

WS 38
Multiple worlds, development, and globalization – struggles across Oceania
RG Ozeanien

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Organisiert von / organized by:

Arno Pascht (LMU München)

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Arturo Escobar has recently argued that territories all around the globe become more and more occupied by one particular ontology, which builds on a number of dichotomies such as nature vs. culture or individualism vs. communalism and is framed by the universal world of individuals, expert knowledge, and the market economy. Against this background, the indigenous and autochthonous people of Oceania (and elsewhere) struggle to maintain their local ways of being. Pacific Islanders have for long experienced the effects of external influences such as evangelization, colonialism, capitalism and development aid, resulting in ongoing struggles for alternative ways of being in the world. Previous scholarship has often theorized these processes as the negotiation of multiple worlds and emphasised the power of resistance of local societies. Yet, in the light of the continued extraction of natural resources and externally-driven economic development, the emergence of new political, military and economic elites, climate change and disaster management programs in many parts of Oceania, the question arises if local contexts in which these multiple worlds and their ontological foundations encounter, can indeed always be (seen as) socially negotiated. By asking this question from a political ontology perspective, we hope to open new angles of analysis and interpretation.

To that effect, this workshop seeks to explore seemingly failed negotiations in encounters which emerge in various fields of globalisation in Oceania. Obvious examples are (anti-) mining activities or fisheries and agriculture. But we also want to address policy-making regimes in areas such as health, development, climate change and disaster and risk management, where Western scientific models are seen as superior in comparison to local conceptions. We invite papers that ponder ethnographic examples in which negotiation and engagement may be seen as ended or where the resistance of local communities and their interests are interpreted as (temporarily) failed.

Keynote:

Melissa Demian (University of St Andrews):

'It's never over': refusing legal remedies to domestic violence in urban Papua New Guinea

The "epidemic" of domestic violence in Papua New Guinea has attracted the attention of any number of would-be interventions from international actors, from foreign aid bodies to NGOs to church-based organisations. Most of these interventions take the form of a criminological teleology, wherein a perpetrator is tried in court and imprisoned, following which the abuse survivor and her children are removed from the urban arena and sent "home" to a village environment.

Research with women in the settlements of Lae and Port Moresby, PNG's two largest cities, suggests that this type of intervention is favoured by very few women currently facing violence in their families. Indeed the legal regime of intervention may actually work against the interests of women for whom, in the words of one interlocutor, "It's never over," referring to relationships with an abusive husband and his family. The notion that law can sever relationships and begin a

person's life anew does not reflect the lived experiences of women who desire to reconfigure their already-existing lives in the city, rather than trying to reinvent themselves as villagers with conveniently erased husbands and affinal connections.

Vortragende / Speakers

Arno Pascht (LMU München),
Sina Emde (Universität Heidelberg) und
Dominik Schieder (Universität Siegen)

Introduction

People in Oceania live in entangled local and global worlds characterised by a number of dichotomies such as nature vs. culture or individualism vs. communalism. In this introduction we look especially at regimes that render development and aid technical and separate experts from non-experts by giving privilege to Western ontologies and dichotomies over Oceanic ways of being in the world. This happens in the context of economic development, the emergence of new political, military and economic elites, climate change and disaster management programs as well as food and health programmes. In this introduction we discuss possible consequences if processes following the encounter of multiple worlds and their ontological foundations are not (seen as) as socially negotiated or interpreted as failed negotiations.

Michael Goddard (Macquarie University Sydney)

Culture without land

Port Moresby, the capital of Papua New Guinea, has grown and spread during the past century and a quarter across the traditional territory of two ethno-linguistic groups, the Koita and Motu, who nowadays identify themselves jointly as the 'Motu-Koitabu'. An increasing loss of land to the city and its overwhelmingly migrant population in recent decades has generated a degree of neo-traditional self-assertion by the Motu-Koitabu, pursuing cultural revival projects and political advocacy to preserve their joint identity.

However, due to capitalism and the increasing commercialization of land the priorities of younger Motu-Koita are increasingly shaped by a globalising market and its persuasive futurism. Land 'ownership' is now constrained under a legally codified 'patrilineal' descent dogma which facilitates entrepreneurial individualism and undermines traditional processes of group consultation over land use. At the same time, the commodification of land and the emergence of a descent dogma might be undermining the mutually-preserving coalition between the Motu and Koita, as pre-colonial territorial arguments between the two groups are revitalised in contemporary contests between modern 'landowners'. Can neo-traditional Motu-Koita 'culture' survive?

Willem Church (University of Luzern)

Whose ontology anyway?

Diverse visions of development around a prospective copper-gold mine in Papua New Guinea

Recently, there has been a surge of interest in the so-called "ontological turn" in anthropology. Although fashionable, the ontological turn has also been criticized on numerous grounds, from the political (homogenising the perspectives of local peoples) to the conceptual (particularly over the term "ontology"). This paper attempts to engage with such concerns by considering the diverse range of ways in which different Wampar are engaging with a prospective copper-gold mine in the Morobe Province Papua New Guinea. For Wampar, the mine is the newest manifestation of

a long line of changes that people profoundly and fundamentally disagree over. In this paper, I recount the story of three different Wampar in their attempts to alternatively resist and enlist the mine for their own goals, and their successes and failures in doing so. Through these accounts, I seek to emphasise the heterogeneity of perspectives and approaches to the mine, and how discussions of multiple worlds and negotiating ontologies (successful or otherwise) is unhelpful to capturing the nature of these interactions.