

Abstracts

Ringvorlesung “Animals as Objects. Animals as Objects? Histories, Institutions, Infrastructures, Data, and Knowledge

(in alphabetical order)

Filippo Bertoni, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

“Oozing Objectivities: Knowing Radiolarians, Fuelling Fossil Capital”

What kind of object is an animal? In this presentation I try to respond to this question by following one particular organism, *Cycladophora davisiana*. Already from the onset, though, this species complicates both the idea of animals, and the idea of objects: as a eukaryotic protozoon, radiolarians are not animals, nor plants, nor fungi; and given their microscopic size (50-100 µm) and the fact that they are often recovered from oceanic sediments, at first sight they look like nothing more than the mud they are in. As I follow this species, though, it becomes evident that *C. davisiana* troubles the notion of object even more deeply, since its status as object and organism went through many transformations, and keeps changing with the different (research) practices it emerges with. To understand how this radiolarian goes from being a proxy of planetary geoclimatic change, to a tool for petroleum exploration, from an element of proof in 19th century debates on life in the ocean bottoms, to a sample archived and preserved in Canada balsam, I suggest we think of objects as less stable and bounded things. Instead, I use the notion of objectivities in a way that is parallel and complementary to the idea of (political) subjectivities: objects are not what they are a priori, but they emerge and are allowed to take specific forms as they take shape together with different technosocial formations. Rearticulating how we think of and use animal-objects, I argue, is an important step towards the goal of making space for successor sciences that can question and situate their objectivities – in turn so critical in these times of decolonial struggles within and without knowledge practices and institutions.

Bernhard Gißibl, Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte

“The Other Serengeti. Discussing the Naturalness of Elephants in postcolonial Tanzania”

Ever since the Frankfurt Zoo Director Bernhard Grzimek released the award-winning film *Serengeti shall not die* in 1959, this savannah landscape in Northern Tanzania has become iconic for its large-scale seasonal migration of zebras and wildebeest. This image of the Serengeti ecosystem has been marketed by both global tourism and conservation, and since the early 1960s, the removal of pastoralists from the park as well as the alignment of borders all served the purpose to allow the migration to run its unimpeded, “natural” course.

Alongside this touristified Serengeti existed, however, another savannah that was characterized by the unintended consequences of management decisions. An unexpected and unprecedented surge of elephant numbers since the middle of the 1960s appeared to threaten the touristic appeal of the park and confronted wildlife scientists with the puzzle in how far these animals were “natural” occupants of this savannah landscape, or to be regarded as an “unnatural” disruption of the ecosystem.

The presentation will take the “Serengeti elephant problem” of the 1960s to situate the politics of science within the newly founded Serengeti Research Institute in the context of broader developments in elephant and wildlife research and management across Eastern Africa in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It will show how the creation of an allegedly natural ecosystem through the removal of indigenous people initiated a new period of a science and tourism-based human ecology of the savannah, and it looks how in the course of scientific study, elephant agency was both historicized and individualized.

Wilko Graf von Hardenberg, Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Berlin “Counting Animals: Surveys, Baselines and Models in Nature Conservation”

Since before conservation was institutionalised in its modern form, sound management of hunting has required to count, assess, and estimate animal stocks. Animal species conservation efforts, in fact, always require some form of quantification to respond to basic questions such as: How many animals are there? What is the population’s development trend? How does it compare with the past? All conservation has relied on defining baselines and keeping track of trends. Historical reference points and surveys, frequently uncritically used in contemporary population modelizations, are however fraught by the methodological and contextual limitations of data collection. In this lecture we will discuss, through examples taken from the history of animal conservation in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, how counting animals, defining baselines and modelling populations has affected species conservation.

Christian Kassung, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin „Restlos. Von der Unmöglichkeit, Schweine aufzuessen“

Der Vortrag widmet sich den Resten der industriellen Tier-Fleischtransformation. Dabei geht es zum einen um diejenigen Reste, die nicht als direkte Nahrungsmittel, sondern in anderer Form, vom Rasierpinsel bis zur Gelantine in der Zahnplasta, in den Alltag einwandern. Den anderen Pol bilden diejenigen Reste, die den Schlachthof unverarbeitet verlassen, um eben als Abfall in den metabolischen Kreislauf rückeingespeist zu werden. Zwischen diesen beiden Polen liegt ein extrem breites Feld, das kulturell sehr unterschiedlich verhandelt wird und das die Frage nach dem dominanten Bedarf (G. Rebora) der Fleischindustrie aufwirft.

Therese Kienemund, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin:

“Alfred Keller's Insect Models and the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin”

The sculptor Alfred Keller (1902–1955) created numerous animal sculptures for the display collection of the Zoological Museum Berlin, which was part of the Museum für Naturkunde, the museum of natural history. Some of his insect models – among others a house fly, human flea, and mill moth – as well as a spider model are currently still exhibited in the museum. The current display emphasizes Keller's artistic and technical innovations as well as the scientific accuracy of his models. But how were the models originally exhibited? How did the displays' scientific, artistic and political meanings change?

Photographic material from Keller's estate and other holdings of the museum archive allows for a partial reconstruction of the first exhibitions of Keller's models in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin in the 1930s and early 1940s and in the "Reichsnährstandschau" in Hamburg in 1935. For visitors, the insects were staged as dangerous pests that should be eliminated, differentiating visually between human pests and plant pests. At the same time, the models served as representative objects for specific research areas of the scientific community at the museum and beyond. Overall, the history of the models' exhibition after

1945 is less well documented. By the 1970s, the presentation strategies for the two categories of pests had become less distinct. By the 1990s at the latest, Keller's insect models had also gained historical significance for the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.

Britta Lange, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

„Die Seidenraupe. Ein (Clastique-)Modell und seine Modellhaftigkeit“

Ausgehend von dem 75 cm langen Clastique-Modell einer Seidenraupe, das sich heute in der Zoologischen Lehrsammlung der Humboldt-Universität befindet, erkundet dieser Vortrag die Geschichte des Seidenbaus in Berlin und Brandenburg im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Während das konkrete Modell in Papiermaché die zoologischen Merkmale des Maulbeerspinners als kultiviertes Nutztier darstellt, zirkulieren Spuren der Raupe und Raupenzucht darüber hinaus als ein Modell für durchaus verschiedene Horizonte: etwa die merkantilistische Wirtschaftspolitik unter Friedrich dem Großen sowie die mythologischen und christlichen Deutungen der Metamorphose zum Schmetterling.

Clemens Maier-Wolthausen, Zoologischer Garten Berlin AG

„Heia Safari!': Fangexpeditionen des Berliner Zoos in Ostafrika und koloniale Vermarktung“

In den 1920er Jahren unternahm Lutz Heck, der damalige Assistent seines Vaters und Zoodirektors Ludwig Heck im Auftrag des Berliner Zoologischen Gartens zwei Fangexpeditionen ins östliche Afrika. Auf der ersten reisten er und ein Filmteam ins Kaiserreich Abessinien, die zweite Reise führte in das britische Mandatsgebiet Tanganjika, Teil der ehemaligen Kolonie Deutsch-Ostafrika.

Gegenüber den Aufsichtsräten der Aktiengesellschaft des Zoologischen Gartens Berlin wurden beide Reisen erstens finanziell und zweiten wissenschaftlich begründet: Zum einen argumentierte Heck, dass der Fang von Tieren vor Ort eine preiswerte Alternative zum internationalen Handel mit exotischen Tieren sei; zum anderen, dass er die Tiere in Afrika in der Natur beobachten und Schlussfolgerungen für die Haltung in menschlicher Obhut ziehen könne.

Eine genauere Untersuchung der Korrespondenzen zu den Expeditionen, der Presseberichterstattung und auch der Selbstzeugnisse Lutz Hecks lässt aber erkennen, dass die Tiere nicht nur als wissenschaftliche Schauobjekte für den Berliner Zoo dienen sollten, sondern vor allem als Träger der Eigenwerbung des Expeditionsleiters und der Werbung für den Berliner Zoo. Mit Ihnen wurde zudem eine Sprache transportiert, die diese Tiere und die begleitenden ostafrikanischen Pfleger für lange Zeit nach der Rückkehr der Expedition nach Berlin in den Dienst einer kolonialrevisionistischen Propaganda stellte.

Tahani Nadim, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin / Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

“Reproducing Species in and with Data”

Digital sequence data in the form of so-called “barcodes” is offering novel ways for figuring species. The production and circulation of these entangle practices from natural history, archival politics and genomic promises. This article attends to three data moments that each opens an empirical site for querying the combinations and proliferations of data: a database record, a page from a museum ledger and a scientific paper about automating species identification. The paper uses the datafication of species to think through analytical devices developed for problematising imperial archives and consider their appropriateness for data infrastructures built on records from such archives.

Tamar Novick, Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Berlin

“Bodily Waste as Animal: The Case of Urine”

We tend to regard urine as a useless substance, and have developed ways to jettison it from everyday life. Like many other types of bodily materials we consider to be waste, however, urine has been remarkably important in worlds of knowledge and practice such as medicine, agriculture, architecture, and art until the early modern period. Then, this value was largely lost. At the turn of twentieth century, with the emergence of endocrinology, animals and human urine collection campaigns became the basis of a global reproduction revolution, and the growth of the pharmaceutical industry. This talk considers the possibility of studying the history of urine as one of an animal object, and discusses the challenges that arise with the attempts to follow its smelly traces.

Lisa Onaga, Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Berlin

“Cocoon Cultures and Life Histories”

Efforts to secure the future of silk for rural enterprises in Japan after World War II forged a developmental context in which two major silkworm biobanks remained key to rebuilding the country. These biobanks represent two historical paths: cocoons leading to silkcrafft and to bioscience. Together, they offer an opportunity for understanding how humans have interacted with the life histories of *kaiko* in recent centuries. The term *kaiko* refers to the eggs, larvae, pupae, and moth of silk moths. The use of this Japanese word for these valuable insects encourages a rethinking of how histories of insects can be told. Cocoons, a product of the pupal life stage, are key objects for grasping how actual and potential life paths of *kaiko* are deeply entangled with human activities. Noticing these distinct paths is necessary for making new articulations of life history and thus understanding the tensions inherent to the process of writing the history inclusive of individuals, swarms, and generational beings.

Kerstin Pannhorst, Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Berlin

“Turning to insects: tiny bodies for the lab, the library, and the department store in Germany and Japan”

Around the turn of the 20th century, insects became newly visible in a broad variety of discourses. In a modernity characterized by mass production, insect bodies became objects of research, of commerce, and of art in a larger scale than ever before. This talk will follow insect bodies mass-collected in colonial Taiwan to Germany and Japan, to the museum and the library, to the laboratory, the factory and the department store. In Dahlem, today a part of Berlin, the newly built *German Entomological Museum* relied on fleas and flies from Taiwan to not only build up a specimen collection, but a library. In Gifu in central Japan, the *Nawa Entomological Laboratory* turned Taiwanese butterflies into folding fans, kimonos and other decorative art objects in order to fund research in applied entomology. Deeply intertwined with the expansion of colonial infrastructures, many disciplines turned to insects and an insect collecting economy emerged in Taiwan.

Marianna Szczygielska, Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte Berlin

“Animating Capture, or an Elephant Microhistory”

While zoos are typically defined as spaces of confinement, they largely depend on infrastructures of mobility that sustain animal captivity. Since the nineteenth century the trajectories of trade and exchange in living animals underscore the role of circuses and travelling menageries in supplying zoos with specimens. Creating a zoological collection required not only the movement of animal bodies across geographical spaces to produce captivity, but also set into motion the circulation of animal bodily parts within the institutional network of zoos, natural history museums, and veterinary anatomical institutes. Introducing the animal biography and microhistory methods, this lecture follows an Asian elephant in his journey between German circuses, a Polish zoo, and an anatomical institute to build a micro-history of animal movement under captivity.