



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Shaping Asia through Knowledge Circuits

Convener: Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka

In-Person Workshop

Venue: ZiF Bielefeld

Date: 27–29 September 2023

Most of our knowledge about the world is co-produced. This workshop focuses on the knowledges produced collectively and collaboratively in and about Asia historically, and contemporaneously. We conceive of 'knowledge' in plural as the workshop will inquire into different forms of knowledge. On one hand, the workshop is interested in the manifold forms of everyday and practical knowledge that is produced, circulated, and disseminated among diverse actors such as trading communities, activists, art performers, farmers, and others. In some instances, the involved actors may not conceive of their *sens pratique* as 'knowledge'; in other instances, they might re-value and newly deploy certain forms of knowledge in movements aimed at highlighting 'alternative' (Alatas) or 'discrepant knowledge'(Said). On the other hand, the workshop is interested in the many processes involved in the canonisation of knowledge, including academic canonisation, and the modalities of forging and contesting 'valid' knowledge reservoirs.

Why Asia? The workshop starts off from the observation that we still know little about historicized and contemporary Asia-Europe, even less so Asia-German nexuses. There exists an impressive amount of knowledge on specific dimensions of Asian societies and cultures, produced inside (for instance think of the knowledge powerhouses located in Japan, China, and Singapore) and outside of Asia (especially in US, UK, in the Netherlands, and in France) and of course in their manifold entanglements. Nevertheless, we lack comprehensive insights and visions on Asia and about its challenges and roles in the contemporary world. We also require comparative dimensions in Asian studies that would put similar constellations and developments taking place in different parts of Asia in relation to one other. At the same time, we don't know enough about past and contemporary connectivities within the continent and how they expand beyond the Asian region. Comparisons, connectivities, and collaboration are all too often neglected by those engaged in forging knowledge locally, but also by those producing knowledge on Asia within academic thinktanks formed around specific regions.

This workshop is part of a continuous effort within the 'Shaping Asia'-network to stimulate academic exchange between scholars and practitioners engaged with different (trans-) regions in Asia and working in different academic disciplines. 'Knowledge circuits' are taken here as constellations within which knowledge is (re)produced, exchanged, critically contested, and put to use for academic collaboration and societal engagement. We are interested in knowledge circuits at different levels proposing, therefore, four thematic panels:

- I. ***Every-day configurations of knowledge exchange:*** How is knowledge forged within small social formations (e.g. families, village and neighbourhood collectives, grassroots organisations etc.)? How are the actors involved as well as the social formations they are part of shaped by the knowledge that is co-produced? How are such social micro-constellations informed by the broader processes of knowledge production and circulation, how do they position themselves within knowledge hierarchies (e.g. by engagement in 'alternative knowledge' movements)? How do they challenge, subvert, or impact 'dominant truths' inscribed in hegemonic knowledge discourses?
- II. ***Transnational dimensions in knowledge exchange:*** How and what forms of knowledge are forged in the transnational knowledge circuits (e.g. among traders, entrepreneurs or among religious practitioners and political activists)? How do these forms of knowledge shape and reshape transnational networks or partnerships? How do the contemporary infrastructures of knowledge production and circulation work in on- and offline exchanges across the continent and beyond?
- III. ***Asian initiatives in enhancing mutual knowledge exchange:*** Over the last decades, scholars, especially among those based in Asia, have engaged in numerous initiatives geared at the acceleration of knowledge exchange between different Asian 'knowledge communities'. Despite their networking objectives, they remain or appear scattered on a more global stage. The aim of this panel will be to learn about the different academic circuits as well as short-circuits of knowledge production on/in Asia. Of interest will be the assumptions and the outcomes of the networking activities, the variety of academic co-operations as well as the potentialities, promises, challenges, pitfalls, and failures of such collaborations.
- IV. ***Germany-based scholarship on Asian societies and cultures through collaboration – taking stock and research cum networking desiderates:*** Compared to the German scholarship on for example Africa, social science and humanities research on Asia and with 'knowledge communities' located in Asia (going beyond the local, national and regional particularities) still lacks institutional structures of support and public visibility. Given the magnitude of the rapid developments and innovations within different regions of Asia and given the increasing interconnections within and outside of the continent, a research platform enabling intensified exchange and knowledge dissemination is necessary. This panel is geared at developing an agenda towards establishing a research platform that will build upon the 'Shaping Asia'-initiative as a funded DFG-network that is slowly coming to an end and invites initiatives for future collaboration.

Please submit an abstract of approximately 400 words (with title, author contact, and 5-6 keywords) by **23 July 2023** to the workshop convenor:

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