, these processes shaped a distinctive form of a multi-scalar sacred economy which cannot be adequately described by the generic terms of 'amalgamation' or 'merging' and seeks for the implementation of more complex analytical tools. Art historian **Michael Falser** takes up the question of how power relations structured the translation process, affecting not only the translation products but also the original. He explores the commodification of small-scale artefacts from the 'Orient' to the 'Occident' in the nineteenth century and the translation of monumental architectures like Angkor Wat used as a powerful means by which to visualize the European image of 'the East'. In this case, a European hegemonic 'translation privilege' stereotyped the Asian sources as 'primitive', 'exotic' or the 'other'. As in Antje Flüchter's previous analysis, it becomes evident that the translation process impacted not only on the translated but also on the translator and the target audience. The appropriation of 'exotic things' into a new cultural context can be regarded as a form of materialized cultural translation. **Philipp W. Stockhammer** examines the complex relationship between human and foreign things by focusing on their effectancy which he defines as a non-intentional counter-force to human agency. The prehistoric archaeologist considers how this effect of objects upon humans is enhanced in the context of several changeabilities which are constituted through perception, time and practice and are entangled with each other. The increasingly important role of indigenous knowledge in the era of globalization can be regarded as a mainly transcultural phenomenon, as philosopher and historian of science **Dhruv Raina** implies in his analysis. In his view, the recognition of the limits of science for providing solutions to societal and global problems in the recent past contributed to an awakening of interest in local knowledge systems as a counter-reaction to the epistemological violence of modernization. In

the course of this development, indigenous knowledge can be regarded as complementary to modern science and as a precondition for sustainable development.

Part E: The transcultural lens

Revisiting phenomena and processes through a transcultural lens allows us to open new hermeneutical possibilities that contextualize traditional monolithic approaches elucidating their complexity and hidden relationalities. This becomes evident in the eight chapters of the final section which opens with art historian **Monica Juneja** who seeks to explain how transculturality can change our view on art history. Starting with the problematic entanglement of art, nations and cultures, and the emancipation of both culture and art from the monolithic concept of territorially bounded and ethnically monolingual entities, the author strives to formulate the agenda for a transcultural art history which can do justice to phenomena of 'intense proximity' in the modern borderless and shared art world. She attempts first a transcultural view on modernism in the early twentieth century, revealing various entanglements and a 'coevalness' between Western-trained artists and the 'primitive'. Her analysis underlines the significance of the latter as a main incentive for artistic creativity in and from India. Juneja furthermore raises the question how transcultural thinking can not only explain but also inspire contemporary art contributing to its critical reorientation. How insightful this novel perspective might be is vividly demonstrated by **Cathrine Bublatzky**'s chapter on the travelling exhibition *Indian Highway*. The anthropologist begins with the crucial question why art should be culturally representative and thus geographically bounded and disposes successfully of strategies of 'geo-aesthetic mapping' that pigeonhole local art, in this case 'Indian art', according to geographical borders of stereotypical nature in the process of their circulation, stereotypes that are largely enforced by notions of 'Western' art value and authenticity. Bublatzky delineates that in a highly mobile and multi-directional field such as the international art world, a transcultural and relational approach becomes a tool to tackle non-Western art beyond the 'burden of representation' (Mercer 1990). Studying the first women's magazines which came into being at the beginning of modern Chinese history, at the end of the nineteenth century, **Barbara Mittler** explores the hermeneutic potential of transcultural studies for addressing the issues of gender and the media in a manner most adequate to the intrinsic border-crossing character of both. The sinologist argues for a dynamic approach which avoids traditional binaries and borders by focusing on dynamic transversals and creative integrations and by adopting different ('trans'-)angles. Extrapolating the methodological assets of a transcultural approach, she suggests a multi-disciplinary reading practice, a multi-perspectival 'reading-in-conjunction', which proves the only adequate method for fully deploying the explanatory potential of complex issues such as media and gender. The merits of a transcultural approach become apparent in the analysis of citizenship and its dynamic nature both as an idea and in practice, as it is discussed by political scientists **Subrata Mitra**, **Jivanta Schöttli** and **Markus Pauli**. Despite the fact that the concept of citizenship has been traditionally conceived as watertight and fixed, the authors demonstrate the assets of a transcultural understanding of citizenship by incorporating differentiation and variation. Only through a transcultural lens can it be possible to capture the shifting parameters and institutions through which citizenship is mediated across time and space. Using modern India as their historical setting, they further demonstrate that the growth of modern cities had surprisingly no effects on the issue of citizenship. **Hans Martin Krämer**, scholar of Japanese studies, raises the question how the transcultural turn can contest traditional wisdom on religion as a concept which was mainly shaped in nineteenth-century Europe. The author argues that, contrary to grand theories highlighting the significance of Europe and

implying that a Europe-centric concept of was imposed upon the rest of the world, 'religion' became global as a result of complex entanglements between Europe and other cultures, thus owing much to non-European historical actors. Looking beyond comparison and connections and exploring global conjunctures in political, social and cultural spheres, Krämer examines patterns of responses by religious groups including reforms based on foreign and novel ideas, conservative reassessions of main tenets, or finally the creation of new religions. The contribution by **Max Stille** engages with a highly complicated as well as controversial subject: the study of emotions. Since emotions are culturally bound, transculturality can provide a decisive tool for their study, especially in the cases in which emotions are integrated in the multitude of media and art forms that affect them. As in the previous chapter by Krämer, Stille points out that a transculturally framed study of emotional transitions means to avoid the comparative method by stressing the multiplicity of layers and sources. One should instead expand the cultural frame of emotional studies by exploring the complex trajectories of emotions as they are steered across communities, spaces and genres and illuminate their relationalities.

The applicability of the transcultural method beyond the realm of human interaction is explored by anthropologist **Daniel Münster** who argues that this can include encounters f people with plants, animals and microbes. Starting from the role of transcultural studies in destabilizing many of the epistemological binaries and purities that underlie persistent constructions of race, culture, civilization, religion, language and nation, the anthropologist adopts a socioecological approach to food and agriculture which negates the traditional separation of nature and culture as two different epistemic domains, highlighting in contrast the affective aspects of natural farming and thus the significance of non-human agents. In the volume's final chapter, **Armin Volkmann** deals with the question of how transculturality as a new research focus versus a theoretical model may have an impact on current methods and analytic techniques. In the view of the archaeologist, the transcultural character of the modern global society and science is a huge challenge for digital humanities and forces them to develop new tools and methods. The epistemological problems arising in the Semantic Web seek for new representations of knowledge with artificial intelligence, which can be founded not on traditional taxonomies but on complex ontologies presenting a network of information with logical relationships as concept maps.

Limits and prospects

Transculturality has been criticized for blurring research lenses and terminologies rather than sharpening differentiation.[8] Indeed, the aim of any transcultural approach must be to concretize the methodological perspective in order to render visible and very palpable the dynamics of cultural entanglement. Transculturality forms a transdisciplinary understanding that could underlie any (at least) humanities or social-sciences approach. To uncover even segments of the rhizome will call for multidisciplinary and often multilingual expertise. At the same time, it is our persuasion that concrete (and sound) transcultural methodology can only be developed by adaption within disciplinary frameworks. A transcultural approach will likely produce its own blind spots. For instance, the emphasis on entanglement has been said to favour the micro over the macro, or disregard the potential of cross-cultural comparison (e.g. Duindam 2018). One cannot deny that 'practising transculturality' has its limits that start, for instance, in the enormous demands of complex data with respect to time investment. 'The focus on multiplying boundaries opens a history of misunderstandings, of wrong translations and insecurities. Often enough, mimicry and heterotopic communication do not serve as the outcast's safe haven, but can be found in the centre of power, in the allegedly universal rules that stop being universal when migrants are concerned', write Herren, Rüesch and Sibille in their book section entitled

'The Transcultural Grave' (2012: 66). Another criticism is transculturality's alleged affinity to be less explicit about agonistic, conflict-ridden tensions and polarizing potential, so often outlined in, for instance, post-colonial theory's emphasis on structural violence in scientific language, power-inequalities and exclusivist politics (see Kravagna 2017: 11). However, while certainly not wanting to pull our disciplines' political and critical teeth, we rather think that they can be re-sharpened. Thus, we support the timely contribution on transdisciplinary research by Béatrice Hendrich, Sandra Kurfürst and Anna Malis (2017). The editors of this volume argue that instead of looking for weaknesses and adding another 'spicy yet empty' term to a 'red list' or problematic academic 'canons', one should recognize the strength of underlining disciplinary perspectives' need to push open in order to further profile research questions and matters. Transculturality, thus, stands for a conscious shift in perspective on, and access to, one's research field, which consequently also leads to a change thereof.

While there may be some truth to the criticisms, the challenges thus addressed can – in our understanding – only be accommodated by a plurality of perspectives. More than anything, transcultural research calls for epistemological openness, the willingness to critique, and the readiness to question even well-established knowledge. The present volume does not claim to contain the definite answer to what transculturality is. Instead, we offer reflections based on profound research practice. Rather than a closed and contained single method that would be applicable to all fields, our authors present approaches tried and tested in a wide range of research fields and our interdisciplinary analytic practice. Most of all, we would like to invite our readers to take seriously this book's title – to engage transculturality.

Notes

1. In this context, reference should also be made to two online journals, namely *Transcultural Studies* (HeiUP, Heidelberg) and *Transcultural Studies: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* (Brill, Leiden).
2. In their structure, processes can still be seen as stable, or even static.
3. For a nuanced discussion of the paradigm-concept in its application to the humanities, see Hoyninges-Huene (2010).
4. Online. Available: https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment (accessed 19 April 2016).
5. The above-noted sketches focusing on cultural anthropology and history do not claim comprehensiveness either within these disciplines or the general scope of the transcultural turn that (potentially) encompasses the humanities and social sciences. For instance, Wolfgang Welsch's *Transkulturalität* has been taken up in very productive ways in literary and cultural studies. The debates at the Heidelberg Cluster of Excellence were, however, chiefly advanced by the productive tension between approaches which can be broadly classified as either historical or anthropological.
6. The passage continues: 'For me, the key aspect of this division can be characterized formulaically: the literary humanities as a whole were arealized and de-disciplined, whereas the social sciences were de-arealized and re-disciplined' (Pollock 2016: 915).
7. They are thus not to be identified with Arjun Appadurai's notion of scapes or flows (1995).
8. Interestingly, another term has not faced such strong criticism: 'transnationalism', coined in the 1990s, was recognized as a phenomenon of transnational migration and globalization, attributed with 'flexibility' (Ong 1997) and an alleged weakening of nation-states (Appadurai 1997); see Pries (2013).

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