JEECA

2016/2

Journal for European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis

WAXMANN

Journal of European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)

Edited on behalf of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde by Alexa Färber, Irene Götz, Ina Merkel, Johannes Moser, Friedemann Schmoll

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Indexing is in progress.

Frequency of publication and subscriptions
JEECA is published online biannually and can be acquired via library license. The subscription price for libraries and institutions is 250,-€ and 100,-€ for institutional members of the dgv and libraries/institutions of some countries from the Global South and from (South-)Eastern Europe (please contact JEECA for the reduced subscription fee). The subscription price for individuals is 80,-€ (prices inclusive VAT; cancellation of subscription at the end of the year). More information on terms and conditions:
www.waxmann.com/jeeca

ISSN 2511-2473

Internet: www.waxmann.com, e-mail: info@waxmann.com
Advertising: Melanie Völker, voelker@waxmann.com

JEECA

2016/2

Journal of European Ethnology and Cultural Analysis

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Journal of European Ethnology
and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)
2016, 1 (2): 81–103

Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, Georg Wolfmayr

Doing city*

Other urbanities and the negotiation of city in everyday practices

Abstract: Urban studies (in European Ethnology) are dominated by a persistent metrocentrism. Metrocentrism is characterized by a one-sided concentration on large cities and metropolises and is based on a normative conception of urbanity, which is closely linked with classic notions of modernity and does only consider certain (i. e. 'Western') milieus, situations and spaces. Cities and city life beyond this restriction are neglected and have become fields off the map, such as cities in the southern hemisphere and above all smaller towns. This contribution reflects the underlying hierarchization and presents a praxeological approach to studying the constructed nature, processuality and performativity of relations and categories of cities. Using the example of the cities of Wels in Upper Austria and Hildesheim in Lower Saxony, it demonstrates how practices of doing place, size and scale can be studied ethnographically.

Keywords: metrocentrism, urbanity, urban way of life, urban studies, praxeology of scale and size

Metrocentrism in (anthropological) urban studies and the problem with urbanity

The urban is enjoying an academic and social boom in the 21st century, brought about by a rate of urbanization never experienced previously. Matthias Horx, the trend researcher, even goes so far as to proclaim the "the city and urbanization as a megatrend" (Zukunftsinstitut 2016). Thomas Hengartner speaks of a second urbanization (Hengartner 2014) and geographers Tim Hall, Phil Hubbard and John Rennie Short write in their introduction to the *SAGE Companion to the City* that we are "in the midst of the Third Urban Revolution" (Hall, Hubbard, and Short 2008). Over half the world's population has been living in urban areas since 2007, and urban life has been declared ubiquitous, long since reaching rural regions, or at least flattening the differences between city and countryside.[1] Academic research has kept pace with

* German version in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 112 (2): 187–208. Translated by Joanna White.

1 Following Henri Lefebvre, numerous studies trace the purported trend towards global urbanization (e. g. Acebillo, Jacques, and Schmid 2013; Brenner 2014; Moravánszky, Schmid, and Stanek 2014). Peter Dirksmeier, the geographer, notes a ubiquitous urbanism in rural regions as well (Dirksmeier 2009).

this situation through a growing interdisciplinary focus on urban forms of life and environments. Urbanity as a specific form of life in the city is once again a central topic, as seen, not least, in new directions in urban planning studies regarding categories such as density and cultural mix.[2] However, a closer look reveals that *very particular* cities predominate in research, society and politics, and are viewed as paradigmatic examples of urban life. These are the big and very big cities of a presumed western modernity. It is particularly the metropolitan and cosmopolitan lived realities and, for some time now, the global and world cities that function as the nerve centers of global capitalism, as Saskia Sassen (1991) puts it, that have garnered attention, i. e. primarily cities such as New York, Tokyo and London.

Ideas about the city are, thus, largely connected to big and very big cities. By contrast, other cities – smaller or non-western cities or towns – barely feature as examples of urban life, tend to be viewed as deficient, less developed and less urban, and are less often the subject of research. The British geographer Jennifer Robinson has highlighted this remarkable disparity in the attention paid to different forms and sizes of cities and, in her well-regarded book *Ordinary Cities* (2006), calls for more studies of cities that are "off the map." Taking up perspectives from postcolonial studies, she criticizes the centrism of the focus of urban studies on western cities in the northern hemisphere. Geographers Tim Bunnell and Anant Maringanti also fault this bias, which they term metrocentricity (2010), and attempt to break with it by looking towards Asian countries. Urban research being carried out in the global south has also put forward criticisms of urban Eurocentrism, for example, the work of AbdouMaliq Simone (2010) and Ananya Roy (2011). The British cultural geographers David Bell and Mark Jayne deliberately investigated "Small Cities" (2006a); in doing so, they focused on "overlooked" types of town or city, such as small and medium-sized towns and cities.

Metrocentrism was also frequently to be found in European Ethnology, once the discipline had identified the city as an object of study. The primary point of interest in the German-speaking tradition of *Volkskunde*, as is well known, was first and foremost the village and the community. These were ways of life conceived of as being on a smaller scale, where researchers were looking for social orders and collectives that had ostensibly been passed down and traditional lifestyles that had remained untouched by social change.

The number of studies of cities in European Ethnology started to increase in the 1980s along the lines of an anthropology of urban areas (Hannerz 1980), where the urban was decidedly equated with the city – as, for example, at the 24th Congress of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* in 1983 in Berlin, which bore the title: "City. Aspects of Empirical Cultural Research" (Kohlmann and Bausinger 1985).

2 On the central role of the term urbanism in urban planning, cf. the work of Thomas Wüst on "the myth of urbanism" (Wüst 2004).

Research questions were sought specifically in the everyday life of large cities. Still today, it is predominantly the (symbolically) big cities that provide the locations for urban research, for example, Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Vienna, Graz, or Zurich. Smaller towns or cities, such as Marburg, Tübingen or Göttingen, are only seldom studied as having something to contribute to urban studies. Thus, with the shift from the village to the city as well as from tradition to modernity, a new imbalance regarding social reality crept into European Ethnology: ultimately, most people in Europe do not live in cities but in small and medium-sized towns and cities.[3]

With its transition to an empirical study of culture as European Ethnology, the discipline found itself in service to a city hype that would have been worth studying in and of itself. The seemingly exotic, iridescent and multicolored city, or specific spaces within it, was what attracted researchers and promised renown (Lindner 1990: 108; Schmidt-Lauber 2010). Once again, European Ethnology went along with the social bias towards cities as apparently paradigmatic urban centers. Not least, there was also an academic logic to this imbalance: If the most pronounced manifestations of urban life were to be found in the city, so ran the conjecture, then it was best studied there. Underlying this was a conception of qualitative research in which, in contrast to the earlier *Volkskunde*, the object of study was aligned around the 'new' or the 'modern.'

The term urbanity harbors multiple constraints. On the one hand, like the term city, it is a well-established concept in everyday speech and a formalized term in academic usage for urban lifestyles, one closely connected to classical ideas about modernity and which includes only certain milieus, situations and spaces (namely 'western' ones) (Amin and Graham 1997; Bell and Jayne 2006a; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Robinson 2006). At the same time, it is so vague that it can be used in a variety of situations (Wüst 2004). Within the concept of urbanism, 'the city' is generally equated with the big city or only with certain spaces within it. As a result of this normative understanding, lived realities in other towns or certain areas of the city are not considered to be urban. Hence, Thomas Hengartner is among those who criticize the exclusion of other forms of urban life and the one-sided bias of the terms urbanity and urbanism towards a "fair weather urbanism," as if this were to be found "only in a dense crowd, in temperate climates and when the sun is shining" (Hengartner 2014: 17).

In everyday usage, urbanity and urbanism often arise in commercialized contexts, and their use to lend emotional weight or as a value judgement is striking,

3 Given the different definitions of towns and cities in relation to their population and function, categories of cities and their share of the total population vary between countries. As a result, figures available for the EU are estimates, according to information provided by the Europe office of the *Deutschen Städte- und Gemeindebund* (June 25, 2014). However, all the estimates that differentiate by city type conclude that most inhabitants live in medium-sized and small towns.

usually with positive connotations when, for example, estate agents, the media or travel guides describe certain districts or streets as 'urban,' implying not only vitality, variety and good infrastructure, but also the visibility of aesthetic or new consumer trends. Places with 'urban' qualities appear livable; following today's dominant, culturalized understanding of what a city is, this often translates as the staging of cultural diversity (Grube and Welz 2014). For some time now, the practice of new urbanism in town planning has also been reorienting itself around the concept of urban life (Sonne 2014) and striving to make it something that can be planned, while the model of the overdeveloped, car-friendly city has had its day (Othengrafen et al. 2016). Remarkably, this means that even the small town has now come to serve as a guide in new urbanism.

Based on this kind of normative, structural definition of what constitutes urbanity, urban studies can offer the possibility of researching and 'measuring' characteristics, such as the density, size or heterogeneity of a city. However, it is our opinion that it also makes – perhaps greater – sense to rethink the normative constraints of the term urbanity and to open it up to explore the plurality of urban life beyond the metropolis, expanding Louis Wirth's "ways of life" to "different ways of urban life" (Wirth 1938); it is in this sense that the title of this article speaks of 'other urbanities.' This means searching for other ways of describing and evaluating urban life and avoiding the unthinking perpetuation of an overt hierarchization of cities.

In the following article, we seek to reflect critically on the metrocentrism – of which European Ethnology is also guilty – and on the normative limitation of the terms city and urbanity to modern, western cities, and to break with this by focusing on case studies involving towns and forms of urban life that do not correspond to the conventional understanding of the city, but which we, nevertheless, deliberately investigate as cities and conceive as urban ways of life. In doing so, the text joins the growing body of work focusing on non-metropolitan (often non-western) cities described above and explores the specific contribution made by European Ethnology to this trend. In comparison with urban studies, with its basis broadly in the social sciences and geography, empirical culture studies have hitherto contributed only very little to the discussion, or only very recently.[4] However, as we hope to show, the

4 Based on a research project on urban life in Göttingen (Schmidt-Lauber and Baerwolf 2009), we held an interdisciplinary conference at the University of Göttingen in 2009 on the topic of "Medium-sized towns. Urban life beyond the metropolis," which concentrated on case studies that did not involve large towns or cities. In October 2015, an international, interdisciplinary conference took place at the University of Vienna titled "We have never been urban. From metrocentrism to the plurality of the urban," which looked explicitly at other forms of urbanity outside of its normative understanding.

discipline's microanalytical, historical and socially contextualizing approach[5] opens up the potential to trace the complexity of social processes and lifeworlds, as well as to decode the dynamics of city hierarchies in everyday contexts without restricting or reducing them to their structural or material premises. To do this, we investigate the role of 'big' concepts like city and urbanity in everyday situations and show the different meanings that 'the city' can have. This also allows us to highlight both the interplay between material and symbolic practices in the production of urban positions and hierarchies and the contingent nature of urban models.

Medium-sized towns as ordinary cities

The question of everyday urban life in ordinary cities will be directed in what follows towards a specific example: Namely, what are known as medium-sized towns. These are towns that, according to official typology, are neither cities nor small towns. 'Medium-sized town' is not a common category either in everyday speech or in academic urban research. However, it is one of the common categories used for classifying municipal areas for German government administrations and is based on a numerical definition calculated according to the number of inhabitants. Remarkably, the authorities still use the numerical definition taken from the German Imperial Statistics (*Deutsche Reichsstatistik*) of 1871. According to this, towns with 20,000 to 100,000 residents are medium-sized towns, whereas towns with over 100,000 residents are cities – and this in spite of the fact that urban life has undoubtedly changed dramatically since the late 19th century. Suggestions for different boundaries when categorizing by size have, therefore, been made by those working in the

5 Approaches from urban studies and the study of culture have become much more differentiated within European Ethnology in recent years in terms of both theory and method. Sustained efforts to determine the specificity and singularity of individual cities through a description of the habitus of a city (Lindner 2003; Lindner and Moser 2006) have entered the research field alongside diagnoses of the social trends of a particular time (Färber 2014; Färber and Otto 2016) or normative questions of communal life ("Urban Ethics" research group at the Ludwig Maximilian University Munich). New impulses can be seen particularly in terms of methodology (Schwanhäußer 2010, 2015) and textuality in the wake of the critical reading of the tendency to parcel up towns into closed entities and describe urban cultures holistically in the same way as villages or islands (see, e. g. Kokot, Hengartner, and Wildner 2000). Conceptual programs put forward recently by, above all, Alexa Färber (2010), Jörg Niewöhner (2014) and Ignacio Farías (Farías and Bender 2010) suggest adapting the assemblage approach and utilizing ANT for urban studies, seeking to counter the dematerialization of space through a plurality of actors. The much cited thesis of the culturalization of urban life along the lines of a general estheticization of society (Reckwitz 2009, 2012) has been taken up recently by Nils Grube and Gisela Welz (2014), who provide concrete empirical examples that highlight the use of multiculturality as a resource in city branding initiatives and the economic and symbolic upgrading of cities. In their own way, all these examples show the potential of detailed, multidimensional case studies in European Ethnology for studying everyday life, which we also follow.

study of space and place, for example, a population bracket of 50,000 to 250,000 inhabitants for medium-sized towns (Adam 2005: 496). However, a growing number of voices consider, justifiably, that defining city types according to statistical size is meaningless given that there are critical differences between cities in terms of their significance and configuration at a national and global level and in different historical periods, and even between cities of the same size – regarding their functions, structure and role within a network of settlements, and regarding everyday life and experience.[6] It is precisely here that European Ethnology is capable of making a key contribution, namely, the qualitative study of medium-sized towns in terms of their lifeworlds and lived everyday practices within the context of their history and sociospatial configuration.

If we are to study medium-sized towns, and, in doing so, proclaim the pluralization instead of the hierarchization of the urban, this means moving away from trying to define different types of 'city' and codify criteria for assessing urbanity. The case for retaining the medium-sized town as a type in its own right outside of government categorization is difficult to maintain: The social, economic and historical background to each town is too diverse, not to mention the variety of living situations and ways of life within the towns (Baumgart and Rüdiger 2010: 254; Rauter 2011: 4; Schmidt-Lauber 2010: 18–19). Consequently, the towns are not investigated as 'medium-sized towns,' but, following Jennifer Robinson, as ordinary towns, where 'ordinariness' is understood not as averageness, but in the sense of non-deficient. We also trace how town size is produced in these towns:

> "Rather than categorising and labelling cities as, for example, Western, Third World, developed, developing, world or global, I propose that we think about a world of ordinary cities, which are all dynamic and diverse, if conflicted, arenas for social and economic life." (Robinson 2006: 1)

We understand town size as a category that requires explanation and cannot simply be assumed implicitly. With this in mind, we trace the logics of urban life and draw attention to the fact that 'the city' and 'urban life,' or how they are understood, embrace a more diverse range of meanings than simply the nightlife in Berlin Mitte or Neukölln, the consumer world of Vienna's Neubau district or Graben shopping street, or the spheres of the cultural economy in London or New York.

The impetus for this topic came – as so often in European Ethnology – from our own experiences. Working in the empirical study of culture and lived experience, European ethnologists are practiced in drawing on their own experience and using it as source material. When I (Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber) was appointed to the Georg-August University in Göttingen in 2006, I found myself living in a town with

6 Adam 2005: 495–496; Flacke 2004: 27; Hannemann 2002: 268–270; on the diversity of small and medium-sized towns, cf. Kunzmann 2004.

fewer than 240,000 inhabitants for the first time in my life – until then Kiel was the smallest city I had lived in – and I quickly realized that my previous experiences and routines were hardly suitable for navigating everyday life in Göttingen and that, in any case, my habitus and outlook, shaped by 'city life' and formed in places like Hamburg, Vienna and Cologne within particular social and political milieus, appeared out of place here. Just the shop and restaurant opening times represented an example of the town's different qualities of experience as distinct from my lifestyle in the city, when I think of my futile attempts to find a proper meal in Göttingen having finished work at 10 pm, although even the understanding of a 'proper meal' is based on social and habitual influences. While in some milieus, the choice of restaurants available in a medium-sized town fails to meet with habitualized tastes, for other consumers, any difference to the city in this respect is irrelevant or goes unheeded. In addition, the culinary range on offer points to the town's position in a gastronomic field that is part of a cultural economy.[7]

I was particularly struck by the spatial and social manageability and familiarity, the small-scale urban fabric of Göttingen. My experience of distance in the city meant I usually allowed too much time when planning routes. I also found it irritating that social networks frequently and almost inevitably intersected, despite being dispersed across the entire town. Unplanned encounters often occurred, or I met acquaintances in places where I believed myself safe in my anonymity, such as the supermarket, swimming pool and, inevitably, time and again at the railway station – a noteworthy hub in medium-sized towns, and especially in university towns. I also became aware of the surprisingly high degree of visibility accorded my own academic activities. This was familiar from my research in Namibia, where my master's thesis about German-speaking Namibians was declared introductory reading for diplomats by the German embassy and I, as a doctoral student, received an invitation to a state reception in Bonn. My admission to this illustrious circle of statesmen (in this case only) was certainly not the result of any form of brilliance on my part, but was rather the product of shorter social pathways in a compact milieu, the result of scant competition and an associated boost in importance in comparison with the much-cited anonymity found in large cities.[8] These characteristics should not, however, be conceived as genuine features of medium-sized towns; instead, they are the outcome of a performative production of familiarity. They point to the negotiation of one of the town's specific roles.

While today's Göttingen, with its 116,650 inhabitants, is officially categorized as a city (and sits in 65th place in the ranking of German cities; as of 05.01.2016),

7 See, for example, the distribution of Michelin Stars in Europe: Eupedia. 2017. "Ranking of Michelin-starred restaurants by city in Europe." Accessed July 5, 2017. Available at: http://www.eupedia.com/europe/michelin_stars_by_city.shtml.

8 See "Small Countries" (Gingrich and Hannerz 2017).

this does not correspond with the attitude towards life or the self-image of most of the people who live there. Yet hardly anyone categorized the place as a small town either; rather, it was somewhere in between – it was felt to be a 'medium-sized town.' Locally, being positioned between city and village, being 'in-between' or 'both the one and the other,' was an important feature. A town such as Göttingen boasts characteristics of the city *and* features of the small town, as well as the countryside through its proximity to nature, I heard over and over again. The basis for this might well be the its role as an important university town and tourist destination, which demonstrates that town size is dependent on context. Thus, the town's position within these academic and tourist domains renders it 'larger' than the number of inhabitants would suggest. Town size – this indicates – is, thus, a relational category produced by a number of different means.

Research on medium-sized towns or doing place, size and scale in Wels and Hildesheim

In the research project "Middletown Urbanities,"[9] we follow a praxeological approach in the sense of 'doing city,' studying towns as relational cultural, material and social structures and identifying the ongoing production of the city, or categories of cities, in various fields of practice. Here, a central role is played by practices that ascribe significance and positioning to a place, which we bring together under the terms 'doing place,' 'doing size' and 'doing scale.' We render the towns of Wels and Hildesheim visible as the *result* of place-making practices. City and place are understood not as fixed entities; instead, the research focuses on the processes by which they are produced performatively over and over again and appropriated in the sense of Doreen Massey's concept of multiple place identities (Massey 1991). There is no fixed meaning (derived from town size, for example) that 'resides' in a place; rather, relational processes lend it position and meaning: "In this interpretation, what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 1991: 28). With Ignacio Farías; we understand city and place "as a multiplicity of processes of becoming" (Farías 2010:

9 In preparation, we initiated a research project that ran over two semesters at the University of Göttingen about everyday life in the town (Schmidt-Lauber and Baerwolf 2009), which was associated with an interdisciplinary conference involving social scientists and historians (Schmidt-Lauber 2010). Even after the project leader had transferred to the University of Vienna in 2009, continuing to break with the metrocentric bias of the cultural focus on cities remained important. Therefore, from our location in Vienna and running parallel to research on the city, we consciously initiated the FWF-funded research project "Middletown Urbanities – Ethnographic Urban Studies in Wels and Hildesheim" (http://www.univie.ac.at/middletownurbanities/), which ran from 2011 to 2016 and the aims and initial findings of which we present in the following. This article also draws on existing publications arising from the various projects on medium-sized towns.

2). An ethnological approach in urban studies foregrounds what people do and asks how, through these actions and in various ways, the city is produced, perceived and appropriated (Färber 2010; Hengartner 2000; Hengartner, Kokot, and Wildner 2000). At the same time, our work is founded on a broad understanding of practices and actors that includes the work of politics, urban planning and marketing, architecture, media and other fields of work, but also and above all, the everyday practices of the towns' inhabitants.

However, we are not only interested in how the two towns become places and take on meaning, but particularly how this also produces relations between towns. Ultimately, the importance given to and hierarchies between towns are not the logical result of objective facts and numbers. Rather, one town's position in comparison to another is reproduced repeatedly and in manifold ways. Accordingly, in our research, we do not describe medium-sized towns primarily by means of numerical size, but above all with reference to the concrete practices that produce place and city. In our view, the term size encompasses a symbolic dimension in addition to physical characteristics pertaining to expanse in space. Ayşe Çağlar, the social anthropologist, and Nina Glick Schiller, the sociologist, (2009) use the term scale in a similar way. We attempt to forge a productive relationship between the terms size and scale without collapsing one into the other.[10] To do so, we suggest understanding a town's material setting as a dimension of size and, analogous to scale, as produced through practice. While, in line with Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller and their use of Pierre Bourdieu, we understand scale as the positions a town occupies within different fields (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 188); we understand size as a resource deployed in relation to these positions, or, as Mark Jayne and David Bell put it: "It's not size, it's what you do with it" (Bell and Jayne 2006b: 5). Drawing on Levitt and Glick Schiller, we understand social fields as a "set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). Taking a range of fields – such as everyday life, administration and economics – we identify how and in what ways towns are classified, how meaning is ascribed to a town, and what forms of the production and naming of 'size' become visible.

Implicitly or explicitly, references to and comparisons with other towns play a role in these kinds of characterization and positioning. Towns can only be understood and described – in both academic and everyday situations – in reference to other towns, i. e. relationally. A term we use in this context is the 'landscape of urbanity' in which a town is embedded and in relation to which its inhabitants make sense of it. By this, we mean specific spatial contexts against which the normative image

10 Thus, for example, in some cases, residents linked the lack of anonymity with the 'provincial' status of the towns studied (scale) and in others, with the small-scale of the city center (size).

of the urban is understood, and within which a town is characterized and placed in relation to other spatial entities. Landscapes of urbanity function as guides for what appears self-evident, such as what a 'town' is and means, or the form taken by the relationship between town and countryside, each of which communicates certain ideas and expectations about urban life. The idea of a town in central Europe hardly corresponds to the reality in China, for example, where megacities create administrative units and spaces organized in a completely different way. Within Europe too, what is considered self-evident and what is considered relevant varies greatly. This is clear even just from a comparison of our case studies: Hildesheim has around 100,000 inhabitants, making it only the seventh largest town in Lower Saxony, a federal state in which there are several other medium-sized towns. Wels, by contrast, with just under 60,000 inhabitants, is, nevertheless, the eighth largest town in Austria. 'Medium-sized urbanity' is, therefore, produced within its own regional and national frame, and is more likely to be measured against such conventions than by numerical analysis. This makes it imperative that cultural urban studies look at a town's historical and geographical contexts.

Towns do not all have the same importance or carry the same weight, and instead have different relevance and reach depending on the underlying criteria or context.[11] Even we were rarely able to ignore the hierarchy between towns or the unequal power relations. A town such as Hildesheim or Wels has a distinct and, in many contexts, much smaller amount of symbolic capital than a city such as Vienna or Berlin. Geographer Peter Dirksmeier (2009) writes aptly in this regard of "residential capital," meaning the local effects and spatial profits which towns and cities have available to them to varying degrees. This residential capital is actively created and continually renegotiated, meaning that the generation of symbolic capital takes place in a number of ways, through different actors and on different levels. Towns today increasingly find themselves in national and global competition with one another and compete for different sorts of capital. Intertown competitions and city rankings on a whole variety of themes and initiated by a range of organizations use different criteria to rank all sorts of towns, forming hierarchies of importance by topic. This itself reflects the growing focus on competition and a culture of evaluation in general (Tauschek 2013). Which town comes out at the top of these symbolic city rankings and can offer the most residential capital can vary historically and depends on the field and methodology involved. Even the attractiveness of city life *per se* is subject to changing cycles, with criticism of the city and urban outmigration, or urban hype and booms around particular districts playing a role.

11 Here, a similarity can be seen to postcolonial studies and its critical reflections on the logic of the hierarchization of people and spaces and its implications – in this regard, it is possible to perceive a relationship between the center and those regions deemed peripheral that appears almost colonial.

The investigation of 'doing city' in this research project encompasses different dimensions. In concrete terms, we trace practices of doing place, size and scale on symbolic, material and social levels.[12] On a *symbolic* level, we are interested in the discursive practices around the classification of places and towns. One particularly powerful practice of classification can be seen in the established administrative convention of categorizing towns by town size, and here we submit the status of 'medium-sized town' itself to a critical reflection and historicization. Local, regional and national administrations create and materialize hierarchies between towns. By using numerical and functional criteria, such as population, administrative status and infrastructural and/or economic function, they categorize municipalities as cities, medium-sized towns or small towns, allocate them a status as a local or regional center (Adam 2004), allot them different resources and tasks and, by doing so, turn them into a region's 'second city' or 'first city.' Urban planning, the social sciences, history and culture studies have now also, having long neglected them, hesitantly started to (re)discover urban spaces beyond the metropolises and, consequently, have opened up new positions for the category. Today, researchers and planners are interested in medium-sized towns particularly from the point of view of sustainability, the compact city and mixed-use development, ascribing to them a specific quality of life. Medium-sized towns will become increasingly significant in Europe, as predicted by the political scientist Carl Böhret as early as 1991 (Böhret 1991: 1). The rankings mentioned above, as symbolic practices of relation in the context of the logics of competition and the culture of evaluation, also enact a system of classification (Tauschek 2012: 196–197). A further major contribution to how a city is positioned and labelled is made by city marketing. Utilized by medium-sized towns as well, it is a way of professionally marketing and showcasing a town in an era of competition between towns. Maps are another very obvious and clear way of producing positions – and, therefore, hierarchies – whilst appearing to objectivize them. Maps are based on a practice of ordering that makes differences in importance visible and produces them. By using differently sized, colored or shaped markings, maps produce and visualize the ostensible value of individual towns, giving them different weighting or creating hierarchies between them, and contributing to a town's visibility or its positioning 'off the map.' At a local level, the image and size of a town are formed by street maps, which reproduce administrative units and take shape in everyday life as mental and habitual geographies, as we see on city walks or in mental maps.

12 These three levels in the study of space correspond to the concept of place put forward by Anne Vogelpohl (2014). For a general discussion on the different dimensions of space, see the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991) and studies inspired by him, particularly in European Ethnology, those by Johanna Rolshoven (2003, 2012).

From the perspective of European Ethnology, we are especially interested in everyday practices of classification, i. e. in the question of how towns are negotiated and the moments in which they are compared or weighed against one another. We are also interested in how the residents come to embed themselves narratively in these comparisons and relations, in how they classify themselves and the links they make to their own self-image, in who calls a town big or small and when, and in who connects it to which other spaces. Symbolic classifications are by no means always immaterial and can certainly have serious material consequences. We need only think, for instance, of the many material effects linked to a new classification as a national or regional capital, as illustrated by Berlin or the example of St. Pölten in Austria.

A second level of interest for us is, therefore, constituted by the *material* relationships that are associated with different classificatory practices, i. e. how the position of a town is produced materially. Human geographers Don Slater and Tomás Ariztía use the apt term "scaling devices" for artefacts that objectivize scales (Slater and Ariztiá 2010). For our purposes, this includes not only things such as infrastructure – local transport networks or transport links to other places – but also a town's physical composition – the built environment or prestige buildings. We are again interested in how actors relate to these materialities, and how they use and employ them. A frequent topic is the extent to which certain buildings in the towns under study are considered 'fitting' in terms of their dimensions or, instead, as 'too big' or 'too small.' And if nothing else, town planning operates on the level of the material. It typically broadly aspires in medium-sized towns to imitate or follow a "blueprint" of the city (Baumgart et al. 2004) and is, thus, guided by the normative understanding of urbanity outlined above, even if principles such as the 'compact city' or 'human scale' are increasingly making an appearance.

Finally, we are interested at the level of the *social* in the practices associated with classifications and materialities, where practices also have a bodily dimension. Pierre Bourdieu has shown how relations become embodied through processes of socialization and habitualization and, thus, become part of human schemes of perception, thought and action (Bourdieu 1982, 1987). This shifts the focus not only to questions of the embodiment, socialization and habitualization of relations, but also of how relations take shape performatively, i. e. the enactment of these relations in social situations, such as a person's moment of embarrassment about or justification of where they live, or in the internalized notion of how to behave in public space. Relations here are not simply performed in the sense of repetition, but are rather constituted, strengthened or contested through practice. In concrete terms, we might examine the extent of social networks or the existence of particular scenes as practices of producing bigness or smallness. We are also interested in the rhythms and everyday routines of shopping for groceries or of work and leisure, in

spheres of action, in how space is appropriated and in social milieus. Using examples such as these, we reveal how actors experience and produce their specific town in their everyday lives.

An ethnography of negotiating place, size and scale in Wels and Hildesheim

The tool and the lens we used to carry out an empirical investigation of urban life and the interweaving of symbolic, material and social levels in everyday worlds was ethnography. This required relocating to the town in question for several months and living there full time, which led to the participation in events and discussion groups, and included things such as reading the local paper daily, attending a yoga course or going to an Irish pub, chatting with neighbors, shopping at the weekly market, going to the theatre or cinema and much more. Ultimately, ethnography means carrying out as many of the tasks of daily life as possible in the research location, knowing that constituting the research field is already part of 'doing place.'

Project researchers Georg Wolfmayr (Wels) and Anna Eckert, and, before her, Wiebke Reinert (Hildesheim), each undertook two periods of ethnographic fieldwork lasting several months and totaling one year. Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber joined them in each location for shorter stays. During this time, we conducted numerous informal, everyday conversations as well as qualitative, ethnographic interviews, researched written sources, such as historical, statistical, administrative and media reports, and made a variety of social contacts with as diverse a range of people as possible. In addition, by asking people to "show me *your* town," we were taken on walking tours of the towns by different inhabitants – an informative method in the style of "go-alongs" (Kusenbach 2008; Lee and Ingold 2006; Schwanhäußer 2015) or "perceptual" walks (Lynch 1960), and forming part of a sensory ethnography (Arantes and Rieger 2014; Bendix 2006; Pink 2009). Residents chose both routine journeys and favorite places or ones associated with a specific memory. At first, we were taken typically less to personal and instead to prestigious sites in the towns, such as those normally included in an official town tour – Hildesheim Cathedral or the Wels Trade Fair Centre – and only a repeated enquiry about the participants' daily life in the town elicited the inclusion of other stops on the tour. Often the concreteness of the sites visited served to contextualize comparisons: References to other towns helped to characterize what gave this particular town its specificity. The walking tours were, therefore, a method which revealed the dimensions of everyday practice and drew out moments where memories and urban imaginaries had condensed, and through which the relationship between the built environment, the appropriation of space and the use of space, as well as symbolic positioning, became visible. We also asked people to give us a history of where they had lived and analyzed how they described the different places and reflected on or justified their decision to move town.

The research was divided into three phases. During an initial fact-finding tour, we examined the history, self-presentation and image of the town using mainly written materials and analyzed basic statistical data. During the second phase, researchers were stationed for four or seven months in the towns for fieldwork. This was used to gain insights into different dimensions and aspects of town life and make contact with a wide range of people. Finally, the third phase consisted of another research stay in Wels or Hildesheim lasting several months, during which time an ethnography of a sector – a particular field serving as a case study for the town – and what might be termed 'deep drilling' was carried out. Given our disciplinary interest, which is concentrated on everyday activity, we sought to use these different methods to understand what it means to live in Wels or Hildesheim, how the residents organize their everyday lives and how they negotiate their town.

In the following, some of the insights gained from our materials will illustrate the fields of research and the three levels of 'doing city' we have explored.

In *Wels,* size is negotiated above all against the backdrop of the town's stigmatization and marginalization within a general culturalization of towns. Having enjoyed an upturn and a sense of euphoria in the 1960s and 1970s founded on the ideal of urban modernity (skyscrapers, motorways, industry and trade), a narrative of decline now dominates in Wels. The 1970s saw the construction of the centrally located Maria Theresa Tower in Wels, which, in its day, proudly adorned postcards as a kind of proof of its own modernity; today, however, the media and residents judge it to be 'out of proportion' for a town such as Wels. While the town is not experiencing an economic or financial crisis, it has symbolically lost relevance over recent decades. Developments linked to postindustrial production, which has been typical for many metropolises which became the centers of cultural and symbolic economies, were not successfully realized in Wels. The symbols of status that used to signify upturn have vanished today, as seen from the many empty shops in the town center, or have lost their value, as the negative discourses around the high-rise housing developments of the 1960s and 1970s show. By contrast, new markers and signs in the symbolic economy are largely lacking or did not bring about the desired effect. Thus, the Welios Science Centre – Wels' attempt to evoke the Bilbao Effect[13] and proof that medium-sized towns are also attempting to embrace the culturalization of towns through flagship projects and creative industries (Florida 2005; Landry 2000; Reckwitz 2012) – disappointed the hopes of the symbolic appeal placed in it and was considered to be 'too big.' With this in mind, broad-based discussions are now taking place about what kind of town Wels could be and, above all, how urban Wels should be.

13 In the sense of using architecture to add value, as was the case with the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

The tableau of urban symbolism and representation opened up by *Hildesheim* is a completely different one. The town is part of the Hannover-Braunschweig-Göttingen-Wolfsburg metropolitan region, while, at the same time, it possesses some individuality as an important town in the region in terms of the economy and infrastructure. The town had close links to the wider area as a location for education, living, business and retail well before the municipal reforms of the 1970s and these still exist today. In addition, Hildesheim is a university and college town with a total of around 10,000 students. Town marketing emphasizes 'tradition' and history and makes use of popular images of medium-sized towns. The significance of 'old Hildesheim' finds expression in a contentious culture of memory negotiated around religious sites, such as Hildesheim Cathedral, or the Second World War, as well as in urban building projects, such as the reconstruction of the historical market square at the end of the 1980s. This also includes the comprehensive renovation of individual buildings listed as UNESCO world heritage sites. It is precisely these attributions which allow the town to score points in the competition between cities and deck itself out with unique selling points. It aims to profile itself as a "global province" (*Weltprovinz* – Interview with Lothar Meyer-Mertel, the Director of Hildesheim Marketing).

At a *symbolic level*, the continual positioning of both towns in contrast to other towns and the extent to which this was considered relevant or taken for granted became clear to us through the strikingly evaluative descriptions and reactions we met with time and again during ethnographic research, which told of the different symbolic weight accorded each town. In many cases, references to and comparisons with the city created a descriptive foil for the hallmarks of life in Wels or Hildesheim. In comparison to a city, there was 'nothing going on' in Wels, the town was empty or dead or 'neither one thing nor the other.' As well as these rebukes, of course, we also met satisfied residents who valued the manageability and ease with which everyday life was organized in the 'compact city.' The classification always expresses something about the outlook and standpoint of the person doing the classifying and, thus, it was noticeable that young people tended to describe the towns under study as 'boring' or 'unsatisfactory' and claimed to be striving to move away to the city, in contrast to families, or at least those with young children, who placed positive emphasis on the practicability of life in Hildesheim or Wels (Schmidt-Lauber and Wolfmayr 2016). These and other judgements characterized the local media, the interviews and everyday conversations. On various occasions, the fact that we came from a capital city also formed a point of reference, shown in the surprise expressed as to why we would be interested in this town of all places, in narratives justifying why people were still living here, or in apologies that suggested the town was not as bad as its reputation. Remarkably, we found that the strategy pursued by the

marketing boards for the two towns was to try to emulate the city (Eckert, Schmidt-Lauber, and Wolfmayr 2014).[14]

We observed the creation of this kind of evaluative discourse in our own perceptions and actions as well. On repeated occasions, we felt obliged to justify our research object and to describe it as just as exciting and relevant as, for example, a district in Istanbul or Oslo. In contrast to these places, an ethnography of Wels or Hildesheim seemed to attract less renown. Consequently, we felt impelled to apologize for the small or medium-sized and became veritable advocates of non-metropolitan towns.

At a *material* level, the towns studied exhibited a distinctive town structure and topography with specific modes of use. Each has developed around a town center and, in this sense, both correspond to the image of a European city. For a long time, shopping malls on the edge of town drove the much lamented atrophy of town centers outside of the big cities, which are themselves increasingly turning into luxury retail districts of global consumption. Yet even so, as centers not only for getting supplies and of infrastructure, but also for housing and as the main place to go out, these town centers continue to play a large role in the everyday life and rhythm of the towns studied. Competition comes not from other districts, but mostly from malls.[15]

As well as the town center, the towns studied comprised districts that differed in terms of atmosphere, social structure and architecture, each with a basic infrastructure (e. g. bakery, newsagent, hairdresser, doctors' surgery) and their own image. An area typified as a 'migrant district,' as is often heard about in cities, can also be found to some extent in the towns studied, but it is less sharply delineated than in the metropolises – Hildesheim Nord, for example, which is also known locally as "Little Istanbul." Multiculturality is typically rarely marketed as a colorful advertisement for the town, as it is in large cities (Grube and Welz 2014). An extensive public transport network connects the different parts of town by bus or tram, but this is only available at certain times (e. g. not at all or only running a reduced

14 It appears that local players are becoming increasingly aware of this imbalance. Max Rieder, an Austrian architect, recently took metrocentrism and its guiding effect on smaller towns as the starting point for a joint initiative with colleagues called *FORUM ZUKUNFT MITTELSTADT* (FORUM FUTURE MEDIUM-SIZED TOWN). This aims to initiate critical reflection on the city of Salzburg and seeks to not only engage critically with a 'cultural industry' that is oriented on the big city, but is taken as the norm for all towns. At their request, we are writing an opening post 'from the field' for the initiative's blog, meaning that we too are contributing to the negotiation of a city's positioning.

15 Here, we see a difference to urban development in numerous western cities since the 1960s/70s, which reflected the guiding principle, long valid in urban planning, of segregating spaces by function and the tendency towards a one-sided focus on consumption in the town center, and where a so-called "renaissance of the town center" has only become visible again in recent times (cf. Dittrich-Wesbuer, Knapp, and Osterhage 2010).

service in the evenings and at weekends). There is no underground system – a central feature of the city and paradigmatic for the experience of anonymity in a city whilst surrounded by a crowd of people (Lang 1994; Lindner and Letsch 1994). Especially the old and the young, pensioners and school pupils, or parents with small children travelled by bus or tram. It was also often clearly taken for granted that the geographical spread of activity was not limited to the town, but stretched to locations outside the town. Interview partners frequently spoke of trips to other places, especially provincial and federal capitals, to fulfil the need for culture or consumption – to the concert hall or to a bar in Linz, to the opera in Hannover or to the shops in Vienna or Berlin; a daily commute to work in a neighboring town also came up occasionally.[16]

On a *social level*, one particular social constellation represented a dominant and, in many contexts, tangible theme when it came to everyday life not only in Wels and Hildesheim, but also in Göttingen: manageability and familiarity, the small-scale urban fabric. In Wels, Georg Wolfmayr noticed that on walking through the town center, it would not often be long before someone greeted him, and in Hildesheim, Anna Eckert found it pleasant that on her second visit to a café she was greeted as a regular and given a warm welcome. We measure these kinds of experiences as signs of the social bond between people in their dealings with one another. Some interview partners stressed that they valued their town, had even moved there especially *because* they liked the 'familiarity' and 'helpfulness' of the people there, which conveyed a sense of 'safety': 'people know each other.' Others complained about precisely this lack of anonymity and social diversity. Familiarity guides behavior and interpretation in a wide variety of contexts. The dense social and spatial connections result in direct communication and strong control. Existing research suggests this leads to a high level of civic engagement in town issues (Wagner-Kyora 2010). Not least, familiarity manifests itself as knowledge about the social environment and an awareness of other people, in knowledge about places, people and events in the town – be this in relation to the history of family ownership of long-established shops or knowing the family situation of long-serving dignitaries. A walk through the town brings few surprises with it. This all conveys an attachment to the town beyond one's own district, even if the familiarity and closeness evoked do not extend to all spaces. In the everyday actions, speech and perceptions of the residents, 'doing size' – as here in the example of the topic of manageability and familiarity as a performance of social and geographical small-scale urban fabric – is happening all the time.

16 It is possible that, in this regard, the everyday actions of our interview partners exhibit a specific geographical horizon, which, in contrast to the metropolitan mix of the global *and*, simultaneously, the self-sufficient, is part of the organization of daily life.

Outlook

The practices and fields described here, through which the towns of Wels and Hildesheim are positioned and given meaning, and in which everyday life takes concrete form, are just some examples among many. We wanted to use case studies to generate insights into an urban study that is ethnographical and praxeological and does not define and objectively measure what a town is in advance, but rather seeks to make it visible in its ongoing production – empirical urban study in the sense of 'doing city.'

At the same time, one of our concerns was to free the term urbanity from its normative constraints as something that applies only to very specific spaces and forms of city (life) and to claim urbanities as '(different) ways of urban life.' This underlines the relevance of towns considered 'off the map' for the investigation of everyday life in the empirical study of culture, which focuses not merely on the exceptional and the special, but also on the routines and norms in the everyday lives of broad sections of the population.

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Journal of European Ethnology
and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)
2016, 1 (2): 104–123

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A cosmopolitan city, a cosmopolitan life*

Aspasia Schoenwald from Smyrna and the spaces of a transnational biography

Abstract: Based on a historical stock of letters, the project presented in this article is concerned with a dual biography: that of a woman and that of a city. In particular, it focuses on the lifeworld of Aspasia Schoenwald, who was born in Ottoman Smyrna in 1891. Her story is unthinkable without the Levantine city on the Mediterranean Sea and its cosmopolitan lifestyle. The source material mainly dates back to the 1910s. By finding constellations and horizons of meaning from the perspective of a historical cultural analysis, a widely interconnected, transnational past can be made visible on the example of this dual biography. In her letters and parcels to Wilhelm Boeck in Munich, Aspa creates a *Third Space* (Soja 1996), in which agents, lifestyles, practices, and ideas are connected across geopolitical and social boundaries. This cosmopolitan space of communication, which was even maintained during the Great War, points to links and aspects in this transnational space that have been forgotten in the present. And yet, it is these historical relations that are indicative of contacts, shared knowledge, and translations and that may have implications for a new way to think about the future of Europe.

Keywords: Biographical analysis, cosmopolitan city, Levant, love, gender, communication in personal letters, First World War, Ottoman Empire

"Smyrna, February 15, 1911

Dear Mr. Boeck,

I am very pleased to do as you have requested. Since my delightful trip is already over and since you asked, I will tell you about my experiences during my travels. Since I cannot do it verbally, I am writing to you. I had a wonderful time in Greece. In Corfu, I went on a long outing with the consul and the captain. We took a car to the emperor's castle. The world around us was altered, everything was cloaked in a beautiful green, and the castle of our Austrian Empress Elisabeth is situated in a beautiful location – there is even an excellent view of the blue waters of the sea from the first story. We continued on at 4 in the afternoon, once again, I had a lovely evening. The moon was shining brightly on the sea. We arrived in Piraeus at 6 in the morning. I got up at 10, had breakfast and went for a short walk on board with the first lieutenant, he was a very nice man and we had a lovely conversation. After our meal, we went to Pi-

* German version in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 112 (2): 209–229. Translated by Jessica Wallace and Julia Heinecke. The translation is funded by the Faculty of Cultural Studies at the Alpine-Adriatic-University in Klagenfurt, Austria.

Aspa in Smyrna, about 1911

raeus with the captain and the first lieutenant and a journalist from Smyrna on the ship's boat. We took the electric tram to the train station and then the electric train to Athens. There I went into the ruins as if visiting a lovely museum before going to visit my aunt, which brought on old memories, it was truly wonderful, the time just flew by as I was back on the steamer by 6 in the evening. The next morning, we had fabulous weather once again, not a breeze in the air, and the ocean was shiny and smooth all around us. You can imagine how delighted I was, since I had not seen the ocean in such a long time! Doesn't that make me sound like a seaman? Yes, you learn a great deal on such a long ocean journey. Watching the view of the wild and rugged cliffs and out toward the surface of the water shining in the sun where the sea gulls play. The ship approached Smyrna, how sad I was to see the bare mountains, time really passed far too quickly and I had so easily become accustomed to living on the ocean and was really sorry to leave it again, but that's the way it is, we humans must put up with everything. Now the steamer was to leave at 3 in the afternoon … the row boats approached even before it had come to a stop, including the boat with my relatives. I was up with the captain and looked through the binoculars, but it was impossible for me to recognize my sisters. After about ½ hour, I took my farewell of all the crewmen and invited them to come visit us. I am expecting them to come next week. Now it is carnival here and as of tomorrow, I will dress up with my friends and we will be very merry. I have already burned the report card. And now I am sitting in our heated room and am writing. Olga is playing the piano, every day between 4 and 7, I have English lessons with an Englishman, his name is Mister Chapman, I also play the piano. Now I have written you a long and interesting letter, I hope you will be happy with me.
All the best, yours truly Aspa Schoenwald"[1]

1 Letter by Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, February 15, 1911. The German contains orthographical and linguistic errors. This is due to the fact that the writer's native language

History/Stories

"To understand the meaning of a story" (Angehrn 2004: 19), means to comprehend the context in which one episode relates to others and, finally, how these episodes relate to a greater context. "Thus, understanding the meaning of a story," according to the philosopher Emil Angehrn, "goes above and beyond simply understanding the functional context, as a machine is capable of doing; ultimately, it refers to the everyday – ideal typical – meaning that a story has for the subjects involved" (Angehrn 2004: 19). The interactions between the structures in which the subject is embedded as well as the effects that have a specific impact within different lifeworlds are of particular interest for a historical cultural analysis. The same applies for a search for constellations in the present (Lindner 2003a). Subjects generally do not see the world as a "regular system"; here, Angehrn emphasizes the "context of involvement" (Angehrn 2004: 19) discussed by Martin Heidegger. "History can be understood as long as we are able to describe the impact it has for those affected and for ourselves" (Angehrn 2004: 19). A meaningful explanation initially involves putting the circumstances of a person's life and their concepts of the world in relation to oneself. Nevertheless, reflecting on meaning as it is perceived from a historical point of view creates yet another dimension. On another level, the philosopher speaks of the "interplay between a receptive perception of meaning and an interpretative construction of meaning" (Angehrn 2004: 19). Writing history does not reproduce the past. Instead, historiography must be seen as an act of creation. As Angehrn further explains, such a concept of research requires that one asks which approach can be meaningful for whom and at which point in time. An analysis of historical constellations thus always focuses on the alternation between construction and reception, and the perception and creation of meaning (Angehrn 2004: 20).

Analogously, it is possible to consider an ethnography that approaches phenomena and processes from different perspectives in order to gain an impression of what is being interpreted, discussed, and translated. The cultural anthropologist Kaspar Maase also refers to the aspect of construction in historical research, without which there could be no analysis. Within this context, he emphasizes the contemporary horizons of meaning and ambiguities in the field, which must be considered from the perspective of the present – a perspective that is initially considered to be a matter of course (Maase 2001: 255). Based on the work of Clifford Geertz, Maase explains that for historical contexts or codes that, for other reasons, are not generally known, ethnography involves distancing oneself from one's own perspective in order to understand the situation within the context of its historicity or the context within which it developed (Maase 2001: 256). "The task of historiographical

was Greek. She learned to write German in school. Abbreviations and grammatical errors are not incorporated into the translation.

narratives is to use language to create a small world that encourages sources to speak out and gives them the opportunity to be heard by us – including all of their inconsistencies and discords, cries and silence, and everything that remains incomprehensible and unarticulated" (Maase 2001: 262). Maase uses a term coined by Rhys Isaac, "social theater," to describe this process of reenaction and interpretation. For example, at the time of its articulation, a statement never stands alone. It must always be examined within the context of a conversation whose participants must all be considered at eye level and whose interactions should be understood solely in correlation with one another (Maase 2001: 258).

The journey that Aspasia Schoenwald, called Aspa, describes in her letter from Smyrna in February 1911 names geographical markers that the addressee, Wilhelm Boeck, can reconstruct for himself at home in Munich.[2] Her obvious joy in reporting the various steps of her journey increases the physical distance between her and Wilhelm. At the same time, the letter creates a space of closeness between the sender and the recipient. They should not yet succumb to sadness, even though the separation was painful. The gleeful description of her experiences is thus to be seen as a consolation. The formal address to her beau, on the other hand, is a clear attempt at concealment: the relationship between Aspa and Wilhelm should not yet become public. Due to divergent moral values, their relationship had already caused difficulties in Bavaria, a crisis that presumably led Aspa's mother to order her return home. "History deciphers not only the traces and sedimentations of the historical construction of meaning, it is itself part of this process" (Angehrn 2004: 21).

An analysis of Aspa and her lifeworld in the first half of the 20th century raises the general question of whether it makes sense to search for traces of the past from a contemporary perspective. On the one hand, historical research of this kind aims to clarify the positions that Aspa, as a female subject living under the constraints of her time, actively sought out. In view of a historical cultural analysis, the cultural anthropologist Jens Wietschorke emphasizes the importance of contextualizing content and patterns of interpretation (2014: 173 f.). On the other hand, Aspa's mobility between the Ottoman Empire and the German Empire, Austria-Hungary and the Kingdom of Greece is particularly interesting as her travels connect geopolitical spheres whose close relationship has been largely forgotten. To reflect on relationships between people who are no (longer) present in the cultural memory of Europe in our postmodern age characterized by complex networks is a task that I see as a contribution to a transnationally defined global historiography that is not limited to national borders or European formations, but instead focuses on the agents by first examining the frame of reference in which they lived. The call to "conceptualize Europe from its margins" (Welz/Lottermann 2009), and thus to question it, can also be understood within a historical context.

2 A collection of postcards has been passed down through the family.

A double biography

The project I am presenting in this article is based on the concept of outlining a double biography.[3] This consists, on the one side, of the thoughts and experiences of a young woman, Aspa, the letter writer, at the beginning of the 20th century. Aspasia, the daughter of Mosca Alexiou, a Greek woman, and Adolph Schoenwald from Austria-Hungary, was born in Athens in 1891 and grew up in Smyrna on the Aegean coast in 1891. Her father was a businessman who imported and exported goods in the Mediterranean region, while her mother kept a boarding house in Smyrna. This boarding house was one in which officials, e. g. the director of the Italian post office, rented out rooms over a long period of time. Aspa, her sisters Anna, Olga and Maria, and her brother spent a happy childhood in the city on the Mediterranean. The siblings enjoyed an upper-middle-class upbringing with a diverse education and music lessons. For a time, Aspa attended a boarding school for girls from respectable families. In 1909, she left the Ottoman Empire to spend a year abroad in the German Empire, which she had not yet visited before. During her stay in Munich, she lived with the family of the Protestant Pastor Lambert in the vicarage of St. Lucas at Mariannenplatz. At a New Year's party held by the Jahn sports association in the nearby Widenmayerstrasse, she met a young man and fell in love in January 1910. Wilhelm Boeck, born in 1890 in Munich, lived with his mother Margarethe, his brother Siegfried, and his sister Anni in an apartment in the Milchstrasse in a neighboring part of town called Haidhausen, an incorporated suburb of the growing city. His family was a member of the lower middle class. At the time of their first meeting, Wilhelm was completing an apprenticeship as a financial manager. In the following weeks, Aspa first remained in Munich and then traveled to Bad Brueckenau to undergo treatment in the Bavarian health resort. "Dear Wilhelm!" she wrote from Bad Brueckenau on April 3, 1910:

> "I am thinking of that lovely Sunday we sat together and will never forget your sweet kisses. I haven't been able to eat anything today, I could just eat a soup for lunch. Just imagine, I have to drink mineral water every day and it tastes horrible, I looked terrible on the train and I felt ill. In the afternoon, we went on a walk and I picked some lovely flowers. It is beautiful here; there is no snow anywhere. I don't have anything else to say, except that I was very pleased with you on Sunday."[4]

After a few months spent with another pastor's family in Gauting near Munich, where she also took care of the family's children, Aspa had to return to Smyrna in early 1911.

The sources used for my research include 270 letters, a variety of postcards, and several photo albums. Aspa wrote the letters to Wilhelm Boeck between 1910

3 My research on Aspasia Schoenwald's life and the city of Smyrna in the first half of the 20th century is part of my habilitation project on which I have been working since 2014.

4 Letter from Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Bad Brueckenau, April 3, 1910.

and 1918. She sent them to Munich and other places he stayed during the war. The date of their arrival is noted on the envelopes. With the exception of one single letter, none of his correspondence to her has been preserved. Other sources include documents such as a *Spruchkammerbogen* (a protocol of a denazification tribunal), recipes, telegrams, stamps, additional photographs, and pictures dating up to 1950.[5] Over the years, Aspa's letters described a world that Wilhelm would never see in person. From the everyday perspective of a young woman, this correspondence led to the preservation of more or less connected moments in time. Sometimes these moments stand alone, but more often they become a part of more complex topics through repetition. Even though Aspa belonged to a wealthier family, which is clearly reflected in her habitus and lifestyle, and came into contact with many people, she was neither a public figure nor an author. She showed little reserve in communicating with a wide range of people. From an ethnological point of view, her position can best be described as *in between*, i. e. she moved in circles that were not exclusively part of a homogenous milieu. The status of Aspa's family and the heterogeneous societal structure of the city meant that she moved in disparate contexts, especially since her parents did not (or barely) regulate her contacts or activities. This respectable young woman was thus able to gradually gain insight into the diversity of events and agents in her environment. After all, Aspa wanted to understand what was happening around her so that she could describe the events and consult with Wilhelm on how to interpret the situation. Her role thus developed over the years and her insights into her environment can be clearly understood as ethnographical fragments. She is also *in between* because she constantly, and therefore intentionally, crosses boundaries. In terms of a "critical and positional analysis" (Wietschorke 2014: 175), this rare collection of material can be seen as exceptional in its significance. What distinguishes these preserved photos and texts form other historical sources are the dimensions of the described connections and the specific information about the family. The Schoenwalds' presence could always be felt during the conversations with Aspa and Wilhelm's youngest daughter Heidi, even when they were not the direct subject of discussion.[6] Knowledge of Heidi's lifestyle and memories of her mother allowed me to come to some conclusions about the past. I plan to release an edition of the letters that is annotated based on a historical cultural analysis. The intonation, the essence of the texts, and the rhythm of the topos should thus be preserved.

5 I met Heidi Boeck in 2010 during my exhibition project in Munich. She gave me some of Aspa's letters while she was still alive with the remark that I would be able to make use of them somehow. I acquired the remaining sources from her parents' assets.

6 This text was written in memory of Heidi Boeck (1926–2013) who would have celebrated her 90th birthday on July 26, 2016.

Aspa's experiences cannot be separated from the cosmopolitan habitus of historical Smyrna.[7] Cultural anthropologist Rolf Lindner defines the term *habitus* as a set of powerful dispositions that are the result of urban economics and the corresponding social structure of a city and which frequently come to light – for example in characteristics or manners of expression (Linder 2003b). The characteristic of being "in between" was also an important attribute of the city on the Mediterranean. In his novel "Middlesex," author Jeffery Eugenides, whose Greek grandparents had to leave the Ottoman Empire in the 1920s and migrated to the US, describes the port city as follows:

> "And did I mention how in summer the streets of Smyrna were lined with baskets of rose petals? And how everyone in the city could speak French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, English, and Dutch? And did I tell you about the famous figs, brought in by camel caravan and dumped onto the ground, huge piles of pulpy fruit lying in the dirt, with dirty women steeping them in salt water (…)? Did I mention how the reek of the fig women mixed with pleasanter smells of almond trees, mimosa, laurel, and peach and how everybody wore masks on Mardi Gras and had elaborate dinners on the decks of frigates? I want to mention these things because they all happened in that city that was no place exactly, that was part of no country because it was all countries, because now if you go there you'll see modern high-rises, amnesiac boulevards, teeming sweatshops, a NATO headquarters, and a sign that says Izmir (…)"[8] (Eugenides 2011: 54).

In writing a double biography, double in the sense that it is intertwined in many ways, my intention is not to reconstruct rigorous curricula for a teleological purpose, which also was Pierre Bourdieu's criticism of *biographies*.

> "To try to understand a life as a unique and self-sufficient series of events with no links other than the association with a subject whose constancy is no doubt merely that of a proper name, is nearly as absurd as to try to make sense of a route in the metro without taking into account the structure of the subway network, that is, the matrix of objective relations between the different train stations" (Bourdieu 1998: 82).

To begin with, the course of a life must not be seen as linear, coherent, and consistent. Instead, it is important to look for shifting *positions* and *changing places* in social space (Bourdieu 1998: 82). These are the constantly changing elements that comprise a biography. Finally, Bourdieu defines the *social surface* as "the set of positions simultaneously occupied at a given moment by socially instituted biological individuality acting as the bearer of a set of attributes and attributions capable of permitting it to intervene as an effective agent in different fields" (Bourdieu 1998:

7 Over the course of my research for Aspa's biography, I was in Izmir (Turkish name for Smyrna) in February 2014 in order to get an impression of the city and search for traces of the past.

8 By "amnesiac," Jeffrey Eugenides is referring to the city's alleged lack of history, the forgetting, and arbitrariness of modern streets.

83). Thus *social aging* can only be understood by considering the "successive states of the field" (Bourdieu 1998: 83) in which this development takes place. According to Bourdieu, a trajectory can only be envisaged if we connect "the set of objective relations which united the agent in question (…) with the set of other agents engaged in the same field facing the same space of possibilities" (Bourdieu 1998: 83). Aspa's biography cannot be understood without the biography of Smyrna and at the same time the city only takes shape through her written and spoken words. The concept of a *social surface* allows Aspa to become fathomable as a person in an abstract manner. Analogously, this concept can also be applied to the habitus and lifestyle of Smyrna.

"Smyrna, June 22, 1911

My love!

Thank you very much for your delightful letter. You wrote that you were worried about cholera, you need not be afraid, there are not so many cases anymore. Of course I will fulfill your wish, I'm delighted to hear you're doing well. I want to write to you today so that you will be able to hold my letter in your hands this week. You asked me how the postcard with the Bavarian postmark arrived? An acquaintance of mine who was traveling to Europe and passing through Munich delivered it to Munich, I wanted to trick you and make you think that I was back in Munich. On Sunday I went sailing, it was lovely, our group consisted of the following people: Mr. Konstantinides with his two sisters, Mr. Chapmann, and myself. We headed out at 4 in the afternoon, arriving in Mercili at 7, we left ship there and took a stroll. Afterwards, we went to a coffeehouse and drank a great deal of beer. We had a wonderful time, it is too bad that you couldn't be there. We wanted to head back at 8 in the evening but the wind had calmed down so we had to go through the trouble of rowing. Just now, I and that donkey, Chapman, were rowing, he wasn't at all capable of rowing so that I alone was responsible for keeping the sailboat going. The others began singing lovely songs so that I, too, began to sing along. Once, as we were walking through the forest with Kitty and getting tired, we also sang on our way home, do you remember? My dear Wilhelm, since I have been in Smyrna I have lost my bathing suit …, so I ask you, as long as it's no trouble, if you could buy me a pretty one from Tietz and write me what it costs so that I can send you the money, but please do so as soon as possible because I really need one urgently. It is very hot here, today it is 31 degrees and stifling. Dear Wilhelm, Mama and I are not getting along well these days, I wanted to write to you about it but then you would be sad and I wanted to spare you that. I have had my photograph taken and once the prints are finished I will send you one. That must do for today, I will write you a longer and more interesting letter next week.

I send you all the best, hugs and kisses,

Your ever faithful Aspa.

I have not lost the calendar you gave me."[9]

9 Letter from Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, June 22, 1911.

Smyrna

The fort on Mount Pagos, which commands a view of the bay, towers over the city on the Aegean coast, which has been considered a place of longing for centuries. Both the city's location on the Gulf of Smyrna, situated between the two antique port cities of Ephesus and Milet, and its mild climate played a significant role in this perception.[10] "This ancient city, renowned as the birthplace of the poet Homer, owes its extraordinary development to its exceptional geographical location" (Hitzel 2013: 69). In numerous travelogues written by English- and French-speaking travelers, the city is frequently referred to as the "crown of Ionia", the "jewel of Asia", the "light of Asia Minor" or the "eye of Anatolia" (Hitzel 2013: 69), especially in the 18th and 19th centuries. Both the history and the present of this metropolis on the sea fascinate visitors. The entire region was settled by humans long ago and has been the frequent setting for many armed conflicts. Leaders of different ethnical backgrounds (Hellene, Roman, Lydian, Persian, Ottoman, etc.) took turns vying for control of the city for millennia (Marek 2010). Again and again, the region was divided up and transferred hands several times. The resulting mobility led to a heterogeneous population. Various agents left their marks on the coast while historical ages and routes crossed paths in the city's biography. In the rich *cumulative texture* of Smyrna (Lindner 2008a), which was built on *successive states of the field*, the pulsating life of the port city was interwoven with the "sagas of the classical age" in the same way as sediments of different architectures, pictures of a Mediterranean landscape, and finally, the exoticizing concepts of *the Orient*. The iridescent as a central component of the *imaginary* admitted *images* (Lindner 2008b) that allowed this "Turkish Marseille" (Boulanger 2013: 86) to sparkle even more.

Smyrna was the Greek name of the city on the Mediterranean until 1922. Since the 16th century, contracts with the Ottoman Empire, which – expressed in terms of today's national borders – extended from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Kuwait, permitted British, French, Dutch, and Venetian merchants to settle at this strategic gateway. Caravans delivered silk from Persia to the city, while the export of cotton, tobacco, and dried fruit were lucrative business opportunities. Over time, Christians and Jews from Spain, Austria-Hungary, and North America came to live in the city (Boulanger 2013: 86). However, the population was dominated by a majority of Armenians, Turkish Muslims, and Greek Christians, whose lifeworlds could hardly be separated from one another in everyday city life (Stickler 2015). As well as Constantinople, Alexandria, and Beirut, Smyrna was considered a city of the Levant, a term that initially referred to commerce (Abensur-Hazan 2013: 119). Despite the fact that there is no clear definition, the term Levantines also referred to Christians with Arabic, European and American roots who were born in the cities of the Levant

10 In Turkish, the mountain and the Fort Kadifekale are mentioned.

States or who lived there for a long period of time.[11] In either case, the term refers to an extremely heterogeneous constellation of subjects (Fuhrmann 2006: 272). In an extensive handbook on the port of the world, which was published in Vienna in 1891, the city was described as follows:

> "Smyrna is listed as having a population of 186,510, made up of 147,200 subjects of the Sublime Porte, 89,000 Muslims, 40,200 Greeks, 17,000 Jews, 4,000 Armenians and 39,210 foreigners, which included 25,000 Hellenes, i. e. subjects of the Kingdom of Greece, and 6,800 Italians. In addition, there are large colonies of Austrians and Hungarians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Germans, and Dutch in Smyrna" (Dorn 1891: 206).

The Sultan's palace, or more specifically the central government of the Ottoman Empire in Constantinople, was called the Sublime Porte.

"Like other cosmopolitan cities of the Ottoman Empire, the presence of different ethnic groups – referred to as 'nations' – lent Smyrna a very particular social organization, which was typical of these cities and also geographically conspicuous", the historian Laurence Abensur-Hazan explains (2013: 119). Until the 1920s, the city was divided into five quarters: a Turkish, a Greek, a French, an Armenian, and a Jewish quarter. Despite this division, the inhabitants of the city were not physically separated from one another, a fact that is confirmed by Aspa's depictions. Nevertheless, the social divides must have been enormous. While there were relatively few poor people in the French or European quarters and the proportion of poor among the Turkish population was higher, these observations cannot be generalized for specific ethnic or religious groups. Rich Turks and Armenians also lived in the city. The biographies of many of the inhabitants were extremely diverse and Smyrna was often just one of several stations in their lives. Some families stayed for generations, while others came from Budapest, Paris, Jerusalem, or Beirut and carried on to New York, Vienna, or Damascus.[12] City inhabitants married according to religious criteria, but often social status or membership to the Levant was a more important factor. The *cosmopolitan habitus*, with a cultural, social, and economic capital based on the disposition of diversity, was also visible in the numerous churches, mosques, synagogues, and Armenian cathedrals whose towers and minarets characterized the backdrop of the city. The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah sees *cosmopolitanism* as an attitude that perceives people in their diversity, recognizes difference, and

11 Merchants and engineers not only from Europe but also the United States settled in the cities of the Levant. Many of these settlers were Armenians or people from other backgrounds, which leads to the assumption that their families had migrated to the US at an earlier point in time. The American colony at the gates of the city of Smyrna was known by the name of "Paradise" (Milton 2008).

12 Today, the descendants of these families meet and converse with one another on the Internet and in social media. http://www.levantineheritage.com/, (March 28, 2016).

can see heterogeneity as a resource (Appiah 2007). "From the 18th century on, and increasingly during the 19th century, the social life of Smyrna was characterised by a cosmopolitanism blended with European influences and, consequently, its mulitlinguism" (Abensur-Hazan 2013: 119).

As early as the first half of the 19th century, the construction of railroads led to additional connections for the city and the region and a link to international trade routes. "In the late 19th century, trade, and cultural and social life were booming in Smyrna," writes the historian Tessa Hofmann (2006: 11). "A consortium of Christian Smyrniots played a significant role in building a three kilometer long pier. The best hotels in the city as well as diverse administrative offices, consulates and the city palaces of the rich Smyrniot tradesmen were soon built here" (Hofmann 2006: 11). After the deep-sea port was expanded, Lloyd's shipping routes connected the Aegean coast with all parts of the world. The wealth of the city grew and more and more travelers arrived in the metropolis. The historian Giles Milton imagines that

> "Frank Street was the principal artery that ran through the European quarter. It had been laid out long before the advent of the motor car and was very narrow – too narrow, even, to cope with the human traffic. Yet in spite of the bustle, heat, noise, and collisions with donkeys and camels, it remained the city's most popular street for shopping. When Marcel Mirtil [a French lawyer and president of the Zionists of France] came here on his world tour in 1909, it was the hair salons that caught his attention. 'In sheer size, they were reminiscent of ballrooms …' The European quarter's most ostentatious building was the Grand Hotel Kraemer Palace, with its gigantic foyer and capacious dining rooms" (Milton 2008: 11).

The villas and summer homes of the wealthy families were situated in the areas surrounding the city, just like the American "Paradise" colony. The French or European quarter, however, bordered on the Kordon, Smyrna's quay. Alongside of the trade buildings, hotels, clubs, and theaters also lined the waterfront. One of the attractions was the "Cinimatograph", a movie theater that Aspa mentions and which – like the other establishments – she visited regularly. Frank Street ran parallel to the Kordon. The Schoenwald's house was in a side street nearby; the British consulate was located on the other side. Aspa could hand in her letters to the British, Austrian, Russian, Italian, German, or Ottoman post.

"Smyrna, 10 o'clock Sunday evening, November 10, 1912. My dear Wilhelm! This morning after service, I and a friend went to the post office and I have been so happy the whole day after reading your considerably long and despondent letter."[13] As it was customary to switch between several languages on a daily basis, Aspa could also speak Greek, English, French, Turkish, and German.

13 Letter by Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, November 10, 1912.

"*Smyrna, January 31, 1915*

My dear Wilhelm!

For two weeks now I have been waiting in vain for news from you, I cannot imagine why you have stopped writing. Are you ill perhaps? We are all quite well today, we were planning on going hunting; our party was a total of 10 people. My brother-in-law with my sister, my cousin, and I, my sisters with Routh and Mr. Petz, Ms. Cox with Mr. Atkensson. The weather would not permit it, as it was raining quite heavily, how unfortunate; we will have to put it off until next Sunday. Now there is nothing left to do than to accept an invitation to tea from Petz and go there with my cousin, but it gives me no pleasure since we must speak English the entire time as Mr. Petz does not speak any other language. Around eleven o'clock there was a wedding in our consulate, an acquaintance of mine who is 18 married a man of 32, but the two are not at all well suited for one another. I recently met a Turkish minister, his name is Mouchtar and he is a smart and funny man, I speak with him in French, he comes and we play cards – poker – do you know that game? Otherwise there is no more news to tell you. In the last while I have been very lazy about playing the piano, I don't want to practice at all, even though I have lovely pieces to play. The only thing that gives me pleasure these days is to sing sad songs such as "Das Grab auf der Heide", "Seemannslos", "Der Abschied", and the like. The day before yesterday, I dreamed that I was in a garden, I was picking beautiful flowers, windflowers, lilies, daisies, and forget-me-nots – can you come up with an interpretation for this dream? Now it is almost time for lunch, even though I am not at all hungry since I got up quite late, not until ten. What do you say? Am I not extremely lazy? Otherwise there is nothing for me to do but eat and sleep. All we have these days are troubles, nothing else. My family sends their best to you all, Soyter is not writing to me anymore since I did not answer his last letter. Your Aspa, who holds you dear in her heart, sends her love. Please write to me because here all of our letters are read and Smyrna is much smaller than Munich und I do not want all my secrets to become public all over Smyrna. I send you a thousand greetings, Your faithful future bride Aspa"[14]

Media and Communication

In her letters, Aspa describes a world to her beau and his family that was beyond the scope of their everyday lives. The relationship between Aspa and Wilhelm enables a perception of spaces in which places and agents from different constellations, which were not otherwise connected, are brought into relation with one another.

> "The subject matter of cultural studies could roughly be taken as the relationship between the word and the world. I understand these two terms in their widest sense, so that *word* can encompass all forms of textualized expression and *world* can mean anything from the means of production and the organization of lifeworlds to the globalized relations of cultural reproduction discussed here" (Appadurai 1996: 51).

14 Letter by Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, January 31, 1915.

Despite the fact that Appadurai focuses on the interconnectedness of the world in the age of electronic and digital mass media, and especially examines the migration movements of the second half of the 20th century, his considerations can also be applied to Aspa's situation. Appadurai is concerned with the production of spaces and connections above and beyond political borders. For Wilhelm, all of the concrete places and thus the spaces and knowledge that can be deducted from them exist almost solely through Aspa's letters. On the other hand, Wilhelm tells Aspa about developments in Bavaria, his own thoughts, dreams, and wishes, primarily by post. Therefore, the communication between the couple opens up new spaces in which everything comes together: "subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history" (Soja 1996: 57).

The urban and theorist analyst Edward Soja uses these qualities to define the *Third Space*, a term he uses to make the category *space* comprehensible as a social construction (Soja 1996). Aspa's letters and parcels often contain several sheets of paper written in ink, sometimes articles, postcards, or programs are included, about a third of the letters contain dried flowers from Smyrna and the region. The Arabic characters on the envelopes, the Smyrniot stamps, postmarks, the paper, and the content of the letters turn this correspondence into a *Third Space*, which becomes the space of Aspa and Wilhelm's relationship and at the same time directly reflects their lifeworlds.

In her letters, Aspa contemplates life, admirers, friends and family, her body, the city and its entertainment, social affiliations, decisions, the war etc. and thus pulls Wilhelm into her everyday life in the sense of a *social theater*. Topoi, which connect the couple with one another despite their social differences, are the theater and music as well as their great interest in political developments, language, and sports. They even sent concrete objects from one empire to the other by post. "Actions and objects serve as elements of a symbolic system of relationships above and beyond their pragmatic function; they become a part of a production on the stage of every day interactions" (Maase 2001: 258).

Tangible actions, which made the other person seem real within one's own reality, followed the requests made in the letters. The range of objects sent by post included newspapers and magazines, stamps from all over the world, which Aspa collected in her mother's boarding house, as well as Turkish-German grammar books, which she needed for her temporary job as a teacher in a suburb of Smyrna. Wilhelm took care of everything in Munich. In her letters, she frequently asked him for tennis balls to play tennis with the English. At times, she asked Wilhelm, sometimes

directly, to try to obtain something or offered him a sweet watermelon in return. On March 11, 1916, Aspa wrote to Wilhelm:

> *"As I was speaking of the baths, I would like to ask you to see about a bathing suit and bathing cap for me. I do not want a one-piece costume because I do not want the men from the men's pool to see my body. I would like shorts and the top should be like a shirt that goes to just above the knees. I once bought a costume like this at Tietz when I was in Munich. It was dark blue with white stripes and the bathing cap was not made entirely of rubber. The cap was basically black and white striped, similar to a hat, and then there was a pair of linen beach shoes. I would like to ask you to look into how much all this would cost and let me know, because if it is all too expensive then I can also purchase these things here. The thing is that I would like to have something more elegant and stylish than the Smyrniots."*[15]

Wilhelm conscientiously took care of all of her requests, sent tea, fashion magazines, and sheet music, from time to time even a flower. Cigarettes and soap became more and more important during the war. Aspa could purchase things at the bazar in Smyrna that had long become luxury goods in Munich. Food is another item included in her packages. Aspa often sent Wilhelm and his brother Siegfried macaroni via army mail. However, photographs are the special media in their relationship. Aspa even owned her own camera.

Based on the correspondence between Annie O'Donnell, who migrated from Ireland to the US in 1898, the historian Sonja Janositz analyzed the importance of media using a biography shaped by mobility (Janositz 2014). During her two-week journey to the United States, Annie O'Donnell, who was 18 at the time, met a fellow Irishman, James P. Phelan, who was just a few years older than her. After losing contact for a long period of time – the two departed for different destinations after their arrival – they began exchanging letters in 1901 and continued doing so until 1904. Written at the turn of the century, the sources used for the analysis were – in accordance with the times – letters. The approximately 70 letters written by Annie O'Donnell were preserved and have since been published in Dublin (Murphy 2005). Sonja Janositz sees the collection as an "archive of historical communicative practice" (Janositz 2014: 69) and considers the role writing plays in biographies. In her remarks, Janositz explains that letters must be understood as a format of negotiation. In these texts, both sender and recipient, make their positions clear over a defined period of time and thus approach one another in this manner. Within this context, Janositz speaks of an "outline of a shared life" (Janositz 2014: 69). After all of their questions were answered, Phelan finally moved to Pittsburgh where the couple was married. Aspa, too, negotiated with Wilhelm and presented her view of life to him, which he was required to accept if the relationship were to lead to marriage. A central agent within their *Third Space* is Augustus C. Routh, a great admirer and

15 Letter by Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, March 16, 1916.

close friend of Aspa. Time and again, she writes of joint outings or afternoons spent with him in the garden. Wilhelm is thus being tested; at the same time, Aspa also mentions that her friends in Munich report back to her about Wilhelm's associates.

Within the context of correspondence and transnational relationships, the historian David A. Gerber also speaks of spaces of communication that develop through writing (Gerber 2000). Especially for migrants, who are both writers and recipients, letters are the most common phenomenon of this kind.

"Personal correspondence, by its nature, breaks down conventional boundaries of place and in a sense cheats time, for it creates its own chronology of sending and receiving by which an epistolary relationship is charted and, through narration, it places the past in the present and the future" (Gerber 2000: 45).

From this perspective, he sees the letter as an early form of social field, one "that lifted people out of conventional time-space and rendered the national borders that separated them insignificant, at least in so far as the letter rendered physical borders powerless to create impediments for maintaining relationships. Letters simultaneously created their own webs of meaning and relation" (Gerber 2000: 45).

At first, social boundaries made it impossible for Aspa and Wilhelm to live together. After years of hesitation, the First World War established new borders that prevented them from meeting. Throughout these years, their correspondence never ceased for any significant period of time – despite censure and adversity.

Other family members, for example Aspa's sister Maria and Wilhelm's sister Anni, were integrated into the joint space.

"I wanted to send your sisters some figs and raisins. I brought the boxes to the post office twice but unfortunately they would not accept anything at all, but I will be sure to keep my promise and send it all soon. Your sister has asked me for a pair of Turkish slippers, I will send them to her once I have the consent of the post office, unfortunately I cannot send them beforehand,"[16] Aspa writes on December 5, 1915. The large variety of fruit at her disposal, which was primarily exported as dry fruit, or visits to the bazar were unquestioned components of her life on the Mediterranean. For Aspa as an inhabitant of Smyrna, figs and other goods as well as bargaining were part of everyday life. For her sister-in-law in Munich, the letters, objects, and texts written by Aspa are primarily exotic, i. e. appealing because they have an exclusive and unfamiliar quality. Considering the conditions caused by the First World War, Turkish slippers and raisins must have seemed like clichés from an Oriental story to her. Edward Said notes that the idea of a *western* – European and American – hegemony is always inherent in the concept of *the Orient*. The *European culture* is not a given but is instead established through attribution and differentiation (Said 2003: 7). Aspa's form of expression also sometimes reveals a colonial

16 Letter by Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, December 5, 1915.

attitude toward the Turkish population. The statements that she makes, especially while she is young, often give the impression that she is merely repeating the positions of her social environment. Her own attitude, however, is ambivalent. Over the course of the war she increasingly complains about the poverty and need of the people and repeatedly attempts to provide assistance.

In Between

"My youth in my home city Smyrna," is written on the inside of the album covered in blue fabric.[17] On the first page, there is a black and white photograph of a group of people sitting at a table in the garden holding beer glasses up to the camera. In the background, bushes, a field, trees, and a wooden fence are visible. About a dozen people are present in the photo, including a small girl with a bow in her hair and a skipping rope in her hand, a boy in a sailor shirt, women wearing long skirts with their hair pinned up, men in suits with mustaches, one of whom is wearing a fez. "Pumonte Péra brewery, Constantinople 1918. Farewell party in September"[18] say the captions added by the same hand who wrote the title of the album. Aspasia Schoenwald herself is visible in the photograph. She is wearing white and smiling under a straw hat, holding a beer mug up to the camera in her left hand. Aspa had to wait over seven years for this day. Since the summer of 1918, she had been in Constantinople trying to obtain the papers for her immigration to Munich. The apartment of her cousin, Elenie Haviaropoulus, where she lived during this month was situated, like many embassies and hotels, in the central Grande rue de Péra.[19] In the 1890s, two Swiss brothers founded a brewery in the same quarter. Their beer garden was not far away. Elenie's husband, a Greek dentist, sits between her and Aspa in the photo. His fez, a cylindrical red felt hat, is a reference to the period of the Ottoman Empire. During the 19th century, the head covering had become popular throughout the empire and represented the modern policies of the Sultan. In 1918, the fez stood for a world that was already in the process of disappearing.[20]

A step back in time: in November 1914, the Ottoman Empire had allied itself with the Central European powers, the German Empire, and Austria-Hungary. Not until then did the category "nation" gain importance in Aspa's everyday life. Prior to this event, she had sometimes referred to herself as German, sometimes as Greek, al-

17 Family Boeck's Blue Album, 1932.

18 The Bomonti Bira Fabrikasi still exists today; its dark malty beer is a local specialty in Istanbul. The historical brewery was located in Pera, a European district of the city, which is now called Beyoğlu.

19 Grande rue de Péra is the old name for İstiklâl Caddesi, which passes through Beyoğlu on its way to the Bosporus.

20 The upper classes of Constantinople wore a felt hat that was locally produced. However, the hats were usually manufactured in the Bohemian city of Strankowitz. The popular model of the fez was an Austrian-Hungarian export hit (Purkhart 2010).

though she did not differentiate between German and Austrian. Wilhelm and Aspa's brothers now fought on the same side, while her sister Anna's husband, a Greek, belonged to the Entente and was thus one of the "enemy". The war soon became an integral part of Aspa's letters. She sometimes wrote about poorly paid Ottoman soldiers, hunger, warships and officers, or airstrikes. According to her letters, she stopped playing tennis because she did not want to see the British, even though most of her friends were British. The letters Aspa wrote in 1915 not only told of the war but also about her job as a teacher. She taught twice a week at a Dutch monastery school in Goeztepe, south of Smyrna. Her students were Turkish, Armenian, and Greek. Aspa once sent a class photo to Munich. As far as religion was concerned, she made Wilhelm a proposal that she thought was quite pragmatic:

> *"This morning I went to church as usual, on my way home, I met a man who was also coming from church and we even had a conversation about faith. He told me that he was very happy to be Protestant and that he would not be willing to change his faith. I told him, you may say that, but I have a different opinion because I intend to marry a Catholic man. He asked me if I would be willing to convert to Catholicism. I said no, but my husband would have to accompany me to my church one Sunday and the next week I would go with him to his. That way we needn't argue or have a problem with one another. What do you think? How do you like this conversation of mine?"*[21]

The city as described in Aspa's letters existed until 1922. The Allies occupied the Ottoman Empire after the defeat of the Central European powers, and before the Ottoman troops regained control. Ongoing fighting resulted in many deaths, the situation in the city escalated in September 1922. Obviously, instigated by a pogrom targeting the Armenian population, the Levant city of Smyrna was largely destroyed by fire. Only an international rescue operation with ships and trains saved large portions of the population (Milton 2008). Hundreds of thousands of people sought refuge. "I have visited the store No. 202/2 Passage Ruegg, rue Parallele, and found it entirely destroyed by fire. R."[22] Augustus C. Routh, who worked for both the British and the American consulates at the time, wrote these lines shortly after the fire. Private and business letters frequently arrived at the consulate. Commercial settlements and insurance queries, as well as the whereabouts of people were the subjects of these letters.[23] Following intensive negotiations, an *exchange of populations* was finally settled and sealed with the Treaty of Lausanne, which ordered over a million people – thence declared to be Greeks – to leave the Ottoman Empire (Hirschon 2003). The sociologist Renee Hirschon refers to the event as the first implementation of an idea of this kind in the 20th century. Several thousand inhabitants who

21 Letter from Aspasia Schoenwald to Wilhelm Boeck, Smyrna, June 3, 1917.

22 National Archives Washington, 84.3 Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Izmir Turkey, Vol. 10.

23 Ibid.

were assumed to have Turkish roots were forced to leave Greece in return (Hirschon 2003). The Treaty of Lausanne resulted in a second catastrophe, not only from the Greek perspective. These developments, however, also led to the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic under the rule of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In 1925, the fez was officially forbidden as a symbol of the Ottoman Empire (Purkhart 2010). Aspa had already left Smyrna before the city was destroyed. Her story, like the story of Smyrna, is both an everyday and an unusual one; it is a story of the 19th and 20th centuries. Aspa's story is also the story of a great love and a cosmopolitan lifestyle, which helps her to keep her memories of the city on the Mediterranean alive. The Blue Album also has a second title on the inside: "Our home in Munich since September 1918–1932."[24]

James Clifford considers the different paths people take toward a present defined by mobility and looks back on the beginnings of a modern or postmodern lifestyle. Here, Clifford sees parallels between discovering the world through traveling and the development of an ethnographic perspective – as is common in his discipline in view of the history of cultural anthropology. "The long history of travel that includes the spatial practices of 'fieldwork' is predominantly Western-dominated, strongly male, and upper-middle class" (Clifford 1997: 66). From the point of view of a global history based on a cultural analysis, the impressions left by Aspa's letters indicate that she was one of the few non-aristocratic women who was not famous and yet whose transnational lifestyle in the first third of the 20th century can be reconstructed in this fashion. The biography of Aspa's sister, Anna Ghikas, who immigrated to Moshi in East Africa with her husband Dimitrios Ghikas round about 1900 and returned to Smyrna frequently, revels an additional episode of this lifestyle. Aspasia and the city of Smyrna have left many traces. Researching and reconstructing the transnational routes and connections revealed by the preserved letters will be the central task of my future work in this field, which connects biographical and urban research and unites local and transnational events into a historical cultural analysis.

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Journal of European Ethnology
and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)
2016, 1 (2): 124–147

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Small beings, great phenomenon*

Garden gnomes from the perspective of popular culture nanology

Abstract: At home all over the world, garden gnomes remain diligent, even when placed in new roles. This paper considers previous debates, while providing new reflections on nanology – the science of garden gnomes – from a popular culture perspective. It provides historical and genealogical information demonstrating a progression from the court dwarfs and park gnomes of yesteryear to the garden gnomes of today. One of its central arguments revolves around the process of nanofication, in which the dwarf's potential is used productively to open up new spaces and initiate innovative performances in society. Given their tendency to both polarize and provoke, gnomes have played a role in legal processes and jurisdictions. Associated with a corny, sentimental and emotional culture, the garden gnome proclaims a desire for a beautiful, idyllic and intact living environment.

Keywords: dwarf, garden gnome, kitsch, material culture, nanology, popular culture, folk tale studies

Things are not easy for garden gnomes, but they are not the only ones. Their owners have to put up with a lot of things, too. While the gnomes like to put on smiling faces and aspire to a cheerful nature, their owners – like their charges – are exposed to severe judgements. They are themselves usually seen as representatives of the petty bourgeoisie, with all that that entails. People who own a garden gnome often have to justify themselves. This pressure is part of a battle that the owners of garden gnomes fight to defend themselves against the accusations of petty bourgeois affectation, bad taste and particularly kitsch that they are faced with. It is true that there are specific connotations between the garden gnome and kitsch which quickly rear their heads. They have also found their way into an edifying encyclopedia of kitsch:

If anybody should hit on the kitschy idea of setting up a monument to kitsch, it would have to be a garden gnome! For this little fellow with the red pointed cap, smiling contentedly, puffing on his little pipe, pushing a wheelbarrow, lighting up the area with a little lantern, or doing all sorts of other cute things, has been popular for generations and is, so to speak, the classic symbol of kitsch. If you think

* German version in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 112 (2): 230-252. Translated by George Low.

of kitsch, you immediately think of garden gnomes, and if you see a garden gnome, you straight away think of kitsch (Richter 1972: 71f.).

People who adopt this identification postulate kitsch as a characteristic of the object and elevate the garden gnome to a kitsch figure. Reducing him exclusively to kitsch is, however, problematic and does not go deeply enough. The interrelationship is more complicated and cannot be limited to a single interpretation. Whether the meager field of analyses of garden gnomes in popular culture is similarly susceptible to the accusation of kitschy taste remains to be proved. The fact is that we are today confronted with approaches from various disciplines and opinions of differing standards, including ones written from the narrative perspective of a gnome (Paeschke 1994). The aim of this work is to examine all of them for their relevance to everyday life, to contextualize them thematically, and – using selected statements concerning garden gnomes – to convert them into new elements of research and debate.

Historifications and genealogies

When we attempt to approach the garden gnome by means of academic and more popular literature, we initially encounter the derivation via history, origin and genealogy, which are constantly being updated. It is noticeable in this context that the history of the dwarf and the history of the garden gnome are frequently 'coupled,' as if the figures produced nowadays are really their descendants and as if they could look back comfortably at their ancestors and forebears. In 1962, G. F. Hartlaub produced a survey of the early paths of the dwarf from the viewpoint of iconography and art history and discovered them in myths, fairy tales and traditional superstitions. The widely scattered elements cannot be simply pieced together. Their story could not reach further back historically – they are first mentioned in pre-Christian Celtic culture and in Nordic sagas. The traces of dwarfs lead into the realm of supernatural beings, mysteriously surrounded by legends, including goblins, imps and elves. Attitudes concerning the mythical effects of dwarfs from alchemy and Paracelsus lead, in the 16th century, to a strengthening of belief in dwarfs, who can, in the shape of mining spirits, for example, perform good deeds for miners as their secret helpers (Hartlaub 1962: 10f., 15f.).

Not infrequently, historicizing ideas that construct the origin of dwarfs also contain genealogies. They are attempts to uncover lines of descent and to do genealogical research in the land of dwarfs. In this context, the mythological dwarf plays a special role in genealogy: Dwarfs are regarded as chthonic (close to the earth) beings who live deep inside mountains as earth spirits, similar to other fabled and natural creatures that traditionally bear different names, such as imps, goblins, trolls, elves, brownies and ship's kobolds. Myths, fairy tales and legends speak of helpful beings who work – usually at night – in the house, barn, fields, or mines, but who react sensitively to mockery and ridicule and then flee forever (Peterhans

1973: 59 f.). The traditional accoutrements of the dwarfs, the red pointed cap, white beard, round cheeks, lantern, leather apron, pickax and wheelbarrow are significant and help us further.

On the one hand, these attributes refer to a world of experience (imaginary or real) between dwarfs and miners, and on the other hand they attempt to discover other, historical connections. Accordingly, following the Battle of Mycea, around 332 BC, a mass migration took place, leading to settlements in the Carpathian Mountains, the Urals and the Alps. Very early references focus on mining dwarfs on Mount Ida in Crete, where they searched for gold and silver; and similar constructs occur as far away as the mines in the Harz and Eifel mountains, and in the German, Austrian and Swiss Alps. Dwarfs were allegedly active everywhere here, because of their size. "Since the height of the galleries in the mines is very low, only people of small stature can work there: dwarfs. They dig and search for ore, gold and silver," as Etta Bengen declares in a generalizing way in her historical survey (Bengen 2011: 17). In this context, Hans Werner Prahl also comments that: "In what is now eastern Turkey, Pygmies from Africa worked as slaves in the ore and coal mines. But the seemingly supernatural powers of the dwarfs unsettled the owners of the mines. They therefore created stone representations of the diminutive Africans in order to ward off their magic powers" (Prahl 1998; cited in Brinkmann 2008). In genealogical terms, the first line of ancestry finishes here.

Court dwarfs, park gnomes and garden gnomes

A second linking to ('younger') ancestors can be discerned among the artificial figures. In this context, it is important to differentiate between court dwarfs, park gnomes and garden gnomes, according to their function, and to localize them. Powerful rulers liked to make sure that a diminutive or crippled court dwarf was present at their court. In view of the supernatural powers attributed to him, he was entrusted with various duties, including that of being a jester and entertaining the court. The tradition of employing court dwarfs in Central Europe dates back to the 15th century; earlier in the ancient world. The park gnomes are particularly conspicuous among the concrete depictions of diminutive people. These, in the 18th century, were part of the ornamentation of the gardens in aristocratic homes in Germany and in manors and country houses in Italy, as Hartlaub (1962: 28 f.) has demonstrated. The function of these statues of dwarfs was to decorate the palace gardens, but, at the same time, they represented an important stage of development. Park gnomes are statues made of marble or sandstone that were erected as ornamentation in parks. They occasionally depicted deformed, abnormal or grotesque dwarfs, which were given caricatured features based on designs by the court painter Jacques Callot (1592–1635). Park gnomes can generally be counted among Baroque garden culture, with the number of their locations reaching a peak in the first half of the

18th century (Hartlaub 1962: 26 f.). Precursors of new forms were already appearing: "Between 1744 and 1750, many of the china figures made in the Dresden china factory in Meissen and in the Imperial Court factory in Vienna were produced for the galleries of dwarfs in aristocratic ornamental gardens" (Zöllner 2010).

Following the varieties of dwarfs that had, in the meantime, established themselves and the 'decline' of the park gnome, there arose a form which can apply to the garden gnome in the narrow sense of the term, or what can be derived from it – what can be described from our present-day point of view as the classic garden gnome. To start with, it is, however, a cautious early phase. "That age of the garden gnomes, as we know them, appears to have dawned in the German Biedermeier period" (Wunderlin 2007: 11). The 'modern' gnome, today made of marble, sandstone, clay and, eventually, plastic, started to lead a new life in the gardens of the bourgeoisie and, later, the petty bourgeoisie. Their rise and significance are combined in an important transition. This can also be found in the world of myths and fairy tales. The legends of dwarfs lead particularly to relevant traces. "All in all," says Lutz Röhrich, "the legends of dwarfs convey an impression of preindustrial rural and small-town society with all people's hopes, wishes and fears. Dwarfs present microscopic reflections of our own culture, an image of the world in miniature" (Röhrich 1998: 8).

The flow of information concerning the new gnomes increases towards the end of the 19th century, where previously only sporadic reports had been available (Wikipedia 2015b). It has been established that garden gnomes were also produced in England in 1847, in some cases even in small series. "John Claudius Loudon, in his Encyclopedia of Gardening, published in 1850, specifically recommended enlivening a garden with figures of gnomes" (Brinkschulte 2013). However, the cradle of the production of classic garden gnomes lies in Thuringia, and Rüdiger Helmboldt has produced a work of reference for cultural history in the form of a unique monograph (Helmboldt 2009). The first two factories were established in Gräfenroda by August Heissner and Philip Griebel and were soon very successful – this resulted slowly in a switch to serial production, we can even say the mass production, of garden gnomes (also for trade fairs and export), and led to the establishment of further factories; there were sixteen of them by the turn of the century. "The gnomes flourished mostly in the period between 1870 and 1920. There was hardly any object that was not decorated with them; there was hardly any book or magazine in which they did not appear," as Esther Gajek explains in her detailed introduction to nanology (Gajek 2010: 249). Depictions of dwarfs in Romantic paintings and colorful illustrations in books of myths and fairy tales show similarities with garden gnomes, thus, it is more than merely likely that "the form, appearance and shaping of the garden gnomes derive from these originals" (Friedmann 1994: 18).

Serial production and new signifiers

In recent years, signals or messages have been received more and more frequently from the 'new' colonies of gnomes in Germany and Austria, and also in France, Belgium, England, the Czech Republic, northern Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland. The constant rise in the sales figures of modern gnomes probably collapsed due to the two world wars (Hildebrandt 2014) – indeed, garden gnomes were even prohibited by the National Socialists. Trade sources reckon that a rebirth and reinvention of the production of gnomes started in about 1980. How many garden gnomes there are worldwide cannot be ascertained precisely – it is estimated that 25 million specimens have been sold in Germany alone. With figures of this magnitude, it is permissible to speak of a population. And there remains a lot of unregistered gnomes, and questions concerning the ancestry of modern garden gnomes, which have already been mentioned above, continue to play a part in the debate and in sales advertising – genealogical constructs and speculation have survived in numerous mutated forms.

The factory firm with the name *Zwergen-Power* (Gnome Power) in the German municipality of Eichen has demonstrated this prototypically since 1990.[1] It is now possible to individually select the version of the history of its ancestry that personally strikes one as the most credible. The website *zwergen-power.com* offers "plausible theories" and "mystic sounding fantasies," which are presented for the friend of garden gnomes to choose from. *Alpen* (the Alps) provides the keyword for the first ancestral history. According to this version, the garden gnomes keep their wives concealed in the Alps, where their offspring are raised. When these children have reached adulthood, they are collected once a year by the older garden gnomes. A second theory, called *Gen-Technik* (genetic engineering), postulates propagation by forms of reproduction that are very close to modern technology. To put it more precisely: "Garden gnomes have been able to propagate their own species without direct intercourse for more than one hundred years," as the website phrases it. A third version places their origins in the Biedermeier period when new garden gnomes were created – it is a significant step from gnomes that were 'only' painted (as patterns) to three-dimensional figures in clay.

To sum up, it can be stated that the search for evidence of the history of the garden gnome has thrown up a lot of difficulties and discoveries. In view of the confused and confusing patterns of interpretation and speculation, it makes sense to distinguish the history of the dwarf from the history of the garden gnome, for "not every dwarf is a garden gnome, but every garden gnome is a dwarf."[2] The underlying motive for a fusion is probably 'tradition with mythical age' – in other words, a

1 http://www.zwergen-power.com/de/info/Woher-stammt-der-Gartenzweg-.html, 22.07.2015

2 http://www.zipfelauf.com/wienerz.htm, 04.09.2015.

traditional legitimation. It almost seems that a certain measure of anthropological knowledge is a prerequisite for this sort of time journey to one's ancestors.

Dwarfs are interpreted, amongst other things, as the emblematic embodiment of useful, but, in the last analysis, uncontrollable natural forces or also as experiences and deeds of the subconscious that are and can only be seen through with difficulty or not at all. However, if one examines the wide variety of legends and fairy tales, the stories about dwarfs often have a very real core, which can be explained by the diminutive stature of human beings (Hänsel and Kramer 1993: 9).

The actual production of modern gnomes was accelerated in the 20th century and various structural developments can be seen from the 1990s onwards, which I will proceed to list. The central focus of attention is still the classic and easily defined garden gnome. Its ironical Latin name is *nanus hortorum vulgaris*, in other words, the 'standard (common) gnome in gardens or parks.' It is an ornamental figure made of clay or plastic and painted by hand, no more than 27 inches high and male, generally with a white beard, a pointed red cap, a green apron, a leather jerkin, a lantern and stout boots. By means of these elements, "the classic German garden gnomes indicate that they carry out duties in the garden or down the mine, which is why they are often equipped with a pickax, a shovel or a wheelbarrow."[3]

New design patterns

A first defining characteristic is that new design patterns deviate from the 'average gnome' and can be subsumed into various categories: the 'working gnome' (*nanus laborans*): with a bucket, lantern, shovel, wheelbarrow or pickax; the 'artistic gnome' (*nanus artifex*): with a book, recorder or accordion; the 'leisure gnome' (*nanus relaxans*); the 'scandal gnome' (*nanus perversus*): displaying a great deal of flesh in an exhibitionistic or provocative way, in latex or leather; the 'political gnome' (*nanus politicus*) as a political caricature; the 'poisonous gnome' (*nanus virulentus*) with poisonous spotted fly agaric; and the 'she-gnome' (*nanus femininus*) as a controversial female garden gnome.[4] A different typology speaks of the 'working gnome,' the 'leisure gnome' and the 'cultural gnome' (Prahl 1988; cited by Bengen 2011: 99); on the other hand, a categorization based on the material used distinguishes between an 'animate gnome' (*nanus hortorum vulgaris animatus*) and an 'inanimate gnome' (*nanus hortorum vulgaris non animatus*). According to this principle, only gnomes made of clay, ceramics or terracotta can be animate, but not products made of cheap plastic (Friedmann 1994: 16).

It is easy to overlook the imaginative development of an apparently limitless diversification of the product range, because they are grouped together in general

3 http://www.garten-treffpunkt.de/lexikon/gartenzwerg.aspx, 01.08.2015

4 http://www.garten-treffpunkt.de/lexikon/gartenzwerg.aspx, 01.08.2015

categories. Here are a few examples of innovations which have market potential: the garden gnome musician, the garden gnome sportsman, the garden gnome with Angela (Merkel – the German Federal Chancellor), the garden gnome with shield and cup, the garden gnome with animals and passive infrared detector alarms, funny, erotic, macabre, cheeky garden gnomes, garden gnomes with Snow White as a set, the garden gnome money box, the garden gnome as a nurse, and many more. She-gnomes are frowned upon among collectors, as are the tasteless or perverse poses of eroticized gnomes (Friedmann 1994: 16). Garden gnomes 'flipping the bird' are considered a provocation, likewise garden gnomes with a gun, with a knife in their back, with an open coat as a flasher or with a beer bottle.

In addition, there are designer garden gnomes in the field of so-called anti-gnomes or shock gnomes: with latex, leather and a whip as a dominatrix, as a Goth, as a cool rocker and, since 1963, as a caricatured politician.[5] The former garden gnomes have long since reached various areas of design onto which they can be projected almost at will – with new motifs unconnected with the former garden culture. A specialist Swiss Internet shop (www.zwergshop.ch) offers garden gnomes with a first name, for example, "garden gnome Wendelin," or, at the same time, sells groups with figures, such as the complete set "cozy jass group."[6] The product range includes spontaneously designed groupings: gnomes with names, gnomes with information about their occupations, gnomes with accessories, gnomes with the heads of prominent politicians, and even with moods, postures, group histories, scenarios, traditional figures (St Nicholas, Father Christmas) and many others. Technical elements provide the figures with solar cells, lights and whistles (e. g. as passive infrared detector alarms) or make the gnomes wobble.[7] At the time of writing, the complete range comprises 61 products. A German firm advertises its comparable products as "cool," "stylish" and "cult."[8]

Expansions and new fields of activity

A second defining characteristic can be found in the spatial and medial expansion of the gnomes' fields of activity. They describe a development that places new play areas at the garden gnomes' disposal. While park gnomes and garden gnomes were confined to courtly parks for a long time and to private gardens later on, their world has expanded to include new 'theaters' and locations. Although the garden gnomes still point to the garden by their very name, they are slowly leaving it. They are mov-

5 http://www.garten-treffpunkt.de/lexikon/gartenzwerg.aspx, 9–10, 03.08.2015

6 http://www.zwergshop.ch/gruppen-figuren-sonstiges/index.html, 14.08.2015; Jassen is a popular Swiss card game.

7 http.//www.preis.de/index.htm?AKT=sem&search=gartenzwerge+set&af=1&d=3&w=43&y=2012&preis_aff_id=4444-adwords-2013&gclid=CKy4i-eYqscCFeHMtAod1HQM3g, 14.08.2015.

8 http://www.zwerge24.de/Gartenzwerge, 02.01.2015

ing from the front garden to the allotment, invading houses and apartments, climbing onto balconies, meeting up with their fellows in building supplies stores and garden centers, and even going camping in trailers, as one online forum reveals.[9] Nevertheless, the gnomes continue to remain in the private sphere to demonstrate their effect in public.

The sale and distribution of gnomes enliven an online shopping portal of their own with further play areas in which the garden gnomes like to present and parade themselves. They have even found access to digital chat forums and have been using them for some time now – they show no fear of contact by means of communication based on the Internet. Blogs are used by our gnomes as a further innovative theater for exchanging stories and publicizing their view of the world. "After the new Internet store […] had gone online[,] the garden gnomes decided that it was time that the gnomes got their own blog, too […] Garden gnomes also want their voice to be heard and have created a garden gnome blog for this purpose."[10] Concerning content, it is the postings and self-descriptions that refer to gnome culture and, at best ,display media-specific forms of expression that must be regarded as the most relevant. Thematic emphases can hardly be detected in current archive files.

Whether there were any connections between the rise of allotments and the garden plot movement and the rise of the petty bourgeois garden gnome remains to be examined in detail – there is evidence to support this assumption: "In those days, thousands of Germans followed an idea that a physician called Daniel Gottfried Moritz Schreber had put forward decades previously – the garden plot movement. The sales of gnomes suddenly skyrocketed as part of this movement" (Kirnich 1995: 1). Current scholarship, however, suggests that the invention of the garden gnome had nothing to do with Dr. Schreber's ideas, and that it was merely one element in its development – evidently a significant one (Helmboldt 2009: 45). That the garden plot as a part of one's home found a place in the "German places of memory" is connected with this and is certainly no coincidence:

The happiness that garden plot owners aspire to is defined by orderliness. Standardized hideous objects, prefabricated kitsch and artificial manure are of great importance; typical German virtues are in high demand – peace and orderliness, industriousness and cleanliness. The owners can only permit themselves individuality in the choice of garden gnomes (Rudolph 2009: 367).

In the present-day context, we can detect a change of image from the bourgeois garden plot culture to the hip city cult – including the consequences for the garden gnomes, who are frequently smiled at by a newly identifiable generation of urban gardeners. But the gnomes smile back and they have every reason to do so, since

9 http://www.wohnwagen-forum.info/board62-lustiges-rund-ums-camping/208-gartenzwerge-ja-oder-nein/, 22.08.2015

10 For example: www.zwergen-power/info/, 04.10.2015

they occupy new locations in public and semipublic areas. A glance at history shows that the traditional places for garden gnomes remain bound to personal locations, whereas a glance at the current presence of garden gnomes leads us to new terrain. Indeed, since the 1990s, our garden gnomes have even been found in museums and exhibitions, as evidenced by selected examples.

Between museum and event

Thus, equipped with the aura of the authentic, the garden gnome factory mentioned above and the 'Garden Gnome Museum' in Gräfenrode in Thuringia, Germany, attract potentially interested people. The firm can look back on a turbulent history and a fourth generation is now marketing it together with its new products since Reinhard Griebel made a fresh start in 1971. From 1948 until 1952, the production of garden gnomes was officially prohibited, but the government of the German Democratic Republic discovered that they were an export hit with a considerable turnover. Since then, both the production and the marketing have been in the hands of a private firm, which sells around 150 handcrafted figures daily. It was Reinhard's cousin Günter Griebel who branched out in the direction of a museum when he opened the *Deutsches Museum für Gartenzwerge* (German Museum for Garden Gnomes) in Rot am See in Bavaria (Rudolph 2009: 367). The Styrian State Museum Joanneum in Austria provided insights into the 'dwarf republic' by means of an exhibition entitled *Die Zwerge kommen!* ('The gnomes are coming!') at Trautenfels Castle in 1993. The exhibition had an interdisciplinary approach and was accompanied by an informative volume. Next, in 2005, the LWL Museum for Art and Culture mounted an exhibition on the subject: 'Beloved and derided – the garden gnome is 130 years old,' presenting the cultural history of the gnomes, their production and design, liberators and protectors, friends and foes, origins and development.[11]

Another indication of an upswing is the creation of amusement and leisure parks. Only a few miles away from Gräfenrode, a garden area covering almost 2,000 square miles was opened in the community of Trusetal in 1996, designed and marketed as a 'gnome park' tourist attraction. A miniature railroad runs through the family-orientated park and – in addition to a tour of the attractions – provides nanological information concerning events, gnome science, gnome conventions and an international gnome party. Meals are available in the gnomery.[12] The gnome park, Gurktal, a vacation attraction in Carinthia, Austria, likewise focuses on family amusement events. Here, too, a miniature railroad has given visitors insights into the world of gnomes since 1993 by means of various thematically arranged experience locations and activities, such as the 'gnome well' (birth and myth of the

11 http://www.lwl.org/pressemitteilungen/mitteilung.php?urlID=12837, 14.08.2015

12 http://www.zwergen-park.de/, 14.08.2015

gnome), 'the gnome as a work of art,' 'entrance' (home), 'miniature castle,' 'gnome studio' (theatre), 'series of photographs,' 'underground trip,' 'folktale narrator' and 'painting station.' This amusement park is based on an image of the garden gnomes that represents "the primeval desire of humankind to fill nature with life" – with a playful reversion to childhood, as the introduction expresses it.[13] Miniature railroads can also be found among the diversified elements of the Prater in Vienna and the Fantasiana amusement park in Strasswalchen, Austria. This latter park, near Salzburg, was opened in 1996 and offers the widest range of attractions and amusements, including toadstool houses where you can watch the industrious gnomes at work.[14]

When we deal playfully with garden gnomes in the context of fun-and-action programs, it is easy to forget that cheap versions of our figures have also been produced outside Thuringia – this, too, is a new field of activity. We are speaking of Poland's garden gnome industry, which thoroughly deserves the name, since a production plant in Nowa Sól, which has existed for 30 years and in its heyday comprised up to 30 factories, saved an entire region from economic ruin around the time of the collapse of the communist regime. The production went through various stages and provided foreign customers with gnomes. First of all, the Polish garden gnomes could be found in the garden plots of the German Democratic Republic, then they were sold in West Germany, Switzerland and all over the world, but they never took hold in Poland itself. The success of the exports was remarkable: "It can be said that the production of gnomes saved Nowa Sól from ruin at the time of the collapse of the communist regime," is how the mayor there put it (Puhl 2013). The economic transformation is interesting in this context. After the decline of the thread and metal factory, the successful establishment of a new branch of industry turned Nowa Sól into one of the greatest manufacturers of garden gnomes in the world. In the meantime, however, the demand for Polish garden gnomes has stopped – evidently as a result of competition from even cheaper Chinese garden gnomes. Nevertheless, the memories remain: "We were thrown into the icy waters of a market economy – and it is due to the garden gnomes that we survived […] The gnomes showed us the way and helped us survive the difficult period of transformation" (Roser 2005).

Gnomic potential and nanofication

The triumphal progress of the garden gnome illuminates a third defining characteristic. We can presume that a complex gnomic potential provides the modern figure with a momentum of its own. The developments can be subsumed under an increase in nanofication, which can be observed in its exploitation in interdisciplinary fields of application. A process can be discerned here that reflects both forwards and

13 http://www.zwergenpark.com, 15.08.2015

14 http://www.erlebnispark.at/informationen/parkentstehung, 18.08.2015

backwards. As has already been indicated, dwarfs appear in the lower regions of mythology, in genealogies, in oral traditions, and also in legends and fairy tales. The secret of the dwarfs continues to exist; it is believed that there are over 100 different wondrous myths, legends and fairy tales in existence in Germany alone.[15] The most famous one is 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' in the collection of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Popular Fairy Tales) by the Grimm Brothers, which was popularized by the unique success of the Disney film version of 1937. "The heyday of book illustrations between c. 1850 and 1930 has defined the canon of forms to the present day. Both recent pictures in children's literature and artistic and popular innovations such as comics and cartoons are based on it" (Hänsel and Krämer 1993: 138).

A further trail of evidence, this time in belletristic literature, proves that, here too, dwarfs are moving upwards. They have fought their way into higher realms and from the Romantic period right into the 20th century have become a figure and a motif. In widely differing ways, dwarfs have been literary figures in works by, for example, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Mann, Carl Jacob Burckhardt, Hermann Hesse, Elias Canetti, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Günter Grass, as a study by Harald W. Vetter has demonstrated. The author summarizes the process by pointing to a significant structural change: "The mythical canon of the world of dwarfs, which used to be rigidly defined, has in this way undergone a clear dissolution. It will, therefore, become necessary to speak of a 'secularization' of the dwarf and the relevant cult […]" (Vetter 1993: 128).

It is revealing to uncover comparative applications of gnomic potential. They always involve the 'occupation' of new territories, including, for example, operas in which dwarfs are assigned leading or supporting roles. Many compositions from the 19th and 20th centuries have disappeared, but others have survived, as an essay by Clemens Gruber points out. It is enough to mention the dwarf in Wagner's 'Siegfried' trilogy or the numerous fairy tale operas based on the classic theme of 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.' Evidently, a great deal of research remains to be done: "Dwarfs, goblins and their ilk are a fixed element of many 'operas' and works for the musical stage, far too many to permit anything approaching a comprehensive survey" (Gruber 1993: 132).

Analyses of dwarfs in the fine arts, the cinema, videos, picture books, comics, as well as in advertising would presumably come to a similar conclusion if they tried to categorize developments, especially those in folklore. "As a stereotype and symbol of German culture, cited as variously as *Gemütlichkeit* (coziness) and in the meantime as the transformation of kitsch into cult, the garden gnome indicates the central element of its appearance. It is, in essence, a matter of folklore" (Schmidt-

15 http://www.3sat.de/page/?source=/specials/thementage/ard/150599/index.html, 20.08.2015

Lauber 2003: 173). Pictorial representations and objectivizations of dwarfs are a theme in the fine arts that artists have dealt with repeatedly in all periods from antiquity up to late modernism.

There has been no comprehensive attempt yet to describe their development historically up to the present day with the specific aim of filtering out pictorial traditions and the design of objects. How productive the journalistic processing of news, observations and sensations can be may be seen from a wide-ranging collection of useful items using the mass print media as an example (Martischnig 1993). In view of the lack of a comprehensive portrayal, it must be at least pointed out in the present context that, since the 19th century, dwarfs have become assimilated into the fields of exotic edification, of popular knowledge and of entertainment supported by mass culture, and have, up to the present day, repeatedly entered new territory – both in the private and public domain. How garden gnomes accomplish this and how, when and where they blend their lives as dwarfs with substances of their ancestors according to the relevant valid norms of production, reception and diffusion, became evident in the *Gründerzeit* from 1880 onwards.

One hundred years later, Fritz Friedmann, a self-appointed professor of nanology [Prof. nan.] intervened in the 'world of gnomes' and, in 1980 – faced with an increase in developments detrimental to the idea – founded the society *Internationaler Verein zum Schutz der Gartenzwerge* (IVZSG: International Society for the Protection of Garden Gnomes) with its seat in Basel, Switzerland. Its aim was to become involved in the dissemination of knowledge in the field of academic nanology and the decades of struggle for an appropriate treatment of gnomes. The reason behind this involvement was several cases of blackmail, theft, hostage-taking, slander, destruction, perversions, naughty gnomes and the abuse of midgets in advertising, for example, in advertisements for condoms. The society, numbering about 500 members, was successful. It had members in four continents and made its founder a popular expert, who used his journalistically composed contributions to great effect with over 60 broadcasting stations until his death at the age of 98. From 1993 onwards, he published the *Gartenzwerg-Gazette* (Garden Gnome Gazette) six times a year and curated the society's homepage (www.zipfelauf.com). Friedmann's book *Zipfel Auf! Alles über Gartenzwerge. Ein rein wissenschaftliches Lehr- und Lesebuch* ('Caps on. Everything about the garden gnome. A purely academic textbook and reader') was published in 1994 and is regarded as an authoritative work. The year 1996 saw the foundation of the organization *Front zur Befreiung der Gartenzwerge* (in French the *Front de Libération des Nains des Jardins*, in Italian the *Movimento armato per la Liberazione dei Nani da Giardino* and in English the Garden Gnome Liberation Front), whose supporters 'liberated' garden gnomes from front gardens and often released them again in woods, their "natural habitat" (Wikipedia 2015a). This organization was a nonprofit-making association whose activities were carried out in secret.

The victims were, however, informed with details of where they could find their garden gnomes again. From a legal point of view, the decision had to be taken in individual cases whether trespass, illegal appropriation, the depriving of property or even theft was involved. This form of liberation or removal was naturally a problem for the garden plot owners. "The police suspect the existence of a guerrilla group behind this prank." "The 'Garden Gnome Liberation Front' was founded in France and, in the meantime, has supporters in Germany. They send the owners of the stolen garden gnomes letters claiming responsibility, some of which include a ransom demand."[16] One particularly bare-faced case of kidnapping was recorded in the Austrian state of Voralberg in 2014, when 400 garden gnomes – used by the Social Democrats on this occasion as a political symbol in their election campaign – were stolen, which they described as an act of sabotage by their political opponents (Baumann 2014).

Polarization as inflammatory material

A fourth defining characteristic of the modern garden gnomes can be discerned according to their potential to polarize. Whatever garden gnomes may give forth or receive, they provide inflammatory material of a symbolic, social or esthetic kind or taste. People do not have a neutral reaction in direct contact with the figure, rather, there is a reflex that takes place within seconds and provokes reactions – for some a humorous feeling coupled with a smile of acceptance, for others a decision to distance themselves triggered as if by a slimeball. "Garden gnomes divide society," as the curator Claudia Rücker pointed out with justification on the occasion of an exhibition on the subject 'Garden gnomes – kitsch or cult?', which was shown in various locations in 2002. In her opinion, this indicates that people either love or hate garden gnomes; there is only black or white, no shades of grey (Perske 2013).

The polarization 'love or hate' is one thing; its consequences are another thing entirely. On the one hand, 30 % of the interviewees in a survey carried out in 2000 like a garden to be decorated with garden gnomes. But it must be remembered that this refers to garden gnomes belonging to other people, not to themselves. In fact, whether garden gnomes can be put in place is not merely a personal decision; it can be regulated by laws passed by the planning authorities or by neighborhood rules. What happens if such laws or regulations are infringed can be seen from various court cases.

Between disputes and judicial decisions

Disputes can occur in three contexts: Firstly, when garden gnomes are placed on commonly owned property, secondly, when 'alienated' garden gnomes that offend

16 http://www.vox.de/cms/gartenzwerg-guerilla-klaut-733478.html, 04.09.2015

the sensibilities of others because of suggestiveness, insults or obscenity are set up and, thirdly, when legal rights following theft are involved. The local court in Grünstadt, Germany, handed down a verdict on February 11, 1994, which said that a man had to remove his so-called 'frustration gnomes' because they offended the honor of his neighbors and violated their human dignity, which is guaranteed in the German basic law. One of the gnomes was sticking out his tongue and 'flipping passers-by the bird'; a second one was displaying his naked rear, while a third one was holding his nose. Other figures were tapping their forehead to make a 'crazy' sign and forming a circle with their thumb and index finger.[17] A court case that was settled by the Hanseatic High Court in 1988 after four years of hearings reached a slightly different conclusion. In this case, a retiree had set up two garden gnomes in the commonly used garden of the housing estate in Hamburg in which he lived: one of them was singing and the other playing the accordion. A fellow resident took him to court, claiming that the gnomes represented a violation of the commonly used garden. The court found in her favor and, to the horror of the owner of the garden gnomes, described them as "a symbol of narrow-mindedness and stupidity" (Bengen 2001: 107 f.).

An article in the *Hildesheimer Zeitung* of February 7, 2000, announced that "after years of legal disputes, a garden gnome flipping passers-by the bird does not have to appear in court again after all. The District Court of Hildesheim will not hear an appeal about the goblin sticking out his middle finger because the sum involved is too small" (cited by Bengen 2001: 107 f.). Public opposition to a plan by the authorities and in favor of garden gnomes took a special form in the community of Klosters in the Swiss canton of Graubünden. The community planned to compel the inhabitants of Monbiel, a neighboring community in the Walsertal valley, to abide by new regulations to preserve the alpine idyll – with no flagpoles, no children's playgrounds and no garden gnomes either. This plan, however, triggered vociferous protests by the 100 or so inhabitants. Following the lodging of approximately 20 objections the mayor and councilors withdrew the plan in November 2014.[18]

However, disputes, lawsuits, court cases and verdicts do not only occur in Germany, but in neighboring countries as well. The *Krieg der Gartenzwerge* ('The War of the Garden Gnomes'), the sensational title of a book by Jürgen Machunsky, deals in a legalistic fashion with disputes with neighbors, which often take years, as well as with their rights and their duties. The magistrates must cope with the added difficulty that the garden gnomes involved in these cases are situated somewhere

17 http://www.kostenlose-urteile.de/AG-Grünstadt_2a-C-33493_Frustzwerge-Nachbar-muss-Gartenzwerge-die-einen-Stinkefinger-zeigen-oder-entbloesstes-Hinterteil-haben-aus-dem-Garten-entfernen.news9840.htm, 24.08.2015

18 http://www.blick.ch/news/schweiz/graubuenden/nach-20-einsprachen-klosters-kippt-gartenzwerg-verbot-id3303612.html, 14.08.2015.

between artistic freedom, primitive quality, the concrete expression of humor and bad taste. The "disputes about garden gnomes," each of which must be dealt with as a unique case, frequently start out as accessories and end up in a general context (Paprotta 2015).

The figures' functions

There has been no comprehensive theory put forward concerning the garden gnome. A search for such a theory will prove fruitless, but may instead provide brief thought-provoking stimuli that tend in this direction. Thus, garden gnomes still remain somewhat mysterious – it almost seems as if their smile is intended to disarm observers and analysts. A smile indicates a distance to a subject – only people who have a certain distance can laugh. It is noticeable that treatises about the figure of the garden gnome continue to have a strong historical approach and do not shrink from speculations in the field of popular cultural descriptions. As a figure of projection, the gnome carries a load that can include many mixtures and constructions – for whatever happens to be needed at the moment. That makes the gnome a complete and flexible figure that has some substance available for almost any contact and any situation.

Seen from this perspective, the garden gnome is polyvalent and must stand for many things, even where this is not unexpected. In his column in the editorial of his newspaper on October 2, 2013, the President of the *Hauseigentümerverbandes* (HEV; Landowners' Association) in the Region of Winterthur linked garden gnomes and wrestling champions. He points out how important it is, even in our sober Switzerland, to occasionally show pleasure and have some fun aside from the rigors of everyday life […] In this context, I spontaneously thought of the garden gnomes of several landowners as an expression of individual freedom. After all, with garden gnomes, it is in the last analysis, a question not of taste, but rather of the freedom of property-owners and house-owners to set up such figures in their own gardens as an ornament and as self-realization […] For they embody a self-confident and, at the same time, peaceful and harmonious lifestyle, which demands nothing more than the freedom of the individual.[19]

This linking appears somewhat artificial and plays with a long-established tradition of physical exercise (wrestling), whereas the garden gnomes help to secure an individual system of values. Availability, play and self-confidence can here be linked without any problem.

The greatest mystery in the history of garden gnomes is how they could develop from miners to gardeners. Following the story told by Plato in the famous allegory of

19 http//www.hev-winterthur.ch/home/wohneigentuemer/artikel/?txttnews%5Btt_news%5D=6924&cHash=41e793135b01e6b80db3d3c0948a50cc, 04.09.2015.

the cave in his dialogue 'The Republic,' it is possible to imagine that garden gnomes were the first creatures to escape from captivity in the darkness of hell and prefer the brightness of daylight. At the very end of the 19th century, they underwent a fundamental transformation and today enliven our gardens. (LeTensoner; cited by Friedmann 1994: 98).

These comments by Jean-Marie LeTensoner from the Seminar of Prehistory and Early History in Basel, Switzerland, again attempt to find historical traces and recognize the importance of the metamorphosis at the decisive interface.

This interface includes the concept of "sunken cultural goods," which Herbert Freudenthal came across thirty years ago in an essay in the context of his *Streiflichter* (short articles) about the garden gnome. This concept was, for a time, very highly regarded by ethnologists. Freudenthal's conclusion was that: "The garden gnome cannot simply be categorized solely as 'sunken cultural goods.' Wherever they appear, they remain even today a 'primitive (= primary) communal goods.' This also applies to an additional train of thought, which now touches on attitudes in folk art" (Freudenthal 1962: 87). Leaving aside the ideological connotations, the concept describes an item of cultural dynamics from top to bottom, but it cannot show the elements of process and contents between the park gnome and the garden gnome in detail. The sinking remains open. Embedding the modern garden gnomes in the context of the Age of Industrialization opens up other ways of understanding their genesis better towards the end of the 19th century.

Transit agent in a culture of sentiment

If we posit garden gnomes in the form of a type, they can be seen as transit agents – special markers that look forward to the transition to the modern age and backward to their mysterious mythical past.

In the course of time, which was becoming ever louder and ever uglier, the little goblins disappeared sadly from the gaze of the mortals. Nobody can say what the destination of their long journey was. Only then, in order to preserve their memory, did people dream up the garden gnome around 1880. Despite being faced with hostile reactions of all sorts, this late descendant of the mythological dwarfs has survived up to the present day in countless front gardens (Hänsel and Kramer 1993: 10).

According to a legend from the Werra valley, it was "the construction of the railways in the 19th century which finally drove away the last goblins. Hardly had they disappeared, however, then they seem to have been sorely missed. Or is it a coincidence that it was around the same time that the mass production of garden gnomes began in the mountains of Thuringia?" (Hohberg 2012: 89).

However, the garden gnomes do not owe their survival merely to the fact that they are simply descendants of mythically glorified creatures at the threshold of

the modern age. Rather, proof of their strength can be seen again and again in their ability to survive metamorphoses as well as in their variability and in a wide range of adaptive roles. In this way, the smile of the gnomes covers 'open' projection surfaces, which their supporters, however, evidently withstand without difficulties. Garden gnomes carry around permanently with them a catalogue of virtues that is tailor-made for them. Among the important virtues are uprightness, industriousness, courage, peaceability, politeness, loyalty and attention to duty, to name but a few. The fact that they can be made use of in combination permits progression – garden gnomes do not just represent the world of the petty bourgeoisie. Other motifs have contributed to the fact that "the perfectly normal garden gnome has also had the privilege of being subsumed among the canon of trendy status symbols as an example of really good bad taste" (Roller 1997: 65).

Evocative idyll as the message of the garden gnomes

In their 'own' locations, the garden gnomes send out all kinds of messages of their own and, in this way, present themselves. They proclaim what a peaceful and harmonious coexistence could have been like in the past and should be like today, first embedded in park landscapes as ideal types, later in domestic front gardens, then in garden plots, and nowadays in many other locations. Garden gnomes stand everywhere as witnesses from an earlier culture, which today only functions in fragments discernible as a vicarious experience. Such experiences of empathic intimacy are simulated as a surrogate or presented as mass-produced objects. The typified location is part of this:

> The miniature landscapes for the garden gnomes […] – often in a prominent location, clearly visible to passersby – reflect the ideal of an intact world to which the 'modern times' have not yet gained entry. Farmhouses, churches with onion-domed towers and mills with a waterwheel form the backdrop for the world of the garden gnomes. Their unchanging smiles and their calmness suggest, both to their owners and to observers, continuity in a world which is constantly changing. (Gajek 2010: 264)

From the point of view of nanology, this represents a unique process even to their supporters – since the rise of the garden gnomes is perceived as a subculture, specifically: "A subculture of garden culture" (Friedmann 1997; essay title).

With a steering towards a classification of this kind, the relationship of the garden gnome and kitsch must be defined. Logically, this varies according to the way kitsch is understood. If we go from a relational concept of kitsch, as Jürgen Grimm has argued convincingly, garden gnomes themselves cannot be kitsch, even though earlier definition criteria, such as artificial material, trivialization and infantilization, lack of respect and art for the populace, repeatedly seduce one into doing so. As Grimm says, "Kitsch is defined as a particular mode of experience, in

which esthetic standards lose their validity" (Grimm 1998: 56 ff.). According to him, kitsch combines emotion from the object with a special kind of sentimentality and mawkishness, which can also be produced artificially. This can be seen very clearly, for example, in the 'souvenir,' where the popular little present as a vehicle of experiences is simultaneously a derivative, unique and surrogate object (Gyr 2014: 28 ff.), which can provoke such emotional moods.

Garden gnomes reflect and embody a simple image that desires good and despises bad. This role model concept can be seen in many places – since garden gnomes embody "everything that their owners have not achieved in their lives," as Jonas Geist, a professor of architecture, phrases it (Strauss 2002). Interestingly, the nanological protection program does not seek to combat kitschy gnomes. The target of its campaign is rather the deviant and naughty figures, the soulless and artificial ones, made of cheap plastic, and their damaging effects. Their guardians and protectors are committed to a healthy (intact) world and practice such a life by means of industriousness, helpfulness, irony and optimism: "Garden gnomes help in adversity, heal in pain, and rescue in danger […] One feels transported back to one's childhood – a beautiful feeling."[20]

That garden gnomes are involved in the creation of sometimes kitschily beautiful emotions is hardly surprising; a situative regression that often only lasts a few fleeting seconds can be experienced by emotions induced by kitsch and, in addition, individualizations can occur with the object. According to Jürgen Grimm and Konrad Liessmann, it requires courage to admit this. The same authors also say:

Secondly, I find that, as an expression of this yearning, for the idyll garden gnomes are absolutely perfect, because they are at the same time absolutely absurd. They are pure art products. In contrast to the island-dweller, to the noble savage or to the apache, garden gnomes do not exist in reality. They are truly a pure product of the imagination, an art product, which seeks to document nothing more than an unconditional desire for the idyll. (Grimm/Liessmann 2012: 12)

It can be seen ever more clearly that our garden gnomes also represent stereotypical cultural values and categories in the sense of national characteristics: The gnomes stand there as an indomitable symbol of industriousness and order, cleanliness and patriotism. The classic garden gnomes are an icon of German inwardness, a monument to the German way of thinking and way of living. They embody the desire for the idyll and for emotional security and give the gardener peace of mind – over every cap's crest is rest. (Stolle 2005)

Such attributes color an image of the Germans and position it in the vicinity of coziness. As Hermann Bausinger comments: Garden gnomes, too, play a part in transforming little front gardens into a cute miniature landscape. To the dismay of

20 Http://www.urlaub-kärnten.com/zwergenpark-gurktal/, 20.08.2015.

the German manufacturers, they have, for some time now, also been produced in large numbers in several neighboring countries; but the majority of customers are still German. But, of course, they do not have a monopoly either of garden gnomes or of coziness. (Bausinger 2000: 612)

How high the national proportion of a German characteristic is to be estimated remains to be ascertained. According to the *Handbuch für Deutschland* ('Handbook for Germany'), there is a general consensus that garden gnomes, cuckoo clocks, the Munich Beer Festival, Goethe and Schiller, as well as the 'tiger duck' (a duck with tiger's stripes on wheels created by the German/Polish author and illustrator Janosch) and the *Gebühreneinzugszentrale* (the German radio and television license authority) are regarded as being typically German (Maurin 2010: 1). Or, as one journalist pointedly expressed the circumstances surrounding garden gnomes: "Nothing could possibly be more German" (Weber 2015: 2). In the face of such values, it is hardly surprising to find the garden gnome in a slim volume *Leitfaden zur deutschen Leitkultur* ('Guidelines for the German Guiding Culture') designed by Arno Grunwald, in which "the garden gnome and sauerkraut" are listed in first place as German characteristics under the title (Grunwald, n. d.)

Jürgen Ahrens attempts to dispel the myth that the garden gnome is a German achievement within the framework of the "most popular fallacies about Germany and the Germans" that he has uncovered and, by pointing to more successful "foreign" manufacturers, describes the significance of the garden gnomes as dwindling. Ahrens once again raises the question of who really invented the garden gnomes. Disappointingly, he declares:

Garden gnomes come from Austria and, even with regard to their proliferation, they are by no means a purely German phenomenon […] The first garden gnomes were produced in the Baroque period – probably between 1690 and 1695 – in Salzburg, and their creator was the architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, who was born in Graz. His figures, representations of diminutive people, carved in marble, formed the landmark of the so-called Dwarf Garden in Mirabell Palace (where they can be seen again today, most of them as replicas) […] How far have we sunk; the German garden gnome as a candidate for the red list of endangered species. (Ahrens 2013: 109 f., 112 f.)

Future prospects

There are probably still surprises in store for the postmodern garden gnome – and for the lover of smiling icons of the 'statue of the little man,' as the figures are sometimes called. It must not be forgotten that many owners also take their little darlings into their homes with them, communicate with them like buddies or housemates, touch them, dress them and change their clothes according to the season. "People who do not have either a dog or a cat tell their troubles to their garden gnomes […] They

are good partners in a conversation. They listen to you. You can ask them questions, but they never give stupid or cheeky answers."[21] Friedmann generally considers that garden gnomes are certainly more than mere figures: "They are benevolent beings and, for some people, they are even good friends."[22]

The garden gnome, so much should have become clear by now, is a global figure, multifaceted and, at the same time, with a simple form, quickly recognized almost everywhere and happily used as a projection surface. The figure combines many things. Paradoxically enough, it unites a uniquely spirited potential for a symbol and for communication with an outward appearance, which, by miniaturization and superficial trivialization, leads to a polarizing replica of the diminutive. Garden gnomes appear to be multifaceted because they are measured according to a negative esthetic of good taste of a basically kitschy nature. At the same time, they quietly shine with many other qualities that are communicated to the outside world by means of an actual package of virtues. They are always there for others, situatively and permanently, and are also helpers, admonishers and guardians. They are characterized by variability and polyfunctionality, reinforced by the emergence in the 1990s of a diversification and individualization of the garden gnomes' forms, colors and missions.

However, that is not all; they can move confidently in society as well as between art, anti-art and history and have proved adaptable, from their birth in the late 19th century to the postmodern present. They unmistakably display their powers in favor of the (German) petty bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat and, in this way, become their mouthpiece with their messages and tasks in order to spread a product 'balm for the soul' fermented in miniature with a fictional base.

The garden gnomes had to fulfil desires that would otherwise have remained unfulfilled; in other words, for us, the people of the modern generation, garden gnomes are an essential invention, a plaything for adults, an opportunity to flee, a consolation, an element of the dream of a beautiful intact world. They are coupled with a supporter, an object that can unite all this in itself and endure it (Helmboldt 2009: 44).

This point of view opens up revealing prospects for research into the subject as well. The definition formulated by Andrea Hauser can be applied here and aims at "objects as desires in an objectivized form, which ascribes to the things functions that structure everyday life; this leads to an expansion of the analysis of the material culture, hitherto largely focused on the object, by including the relation between the human being and the thing" (Hauser 1994: 59).

The garden gnome is more closely related to us than we care to admit. The concepts of kitsch, taste, trivialization and irony are today hardly sufficient analytically

21 http://www.zipfelauf.com/wienerz.htm, 19.01.2016

22 http://www.zipfelauf.com/sfam.htm, 19.01.2016

and merely perpetuate well-known arguments. From the point of view of everyday culture, empirical research into how the owners of garden gnomes think, feel and act is urgently needed. Future investigations should not, however, focus on questions of taste, but should include the motivation and perspectives of the desire to own a garden gnome within the framework of a culture of popular emotions, coupled with contributions concerning disposition and sentimentality, which form a central part of them. As Jürgen Hasse puts it, people who have, in embarrassment, hitherto stowed their garden gnomes away in their basement, instead of being inspired to a creative game by their silent expression of a possible home, may hope for the commercialization of cyberspace. Then dream and reality will become one. At that moment, we will reach out and shake hands with the garden gnome, one of the last guarantors of the greatest utopia of all, home, and we will, at the same time, be able to experience ourselves as garden gnomes (Hasse 1993: 83 f.).

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Journal of European Ethnology
and Cultural Analysis (JEECA)
2016, 1 (2): 148–171

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Internment and humanitarian aid*

Perspectives on a cultural practice

Abstract: This article discusses internment as a field of research for European Ethnology, focusing especially on the role that humanitarian aid workers played within internment, and studying this as a cultural practice. Using the World War II internment of German merchant seamen as an example, it argues, firstly, that interventions of humanitarian aid organizations were inseparably interwoven with various controlling strategies executed by camp commandants and the detaining power, while, at the same time, benefitting inmates' coping strategies. Secondly, it proposes taking the humanitarian aid perspective as a methodological approach for researching internment and captivity in general. The text aims at emphasizing a multi-perspective, 'contact zone' approach to understanding internment by showing the characteristics and the potential of this third-party-point of view in Prisoner of War Cultural Studies.

Keywords: internment, captivity, humanitarian aid, prisoner of war, cultural studies, cultural practice, World War II, Canada

Scantily clad island women in little grass skirts, invitingly positioned in the first row, behind them chimney sweeps, a painter, a clown and other members of the cast – the performance that called for this repertoire of figures has unfortunately not been recorded. The group image of the cast stems from a Canadian World War II internment camp in which the crews of German merchant vessels were housed.[1] The individual who, aside from the (all male) actors, set designers and the director, probably contributed the most to the success of this production, however, does not feature in this photograph: A secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) War Prisoners' Aid who – as has been recorded in comparable cases – upon request by the inmates, arranged for paints for the set, makeup and the usually forbidden civilian clothing (mainly women's clothes) to be delivered to the camp for use as costumes (Summary report: 14f.). The YMCA also reproduced text books of German plays and sent them to internment camps (Buffinga 1988: 59).

The image provides a flashlight on the special role of humanitarian aid in situations of internment and imprisonment. Questions about its scope of action

* German version in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 112 (2): 253-276. Translated by Stefanie Everke Buchanan.

1 The image is part of a private collection which a former inmate of the camp compiled.

Play unknown, main actor/s invisible: The set design and outfits for this theater performance in a Canadian internment camp during World War II would have been far less opulent without the supply of materials by the Young Men's Christian Association War Prisoners' Aid. No date. Photo: Private collection, Flensburg.

and specific position(ing) within such constellations result from this. In addition, and coming from this angle simultaneously, questions need to be asked about the potential for insight which focusing on the aid workers holds for an investigation of imprisonment in general in cultural studies. The aim is to present theoretical and methodological considerations on internment as an object of cultural anthropological analysis in light of this background and to sound out which approaches to this field of research such a perspectivation can facilitate using an example of my own research on the internment of German merchant vessel crews during World War II (Kestler 2017).

Internment and imprisonment as fields of research in cultural studies

The importance of dealing with forms of internment and imprisonment caused by war remains unbroken roughly a hundred years after World War I and more than 70 years after World War II. Thus, the disappearance of the last generation of contemporary witnesses of World War II is repeatedly a topic in the media and is, among others, interpreted as a sign of the changing societal value of intergenerational dialogue (Bode 2009). The topic also holds a firm place in the *Histotainment* sector. At the same time, new temporary situations of incarceration continue to originate all over the world. A proposal by the mayor of Roanoke in Virginia (USA) shows in a frightening manner, that the topic of "internment" is not always a taboo for

politicians of Western nations. In November 2015, he suggested the setting up of internment camps for Syrian refugees – based on the model of the camps in which citizens of Japanese descent were put under general suspicion as "enemy aliens" and interned in the United States and Canada during World War II (Terkel 2015).

Prisoners of war and internment have played a rather marginal role as a research topic in European ethnology, folklore studies, cultural anthropology and historical and cultural anthropology in the past few decades.[2] After Albrecht Lehmann developed the topic in the 1980s for European ethnology and cultural anthropology, mainly from a narratological perspective (e. g. Lehmann 1984, 1986, 1988), hardly any further cultural anthropological research resulted from this in the following years. Admittedly, the superordinate research area 'war' has been placed more strongly in the focus of the discipline in the last 15 years because of the Tübingen special research field "war experiences" and the publications resulting from it. However, specific impulses, such as Monique Scheer's history of science approach to wartime imprisonment (Scheer 2010) or Rolf Wilhelm Brednich's exemplary problem sketch (Brednich 2005) on civil internment, remained largely without effect.

Some studies in the other Arts and Humanities, however, have appeared in recent years which point towards an increasing interdisciplinary and international networking of research on the topic area of wartime imprisonment:[3] Historical, archaeological, cultural anthropological, literature and musicology research approaches are combined under the 'umbrella' term of Prisoner of War Cultural Studies (Carr and Mytum 2012b: 1). Historical and cultural anthropology can, not least because of its "double competence" (Wietschorke 2013: 206) of reference to the contemporary and the past, make a relevant contribution to this research. The extension of analytical perspectives to further actors of internment should be the focus of research still to be undertaken to make the manifold societal entanglements which constitute and shape internment more clearly visible. It is precisely the reflection of such perspectivations and in the productive connection of different methodological accesses and localizations in which the strengths of historical and cultural anthropology lie.

Internment as a cultural practice – internment as a phenomenon of entanglement

Internment and imprisonment caused by war is understood in the following as the temporary detention of a group of people – civilians or soldiers – which is legitimized by the ascription of certain characteristics (Schneider 1961). Internment is a

2 Cultural anthropological research on National Socialist concentration camps, by such as C. Daxelmüller, G. Fackler, E. Lossin, M. Rumpf or D. Seidl, does not factor here because of the entirely different circumstances.

3 Carr and Mytum (2012), Feltman (2015), Myers and Moshenska (2011), Pathé and Théofilakis (2012) and Théofilakis (2014).

form of excluding segregation as locating or captive violence (Reemtsma 2009: 106). Inmates are most often subjected to limitations of their freedom of movement, strict supervision and further restrictions for an indeterminate time, which, in conjunction with the usual housing in group accommodation, results in a high spatial and social densification.

One can argue that internment and imprisonment as temporary phenomena constitute a cultural practice made by specific actors, which manifests itself most clearly, but not exclusively, in places of confinement, such as in camps. In alignment with this praxeological approach, one can speak of 'doing internment' – internment does not exist, but is constructed (Kestler 2017). A historical and cultural anthropological analysis, therefore, must not only ask about the dimension of experience of those affected, but particularly about the everyday and situational construction of the conditions of confinement by practices and strategies of all actors involved. Before this background, a concentration on the dichotomous-antagonistic constellation of guards and the guarded would constitute a limitation of potential for insight, which is broken up analytically by researching the role of further actors connected with internment. In addition to inmates and guards, this includes humanitarian aid, members of the military and public administration, and the population of the detaining country; where appropriate, also family and employers of the interned in the country of origin, and staff members of the authorities who are concerned with internment in an administrative function. Thus, internment brings together different actors for a limited time, some only here and there, others continuously, some physically co-present, others in written contact, others again in a media-brokered manner or linked on an administrative-structural level.

Because of these entanglements, the concept of a 'contact zone', developed by Marie Louise Pratt for the colonial context, can be transferred as a theoretical point of reference to the analysis of internment (Pratt 1992, 2008). Pratt's definition of a contact zone: "the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present" (Pratt 2008: 8), focuses on the circumstances and effects of encounters between people who stem from different societies of origin and have undergone different socializations. If one conceives of the entire internment as a contact zone and not just of the camp or certain spatial zones within the camp,[4] it becomes apparent that the actors involved must communicate and interact with each other for a certain time, the end of which they can neither foresee nor influence. The contact zone is, thus, a social room "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination

4 Cf., for instance, the study by Holger Köhn, who researches *Kontakträume* (contact rooms), understood as spatially clearly delineated zones within the areas used by the camp inmates (Köhn 2012: 336 ff.). The perspective on camps as intercultural zones has also been a topic in studies in the historical sciences in recent years (Caucanas, Cazals, and Payen 2003; Reiß 2002).

and subordination" (Pratt 2008: 7). The potential for conflict of the contact zone, which results from the colonial power imbalance, is a central aspect for contexts of imprisonment which are always shaped by hierarchical supervision and, thus, conflict-laden (Foucault 1977). The concept of the contact zone, therefore, makes a paradox of internment visible: That intensive experiences of contact occur precisely because of the spatial segregation of a certain group of people. A systematic analysis of these entanglements reveals cultural processes which are caused by the internal logic of internment and, simultaneously, co-constitute them.

From the manifold possible perspectives on internment, it is the one of the humanitarian aid workers which is chosen here, because humanitarian aid workers, as border crossers and neutral intermediaries, must continuously reposition themselves between guards and the guarded. They observe, communicate and intervene at the heart of the contact zone; at the same time, they are subject to restrictions, yet, also command specific spheres of action. The internal logic of internment, particularly at the limits of these spheres of action, becomes tangible, so that this perspectivation offers far-reaching potential for insight.

Regarding the example, this results in the question of which aims the humanitarian aid workers pursued in their commitment for the prisoners in Canadian camps of World War II and which strategies they developed to reach them. Which role did these interventions play for the materialization of internment in the sense of 'doing internment'? How did the contact zone of internment react with the aid workers and their point of view? Which practices and which processes of the constitution of interpretation can be discerned by focusing on the humanitarian aid workers?

"… to find a point of contact with these young men" – relationship as intervention

That civilian seamen were imprisoned as so-called "enemy aliens"[5] during World War II and this was legitimized in terms of the international law of war because they were seen as a strategic military resource of their country of origin (Scheidl 1943: 199). If German freight ships were discovered by enemy war ships, their crews were arrested, in the same way as when allied troops seized harbors in which German ships were docked. Most of the German seamen arrested ended up in British detainment and were transported to different locations within the Commonwealth, such as Scotland, England, Australia or Jamaica. Beginning in the summer of 1940, more than half of the German merchant ship crews arrested worldwide were taken to Canada and remained there until the end of 1946, as were more than 30,000 German soldiers from the air force and the Africa corps, however, spatially separated from

5 "Enemy aliens" or, more specifically, "enemy merchant seamen" are the terms with which German merchant vessel crews are referred to in the files of the Western allied detaining powers.

them (Gillman and Gillman 1980: 161–171; Held 2008: 39–51). The living conditions in Canadian camps were significantly better than the conditions in Soviet camps researched by Lehmann. Without forced labor and with balanced and sufficient food supply, the "hunger culture" described by Lehmann (1988; author's translation) was not an issue there.

It was predominantly two large aid organizations which operated in the Canadian camps: The International Committee of the Red Cross (CICR) and the initially mentioned YMCA War Prisoners' Aid (Böhme 1974b).[6] As a rule, the aid workers from both organizations were in the camps for a little under a day at intervals of several weeks until they had gathered all the information they needed to plan aid measures. The activities of the organizations named in Canada during World War II is closely documented through their own reports about the visits to the camps and their correspondence with inmates and government bodies. According to their mandate stated in the 1929 Geneva Convention, the delegates from the CICR checked, among other things, on the housing, hygiene, state of health and nutrition of the prisoners in the camps (Böhme 1974a). By contrast, the YMCA dedicated its activities mainly to the question of which forms of aid the inmates needed to make good use of their great quantity of unoccupied time (Vulliet 1946: 11f.). The communication of Christian values was also of central importance to the YMCA as a confessional organization, linked with the aim to prepare the "Hitler Youth generation" (Rosenthal 1986: 73; author's translation) for social coexistence in a democratic society. The YMCA War Prisoners' Aid placed faith in the changing power of personal contact between inmates and the YMCA secretaries:

> What is needed is that an attempt should be made, carefully and resolutely, to find a point of contact with these young men, to reach their own sense of need, difficulty and distress, that through friendship and readiness to understand, an entering wedge may be found for fuller teaching of the Christian faith. (Paton 1941)

This friendly, understanding approach by the YMCA is also apparent in the visit reports by the secretaries: Through a description of individual situations in conversation, the relationship-building with the inmates becomes tangible at times. Many YMCA reports also contain detailed observations on food provisions, political views, religious needs and the general mood among the prisoners, on such themes as education, sport, music, theatre, craft and work. The texts served as internal documentation, but they were also sent to the Directorate of Internment Operations in Ottawa and from there, forwarded to the British authorities as Great Britain was the detaining power of the prisoners held in Canada (Commissioner 1942).

6 The YMCA cooperated with the European Student Relief Fund in the promotion of educational activities in Canadian camps. Several smaller organizations were also active for the inmates, however, without regular visits to the camps.

Humanitarian aid as empowerment – internment as a space of possibilities

Regardless of which aspect of "camp culture" (Lehmann 1986: 41; author's translation) one chooses to look at – one will arrive at similar results as in the analysis of the photograph shown above: The activity of the aid organizations, particularly of the YMCA, in the Canadian camps was a substantial factor in the materialization of internment – yet, it is not always visible at first sight. This concerns nearly all areas of daily life, as the following list shows:

> Through the effort of the YMCA POW Aid, every base camp was equipped with volleyballs, basketballs, soccer balls, a skating rink, an athletic field, ping pong tables and some gymnastic equipment. […] In the entertainment field, film circuits were established with the help of distributors such as the Twentieth Century Fox, United Artists, and Warner Bros. […] Every camp was equipped by the YMCA with a piano, a gramophone, and enough musical instruments for a small orchestra. […] The YMCA provided all educational supplies, including linguaphone sets, typewriters, educational films, anatomical charts, and even whole skeletons. […] The YMCA also distributed material required for arts and crafts, including hundreds of tubes of paint, brushes, canvases, and tools for a leather shop and woodcarving. […] Grass and flower seeds, bulbs, and garden tools were distributed to the gardeners and landscapers among the men. (Buffinga 1988: 59)

The approach which the YMCA pursued in its interventions was intended to enable the inmates to design their internment themselves instead of being paralyzed by the critical experience of being imprisoned. This guideline can best be described with the concept of empowerment which, in line with Norbert Herriger, can be understood as processes of self-authorization in which people in a situation of deprivation, discrimination or societal marginalization start to take their affairs into their own hands and in which they become aware of their abilities, develop their own power and learn to use their individual and collective resources to lead self-determined lives (Herriger 2006: 20). Through exercise, education and creativity, the interned were to collaboratively transform the space in which they were imprisoned into a space of possibilities which was to open up new social experiences for them. These processes of transformation became more and more visible with an increasing length of internment: They became sensually tangible and inscribed into the landscape of internment in the shape of gardens, parks, sporting grounds and other built facilities (Casella 2011: 289). Thus, the inmates of the Canadian Fredericton camp, for instance, set up a park (PA AA, R 127.704). These installations transported, as Eleanor C. Casella postulates:

> […] material evidence for the diverse social identities of those within these compounds and camps. In other words, while the built landscapes and institutional objects associated with internment create a powerful force of uniformity, those who

> experience internment simultaneously create signatures of *diversity* by using the material world to maintain a sense of personal self and communal belonging. (Casella 2011: 289).

That these forms of appropriation or providing a home in the initially uniform space of the camp also effected the social relationships between the inmates was an intended side effect of the aid measures. From the point of view of the YMCA, the prisoners could, via their individual meaningful occupation, also try out ways to work well as a community (Vulliet 1946: 58). Thus, it was mainly objects which served the shaping of everyday camp life which were purchased for the interned. From the side of the YMCA, the guideline was that the wishes of the group took priority over the wishes of individual prisoners (Camps 1942). The financing also put the orientation at the group first: If the interned had enough common funds – for instance from a surplus which they had generated in the 'canteen,' that is, the camp kiosk – they shared in the costs of expensive purchases, particularly when building costs were concerned. In this way, for instance, a teaching barrack was financed at Camp Neys, where the interned came up with a third of the cost (Bericht Neys).

Sports teams, learning groups, musical and artisanal working groups developed through the material support for community enhancing activities: "communities of practice" (Wenger 1998) which, behind the supposed material uniformity of the camp, contributed to a differentiation and diversification along interests and affinities. The processes of development and education which were, thus, facilitated formed the social framework within which individual experience of internment originated. Some internees in the Canadian Camp Fredericton, for instance, took on responsibility for the maintenance of the sporting equipment which had been delivered. The request by the inmates for ten special files to sharpen the blades on ice skates was commented on in a letter to the YMCA as follows: "[…] the Sharpening of Skates is one of the new problems; as we […] have appr[oximately] 150 pairs of skates to take care of, we need quite a number of tools for the official skate sharpener, working under the sports manager […]" (Spokesman 1942a). This example shows how the aid deliveries supported the internees in trying out democratic structures and how the introduction of offices such as the "sports manager" mentioned above opened up new spaces of identity.

However, for the internees, the deliveries by the YMCA and the CICR did not only constitute a resource for the design of their everyday life. The camp administration also included them in their planning and, ultimately, also into their governing techniques: Thus, for instance, the regular all-day sports events which were held in many camps on the initiative of the commanding officer[7] would not have been

7 Documented, for instance, in the camp diaries of the Monteith and Petawawa camps. War Diary Camp Monteith (Q/23), Folder 3, vol. 42, July 16, 1944. LAC, RG 24, 15392; War Diary Camp Petawawa (P/33), Folder 2, vol. 43, May 1, 1943. LAC, RG 24, 15396.

possible in this form without the creation of the physical and material basis by the CICR and the YMCA. From the perspective of the camp administration, sports offered a physical outlet in the situation of crisis brought on by imprisonment, while, at the same time, it helped the commanding officers and guards to render the inmates 'governable': Sports channeled negative emotions, structured the days and weeks through regular training and created a medium-term perspective through the organization and preparation of the sports events, which distracted from the burdensome situation. That flight and conflict prevention were the primary motives for the commanding officers (McCarthy 1989: 158) underlines the importance of indirect disciplining of the inmates through "emotional management" (Scheer 2012: 209), which became tangible in the concession of scope for development. In the case of sport, but also in other areas, it was precisely this scope which was promoted by the measures taken by the CICR and the YMCA. Considering the fact that not only the inmates, but also the camp administrators drew on the aid deliveries as a resource for overcoming and structuring the everyday life of internment, the 'everyday' of the internment, as is documented, for instance, in the official camp diaries of the Canadian commanding officers, here becomes tangible in a multidimensional way in its distinct fabricated nature.

In-between: humanitarian aid workers as ethnic mediators and cultural brokers

The work of the aid organizations was subject to certain restrictions. These resulted essentially from the rules which applied to the inmates. How the aid workers dealt with these limitations, how they acted in the negotiation of aid with the relevant authorities and which strategies they employed in this can be demonstrated in an exemplary fashion in the area of provisions. The prisoners received food deliveries according to the rations given to the Canadian army, which were then processed by the interned ships' cooks. Even though an ample and balanced nutrition was, thus, ensured, inmates kept on asking the aid organizations for additional quantities of certain food or for food which were not part of the schedule. This had to be negotiated with the Canadian officials, who kept a strict eye on not letting any suspicions of overly accommodating treatment of prisoners arise in the eyes of the guards and the population in general (Auger 2005: 47).

In 1942, for instance, sailors in Camp Mimico asked the CICR for the continuation of additional milk deliveries, which had already been going for some time. As their request was met with incomprehension by the Department of External Affairs, Ernest L. Maag, the CICR delegate, stated to the relevant authorities that the sailors were experiencing malnutrition brought on by their occupation which could be relieved through an increased milk ration. The milk delivered "the vitamin supply of which they are deficient, due to their peacetime occupation" (Maag 1942a). Aside

from the fact that vitamin deficiencies hardly ever occurred on German freight ships in the prewar era and that most inmates had already had over a year to overcome a potential deficiency by the time the request was made, it is interesting here that Maag does not only cite medical knowledge – "various medical officers" (Maag 1942a) – but also argues with rather vague knowledge about the life world of a sailor to gain the authorities' permission. Instead of making the status of the prisoners and the immanent question of the general appropriateness of such special requests a topic, he shifts the discourse to a level of health and occupation. It becomes apparent here in an exemplary fashion that humanitarian aid workers can also be seen as "cultural brokers," as "bilingual patrons bridging two cultures" (Bailyn and Morgan 1991: 21). Their bilingualism does not only relate to the German, English or French language, but also to the ability to find the strategically 'right' mode of speaking and arguing for the recipient. That they also employed their cultural knowledge to make planned aid measures plausible shows that they were far more than neutral interpreters.

An ethnicizing argumentation which was intended to legitimize a change in the food deliveries is also part of Maag's suggestion to occasionally provide the sailors with sauerkraut instead of the vegetables originally scheduled. Up to then and at his request, there had already been, he writes, sporadic deliveries of sauerkraut which had not had an effect on the rest of the food plan. In March 1942, Maag wrote, on his own initiative, to the Department of the Secretary of the State, Interment Operations: "As you know, the German prisoners are generally speaking fond of this foodstuff and it has recently been brought to my attention that this commodity can now be purchased from a new firm, the Maddington Sauerkraut Co. Ltd., Maddington Falls, Que. […] at 4 ½ ¢ per lb., in barrels of 450–500 lbs" (Maag 1942b).

Maag here names, in anticipation of potential objections, the specific costs which would have come with this change in the menu to achieve culinary variety in the interest of the internees. It is instructive how he argues to the authorities not only with figures, but also with a cultural knowledge about stereotypically mediated culinary preferences of Germans. Such a line of argument in 1940s Canada was anything but odd – the volume "Canadian Mosaic" by Canadian anthropologist John Murray Gibbon had been published four years previously (Gibbon 1938). In it, the author gave an overview of the characteristics of the most important population groups – among them the Germans – to make the Canadian population familiar with the ethnic and cultural diversity of their nation.[8] In the sauerkraut question, Maag, thus, also acted as an "ethnic mediator" (Buffinga 1988) – a term which was formulated in the 1980s regarding the director of the YMCA War Prisoners' Aid, Hermann Boeschenstein, but which can be applied to all humanitarian aid workers who acted in Canadian camps. In this, he renders productive, by means of the stereotype-

8 In it, Gibbon also criticized the concept of the "melting pot"; decades later, his considerations found their way into the Canadian multiculturalism policy (Kelley and Trebilcock 1998).

generating reference to the national food preferences, precisely that construction of difference which was conveyed in the Canadian media and was in circulation in the Canadian population (Kestler 2017). His remark on the culinary preferences of the German can, thus, also be understood as an act of strategic othering (Jensen 2011), which locates difference apart from the political in an ethnic context.

"… as though I were confined there myself": empathy and identification

That the humanitarian aid workers were not only involved in ascriptions of difference in the communication with the Canadian authorities, but also in their own reports points to certain aspects which link their activities with ethnographic description (Kaschuba 2003: 198). The holistic design of their visits to the camps is particularly reminiscent of a current understanding of ethnographic research (Kaschuba 2003: 208), in which openness and "immersion" form the basis for an understanding approach to strange everyday worlds (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011: 3): As a matter of principle, the secretaries aimed for extensive conversations with as many prisoners as possible and did not only question the appointed representative. They connected observation with participation by deliberately visiting different buildings within the camp, arriving at different hours and participating in meal times. In agreement with the approach taken by the YMCA to build empathic and long-term relationships with the prisoners, these representatives were not only taken as easy to find informants on the conditions in the camp during the visits, but taken seriously as conversation partners and experts of their daily surroundings. Therefore, the YMCA workers repeatedly visited some camps outside of the usual visiting times, for instance, for theater performances. This required the agreement of the camp commander, who, in the true sense of the word, acted as a gatekeeper. The texts originating from this are, in places, reminiscent of field notes, also because the secretaries wrote themselves into the texts as individuals with their own prior experiences and associations and, in this, often sketched how they went about establishing rapport (factually and mentally) with the inmates. The specifics of this type of source lie in the thickness of subjective observations and thoughts and their connection with experiential knowledge about the administrative structure of internment.

The often cumbersome trip to see the prisoners – to continue the analogy: entering the field – is also sometimes commented on separately in the reports, and this illustrates how much of an alternative world the camps, in particular the remote work camps in the forest, constituted for a "field secretary of the YMCA" (Hoffman 1945):

> The visitation […] includes long voyages on small rattling lumber boats up and down rivers and over moody lakes or somewhat painful journeys on extremely bumpy trucks over rutting, home-made corduroy-roads. The secretary occasionally resorts

> to pedestrianism, mostly without being compelled by the circumstances to try his pocket knife on the black bears roaming the woods. This form of visitation cannot be carried out according to a strict time-table. It has its peculiar charm, presents gorgeous sceneries and teaches the visitor the virtue of being patient and 'lying low' when the weather just does not permit any trips to distant camps. (Hoffman 1945)

One can assume that the physical distance between the usual urban life world in Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal and the camps shaped the experience of the camp as an exotic and strange setting. How fascinating the proximity to the inmates that the secretaries experienced there was for some of them can be shown in the example of Benjamin Spiro's report on Christmas Eve of 1942 which he spent with the prisoners in Camp Mimico:

> It was with a quite different feeling I went to the camp this time, without any kind of business in mind, and able to talk freely with the men about their problems. The new camp leader, former commander of a big German liner, expressed his thankfulness for our help and also for having the opportunity to discuss without restraint things not related in any respect to the war. During dinner, through which we had music played by the orchestra, I had the definite feeling that at least for a few hours these men forgot that they were prisoners and found the real Yule spirit. Later in the evening I attended the Protestant Christmas service […]. The fact that the carols that were sung were the same as those sung in my country, made it the more enjoyable. All during the service I could observe through the window shadows of men walking, endlessly, along the barbed wire. (Spiro 1942)

There is an interest which is in an extended sense ethnographic, but at the very least cultural and linguistic, evident in a document from the estate of Hermann Boeschenstein – his: "collection of new expressions which have originated among the German prisoners of war in Canada and are used in everyday life" (Zusammenstellung; author's translation). Precisely because this list is not directly connected to the aid activities of the YMCA secretaries, it reflects, in an exemplary manner, their close listening, their interest in the language and, therefore, also their quasi-ethnographic approach to the perspective of the internees (Aull Davies 2008: 87). Boeschenstein noted expressions such as "*latse*" – for "lots of. Taken from the taciturn bush civilians. Used for the German '*viel*' meaning 'many.' E. g. '*latse beer*'" – or "to go for a spin" for "a walk along the barbed wire fence." (Zusammenstellung; author's translation) These turns of phrase relate to the everyday experience of internment and refer both to "transculturation" (Pratt 1992: 6) as a process of the multilingual contact zone as well as to the internees' everyday coping strategies.

Most of the YMCA workers commanded, because of their occupation, experience in dealing with people, a differentiated ability to observe and the capability of wording their perceptions precisely. Many of the secretaries had a background in education; Hermann Boeschenstein, for instance, was a professor of German Studies

at the University of Toronto. He and his YMCA colleagues had a holistic view of the conditions in the camps; they linked remarks made by the inmates with what they saw on site and what they had observed in other camps. As the visits to the camps by the aid organizations were shared among a small number of people, the individual delegates (CICR), respectively secretaries (YMCA) visited a great number of camps and in this way got to know the entire Canadian internment situation over a longer period of time in an intensive manner. On this basis, it was especially the YMCA workers who arrived at differentiated statements about the dynamics of social processes in internment and about the significance of their own aid work. Thus, Boeschenstein noted after a visit to a musical performance in one of the camps: "Such forms of entertainment are most desirable, involving and occupying, as they do, a number of talents, aid workers and assistants over a long period of time" (Boeschenstein 1945). Boeschenstein deemed, with an acute sense of the dangers of intellectual idleness in an internment camp and in line with the empowerment approach taken by the YMCA, particularly those occupations as helpful which facilitated longer term experiences of community and liberated creative potential.

Some of the texts make the strong identification of the humanitarian aid workers with the matters of the internees visible and, in doing so, also show the flipside of the quasi-ethnographic proximity to the internees. Jerome Davis, for instance, uttered his regret that he was unable to intensify the contacts he forged in the camps in the way he wanted to:

> One gets to know the men so well that in spite of differences in political outlook, one feels that they are close friends. I get almost as interested in planning the educational and other activities in camp as though I were confined there myself. In fact, sometimes one wishes he could be stationed in one camp alone so that he might come to know all the men in the camp more intimately. (Davis 1941)

That Davis took, in certain aspects, a "native's point of view" (Kaschuba 2003: 198) after as little as one year of activities for the prisoners, but could reflect this development, shows that he did not completely surrender his professional distance, even if he compares the internees to close friends here. The emotional proximity he experienced also triggered the desire to be able to take something lasting away from the *per se* temporary relationship with the prisoners: In May 1942, Davis asked the Commissioner of Internment Operations, Colonel H. Streight, for permission to keep group photos of the internees from the camps for private use, "also to keep as souvenirs after the war" (Davis 1942). He, thus, anticipated the need to remember and ascribes a prospective central significance for his life history to his commitment to War Prisoners' Aid (Binder 2001: 547).

On the side of the prisoners, the desire for more closeness and more frequent visits was also expressed. The need to show gratitude to the secretaries led to them being showered in gifts and treated with specialties, or receiving letters of thanks

from former prisoners even decades after the war (Hoffman 1945). In June 1942, a captain and spokesman wrote to Jerome Davis: "My staff and myself were delighted to see you amongst us and it is only a pity you cannot come more often" (Scharf 1942). From the point of view of the YMCA workers, the point of contact strategy was, therefore, productive, however not independent of material aid deliveries: These formed the basis for trusting relationships, as Conrad Hoffman observed precisely (Hoffman 1945).

"… as I became one of you back then" – retrospective transformations

In 1980, Hermann Boeschenstein, by then 80 years old, accepted an invitation to visit one of the biannual "Canada meetings" held at various locations in Germany and lasting several days. On these occasions, former prisoners of war and internees who had spent time in Canadian camps during World War II met and exchanged memories and news – an institutionalized form of communicative remembering (Köstlin 1989; Saar 2001: 302). The meeting in 1980 took place simultaneously on two passenger ships which sailed along the Rhine from Koblenz to Mainz. The course of the event is described in detail in a 1981 newsletter to the then remaining 507 "Canadians" (Rundschreiben 1981). Part of the framing program was an exhibition organized by the former prisoners with photographs, drawings, postcards, books (among them memoirs by former prisoners and publications by Canadian authors) and other memorabilia, a slide show with pictures from a group trip to the former locations of internment (undertaken in 1980 under the motto of "Westward-Ho"), lectures and joint evening events with food, music and dance. The Canadian embassy had provided several large flags and pins for the roughly 400 participants, so that the meeting also transported their identification with the country of imprisonment in a symbolic manner (Rundschreiben 1981). Inwardly, such a form of self-ascription has an identity-generating and homogenizing effect; it combines the former prisoners into a community of memory in which, following Jan Assmann, difference to the outside is emphasized, while difference to the inside is played down (Assmann 2002: 40). At the same time, it shows the transformative potential of internment which – in the joint retrospective interpretation – had made "Canadians" out of the Germans.

Boeschenstein gave a speech on the last evening of the meeting, the manuscript of which was passed down in his estate. The typewritten text contains many memories of successful relationships from the time of internment on its twelve pages, in accordance with the joyful occasion (Redemanuskript): A Canada wide soccer tournament between all camp teams, a boozy evening which Boeschenstein spent with prisoners and the Canadian captain in charge, a tasting of schnapps illegally distilled in the camp, the readiness of his colleagues at the University of Toronto to give lectures in the camps and the foundation of German-Canadian associations after the

war. Supported by the anecdotal style, the emotional semantics of Boeschenstein's language transmits mainly positive sentiments. Above all, Boeschenstein describes his hope, which he nurtured over the decades, of a reunion "in delightful freedom, not listened in on and observed by any guards, in the shade of a Gothic cathedral or under a cozy inn sign" (Redemanuskript: 2; author's translation). This reminiscent talk in the context of a public speech can be understood as emotional practice, in the sense of Monique Scheer (Scheer 2012: 209). Boeschenstein's downright exuberant emotionality also refers to approaches of the 'going native' described above: Having grown up as a German-speaking Swiss, "a few hundred meters south of the German border" (Redemanuskript: 1; author's translation), Boeschenstein compares his joy at the reunion with the joy felt when encountering a "countryman" abroad:

> You will say well, what does he mean by *Landsmann*. Does he want to take on, after a first and second citizenship, a third, the German one? It is not that. But in another, in a way, illegal sense, I became one of you back then. I may have lived outside the barbed wire, but you had each communicated enough needs and entrusted me with your concerns which kept me busy and which joined me to the camps like a clamp that cannot be undone. The feet were free to roam Canadian soil, the thoughts, however, were attached to the desires which you had given me to take with me, and circled around the question of how many of them it might be possible to fulfil. (Redemanuskript: 3; author's translation)

The ironic alluding to the illegality of Boeschenstein's transformation refers to the fact that his identification with the prisoners in his retrospective evaluation had developed in the opposite direction to that which was intended by the government in terms of contacts, and that it was not free from moments of resistance. Boeschenstein describes his commitment to the prisoners as a profound experience of transformation, the basis of which was formed by the empathic understanding of their situation. This was expressed in his retrospective estimate during the war in an "often very painful bundle of sentiments" caused by the restrictions (Redemanuskript: 1; author's translation).

From Boeschenstein's point of view, the interactions between the different actors and status groups involved in the internment were also, therefore, highly meaningful in retrospect. Distinct individual aid measures take a back seat in his speech behind a globally thought, relationship aspect: "A tree of life" had grown in the camps, "under which two peoples have extended their hands to each other for reconciliation and cooperation" (Redemanuskript: 12; author's translation). The actors of internment – Boeschenstein himself, the guards, the prisoners, the Canadian population – are combined in the speech into a remembered "imagined community" (Anderson 2006), which contributes to a positive reinterpretation of a situation of crisis from the perspective of overcoming it. 'Relationship' becomes an overarching topos of remembering, which would have been plausible for the listen-

ers mainly because numerous opportunities for encounters between different actors did indeed emerge in the contact zone of internment. Boeschenstein's anecdotal account offered the listeners individual biographic starting points and space for associations. This positive interpretation of internment as a space for relationships is, furthermore, congruent with the ideological mission of the YMCA, and it enables Boeschenstein to continue the success story of his own humanitarian commitment. The Canada meeting formed the social framework in which a community of memory was not only constructed performatively, but in which the remembered community was also (re-)constructed in a narrative manner.

A few months after the meeting, the speech, written down by a listener from memory, circulated as part of the newsletter mentioned above in the former internees' community of memory. Caused by this change of medium, Boeschenstein's address also made the rounds, in a slightly changed form, outside of the performance situation of institutionalized remembering in the network of former prisoners. It could now become an object of memory in a twofold manner under changed conditions of reception. Referring to considerations on remembrance theory, both the speech and its reproduction in the newsletter can be described as points in an intertextual fabric (Welzer 2001: 171), which, at the same time, contributed to the continuation of the community of memory.

Internment as transformation: agency and narrative empowerment

Before the background of this (semi-) public memory and relationship work, it is surprising that one searches in vain for explicit thematizations of the aid work of the YMCA and the CICR in interviews with former internees.[9] While they are omnipresent in the archival sources, neither the names Maag, Boeschenstein, Davis or Hoffman, nor the organizations YMCA or CICR appear in the interviews. The objects, spaces and immaterial opportunities which were furthered by the aid measures seem to be absorbed in the existing camp landscape which is taken for granted, or they cannot be clearly identified at the narrative level.

The fact that the humanitarian aid workers did not come up in the interview can become a leading question by shifting the focus to other narrative processes and strategies and, thus, touches on the question of the constitution of interpretation. Starting from archival material, the perspectivation of the aid workers creates opportunities for insight regarding retrospective sources, especially when these reveal perceived gaps which, at first sight, do not seem to fit with the hypotheses created during the research.

Looking at the sample of the interviews, it can first be stated that the narrators form the last generation of former internees who were still available for interviews

9 I conducted interviews with eleven former internees as part of my research.

in the years 2007 to 2010. Born between 1922 and 1930, they are part of the Hitler Youth generation, and the YMCA had set their re-Christianization as a target. They were aged between 17 and 23 during the war and, thus, the youngest in the camps. Whether they, therefore, had less personal contacts with the CICR delegates and YMCA secretaries cannot be reconstructed from the wartime sources, and neither can it be determined whether there was a generational differentiation in the utilization of aid measures. What can be established, however, is that because of their age and status, they took on tasks which did not carry much responsibility or time commitment, for instance, in the camp administration or the camp schools.[10] This suggests that because of all their free time, they benefitted most from the aid measures, particularly from the education offers which were promoted through books and learning materials. Correspondingly, the education experience for some interview partners is in the foreground in their memories of internment, and they considered it as a prerequisite for their occupational success after the war, because they used the time of internment to acquire a higher degree or occupation-specific further training. Thus, my interview partner Franz Renner, for instance, emphasized: "Due to the fact that I […] had already taken these many lessons in the imprisonment – yes, that was of course an enormous advantage for me personally" (Interview Renner: 869–870; author's translation).

If one looks for traces of the empowerment approach, one does not find explicit thematizations of this aspect in the material, but instead many narrative constructions of agency (Lucius-Hoene 2012). All narrators employ narrative strategies in the interviews which emphasize their own agency or that of their peer group. These narrative passages are often integrated into the construction of narrative identity, as the following example shows (Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2004): "The sailors all possessed this ability, right, to make something from nothing (hm). That is a characteristic which really came to bear there (hm)" (Interview Jürgens: 1334–1336; author's translation). Here, the simple living conditions of internment function as a background before which a narrative valorization of one's own peer group is undertaken; the construction of a homogeneous group identity of the sailors is linked to an implicitly positive self-statement which is based on the posit of one's own agency – a significant building block of a positive interpretation of experiences of internment.

The question about the importance of material relief supplies for the construction of memories of internment also points to the significance of agency in narratives of internment. In certain narrative contexts, the non-thematization of artefacts can also be interpreted as an indication of their existence being taken for granted. While it can, based on archival sources, for instance, be proven that

10 Elected representatives and their coworkers were usually captains or ship officers; the internees I interviewed were mostly too young to already have reached this stage of their careers.

there were groups of artists in almost all camps who received deliveries of paint brushes and paints from the YMCA (Spokesman 1942b), Hans Peter Jürgens spoke in the interview about his "artistic activities" which he continued to develop "also as a prisoner in Monteith later in a studio barracks" (Interview Jürgens: 894–905; author's translation). However, further material was not mentioned here. The "studio barracks" as an experimental space for artists is presented here as a natural part of the camp and is necessary for the narrative logic of the narrative mediation of Jürgen's identity as an artist, which was also present in other narrative strands in the interview. Paint brushes, colors and a studio, therefore, do not require any explanation in and of themselves; rather, they form the backdrop for Jürgens' transformation into an artist.[11] The origin and material quality of objects become a topic when they mediate a certain understanding of agency, for instance, with self-made objects (Kestler 2015: 191).

Regarding the level of the constitution of interpretation, one can speak of a narrative form of empowerment here. The narrators claim interpretative authority by mediating, from a broad spectrum of memories of internment, precisely that which is important to them in a manner which corresponds to them and their narrative habitus.

"Happy busy prisoner": humanitarian aid workers as central actors of internment

Jerome Davis writes in his report on the activities of the YMCA War Prisoners' Aid in Canada between November 1940 and May 1941: "Many of the Canadian Commandants have expressed appreciation for the work because they have recognized that a happy busy prisoner is one who is far easier to care for than any other kind" (Davis 1940/1941). This statement does not only underline the intertwining of interventions by aid organizations with the commanding officers' strategies, but also the awareness of the aid workers of their role within the practice of internment.

While these entanglements are not a topic in retrospective interpretations of former inmates (probably because they were also beyond the horizon of their everyday experiences as inmates), the aspect of the "happy busy prisoner" does become tangible. Thus, a former internee reports on his occupation with "mathematics (.) one could concentrate completely. We had no magazines, we had no radio and the only thing that was interesting with the others was: hey, how do you do that? If the exercise is like that (hm), right, like that, we passed the evenings and the days – that was – it was fun (yes, I think), right" (Interview Pichner: 232–236; author's translation). At first glance, this narrative passage seems to convey that the YMCA's strategy was successful: Fulfilled days in internment generate a positive overall

11 Hans Peter Jürgens is seen as one of the most important German contemporary marine artists.

interpretation. However, the analysis of the interviews shows that an equation of 'busy' and 'happy' only works if meaningful activities are concerned. Yet, this meaning can often only become visible in retrospect, with a view of the entire biographical horizon – stories are told from their ending, as Lehmann (2007: 284) says.

Even if only visible at second glance, a consistent focusing of humanitarian aid workers who were supposedly on the sidelines makes central aspects of internment as a humanitarian practice apparent.

In the sense of a relational analysis of culture (Lindner 2003: 179), this approach taps into processes of communication and interaction and reveals how far and in what ways internment reaches beyond the individual space and time of its realization. Internment and imprisonment can then be interpreted as a complex network of relationships and interactions, as a contact zone which is characterized by specific spatial arrangements, distinct strategies and practices, as well as discursive links and references. Lindner's thesis that the meaning of cultural phenomena can only be decoded by the study of the network of relationships to which they owe their specific form (Lindner 2003: 179) also holds true for the analysis of internment: An analytical focusing of humanitarian aid reveals that these interventions, which go beyond the material dimension, but cannot be separated from it, can be termed, to a large part, as strategies of relationship and emotion management. Even if it is not always visible at first sight, they were at the center of what constituted internment for the parties involved – in the dimension of both historical experience and biographical remembrance.

The potential for insight of focusing on humanitarian aid, therefore, refers, on the one hand, to the simultaneity and interweaving of practices, strategies and positioning between inmates, guards and aid workers: Through a systematic consideration of the context, it makes it possible to sound out the relevant scopes of action of the actors and to make them available for analysis. A vivid polyphony of perspectives of actors can be achieved through a conscious change of perspective which facilitates a thick description of internment as a cultural practice. This is all the more relevant as power imbalances and structures of hierarchical surveillance are always inherent in internment. On the other hand, the focus can be extended to aspects of interpretation, remembrance, passing on and circulation through the analysis of retrospective sources. Drawing on sources from internment, insight can be gained particularly into the question of what has gained in biographical importance for the actors in retrospect and in which form it can be articulated. Both levels must be hermeneutically related to each other to make subjective ascriptions of relevance, positioning and processes of the constitution of interpretation visible and replicable – also in the sense of a broad narratological analytical approach (Meyer 2014).

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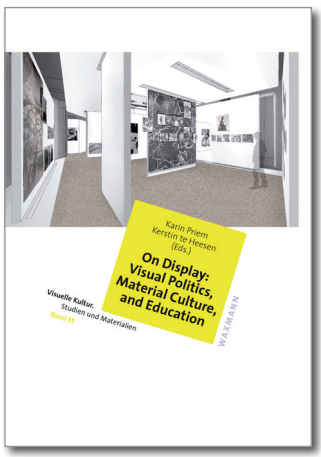
Interview with Franz Renner, May 24, 2008, Bremen

Visuelle Kultur. Studien und Materialien



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Kerstin te Heesen (Eds.)

On Display: Visual Politics, Material Culture, and Education

2016, 210 pages, pb,
four-coloured throughout, € 34,90,
ISBN 978-3-8309-3469-1
E-Book: € 30,99,
ISBN 978-3-8309-8469-6

This book focuses on one of the most successful photography exhibitions in history, The Family of Man. With this exhibition as its reference point, the authors take a closer look at visual and material objects examining their relevance for educational issues and exhibition designs.

This book not only looks at how the presentational, representational and social power of images, objects and designs was deliberately used by political and cultural stakeholders during the mid-1950s, but also how these technologies of display travelled through time and space and, as historical objects, interacted – and continue to interact – with new contexts and audiences.