

## **10. The Knowledge we live by: Authenticity and its Contestations as Epistemic Process (Workshop)**

***Maike Melles, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main***

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Historical authenticity is subject to different and often contradicting claims made by diverse social actors, alluding to identities of various scales, from the individual or regional to the national. Authenticity is known as the hard currency value in the tourist and self-branding business of cultural heritage. Speaking from particular interests, it also figures prominently in translocal contestations in the realm of food and material culture, and the interpretation of historical figures. More generally, authenticity may also refer to knowledge inventories and their authentication in terms of different epistemic sources and practices, relating to embodiment, verbal or pictorial representations, and objects. In this way, authenticity lies at the heart of cultural practices around knowledges of value and meaning, yet it is not always explicitly voiced. What counts as affirmed knowledge is historically contingent and contested. Collectives but also individuals may hold different, even contradictory knowledges at the same time.

Taking up the conference theme of contested knowledge, we ask: How come that some groups of social actors refrain from intervening in official narratives of the past despite knowing better? Why do they choose not to bring past experiences of exploitation, poverty or social inequality into the collective making of the past? How do certain epistemic practices advance or obstruct the view of alternative visions and thus create "the knowledge we live by"? When do we call a tradition invented and when does inventiveness attest to originality? Which role is played by discursive regimes and the "heritage of heritage" for the evaluation of past events? And how do we deal with the knowledge nobody wants to know about?

The workshop invites contributions that reflect on the epistemic and processual dimension of authenticity and its contestations by addressing these and related questions. Abstracts may be sent in German or English.

## **Die Macht der Steine: Zur Bedeutung archäologischer Stätten in Aushandlung indigener Authentizität im plurinationalen Bolivien**

***Anne Ebert, Freie Universität Berlin***

In meinem Vortrag betrachte ich die Problematik indigener Authentizität und setze mich kritisch mit den Auswirkungen materialisierter Bestätigungsdiskurse für verschiedene indigene Identitäten auseinander. Basierend auf meinen ethnographischen Forschungen (2011-2021) erörtere ich die Bedeutung

archäologischer Stätten für die Einnahme indigener Positionierungen im plurinationalen Bolivien.

Einerseits prägen staatliche Indigenitätsdiskurse die Aushandlungsprozesse um Authentizität. In diesen werden Praktiken, Wissen und Vorstellungen als „anzestral“ und „tausendjährig“ bezeichnet und mit Verweisen auf vorspanische archäologische Stätten wie Tiwanaku untermauert, dessen monumentalen Steinbauten als Symbol einer indigenen Vergangenheit gelten.

Demgegenüber nutzen indigene Akteur:innen wie urbane Aymara-Aktivist:innen in La Paz und El Alto diese Aufladungen und münzen ihre räumliche Nähe zu Tiwanaku in historische wie verwandtschaftliche Nähe um: Als Erb:innen der Erbauer:innen erheben sie eigene Deutungsansprüche auf Tiwanaku, bekräftigen ihre indigene Identität und betonen die Relevanz von Aymara im plurinationalen Bolivien.

Anderen Indigene – wie die zahlreichen Ethnien des amazonischen Tieflands – können weder auf eine räumliche Nähe zu monumentalen archäologischen Stätten noch die darüber vermittelte Anzestralität zurückgreifen. Ein Fehlen, das ihre Praktiken und Wissensformen als weniger authentisch indigen ansehen lässt.

Mein Vortrag beleuchtet die Rolle archäologischer Stätten für die Authentifizierung von Praktiken und Wissen als indigen. Damit liefert er Einblicke in die komplexen wie umstrittenen Aushandlungsdynamiken gegenwärtiger indigener Authentizität.

## **Aesthetics of the Raw. The Tricky Relationship between Humour and Authenticity**

***Cassia Kilian, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz***

Authenticity and truth are problematic categories from an anthropological perspective. Advertisers discovered authenticity as a sales pitch. “Keeping it raw” is a strategy to produce authenticity in social media. This aesthetics also distinguishes stand-up comedy from other comedic genres and authenticity is the most important key word for stand-up comedians; being true is considered a cue. Theories on aesthetics have often considered truth a prerequisite to perceive something as beautiful but nobody would assert that beauty evokes laughter. This seems to be the reason why most authors writing on aesthetics have omitted artistic practices that excite laughter. But what evokes laughter in stand-up comedies? Something authentic?

When doing research in Berlin’s comedy clubs, conceiving a performance that would make people laugh was an insightful exploration concerning the tricky relationship between humour and truth, aesthetics and authenticity. It revealed authenticity as a dubious category, but one even anthropologists cannot dispense with.

## **Rapanui memorial practice of Indigenous and National sovereignties. (Easter Island and Chile)**

***Diego Muñoz, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München***

On September 9, 1888, the Chilean State incorporated Easter Island through a treaty of annexation, a text written in two languages: Spanish and Polynesian. For many years, only the Spanish content of the treaty circulated in the press and books. In this text, the chiefs of the island ceded their sovereignty to the Chilean state 'forever and unconditionally' while, at the same time, 'maintaining their titles of chiefs'. However, the Rapanui people have always contested this official narrative with an Indigenous version transmitted through chants, gestures, narratives, and particular material expressions. These memorial practice and knowledge acquired renewed relevance when the bilingual version of the treaty was rediscovered, thus opening this history to a fundamental misunderstanding about the notion of 'sovereignty transfer'.

In this presentation, I analyze the Rapanui version of the annexation and its memorial practices and knowledges. First, I focus on the fundamental aspects and supports of the Indigenous version of the event. Second, I analyze the bilingual text of the treaty, focusing on the Polynesian part to identify and understand the underlying Indigenous concepts, epistemologies and knowledges. Finally, I discuss the theoretical and methodological relevance of Indigenous memorial practices and its authenticity for the analysis of a particular historical event.

## **Seeing the sight before doing the sightseeing: the role of digital mediation in tourists' authenticating practices**

***Pascalie Sebus, University of Antwerp***

In this proposed presentation I would like to shed light on the role digital visibility takes up in shaping authenticating practices in tourism. More specifically, I would like to focus on the manifold ways in which a touristic experience can be digitally mediated by drawing from my work on tourism on the Camino de Santiago (Spain) and in urban environments in Antwerp (Belgium) and Rotterdam (The Netherlands). These sites are part of my ongoing PhD research on the digital mediation of tourism.

Within this framework of digital mediation I will discuss how tourists' ideas of the authentic are individually produced, yet often reproduce a pre-existent and dominant narrative. This 'hermeneutic circle' of tourist photography (Albers & James, 1988; Jenkins, 2003) will hence be a central point of discussion.

By focusing on these digitally mediated, visual authentication processes in tourism – the digitally mediated and visual construction of 'the knowledge we live by' - this

contribution would therefore tap in closely to the conference theme and possibly add to a meaningful discussion on the digital mediation of the 'authentic' beyond our respective disciplines.