

of the *Collaborative Research Centre 1199* (Leipzig University)  
in cooperation with the research platform *Mobile Cultures and Societies* (University of Vienna)

**JULY 15–17, 2021**

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

## ARCHIPELAGIC IMPERIAL SPACES AND MOBILITIES

While mobility has been central for the real and imaginative construction of the United States from its early beginnings, the nation's continental gaze was replaced by a terraqueous triumphalism that dissolved distances with imperial projects in the Caribbean and Asian-Pacific from the mid-1800s onward, creating what Lanny Thompson has called an "imperial archipelago."<sup>1</sup> Whereas many colonial spaces such as Hawai'i and the Philippines are actual archipelagoes, the field of archipelagic American Studies approaches its eponymous concept as a blend of physical and cultural geography, proposing that "the archipelago emerges as neither strictly natural nor as wholly cultural but always as at the intersection of the Earth's materiality and humans' penchant for metaphoricity."<sup>2</sup>

Thinking archipelagically hence becomes both metaphor and theoretical tool for accessing the multiple dimensions of what Elizabeth DeLoughrey calls the "transoceanic imaginary."<sup>3</sup> In the words of island studies scholar Elaine Stratford, "thinking with the archipelago may reveal multiple emancipatory narratives that enunciate exceptions to colonizing grammars of empire that rendered islands remote, isolated and backward."<sup>4</sup> Archipelagic approaches may

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, Lanny. *Imperial Archipelago: Representation and Rule in the Insular Territories under U.S. Domination after 1898*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Roberts, Brian Russell and Michelle Ann Stephens (eds.), *Archipelagic American Studies: Decontinentalizing the Study of American Culture*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M., *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Stratford, Elaine, "The Idea of the Archipelago: Contemplating Island Relations," *Island Studies Journal* 8 (2013) 1, pp- 3–8; 4.

therefore evoke epistemic disruptions of global conditions and a renegotiation of our cultural vocabulary of centrality and peripherality, identity, history, geography, and mobility.

We believe that mobility studies will contribute a much-needed critical perspective on US oceanic expansionism that can be made productive through the lenses of literary, cultural, representational, or media studies, to name only a few. Building upon the spatial turn's insistence on the social construction of space, transnational American Studies has de-centered the topic from the nation-state, rethinking mobility as "socially produced motion"<sup>5</sup> embedded in a "web of connections" among cross-cultural and cross-border practices.<sup>6</sup> This new mobility research "sets out to critique dominant scripts of American mobility articulated in cultural forms from sub- and transnational perspectives and from gender-, race-, and class-critical angle."<sup>7</sup> It traces (im)mobilities as part of human and cultural geographies, for instance in diasporas, border regimes and borderlands,<sup>8</sup> migration flows, regimes of mass incarceration, the racial politics of movement,<sup>9</sup> or alongside asymmetrical constellations of contagion or panic.<sup>10</sup> Other current research scrutinizes the scope of "minor mobilities."<sup>11</sup>

These developments in American studies form the basis of an upcoming workshop organized by Leipzig University's *Collaborative Research Centre 1199: Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition*<sup>12</sup> in cooperation with the University of Vienna's research platform *Mobile Cultures and Societies. Interdisciplinary Studies on Transnational Formations*.<sup>13</sup>

In the workshop, we will explore the placemaking dimension of mobility through the lens of archipelagic American Studies. We will discuss (im)mobilities of colonization in a framework that goes beyond conventional dichotomies of center and periphery by assuming a healthy "skepticism regarding continental presumptions to uniquely mainland status, combined with a dedication [to] reimagining insular, oceanic, and archipelagic spaces as mainlands and mainwaters, crucial spaces, participants, nodes, and networks."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cresswell, Tim, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. Dirlik, Arif, *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998; Fishkin, Shelley Fisher, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies", *American Quarterly* 57 (2005) 1, pp. 17–57; Greenblatt, Stephen (ed.), *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://mobilecultures.univie.ac.at/docfunds/>.

<sup>8</sup> Anzaldúa, Gloria, *Borderlands: La Frontera*, San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Sheller, Mimi, *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in the Age of Extremes*, London: Verso, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Kunow, Rüdiger, "American Studies as Mobility Studies: Some Terms and Constellations", in: Fluck, Winfried, Donald E. Pease, and John Carlos Rowe (eds.), *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies*, Lebanon: Dartmouth College Press, 2011, 245–264.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://enmma.org>.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://research.uni-leipzig.de/~sfb1199/>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://mobilecultures.univie.ac.at/en/>.

<sup>14</sup> Roberts/Stephens (eds.), *Archipelagic American Studies*, p.14.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

We are seeking contributions that address the intersections of archipelagicity, mobility, and American imperialism, for instance by asking:

- How can an archipelagic approach to American Studies be made productive for the field of mobility studies?
- In what ways can archipelagic epistememes help uncover imperial and 'minor' mobilities (i.e. the mobilities of black or indigenous peoples) in the period of US imperialism?
- How can concepts such as archipelagicity, insularity, and peripherality help in the exploration of continuities between the southern US and the Caribbean, particularly concerning colonial violence, racial hierarchies, and differential mobilities?
- How do mobilities challenge spatial formats that are based on principles of territoriality, e.g., nation-state and empire?
- What new spatial formats and spatial imaginations emerge from archipelagic epistememes and mobility practices?

The workshop will explore these and other issues with the goal of preparing a special issue to be published in a peer-reviewed international journal. Participants are expected to present original papers that are unpublished and not scheduled for publication elsewhere. A follow-up workshop to discuss the completed essays is planned for early 2022.

## ORGANIZATION

Your travel costs and accommodation expenses will be covered by us according to the guidelines of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and Leipzig University.

## SUBMISSIONS

Kindly let us know if you are interested in attending the workshop and contributing a paper to the planned publication. Please send your response to Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez ([pizarz@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:pizarz@uni-leipzig.de)) and Prof. Alexandra Ganser ([alexandra.ganser@univie.ac.at](mailto:alexandra.ganser@univie.ac.at)) until **January 22, 2021**.