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Entangled in Global Networks: Practices, Actors, and Objects in Natural History

Leitung: Renate Dürr (Tübingen)/Anne Mariss (Tübingen)

Modern Europe was constructed (and stills constructs itself) through self-ascribed concepts such as the capacity of innovation, technological progress and social improvement. This European self-perception was based on the idea that there was a “scientific revolution” in the 17th century, which initiated the birth of modernity. Recently, this idea is experiencing a thorough historiographical revision. Now, non-European or global developments and entanglements between Europe and the differently involved parts of the world are taken into account for the analyses of the formation of the modern world in which we live. The history of natural history has hardly attracted interest in the question of how modern Europe evolved. This can be traced back to the fact that natural history, especially botany, was, for a long time, not recognized as the “big science and big business” (Schiebinger/Swan, *Colonial Botany*, 2005) of the early modern epoch. The central thesis of the section is that natural history was a highly dynamic field of activity which fostered global entanglements. Early modern natural history was to a great extent organised by the transnational republic of letters and its networks, within which knowledge and things were transferred and exchanged globally. Not only scholars were part of these networks, but also missionaries, merchants, diplomats, seamen and European women as collectors and patronesses as well as local informants and intermediaries.

Therefore, one of the central questions is how and by whom knowledge about nature was produced in local contexts all over the world. Which role did local informants play, such as peasants, pharmacist, mining people, people who practiced medicine, seaman, women, but also indigenous people? Does it still make sense to talk about “global” knowledge production or “global knowledge” and the “republic of letters”, if we assume that knowledge was produced mainly in local contexts and not only by male-European naturalists, but by a wide range of different people? In order to analyse the cooperation between these diverse groups in different local contexts, the concept of “glocality” should be reappraised.

Vorträge



Introduction

Renate Dürr (Tübingen)



Local and Global Knowledge. Studying the 1664 Comet in Colonial Spanish South America

Andres Prieto (Boulder)



Seamen as Actors of Natural History: Collaborative Knowledge Production on board the *Resolution* and Early Modern Networks of Exchange

Anne Mariss (Tübingen)



Family Networks in a Global Era. Women and gender in early modern Natural History

Alix Cooper (Stony Brooks)



Knowledge networks and the structure of early modern science

Sarah Easterby-Smith (St. Andrews)



Comment

Ulrike Strasser (San Diego)