



Logistical Natures

trade, traffics, and transformations in natural history collecting

A workshop organized by the joint research project

“Animals as Objects. Zoological Gardens and Natural History Museum in Berlin, 1810–2020”

Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, Feb 13/14 2020

Invalidenstrasse 43, 10115 Berlin

Room: Neuer Veranstaltungssaal

Funded by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH, 2020

Room: Neuer Veranstaltungssaal, [Entrance through Main Portal](#)

Logistical Natures walk at MfN with artist Sybille Neumeyer

Group I—Bertoni, Finney, Gütler, Ito, Maier-Wolthausen, Szczygielska,

Vennen

Arrival at 13:00—Walk starts at 13:30

Group II—Beiermann, de Bont, Fleming, Greiner, Heumann, Hochadel,

McLeod, Nadim, Pannhorst, Sakurai

Arrival at 14:30—Walk starts at 15:00

16:00 Welcome & Introductions

Filippo Bertoni, Ina Heumann, Clemens Maier-Wolthausen, Tahani

Nadim, Mareike Vennen

Joint Research Project “Animals as Objects”

16:30 Logistics of curation and care

Collecting the collectors? The microscopic preparations of the postal
micro-cabinet club—*Lea Beiermann, Maastricht University*

How to run a zoo: Information exchange between zoological gardens
around 1900—*Oliver Hochadel, IMF Barcelona*

The Bronx Zoo in British Guiana: Tracing a network of animal collec-
tion and ecological science, 1916-1926—*Katherine F. McLeod,
New York University*

18:00 Comments—*Tahani Nadim, MfN*

19:00 Dinner

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14TH, 2020

Room: Neuer Veranstaltungssaal, [Entrance through Portal V](#)

09:00 Subjectivities/objectivities I

Global zebra crossings: Animal trade and its logistical networks in the age of empire—*Andreas*

Greiner, European University Institute Florence

The logistics of bird collecting in the age of empires: Walter Goodfellow’s expedition to Taiwan,
New Guinea and the Philippines—*Takashi Ito, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies*

Dead or alive: Fabricating animal bodies between the zoo and the natural history museum in
Poznan (1924-1945)—*Marianna Szczygielska, MPI Berlin*

10:30 Comments—*Filippo Bertoni, MfN*

11:00 Coffee Break

11:30 Subjectivities/objectivities II

Animals and papers on the move: Transport and trade around Berlin’s zoo and natural history
museum—*Mareike Vennen, HU Berlin*

The entomological factory: Insect bodies from Taiwan as aesthetic and encyclopedic resource—
Kerstin Pannhorst, MPI Berlin

Purveyor of natural history. Dr. O. Staudinger & A. Bang-Haas and the international entomologi-
cal market, 1874-1914—*Ayako Sakurai, Senshu University*

13:00 Comments—*Martha Fleming, Hamburg University*

13:30 Lunch Break

15:00 Infrastructural im/mobilities

Chains of custody, oceans of instability: the precarious logistics of the natural history trade—
Vanessa Finney, The Australian Museum Sydney

Airport, zoo and desert: Animal transportation in post-WW2 Frankfurt—*Nils Gütler, ETH Zurich*

Meeting impossible: Knowledge transfer and professional contacts between zoos in Berlin during
the Cold War—*Clemens Maier-Wolthausen, Zoo Berlin*

16:30 Comments—*Raf de Bont, Maastricht University*

17:00 Coffee Break

17:30 General Discussion for the Special Issue

18:30 Closing

Logistical Natures

trade, traffics, and transformations in natural history collecting

Over the last decade, a growing number of geographers, anthropologists, and historians of science have begun unpacking the crucial role played by logistics in shaping the current era. Showing “how logistics enacts geographies of rationalisation and optimisation” (Hepworth 2014), they describe logistics as more than the apolitical and technical management of supply chain its practitioners and regulators describe. As Chua et al. (2018) put it, logistics “is better understood as a calculative logic and spatial practice of circulation that is at the fore of the reorganization of capitalism”. As a result, we can now talk of an established field of *critical logistics*, concerned with unravelling the entanglements of capitalist dreams of free-flows and their concrete and often violent governmentality. *Logistical Natures* takes the insights of this body of work as its point of departure, and asks: *What can the historiography of natural history learn from attending to logistical practices? And what can the history of natural history contribute to critical approaches to logistics?* Both questions promise to weigh in on current debates around the unfolding socio-environmental crisis of late capitalism – offering novel conceptual tools to begin addressing these issues *otherwise*.

Focusing on the socio-political impact of the tight bonds between military and economic strategies, critical logistics mostly focused on changes in global commodity chains after the two world wars. Deriving analytical thrust from the acceleration of capitalist flows linked to globalization and financialization, its proponents pointed out the current political value of this critique of logistics, urging to expose its flaws and attend to struggles against it. We hold that digging deeper in the relation between logistics and modernist epistemic dis/orders promises to offer an important further step.

We believe that, together, the abstracts we received offer an important contribution to this analytics. They not only show how logistics is involved in the making of capitalist flows and their political orderings, but also that this juncture is set within the broader articulation between the socio-political shape of modernity and the institution of an authoritative knowledge and definition of nature. Exposing the western colonial epistemic roots of this articulation promises to come in handy in our time of ecological catastrophe, as it opens the way to the efforts necessary to decolonize our understanding of nature and of its relations with society. Indeed, the reach of “the logistical imaginary of seamless interoperability” (Rossiter 2016) extends all the way to the core of modern articulations of society and nature. As logistics was at the heart of imperial and colonial enterprises, and was constitutive of – and constituted by – the emergence of natural history, and the epistemic worlds it envisioned, analyzing its import to current politics of nature seems not only useful but also urgent.

As we aim to offer a contribution to the historiography of natural history that moves beyond received tropes and reaffirmations of patriarchal nar-

ratives of white male heroes, and of the progress of western technosciences, we suggest that we consider our conversations in light of this critical version of logistics as an analytics. Engaging together with critical logistics to grasp in a collaborative way the core of these arguments, we aim to put the accent of our collection on the role of logistics in making natural history and its worlds. The engaging materials each participant brings hold promises of furthering this investigation of logistics as shaping and enacting geographies of rationalization that do not end with capitalism, but go deeper, and weave together society and nature through the mediation of natural history, scientific practices, and their logistical optimizations and infrastructures.

To this end, we have provisionally organized the abstracts in four broad categories, meant to reflect the four panel sessions of our event, and offer directions to focus and sharpen our dialogue. We hope these categories, and the suggested rearticulation of the joint work of rethinking logistics will make our workshop more engaging, and will allow us to take steps towards an exciting special issue.

Logistics of curation and care

This session gathers together papers that offer a special insight in how logistics involves curatorial practices and practices of care. While critical studies of logistics usually highlight the violence and negative power of this field’s practices of optimization, we want to bring forward also the attention and care they involve: the necropolitics of natural history logistics are intertwined with politics of care. *Lea Beiermann’s* turn-of-century US Postal Micro-Cabinet Club involved the curation of its members, as well as its own practices and materials, both because of the fragility of the slides, and because of the specificities of emergent microbial disciplines. *Oliver Hochadel’s* study of the global networks of information exchange between zoos at the beginning of the 20th century highlights the work needed for the maintenance of living animal collections. Similarly, *Katherine McLeod’s* case of the relations between the Kalacoon research station in British Guiana and the living exhibits at the Bronx Zoo unearths the many relation of care but also of violence involved in natural history collecting.

Subjectivities/objectivities I – follow the object

The current focus on logistics poses a strong accent on the novel subjectivities emerging together with contemporary logistics – in particular with the figure of the increasingly dispossessed dockworker. These subject positions also reflect transformations in labour that emerged together with the logistics of natural history: collectors, traders, taxonomists, hunters, indigenous workers or trackers, porters, sailors, and so on. Simultaneously, though, the subjectivizing dynamic of logistical natures also shift the accent to the parallel objectification opened up in this process. Not only new subjectivities emerge, but also a host of novel and transformative objectivities: not only commodities, but also specimens, collections, data, attractions, living animals, or dead animal parts. The papers in this panel promise to highlight these dynamics. In this session, *Andreas Greiner’s* focus on zebras between global dynamics of animal transportation and description and the subjectivities involved and shaped by the trade, *Ta-*

kashi Ito’s case of the Mikado pheasant and the imperial logistical networks linking Japan, Taiwan and the UK, as well as the work of *Marianna Szczygielska* on the traffics between the Poznan zoo and its natural history museum and the logistical colonial natural histories of animal bodies, will all offer good occasions to unpack these dynamics of subjectivities and objectivities.

Subjectivities/objectivities II – follow the value

If the previous session began to open up the kinds of objectivities brought about by natural history’s logistics by following a specific object, the papers in this session pursue a similar question by attending to the shaping of values within logistical practices. Indeed, the coproduction of logistics and capital brings into evidence the central role that questions of value hold in the critical understanding of logistical natures. Logistics here provides an interesting analytics to reconsider the objectification of nature not only as commodification, but also as specific, situated, and always local versions of commodities, animals, and values. In this section, the two presentations by *Kerstin Pannhorst* and *Ayako Sakurai* on entomological trade around Taiwan and Japan unfold different articulations of insects, natural histories, and transnational commercial and academic enterprises – attending to the emergence of entomological body parts as resources in decorative arts trades and to the fortunes of a German company’s relation with Meiji Japan, respectively. Finally, *Mareike Vennen’s* presentation explores the traffic between the Berlin zoos and the natural history museum in Berlin. It highlights historical changes throughout the twentieth century in both the logistics of transport and trade of animal objects and that managing and organizing the personal, administrative, and institutional networks and economics.

Infrastructural im/mobilities

If logistics is crucially about movement, as it is mobilized to solve the saturation of late capitalism by expanding and managing its geographical distribution, infrastructures have a central role in this process. The same is true for logistical natures. Yet, circulation and its dynamic infrastructures also emerge alongside stillness, closure, and saturation. The papers in this section will attend to these im/mobilities, flows, and interruptions. *Vanessa Finney’s* work on the trade of Australian natural history and the significance of fragility, both material and sociocultural, can begin to open up the question of the mobilities of logistical natures. As will the work of *Nils Güttler* on Frankfurt airport’s role in shaping natural histories and their circulations, and the paper by *Clemens Maier-Wolthausen* on the role of the Berlin wall in interrupting and redistributing the circulation of animals, natural history objects, and waste between zoos, natural history museums, and the city.