

The issue of territorial displacement of cultural assets in times of both war and peace is of greater relevance than ever, and its implications range from a moral imperative to shifts in cultural politics and academic research. Not a day goes by without a public appeal urging “equitable and fair” decisions in disputes about cultural restitution. Lawyers, museum curators, politicians, ethnologists and archaeologists, art dealers, political activists and journalists, artists and writers all over the world are concerned with the subject. Its topicality is reflected in headlines, blogs and TV documentations, in the founding of state institutions as well as in feature films from Hong Kong to Hollywood, which dramatize various cases and situations with considerable emotion for the wider public. There is no doubt that the consequences of past translocations of cultural assets form one of the great challenges of the twenty-first century. Today, it is not only those displacements resulting from physical force in the past that are seen as problematic. Increasingly, criticism is also directed towards forms of translocations resulting from academic or aesthetic demands that were facilitated by an asymmetric balance of power (be it of an economic, political or epistemic nature).

The key objective of *translocations* is the compilation of scholarly findings about the social, political and cultural implications of

past displacements of cultural assets, that will deliver orientation and direction for the future. This historical research is deliberately aiming to shape a societal dialogue process and to develop potential courses of action.

GRASPING THE FUTURE

The subject of *translocations* are large-scale **displacements of cultural assets** since antiquity, such as: art theft and spoliation organized by the state in times of war and occupation, seizure of cultural goods during colonialism, displacements as a result of a partition of excavation discoveries and research expeditions, a material diaspora of entire civilizations expedited by the art trade, confiscations justified through ideology, nationalisations, or *en masse* disposals of private property.

The utilisation of translocations and restitutions in the service of political and economic goals can be traced and illustrated by numerous examples throughout history. At the same time, object migration has a demonstrable effect in history as a source of creativity, innovation and knowledge. Even in antiquity, translocations were noticeably an important element of empire-building. Around 1800, the Musée Napoléon in Paris became the depository for the “conquered” paintings and antiquities from Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Poland, the Netherlands and Spain, instrumentalised for national affirmation of the empire and the establishment of a universalist paradigm of power *à la française*. Half a century later, the dislocation of thousands of art objects forcibly taken from the summer palace in Beijing and brought to Europe was denounced by Victor Hugo as a barbaric crime against civilization, and he declared their restitution a re-

publican imperative. In 1912, the bust of Nefertiti was excavated in Egypt and the bones of the biggest dinosaur skeleton in the world in present-day Tanzania, both destined for Berlin museums. In the same year, the “Yale Peruvian Expedition” uncovered Machu Picchu and had tens of thousands of artefacts shipped to the Peabody Museum at Yale University. After a long-running legal dispute, they were spectacularly restituted to Peru in 2011 as a form of “academic diplomacy”. Today, provincial museums from Irkutsk to Nizhny Novgorod house Old Masters from German collections, seized by the Red Army in 1945 as compensation for its country’s war losses, which provide entire school classes with the immediate opportunity of a sensual experience of Western art.

In recent years, the example of the National Socialists’ art theft has demonstrated first and foremost that an appropriate and contemporary approach to dealing with the consequences of such translocations of cultural goods demands not only political will but also meticulous historical knowledge of the respective cases. By way of example, Germany invests millions every year into researching the provenance of its art museums. Archaeological, scientific, and ethnological collections have also begun the process of investigating the historical origin of their objects and making it transparent.

However, the field of translocations *as such* - that is, not the history of the transferred object, but the actual phenomenon of the transfer itself, with all its traumas, discourses, actors, gestures, techniques and representations -, has hardly been recognized, and certainly not fully researched.

A POLYPHONIC APPROACH

The *translocations* project will focus on two main aspects. Firstly, at the moment when a cultural asset in transfer is integrated into public museums and libraries, the incorporation of the foreign into a native narrative leads to multiple effects of cross-fertilization across generations. These are of a profoundly cultural, intellectual and aesthetic nature. Secondly, when feelings of injustice, expropriation, and loss become manifest in societies or interest groups, questions of ownership, identity and pride become linked with the displacement of material objects and their insertion into new contexts.

The precise scholarly categorization of numerous historical constellations forms the basis of our work. We approach the phenomenon independently of the legality or illegality of the respective events: there may have been cases where the translocation of cultural assets was legal, but it may take societies or interest groups decades or centuries to articulate their sense of loss or their wish for restitution. At the same time, societies and individuals deliberately choose to accept a provenance based on violence when it is tied to the visibility, research and material preservation of cultures, especially in a museum context. Accordingly, *translocations* investigates complex temporality, uncomfortable resentment and diverging processes of recollection. The key question will concern the perspective of those who perceive themselves as “disowned” across eras and regions, based on any possible construction of identity. This perspective may not always be defined by demand or by grief. Our first and most important task is the identification and gathering of sources and their discourse analysis. Conceptual history must be included. Who determines the

terminology, when, and why? What do and what don't terms such as looted art, Beutekunst, spoliations, furti or перемещенное искусство actually convey?

PROJECT DESIGN

To meet these requirements, our work will be based on four **fundamental projects** that will focus on sourcing material and making it available:

- A digital atlas
- A virtual library
- A glossary
- An image repertory on the iconography of translocated cultural goods

The visualization of web-based mapping will allow us to structure and amalgamate historical events, reaching beyond research into isolated incidents and rendering the extent of translocations tangible. The library will unite well-known but widely dispersed texts ranging from Cicero to Quatremère de Quincy, Victor Hugo, Carl Einstein, and Kwame Anthony Appiah, thus revealing hidden connections across broad historical and cultural divides.

At the same time, we would like to cast light on testimonials which previous discourses did not take into consideration. The glossary will provide a critical historical analysis of terms from different linguistic contexts, investigating their ideological and

theoretical implications. A database of pictorial sources is the fourth core element gathering project material: how are seizures, destructions, removals, conquests, new and re-classifications, and translocations actually represented? How is the scene set? What do the places look like where cultural goods are now absent? Our particular attention will be on political iconography and medial means such as documentary and propaganda films and photography, or even amateur internet videos.

Only a systematic compilation and scholarly analysis of this material will permit an informed contribution to current discussions. This will be developed in **detailed research areas** as follows:

A first project is devoted to the historical study of **Art theft and Trophy enterprise in Antiquity**, with a focus on the detailed analysis of literary sources. We will record translocations of cultural assets through war campaigns and raids, while examining their political effects and meaning. Which mechanisms and patterns were created at the time, that became reactivated in subsequent eras and by subsequent communities? Apart from legal and restitution issues, we are concerned with analysing ancient manifestations of the market, transport, exhibition/presentation of translocated cultural objects and forms of grief for their loss.

A further focus will be on the subject of **“Europe and the Discovery of the World” in the Middle Ages and early modern era**. We will raise similar questions to discuss campaigns of war and conquest within as well as outside Europe as a background for literary and discursive reflections regarding translocations we want to analyse. We will take a close look at the so-called Age of Discovery, which turns into “Discovery as Appropriation”. We are looking for traces of the consciousness of the “discovered” who have re-

mained mostly without a voice. Starting points for our research are the crusades of the Middle Ages, the European conquests in South America, the wars of religion and the Thirty Years War, with a special focus on social, migration, and cultural history.

The third study of the cluster is concerned with **Diasporas of Cultural Objects in recent and early modern times**. Gradually increasing the spatial-cultural perspective, we investigate the diasporas of cultural assets from Italy, Greece, Egypt, sub-Saharan Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and the Americas, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We are concerned with events that were defined as “displacements of cultural goods as a result of colonial history and of the division of excavation finds” (Anton). The perspective of the dispossessed is our clear focal point. We will research the chronology and the forms of displacement - punitive expeditions, excavations, trade and other types of violent or non-violent transfers -, without losing sight of political-diplomatic launchings, direction, and utilisation of these translocation discourses. Working closely with researchers who are specialized and/or rooted in the regions will assist us in overcoming personal gaps of knowledge.

a) **Italy** has a long and well-documented tradition both in cultural property protection laws and in the image of a helpless and plundered cultural community, going back to the eighteenth century and beyond. We would like to work on a coherent analysis of the changes in discourse, which have received little attention to date. Particular focus will be on the political propaganda of the Risorgimento, the reign of Savoy, and Fascist as well as post-Fascist Italy.

- b) A nucleus of European identity lies in **Greece and (what is today) Turkey**. We would like to address, develop and reflect on discourses ranging from the displacement of cultural goods within Europe - such as the translocation of the Parthenon sculptures to London - to the transcontinental trade in antiquities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To date, no comprehensive examination has been undertaken, be it of individual translocated objects, the mass of archaeological goods, or the perceptions and constructions of history of the inhabitants of the North Eastern Mediterranean, who identify as heirs, successors or owners.
- c) While Egyptian cultural goods are deeply rooted in European reflections on the Non-European, we feel that **the material presence of Egypt outside Egypt** has not received sufficient attention. When and through whom did a local consciousness of loss emerge? We will look at the linking of independence movements with archaeology (“Tutankhamun trauma”) as well as at the importance of translocations in the diplomatic relationships with Europe and America, and the entanglement of translocation discourses with the history of the media and that of academic research.
- d) The development and perception of an exterritorial geography of one’s own culture is our analogue focus on **sub-Saharan Africa, the Asia-Pacific region and the Americas**. In addition to the movement of cultural goods into the Northern hemisphere we will be looking into discourses on movements within the South as well as translocations of cultural assets within colonial regions. Our key questions remain: when and how did a perception of translocations as loss become apparent in

the oral and written records of the source communities? What were the consequences of the independence movements of the early twentieth century? What is the relevance of displaced objects in post-colonial constructions of identity?

In a detailed study we also intend to reflect on the entanglement of translocations and religion. This research area cuts across chronology, focusing on examples such as medieval robbery of icons and reliquaries, the “bible archaeology” practised in the Middle East during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or the fate of the Thai national treasure and sacred object Phra Kaeo Morakot.

Lastly, we will undertake a specific study of the systematic **expropriation and translocation of cultural goods in the context of the great wars of the twentieth century**. Above all, we will focus on the discourses which drove and legitimised these activities, looking at propaganda in literature, image, and film. The art theft of the National Socialists and Soviet “trophy seizures” will be the topics of this last project focus.

In accordance with the capabilities of web-based preparation, the maps, the glossary, the virtual library and the image library will be made accessible to the public, as will the results of the associated detailed research. The project cluster will be funded by the financial contribution made in connection with the Leibniz Prize awarded in 2016.