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Anthropology in the twenty-first century
A view of, and from, Germany

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Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel erkundet zentrale Entwicklungen in der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie seit den 1970er Jahren und argumentiert, dass die rezente Geschichte des Fachs im deutschsprachigen Raum vor allem eine Geschichte der nachholenden Modernisierung ist. Deutschsprachige Ethnologen und Ethnologinnen leisten vermehrt Beiträge zu internationalen Debatten über Gegenstände, Methoden und Fragestellungen des Faches, sie publizieren zunehmend auf Englisch und in nicht-deutschsprachigen Zeitschriften und Verlagen, und sie engagieren sich in internationalen wissenschaftlichen Netzwerken. Der Artikel diskutiert, wie und unter welchen Bedingungen der Wissensproduktion sich diese Transformationen vollzogen haben. Wie hat sich der institutionelle, vor allem universitäre Kontext, in dem deutschsprachige Ethnologen und Ethnologinnen arbeiten, verändert? Welche theoretischen Impulse innerhalb und außerhalb des Fachs haben die Entwicklung der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie hin zu einer Ethnologie der Gegenwart angestoßen? Jenseits des Fokus auf die Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Ethnologie entwirft der Artikel eine Zukunftsperspektive für das Fach als symmetrische Sozialwissenschaft − als feldforschungsbasierte und „welthaltige" Disziplin, die mit einer Grundhaltung des systematischen Perspektivenwechsels, mit kritischer Reflektion der Bedingungen ihrer Wissensproduktion und in interdisziplinärer Auseinandersetzung mit Sozialtheorie einen Beitrag zur Selbstbeobachtung der Weltgesellschaft leistet.

Abstract

The article explores the developments in German-language anthropology in the past decades, focussing on the period after the 1970s. It argues that the recent history of German-language *Ethnologie* (social and cultural anthropology) is one of catching-up modernization. German-speaking anthropologists are increasingly involved in, and contribute to, broader theoretical debates, publish in English and in international journals, and are actively engaged in international academic networks. The paper discusses how and under what conditions of knowledge production these transformations have taken place. It analyses the changing institutional environment in which German anthropologists have worked and work today, as well as the theoretical impulses from within and outside the discipline that have given rise to the contemporary orientation of German-language anthropology as an anthropology of the 'present'. Finally, and beyond the focus on Germany, the article offers some ideas on the future of anthropology as a symmetrical social science, characterized by a continued strong reliance on field work and a high level of 'worldliness', a basic attitude of systematically shifting perspectives, the critical reflection of the social and political embeddedness of knowledge production, and an engagement with social theory across disciplinary boundaries.

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Introduction

The history of German-language *Ethnologie* (social and cultural anthropology, see below) in recent decades is one of catching-up modernization. This concerns the objects of anthropological research and practices of knowledge production as well as the discipline's links with the international debate, above all in the United States. From an international perspective, fifty years ago German-language anthropology was peripheral in terms of major advancements in the discipline, not unlike the remote marginal societies that had been supposedly forgotten by history which anthropology felt called on to research. Today, German anthropology presents itself as a 'semi-autonomous field' (Moore 1973): it is significantly involved in the international developments within the discipline but retains its own characteristic forms. As Daniel Münster (2014) puts it, contemporary German anthropology is 'anthropology with an accent'.

In this article we explore the developments in German-language anthropology in recent decades. We also investigate, more generally, what is still 'ethno' about *Ethnologie*, both in Germany and elsewhere. How does the discipline, whose very object of study, *Ethnien* (ethnic groups), as contained in its German-language designation *Ethnologie,* has become problematic, currently define itself? What purpose does social and cultural anthropology serve when it is no longer a discipline specializing in the research of 'primitive' indigenous groups and when the term 'ethno' has become popularized in the broadest conceivable combinations ranging from ethno music, ethno food and ethno fashion to ethno media and ethno marketing?[1]

Presented to a readership outside of Germany, the topic of our article requires some terminological clarification. The discipline referred to in English-speaking contexts as social anthropology or cultural anthropology is known in German as *Völkerkunde* or, in most cases today, *Ethnologie*. This differs from the usage in anglophone and francophone countries, but also in Scandinavia where ethnology or *ethnologie* usually refers to what in Germany constitutes the separate discipline of *Volkskunde*, or, as it is often called today, European anthropology (*Europäische Ethnologie*). We shall discuss the *Völkerkunde/Volkskunde* divide in the German academic tradition and its gradual disappearance in greater detail below. The term anthropology (*Anthropologie*), on the other hand, designates in Germany usually a separate subject, namely physical or biological anthropology that is mostly affiliated to faculties of biology. To make matters even more complicated, *Anthropologie* also refers to a subdiscipline of philosophy. In this article, however, we use 'anthropology', for the sake of brevity, as synonym for *Ethnologie*, that is, referring to cultural and social anthropology.

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[1] This text is a revised and translated version of the introduction to the book *Ethnologie im 21. Jahrhundert* (Bierschenk, Krings, Lentz 2013; see http://www.reimer-mann-verlag.de/controller.php?cmd= detail&titelnummer=102863&verlag=4, last accessed 5.5.2015); for English reviews of this anthology, see Geschiere 2014, Münster 2014, and Rao 2014b). The book was based on a series of lectures entitled 'Was ist heute noch ethno an der Ethnologie?' ('What is still "ethno" about *Ethnologie* today?') at the Department of Anthropology and African Studies of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz from 2011 to 2013. The book's intention was not to add yet another text to the existing German-language introductions to anthropology (Fischer 1983; Fischer/Beer 2000; Kohl 1993a; Streck 1997; Heidemann 2011; Hahn 2013) nor did the editors want to provide a comprehensive overview of the field (as did, for instance, Schweizer et al. 1993) or of the history of German-language anthropology (Gingrich 2005, Haller 2012). Rather, the book's focus was what could best be termed 'fundamental questions of anthropology', *Grundfragen der Ethnologie*. However, our understanding of this concept was broader than that of the editors and authors of an anthology published under this name over thirty years ago (Schmied-Kowarzik/Stagl 1981) which mainly explored theories that could advance the discipline in Germany. Furthermore, because interdisciplinarity is a prominent component of current practice in anthropological knowledge production, we also invited colleagues from European anthropology (Welz 2013), political science (Schlichte 2013) and sociology (Hirschauer 2013) to contribute their perspectives on German-language anthropology.

Furthermore, it is necessary to briefly explain our use of the terms 'German' and 'German-language'. In our discussion of institutional developments we are referring primarily to the discipline of anthropology in the Federal Republic of Germany (on the history of anthropology in the German Democratic Republic, see Gingrich 2005). Our discussion of theoretical paradigms and changing research strategies, however, also includes contributions on the current state and future of the discipline by German-language anthropologists in Austria and Switzerland. In our references we give deliberate priority to texts by German-language anthropologists, irrespective of the language in which they are written. By doing so, we wish to remove their international 'cloak of invisibility' and present a counterpoint to the 'homophobia and allophilia' (Kohl 1997) that increasingly dictates the citation practice of German anthropologists.

This paper begins by outlining important institutional changes both within and outside the university which present new challenges for the discipline of anthropology. We then examine the recent transformation in the epistemic practices of anthropologists. We make no claim to providing a comprehensive overview of German-language anthropology,[2] but rather present a range of answers to the question as to what is 'ethno' about *Ethnologie* today. Nevertheless we wish to offer more than a mere compilation of different positions, and therefore also put forward some thoughts on the future prospects for the discipline.

Institutional developments

A key concept that underlies this text is that of epistemic practice: how and under what conditions is knowledge produced and transmitted today in German-language anthropology? Beyond a purely theoretical perspective, this requires to consider the institutional conditions under which anthropologists work today. Knowledge production practices are shaped by the institutions in which they are carried out. For German anthropologists, these include, first and foremost, the university and state organizations that promote research, but increasingly also extra-university institutions which create a demand for anthropological expertise or present anthropological knowledge in the public arena (Haller 2013; Förster 2013).

Within the university

One of the key facts that characterize the institutional development of German anthropology is its sustained high demand by students (Bollig 2013). In the 1950s and 1960s German departments of anthropology rarely had more than two dozen students who, prior to the reforms of 1960 that introduced the degree of *Magister* (Master of Arts), could only qualify with a doctorate.[3] In the 1970s student numbers rose dramatically and quickly exceeded the thousand mark in some departments (for example, in Berlin, Cologne, Mainz, and Munich). This high demand has been sustained to the present day and, at around half the size of sociology and political science, anthropology must currently be considered as a 'large' discipline among the 'small' ones (Bollig 2013: 168). However, as

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[2] For recent analyses of the period up to 1990, see Haller 2013 as well as Gingrich 2005, Haller 2012, and Rao 2014a.

[3] According to an overview presented by Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch (1959), in 1959 there were around 20 university anthropologists compared with 40 museum anthropologists in West Germany; in contrast, in 1979 there were 14 university departments with 75 academic staff while 50 anthropologists were employed at eight museums (Braukämper 1979).

is the case with other *Magister* courses in the humanities and social sciences, these high student numbers were not reflected in a correspondingly high number of graduates.

From the perspective of the number of lecturers, anthropology has remained a 'small' subject, with an academic staff of around 270 in Germany, most of whom do not have permanent employment contracts. Taken together, German anthropology departments have a good 50 professorial positions, around 80 department-based employee positions and a further 140 project-based positions funded with third-party money. This probably represents a slight increase compared with the 1970s; however we have no definitive data on the past situation. In recent years, new professorships were usually not created through the expansion of the existing departments but through the establishment of new individual anthropological professorships integrated into interdisciplinary departments (for example in Bielefeld, Bochum, Bremen, Koblenz, Konstanz and Trier). The strongest impetus for the growth in scholarships and staff positions in the discipline, however, arose through the establishment of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle in 1999, which increased the number of academic staff in German anthropology by around twenty percent in one fell swoop. The establishment of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen in 2007 also created a further two dozen additional doctoral and post-doctoral positions for anthropologists.

In recent decades, the student body in anthropology, followed by the lecturers at a delay, has become feminized. German anthropology of the 1950s to 1970s had several noteworthy female personalities, for example Ulla Johansen in Köln, Sigrid Westphal-Hellbusch in Berlin and Erika Sulzmann in Mainz.[4] Overall, however, during this period, the discipline continued to be dominated by men at all levels. This has changed radically among the students, of whom around three quarters are female today. Women also account for the majority of the academic staff (around 60 percent) and, at 40 percent, have even caught up considerably at the professorial level (Bollig 2013).

With this rate of feminization of the discipline, anthropology surpasses the general trend in the humanities and social sciences in Germany. A feature it shares with the related sciences, however, is the fact that it has, to the present day, remained predominantly 'white'. The numbers of students from abroad or with a 'migration background' are increasing, but still limited. Few of the teachers originate from countries of the global South which is remarkable for a discipline that presents itself as being distinctly cosmopolitan. However, counter-trends can also be observed. First, the numbers of foreign doctoral students at German anthropology departments, particularly from countries of the global South in which research is being carried out, are rising. In the 1990s, these doctoral students came to Germany usually based on the personal initiative of some lecturers; in recent years, major research initiatives ('Excellence Initiative', promotion of area studies, etc.) have contributed to a considerable increase of their numbers. This has, in turn, led to the development of a new type of presence for German research in the global South as, in some countries, for example in Africa, entire generations of local anthropologists have been educated in Germany. Second, it is now increasingly common for German students to study abroad, including in the global South, or to acquire experience abroad even while still at secondary school. Third, an increasing number of German-language anthropologists teach abroad as guest lecturers and, in some cases, as holders of permanent positions, and some subsequently return to Germany. These forms of foreign experience along with publication in non-German journals, which were unusual among German anthropologists until the 1980s, have now become important criteria for appointments.

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[4]   On women in the anthropology of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany, see Beer 2007.

Finally, with regard to changes in the institutional context of anthropology, it is worth mentioning that anthropology is increasingly integrated into a number of larger networks: in the area of teaching through participation in joint courses of study, and in the area of research through involvement in collaborative research centres, research groups, post-graduate schools and clusters of excellence. As a result, anthropologists face new challenges of working on an interdisciplinary basis, a development that has an enormous impact on the discipline's epistemic practices (Schareika 2006).

Outside the university

The consistently high demand to study anthropology and the growing number of graduates have resulted in a banal outcome that was long ignored by the discipline or viewed with irony, if not cynicism: the majority of anthropology graduates no longer remain at the university or work at museums, as was the case until the early 1970s. Some academic anthropologists gave serious consideration to the professional activities of anthropologists outside the university as early as in the 1980s (Fischer 1988). However, the cliché of the taxi-driving anthropology graduate remains widespread to the present day, and for a long time, some introductory lectures to the discipline began with a kind of 'offending the audience', informing prospective students that they embarked on studying a useless discipline that would inevitably lead to unemployment. Empirical studies of the occupational trajectories of graduates have revealed, however, that the employment prospects of anthropologists are in no way poorer than those of graduates of the other humanities and social sciences (for a summary, see Degener 2010).

One phenomenon, which has become more evident in recent years, has escaped the attention of the above-mentioned studies on anthropology graduates: the development of a new labor market for anthropologists outside the universities, in which the latter are sought not despite or irrespective of the knowledge gained from their studies, but specifically because of it (Barthel/Bierschenk 2013). Quite soon, as many German anthropologists will work outside the universities as work within them, a development of which the majority of university-based anthropologists probably remain unaware. Considerably later than in the United States, in Germany a labor market for anthropologists developed in the area of development cooperation since the 1970s. The market then expanded to other fields like tourism, organizational consulting and development, marketing and the media, and eventually included the police and the army. Cultural analysis and cultural practice are converging in these new fields of professional practice, which, in turn, often become the basis for new hyphenated anthropologies. We are witnessing the emergence of a new occupational profile: the 'cultural engineer', that is a professional who uses anthropological tools to analyse cultural phenomena with a view to influencing them.[5] Academic anthropology has not yet responded adequately to these developments and has mostly dismissed them by labelling them 'applied' anthropology (but see the critique by Antweiler 2004). Reflections on future professional practice outside of academia still remain a subordinate concern in the curricula. However, this neglect or outright disdain fails to recognize the epistemic potential of practice, i.e. the possibility that the altered conditions in the area of practice can also give rise to new knowledge practices within the university.

What is the situation with regard to the public transmission of anthropological knowledge? Apart from a few exceptions, anthropologists tend not to feature in major media-based public debates in

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[5] The professional association Berufsverband freiberuflicher Ethnolog_innen e.V. (<http://www.bundesverband-ethnologie.de/>; last accessed on 16 March 2013) was established in 2012 to improve the visibility and networking of anthropologists working in non-university contexts.

German-speaking regions, even in fields that actually involve anthropological topics like ethnicity and culture. A glance at France, Great Britain, Scandinavia and the United States or some countries of the global South shows that this does not have to be the case. Workshops organized by the press section of the German Anthropological Association in Heidelberg (1999) and Bonn (2009) that aimed at promoting cooperation between anthropologists and media representatives have not managed to bring about any notable improvement. There are several reasons for the reticence vis-à-vis the media on the part of the anthropologists. One, without doubt, is that anthropologists have long internalized the idea of the societal insignificance and marginality of their field (see Haller 2013). This is the flip side of the traditional rejection of the discipline being 'hijacked' for political purposes, a feature of German anthropology that the political scientist Klaus Schlichte (2013) has highlighted as even praiseworthy. Moreover, the anthropological approach of linking individual phenomena with their broader context (the discipline's holistic tradition) and exploring diverse perspectives impose limits on developing explanations that suit the format of the newspaper column or the minute-and-a-half television clip.

Anthropologists are usually approached by journalists as specialists in either exotic curiosities or regions. Many anthropologists reject the first type of request by the media or sometimes also the courts, due to its exoticizing bias. However, the majority of anthropologists also hesitate to respond to the second request and assume the role of regional specialists. Unlike most political scientists or economists, anthropologists usually consider themselves experts of rather narrowly defined localities—too narrowly defined in the eyes of the journalists who demand the expert knowledge. The discipline is dominated by a sense of local expertise, so that anthropologists who are identified with a particular country or region within a country through their research generally shy away from commenting on political crises even in neighboring areas.

The museum remains the main form in which anthropological knowledge is transmitted to the public. As elsewhere, this institution is experiencing something of a crisis, which is expressed, not least, in the wave of renamings that took place over the past twenty years (from *Völkerkunde*, i.e. *Ethnologie*, to world/cultures). As Larissa Förster (2013) argues, the former museums of *Ethnologie* have been challenged to adopt new positions in three regards: as public cultural institutions they must gauge themselves against other types of museums when wooing public favor and resources without resorting to the traditional exoticisms; they must establish or re-invent themselves as research institutes of equal status in relation to academic anthropology; finally, they must respond to the criticisms pronounced from post-modern and post-colonial perspectives. Anthropological museums can no longer simply showcase the objects in their collections as 'representing' supposedly coherent cultures. Instead, according to Förster, they must explore, with the help of the objects, the history of past encounters and entanglements that gave rise to the collections, and examine how the anthropological museum has generated knowledge about foreign 'cultures'. However, the necessary 'productive institutional criticism' and 'epistemic decolonization' (Förster 2013: 200, our translation) that can long be observed in other countries are still in their infancy in museum research and exhibition practices in German-speaking countries.

Ethnographic film, the second most important medium of publicizing anthropology, is also experiencing difficult times in the German-speaking world. Since the closure of the Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film (Institute for Scientific Film) in Göttingen in 2010, the ethnographic film no longer has an institutional home in Germany. Although the financial cost of producing films has fallen due to the use of video technology, the extent to which the necessary technical expertise can be taught at the universities is limited, if available at all (Lipp 2010). The onus here is basically on the public broadcasting companies. Outside of Germany, the BBC is exemplary in this regard. In German

public media institutions, however, the ethnographic film has little or no lobby. As a result very few films are produced which is all the more regrettable as this means losing a major opportunity to counter the exotic television film formats and innumerable amateur recordings circulating on the internet. In Germany, ethnographic films can mainly be seen at film festivals, among which the Freiburger Film Forum (since 1985) and the Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival (since 1993) enjoy the greatest continuity and international recognition. Like museum exhibitions, however, many current film productions lag behind the epistemological debates currently under way at the universities (Keifenheim 2011). This was not always the case, however, as ethnographic film makers like Jean Rouch debated issues concerning reflectivity and representation far earlier than the academic anthropologists.

Finally, the internet is playing an increasingly important role in the transmission of anthropological knowledge and knowledge about anthropology. The new formats range from websites on theory, methods and the history of the discipline to blogs by students, professors and independent anthropologists, and recordings of lectures and seminar discussions on YouTube and platforms which make use of the possibilities provided by Web 2.0 for staging debates on current topics.[6] The institutional conservatism of academia, however, which favors the monograph or journal essay by an individual author, struggles with these new formats that are not exclusively text-based and often collaborative in nature, despite the fact that they reach an audience beyond the university to a far greater extent than most specialist publications could ever do.

Changes in epistemic practices

In a long term perspective, anthropology can hardly be severed from its German roots (Haller 2013; Streck 2013, 2014; Lentz 2013). *Völkerkunde* was 'invented' in Germany during the Enlightenment (Vermeulen 2006; 2015). In the form in which it was practised then, for example by August Ludwig von Schlözer who included it in a lecture series on 'universal history' in the eighteenth century in Göttingen, anthropology was a kind of historical sociology, inspired not only by a comparative perspective, but also a keen interest in the connections between individual peoples (we would refer to 'global flows' today). The genre of ethnography in the modern sense, that is: linking social theory with empirical observations, was also 'invented' by a German-speaking author, Georg Forster. His *Voyage Round the World* (2000; originally 1777), characterized by interdisciplinarity, cultural relativism, reflection on the role of the observer and a humanising style, seems astonishingly (post)modern.

Modernization impulses since the 1970s

While German-language *Völkerkunde* was an important contributor to the international history of anthropology until around the First World War, from the inter-war period to the 1970s the subject largely isolated itself from disciplinary developments in Great Britain, France and the United States.[7] German-language anthropology developed into 'a relatively self- contained world … cut off from the

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[6] See also Dieter Haller's web-based project on the history of German anthropology (<www.germananthropology.com>).

[7] On anthropology during the National Socialist era and the consequences for the development of the subject in the post-war period, see Fischer 1990 and Hauschild 1995. For contemporary observations on the development of German anthropology after the Second World War, see Westphal-Hellbusch 1959 and Braukämper 1979.

international mainstream to a greater extent than, say, sociology or philosophy in Germany' (Gingrich 2005: 137). International contact among scholars was rare and international careers even more so. This 'serious fall into international insignificance and domestic intellectual stagnation' (ibid.: 139) was gradually halted since the 1970s. However, during the same period a new asynchronicity arose: while German anthropologists were starting to discover the empirical studies of their British counterparts and beginning to understand that there was far more to the empirical foundation of the discipline than merely collecting and documenting on 'expeditions',[8] international anthropology plunged into the post-modern and postcolonial crisis, a development that was hardly noticed in Germany at first.

Modernization impulses emerged from within the discipline, from its peripheries and from outside, in particular from abroad and above all from US anthropology. The anthology *Grundfragen der Ethnologie* (Fundamental Questions of Anthropology), published in 1981, was the product of a serious attempt from within the discipline to overcome the backwardness of German anthropology. The publication was triggered by a 'theory symposium' held at the conference of the German Anthropological Association in 1979 and contained contributions by both established and young representatives of the field. Viewed from today's perspective, however, the narrow limits of this attempt at renewal from within the discipline are obvious. Against the background of the observation that German anthropologists were 'not generally prone to reflection on their activities from an epistemological perspective' (Schmied-Kowarzik/Stagl 1981: viii; our translation), the publication presented the most wide-ranging theoretical approaches, from ethnomethodology, ethno-psychoanalysis and ethnohermeneutics to functionalism, structuralism and historical materialism, to name but a few. The contributions, frequently stupendous in their scholarship, were intended to inspire the 'philosophical consideration of the problems and tasks of *Ethnologie* and cultural anthropology' (ibid.: xiii), yet it remained, and still remains, unclear as to how the colorful mix could contribute to the envisaged 'advancement' (ibid.: vii) of the theoretical discussion. The book was pervaded by a profound reverence for 'theory' and suggested – not least through the order in which the contributions were presented, from field work to philosophy – that the aim of anthropology was to develop a general theory of human culture. 'Understanding', not representation in an epistemological or political sense, was defined as the basic problem of anthropology. *Grundfragen* was also aimed expressly at students, but left the reader at something of a loss as it merely conveyed the immense difficulties involved in the 'understanding of other cultures', without offering any assistance as to how to proceed on a practical level, apart from ever more in-depth theoretical study. Furthermore, contemporary philosophical currents like deconstructivism were not registered, and the explosive force of Edward Saïd's (1978) criticism of orientalism, which had been published shortly before the anthology, was not recognized. The publication was aware of a 'crisis of anthropology' (Schmied-Kowarzik/Stagl 1981: ix; see also Schott 1981). However, while this was already discussed intensively elsewhere as a crisis of representation (Asad 1973), the authors of *Grundfragen* had a far more direct but philosophically naive understanding of the crisis. In their eyes, the major problem facing anthropology was the fact that there were fewer 'traditional primitive peoples' to research, in the first place, because they were disappearing 'rapidly' (Schmied-Kowarzik/Stagl 1981: vii), and

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[8] The focus on collection in post-war German anthropology and its unreflected adoption of a 'central perspective' are impressively documented in the exhibition curated by Karl-Heinz Kohl *Das exotische Ding* ('The exotic thing') (1996). For a comprehensive history of German anthropology in this period, see Haller 2012, on the first anthropological 'expeditions' to central Africa in the post-war period, see Brandstetter/Lentz 2006.

secondly, because 'the new class of power holders' in post-colonial societies refused to allow anthropologists access to them (Schott 1981: 62).[9]

In terms of the renewal of the discipline, impulses originating from the periphery of the discipline, that is from not, or not yet, established anthropologists or from scholars who identified themselves in part as being affiliated with other disciplines, probably had the greatest effect. The reader *Gesellschaften ohne Staat* (1978), edited by Fritz Kramer and Christian Sigrist, not only introduced generations of students, whose knowledge of English was still limited at the time, to the 'discoveries of social anthropology', its first volume also contained a knowledgeable introduction to the 'problem of representation of other societies'. Reading these contributions in conjunction with Fritz Kramer's (1977) analysis of the imaginary anthropology of the nineteenth century and the studies of Karl-Heinz Kohl (1986 [1979]) (who was trained mainly in religious studies) of how the experience of the 'other' was processed in ethnography, we can discover an independent German tradition of dealing with the problem of representation. Key themes and perspectives from the writing-culture debate were anticipated here, something about which there is little or no awareness in 'allophile' German anthropology today, and much less outside of Germany (Kohl 1997; see also Calkins/Rottenburg 2014). The impact of these early discussions of representation on research practices was initially limited, however. Experimental ethnographic written forms were not tested, nor did the voices of the 'others', as partners in dialogue or co-authors, feature in publications.[10] This lack of consequence may be due to the fact that Kramer and Kohl did not carry out any field work themselves, at least at the time of the publication of the above-mentioned works.[11] Furthermore, there were distinct groups of 'innovators', among them also the Bielefeld School (see below), whose protagonists knew each other well, but, for a long time, stood in each other's way because they wasted a lot of their energy on in-fighting.

The Bielefeld School, which combined sociology and anthropology, was another one of the 'peripheral' groups that offered important impulses to modernize German-language anthropology. Its ideas were exported from Bielefeld to Berlin first through the anthropologist Georg Elwert and from there spread throughout Germany. The Bielefeld 'articulation' approach was inspired by theoretical issues discussed in political economy, social theory and sociology (for example, the relationship between different forms of work in the global modern age); these issues were then examined on a comparative basis by regional specialists, in part trained anthropologists, using ethnographic methods over the course of extended field missions (Evers 1979; Bierschenk 2002).[12] However, scholars of the Bielefeld school had little interest in the problems of anthropological representation. They maintained intensive networks with colleagues in both the global North (for example, Immanuel Wallerstein in the US, and Claude Meillassoux and Emmanuel Terray in France)

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[9]   The second edition of 1993 was generally more structured and included some new authors; for example, the contributions by Münzel (1993) and Kohl (1993b) consider the post-modern turn in anthropology and the debate on literary forms of representation.

[10]   The trilogy on the Hama by Jean Lydall and Ivo Strecker is an exception here, in particular the third volume: *Conversations in Dambaiti* (1979).

[11]   This also applies to the group around the journal *Trickster*, whose influence on the discipline was also limited. On this point, see Dieter Haller's interview with Werner Petermann (<www.germananthropology.com>; last accessed on 18.03.2013).

[12]   On the topic of development, which the Bielefeld scientists also dealt with, there was some overlap with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Entwicklungsethnologie (Working Group on Development Anthropology) in the German Anthropological Association (GAA), which pursued the modernization of the objects of anthropology from within the discipline and faced considerable resistance from many of the discipline's representatives (Antweiler 2004; Schönhuth/Bliss 2004, Bierschenk 2014a, 2014b).

and in those countries of the global South which they studied and where they also taught regularly; indeed, many colleagues and doctoral students from these countries made their way to Bielefeld. Moreover, in the context of the Bielefeld approach university lecturers created a model of supervised collective student field work that represented a methodological innovation at the time; it was later to become established in many anthropology departments, and has been developed further with productive results (see e.g. Schlehe 2013). In the 1970s, however, this model as well as the Bielefeld approach in general was perceived by mainstream German-language anthropology as more of a threat than an opportunity for renewal. Like the Bielefeld scholars but on an individual basis, Gerd Spittler, originally a sociologist trained by Heinrich Popitz (himself a pupil of Max Weber), introduced sociological and historical perspectives into anthropology, and experienced similar resistance.[13]

The Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, finally, which was established in 1999, adopts an approach similar to the Bielefeld School but on a larger scale. Its research also combines the study of contemporary social change in a comparative perspective with a reliance on anthropological methods of field work. An explicit and ultimately successful objective adopted in the foundation of the Max Planck Institute, and one which was initially viewed with distrust by established representatives of the discipline in Germany, was to internationalize the discipline and 'foster cosmopolitism in a field [i.e. German-language anthropology] that, all in all, has been one of the less cosmopolitan up until now' (Hann 2005: ix).

These, in part highly conflict-ridden, developments in German-language anthropology in the 1970s and 1980s and, in practical terms, the improvement in the English-language skills of both lecturers and students paved the way for the reception of international developments in anthropology in the 1990s, in particular the debate surrounding post-coloniality. Some of the discipline's early European voices that had reflected on anthropology's involvement with the colonial experience had only received a limited audience (for example, Balandier 1951; Asad 1973). The anthology *Writing Culture* (Clifford/Marcus 1986) and Adam Kuper's *The Invention of Primitive Society* (1988), however, enjoyed an intensive and wide reception in Germany. This meant that the German-language anthro-pology of the post-war period *à la* Baumann, Jensen and Mühlmann was finally and conclusively consigned to the archives of the discipline's history. However, in contrast to a part of US anthropology, the greater self-reflectivity of anthropology in Germany did not become a navel-gazing exercise and did not prevent a continued intensive involvement in empirical research.

Gingrich portrayed German-language anthropology of around 1990 as 'still marginal to the interna-tional mainstream, but somewhat less so, it still remained a world of its own, but an interactive one – with windows and doors that were now wide open' (2005: 153). The current state of the discipline, by contrast, can best be described by using the anthropological concept of the 'semi-autonomous field' (Moore 1973). German-language anthropology is more or less up to international standards but retains, nevertheless, its own flair. Its distinguishing features include the fact that it is research-intensive, even at the level of Masters students, and that it is well rooted in the global South, both empirically and in terms of its cooperative relationships. Societies of the global South remain its pre-ferred research terrain, something that cannot be taken for granted internationally.

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[13] Some anthropology departments with an area studies orientation created chairs of sociology at a relatively early stage (as far back as 1975 in Mainz, since 2000 in Bayreuth). In other cases, anthropology and sociology were taught by the same person, for instance in Heidelberg by Georg Elwert's teacher Wilhelm Emil Mühlmann. However, in both cases, the combination of the two disciplines remained, for a long time, purely additive without exploiting its epistemological potential in the way that, for instance, Stefan Hirschauer (2013) has done more recently. On this point, see also Hörning 2008.

According to Richard Rottenburg (2013), the 'foundational figuration' of (international) anthropology in the early twentieth century was characterized by the discpline's taken-for-granted object (the 'primitive'), a particular perspective (privileging the 'native's point of view'), an epistemological premise (naive realism), and participant observation as a form of organizing research that involves the very existence of the researcher (see also Krings 2013). Furthermore, the discipline was marked by a specific political-moral stance, namely the aim of rehabilitating the 'primitives' and, from this perspective, adopting a critical perspective on the researcher's own society. Today, one hundred years later, this foundational formation has become problematic, in terms of each of the individual elements as well as the once seemingly obvious links between them.

The object of anthropological research today

The modernization of the discipline is most clearly evident in the change that has taken place in the objects of research and the awareness that these objects are not simply 'there' but are constructed in the process of research. Most German-language anthropologists would agree that the division of academic fields that was dominant in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the anthropologists being in charge of the 'primitives' on the periphery of the global system (Wolf 1982; Kramer/Sigrist 1978), is now obsolete. Some regret this and would like to see anthropology being practised today as historical anthropology in the main.

The majority of German-language anthropologists, however, would disagree with this latter view. They practise an anthropology which, although it is interested in marginal and remote groups, does not banish them from the present (Fabian 1983). Nonetheless, anthropologists often deal with objects abroad that 'at home' are more likely to be studied by political scientists, sociologists, scholars of media studies and historians. This remains a reflection of nineteenth-century disciplinary specializations. One major reason why German anthropologists carry out research on oil in Central Africa (Behrends/Schareika 2011), media in West and East Africa (Krings 2015), the state in India (Eckert 2011), tourism in Indonesia (Schlehe 2009), or migration in the Black Atlantic (Drotbohm 2014) is that these and many other modern phenomena in the global South are not studied by the disciplines that feel responsible for them in the context of the global North. These modern anthropological research themes are mostly 'transfer objects' (Austen 2007), that is empirical phenomena that result from a process of transmission that often unfolded in the context of imperialism and colonialism in the past. These transfer objects involve complex expert knowledge (for example that of lawyers, oil technicians, medical personnel, or media specialists), which anthropologists must process thoroughly. This is also one source of the increasing interdisciplinarity typical of today's anthropological research practice, a topic to which we will return.

Accordingly, in Germany at least, anthropology remains the discipline responsible for 'overseas'. Around eighty percent of the research funding applications granted by the German Research Foundation (DFG) between 2000 and 2010 involved regions outside of Europe (Bollig 2013). German anthropologists have a particular affinity with Africa; anthropologists specialising on Africa represent the biggest group within German anthropology and, conversely, anthropologists constitute the largest group within scholars of all disciplines who specialize in African topics. In contrast, there are almost no German anthropologists who work on some other regions, for instance the Middle East.

Being responsible for all things foreign is thus a particular hallmark of German anthropology. This is not the case, for example, in the United States where, below the level of the globally renowned big names, a large proportion of the over 12,000 anthropologists have no professional experience abroad, in either teaching or research. However, unlike US anthropology, German-language anthro-

pology has a difficult relationship to ethnographic research 'at home', be this in Germany or other European countries. Until recently the field of 'anthropology at home' was a separate discipline, formerly called *Volkskunde*, now often referred to as European anthropology or cultural anthropology (Welz 2013); *Ethnologie* has only recently become involved in this field. In most other countries, 'anthropology abroad' and 'anthropology at home' have been subsumed under one disciplinary umbrella and pursued in the same department since a long time. Anthropological research on Europe was initiated by British and American anthropologists in the 1960s, and initially concentrated on backward areas in southern and eastern Europe, which were conceptualized more or less analogously to supposedly archaic tribal societies in the global South. Today, however, both German and international anthropologists study a broad 'spectrum of societal, cultural, economic and political transformations in a globalizing Europe' (Welz 2013: 220; our translation).

Field work, methods and a basic anthropological attitude

Up to the 1970s, anthropology had no explicit methodology, set out in specific handbooks. This is particularly true for German-language anthropology. The fact that field work became the object of explicit consideration is mainly thanks to Hans Fischer who, although he did not produce a methodology, edited an anthology on field-work experiences in 1985 and had also written on the topic before that (for instance, in an article in *Grundfragen der Ethnologie*). The first German-language book on anthropological methodology was published in 2003, edited by Bettina Beer, who had studied with Fischer in Hamburg. Today, methodology is explicitly taught in most German-language anthropology departments, albeit in all likelihood for the most part with the help of the numerous non-German introductory books. Compared to the 1980s, however, when Justin Stagl made fun of teaching methodology 'even to students' (1985: 285), this constitutes a veritable revolution. A detailed reflection on research methods, field access, role dynamics in the field and the 'politics of field research' (Olivier de Sardan 1995) has now become a standard component of empirically-oriented Masters' theses.

Exactly what characterizes anthropological field research, however, is disputed. Some argue that ethnography has now become a common process in other sciences too, particularly in sociology where it was established simultaneous to anthropology, but also on the margins of political science (Hirschauer 2013, Schlichte 2013). To what extent, then, is it still a distinguishing feature of our discipline? Thomas Bierschenk (2013), for example, argues for the demystification of field work in anthropology and for its conception as social research that works with the same qualitative and, in part, quantitative and documentary methods as sociology; moreover, it is often organized as team work (see also Welz 2013). Other anthropologists believe that anthropologists carry out field work in a more existential way than scholars of other disciplines (Streck 2013, Krings 2013), or they regret that this existential experience of the 'other' no longer exists today (Kohl 2013).

The difference between these positions is less marked than it may initially appear as soon as on makes a distinction between methods in the narrower sense and the basic attitude towards the field. Bierschenk (2013) argues that the quality criteria of social-science research like validity, representativity and reliability are also applicable in anthropological field work and that anthropologists use the entire conventional repertoire of research methods of the social sciences. However, he also makes the case for a specific anthropological attitude, based on which anthropologists approach their field differently than the representatives of the other social sciences. Even if the terminology they use differs, other anthropologists share this idea of a basic attitude specific to anthropology. Krings (2013) refers to 'border crossing' and Streck (2013) to the 'systematically shifting perspective'

as a special feature of anthropology that distinguishes it from all other disciplines. Hirschauer (2013) ultimately also concedes that sociologists who work on an ethnographic basis in their own societies must first 'estrange' their object of study, using complex methodologies, while anthropologists benefit from their direct confrontation with, and experience of, the 'other' which is aided by the fact that they have to immerse themselves in a different language. Incidentally, anthropologists working outside the university see precisely this capacity for systematically changing perspectives, acquired through the existential experience of 'otherness', as the unique feature that students of anthropology have learnt and can bring to bear on professional fields outside the university.

This kind of basic attitude involving the engagement with other lifeworlds in order to understand internal perspectives also produces a specific approach to methods: they are flexibly incorporated into a research design which constantly changes in response to changing requirements in the field. Anthropology is thus a 'fuzzy science', even more so than qualitative sociology. This more relaxed approach to methods may prompt methodology fanatics to raise an eyebrow; however, based on this (un)methodical attitude, anthropology should be particularly well positioned for research in the post-modern era, in which the unequivocal is disappearing, clear categories are disintegrating and provinces of meaning fragmenting.

How this openness can be maintained in an ever more formalized institutional research context remains an open question; characteristic of today's research projects are the shortening of research periods, strict reporting obligations and a culture of funding applications in which the destination of the research journey must be explicitly stated from the outset. Furthermore, the compulsion for 'relevance', inherent in the prevailing 'audit culture' (Shore/Wright 2015), seems to encourage the preoccupation with 'nearby' objects, which may also run counter to the basic attitude of anthro-pology.

Anthropology as systematically shifting perspectives

What is 'ethno' about anthropology today when the researched 'others' now engage in anthropology themselves and, as native anthropologists, undermine the authority claim of western ethnographers, when researching 'on' no longer seems acceptable as neo-colonial gesture, but the practice of researching 'with' is very much in its early stages (Mauksch/Rao 2014), and when the border between 'western' and 'non-western' is increasingly blurred? What distinguishes anthropology from other social sciences?

Engaging existentially with other lifeworlds is part of the basic attitude specific to anthropology. The core competence of anthropology lies in its capacity for shifting perspectives. During the period of classical anthropology this concept was associated with the attempt to view the world from the 'native point of view' (Malinowski 1922). The ideal self-image of the anthropologist was that of a temporary cultural 'defector', who translated the emic perspective of the 'others', captured during field research, in words and writing into the categories of his 'own' society on his return home. In the course of his academic career, the anthropologist could repeatedly slip back into the role of the 'native' assumed in the field to provide an internal perspective on the researched society, with the borrowed authority of a member of the indigenous population. In a certain way, the 'native' was embodied by the anthropologist. However, even if Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard and other ethno-graphers wrote with a high degree of empathy for the rationalities they had encountered abroad, they left nobody in doubt about the fact that these were ultimately to be interpreted from their own, western standpoint (Rottenburg 2013).

During the classical period, the art of the anthropological shift in perspective was thus still based on a dichotomous construction of the standpoints involved, that is: that of the 'other' versus the anthropologist's 'own culture'. Even then, this dichotomy only existed in the heads of those who cultivated the shift in perspective. That a plurality of perspectives on one and the same object exists in all societies studied by anthropologists, and that these perspectives cannot be summarized in a single 'native point of view', is not something that has only emerged today, as the long-standing discussions on the necessary deconstruction of the culture concept have shown (Lentz 2013). Bernhard Streck therefore expressly demands that, today, the anthropologist must no longer be concerned with 'mixing the contradictory statements of his informants to form a homogenous mass' and then declaring this to be the 'world view of the culture under study' (2013: 42, our translation). Instead he or she must devote himself to 'partial domains of meaning' within one and the same society, and only by linking these domains can he or she achieve shifts in perspective.

How can the ability to shift perspectives be learned? It is clearly possible to develop an 'estranged' view on institutions within one's own society or practise the 'exoticization of the own' (Hirschauer 2013) without the deviation via the researcher's own experience of the 'other'; sociologists working on an ethnographic basis adopt strategies that involve 'artificial' distancing. In anthropology, however, the ideal way of learning how to shift perspectives remains the existential experience of the other, which the anthropologist gains in the context of field work. Anthropological field work is not limited to carrying out interviews and observing individual situations, but involves above all the participation in the everyday life of the subjects of the research; it entails studying a foreign language, learning the complex local rules of courtesy and other forms of proximity and distance, adopting unfamiliar eating habits and, not uncommonly, practising a mimicry of dress. In short: it involves the appropriation of a different 'habitus' (Bourdieu) (see also Meyer/Schareika 2009). Somewhat emphatically this was also referred to in ethnopsychoanalysis as 'second socialization' (Nadig 1986). Accordingly, the existential shift in perspective, which is practised during participant observation, is more deeply rooted in anthropology than in other social sciences. As a result, it becomes, to a certain extent, an intuition which also facilitates to view one's own culture from a distance. While the sociologist must imagine what it could be like to be another, the anthropologist has a direct, albeit temporary and partial, experience of what it is to be (or have been) another.

However, the characteristics of the anthropological capacity for shifting perspectives outlined above must be relativized in various respects. First, the concept of a second socialization is too pompous because it suggests that the anthropologist becomes a new person in the field. It is more accurate to say that he plays at least two roles. In addition to the role of the participant in local social interactions (into which he is not integrated as a full member but according to the roles provided for strangers; see Strecker 1969, Lentz 1989), he always remains a researcher. In this role, he is valued by others in the field as an expert and partner in dialogue (Mauksch/Rao 2014). Second, even the representatives of sociological ethnomethodology bring their bodies into play in a way similar to that of anthropologists when they research social practices of their own society by participant observation (Hirschauer 2013); the difference is rather one of degree than of principle. Third, otherness is always a relational concept and in order to make an existential experience of otherness, it is not necessary to travel to exotic places. Such an experience can also be made in environments in Germany or Europe, in which an anthropologist who has been socialized in a liberal academic world will feel quite 'strange' (see also Diawara 2009). And finally, because anthropologists today often establish long-term and sometimes very personal relationships with their field locations (ranging from close friendship to marriage and children), with time the experience of being 'estranged' may also be strongly relativized.

Representation and criticism

Over extended periods of the twentieth century, ethnographic representation was a project in both senses of the word. What was involved was the presentation of other lifeworlds along with political advocacy for their inhabitants and the rehabilitation of their cultural and social practices. Both aspects were associated with the partly implicit and partly explicit criticism of the researcher's 'own' society. To this extent, anthropology was always a specific form of self-interpretation through understanding the 'other' and a project of social critique. Both aspects of representation have nowadays become problematic. First, the description of cultural difference faces the potential recrimination of 'othering'; and, second, the people who were previously represented by foreign anthropologists now have their own political and academic representatives who speak in their name both 'at home' and in the international arena.

Anthropologists have developed different strategies for dealing with these challenges. In what could be called self-reflective 'confessional' literature, the researcher makes himself the object of study while the society in which he has researched becomes a secondary concern. The preoccupation with the history of the discipline or the anthropological archive (Kohl 2013) provides another possibility for evading the problem of ethnographic representation. The new 'fear of difference' can also result in a shift towards research in the anthropologists' own society (Schiffauer 1997). However, the majority of German-language anthropologists does not (yet) take recourse to these evasive manoeuvres, but tends to operate from a position of critical realism. With regard to the epistemological dimension of the representation problem, this involves increased reflexivity in the sense of critical self-observation on the part of the observing subject. With regard to the political dimension of representation it implies a heightened awareness of being part of a context of power (Schlichte 2013). Moreover, new forms of producing knowledge in close cooperation with researchers from the global South considerably nuance the problems of 'othering' (Schlehe 2013).

What becomes of the project of anthropology as a critical practice under these conditions? Four different positions can be identified here**.** First, the old project of criticising the 'own' based on a view refined by researching the 'other' is still relevant. As specialists in shifting perspectives, to the present day anthropologists contribute not only to relativize the social practice of their own societies, but also to criticize scholarly concepts and perspectives originating from Euro-America. This is the case, in particular, when they focus on the study of transfer objects, for example media or biomedicine, which are traditionally the focus of other disciplines using eurocentric concepts (Krings 2013). Second, one can attempt to describe differences without evaluating them and maintain that it is not primarily the task of the anthropologist to improve things. This relativistic approach to differences may be supported by drawing a distinction between the anthropologist as scholar and as citizen. However, Rottenburg (2013), who develops a third position, qualifies this distinction as naive and argues instead for the development of a new anthropological project of criticism, similar to critical sociology à la Boltanski, which does not hesitate to also criticize cultural practices of the societies which anthropologists traditionally study. In this perspective, a sociology and an anthropology of criticism would be similar; their main difference would consist in the fact that anthropologists are interested in the critical potential of actors and institutions not in their own society but in a foreign one. Finally, the sociologist Hirschauer (2013: 246) sees the critical potential of both sociology and anthropology in the epistemological quality of the distanced view: confronting others with a deviating view of themselves is a benefit that 'should not be withheld from them', and it is a task that requires the 'overcoming of moral self-blockades' on the part of anthropology.

The future of anthropology as a symmetrical social science

The modernization process that shaped the discipline in recent decades may be viewed as largely complete today. German-language anthropologists now engage in an anthropology of the present; they contribute to the international debate within the discipline on a variety of objects of research, methods and issues. They publish increasingly in English (sometimes also in French, Spanish and Portuguese), in non-German journals, and with foreign publishers; they present papers abroad, are invited as guest lecturers, and pursue international careers; they supervise foreign doctoral students, sometimes jointly with foreign colleagues; they participate in international conferences and in the executives of international associations; and they are in demand as expert consultants in countries all over Europe and beyond.

There is a price to be paid for this internationalization, however. For example, it puts the German-language journals under pressure as they are viewed as only the second-best publication option when an article is not accepted by an American or British journal. This implies, indirectly at least, a certain devaluation of all publications written in German, a phenomenon that Karl-Heinz Kohl (1997) has described as the dialectics of homophobia and allophilia. If a German-speaking anthropologist can chose between quoting a publication in German or another language to support an argument, nowadays, he will generally show a preference for the English-language text. Internationalization thus also means integrating oneself into the international power structure of the discipline, if it does not mean outright self-subalternization. Because publication in US journals is increasingly considered a crucial criterion for the academic careers of the younger generation of researchers, this also means that decisions about these careers are made in the US (Calkin/Rottenburg 2014).

On the other hand, German-language anthropology today still presents certain characteristic features. As is customary elsewhere, the discipline in Germany sees itself as being in a 'permanent crisis' since the 1960s. However, the high level of reflexivity to which the crisis led can be seen as a strength of the discipline. Anthropologists have become particularly aware of the significance of how the researcher positions him- or herself and of the relationality and relativity of the research object – attitudes which are not so common in neighboring disciplines. Unlike in US anthropology, however, in Germany this reflexivity has not resulted in a blockade against empirical research, the retreat into 'anthropology at home' or theoretical essentialism, all of which ultimately give epistemological priority to the global centres. Moreover, German-language anthropology is remarkably research-intensive. It is characterized by a high level of 'worldliness' and has retained the discipline's constitutive affinity for the global peripheries, even if this periphery can no longer be simply defined today in terms of major regions 'out there'. This is due not least to the relatively good conditions of research funding in Germany, as compared with other countries. The affinity with the periphery also clearly distinguishes anthropology from the other social sciences in Germany.

Like other social sciences and the humanities, anthropology works on fundamental questions of philosophy and social theory. These questions have shaped individual periods of the discipline's history. But they have not replaced each other and are not ever finally resolved but generally emerge again newly formulated at a later point in time. Some of these fundamental questions, for example that of human progress, are shared by other disciplines. Others are specific to anthropology. In the discipline's formative period during the Enlightenment, which was strongly influenced by German scholars, the dominant question was 'What is man?'. The fundamental question in the classical phase of anthropology concerned the possibility of social order in communities which did not have the major institutions of European modernity like the state, the law and the market.

Although they might be accentuated differently, these fundamental questions of anthropology remain relevant today. Moreover they have been joined by a new question: In which global society do we live today? Anthropology is predestined to deal with this question because globalization was inscribed in the discipline from the outset. Similarly, the critical reflection on whether categorical distinctions between nature and culture; economics, politics and religion; or physics and metaphysics are universal was part of the discipline's core inventory from the outset, while in other disciplines it did not gain ground before the post-modern and postcolonial periods. The self-critical reflection on the positionality of the observer also emerged far later in the other social sciences and humanities than in anthropology (Münster 2012). If sociology is sometimes referred to as an instance of self-observation of society, anthropology is well positioned to be an instance of self-observation of global society. With its inherent methodological nationalism, sociology faces significantly greater difficulty in doing this (Randeria 1999), not to speak of the other social sciences and humanities which only research sub-areas of society and culture.

However, anthropology cannot play this role on a self-contained basis but must look far beyond the boundaries of the discipline. This role demands, first, the critical exploration of social theory, that is of the various attempts to conceptualize the present such as the multiple-modernities perspective, or the concepts of globality, post-coloniality, late capitalism, neo-liberalism, network society, and so on. This critical exploration is not yet anthropological research itself but it has consequences for research practice. Anthropology today no longer examines discrete units but global flows and networks. It does not lose sight of the marginalized communities produced or forgotten by globalization, but the local communities, whose analysis is anthropology's particular strength, must be understood in the context of macro-structures. The focus of research today tends to lie on practices and processes, rather than the objectivations or results of these processes. With its affinity for informal processes and practices and the capacity for considering politics outside of the state and economics outside of the market, anthropology is also interested in the counter trends, irritations, resistance and recodings which the dominant processes produce.

Second, the interdisciplinarity imposed by both the objects of research and the institutional context of research linked to the university is challenging traditional disciplinary boundaries. Today, anthropologists write texts which could also be classified under the headings of history, sociology, media or film studies, or political science. The objects of these studies are transfer objects, and the basic approach should involve systematic 'reciprocal comparison' (Austen 2007: 10ff) in which none of the participating disciplines sets the standards for the others.

One possible future for anthropology lies precisely in moving along and across disciplinary boundaries and in developing a symmetrical social science. Symmetry refers here, firstly, to the cooperation between neighboring disciplines, in which, for example, political science can contribute its skills in the area of formal institutional analysis and anthropology its capability to explore informal processes. Secondly, symmetry also means research 'on an equal footing' in transcultural research groups, jointly with researchers from the global South. The research experience in such groups shows clearly just how problematic the traditional disciplinary boundaries have become. When an Indonesian and a German researcher explore jointly and comparatively a topic like 'religion and politics' in both Germany and Indonesia, refer to the same references (which originate by no means only from the canon of anthropology), and apply the same ethnographic methods: when is the German researcher an anthropologist and the Indonesian a sociologist and vice versa? Such transcultural research cooperation with their 'inclusive epistemology' (Schlehe 2013) is pioneering as it provides the opportunity for interactive translation and for overcoming binary polarization. It enables the systematic dismantling of the rigid categories of the 'own' and the 'other', with which an

older anthropology still operated and which postcolonial criticism still accuses the discipline of applying. If the systematic shift in perspectives continues to be the hallmark of anthropology, the aim of an anthropology of the present should be to multiply intersecting shifts in perspectives.

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