The Transcultural Travels of Trends— An Introductory Essay

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In contemporary societies, trends appear to be omnipresent, conspicuous, all-pervasive, and popular. Trends also seem elusive, evanescent, and in a state of perpetual flux.* While adherents of trends perceive them as meaningful or even fashionable, others criticise them as being superficial and meaningless. Either way, trends are some of the most visible manifestations of changes within and between different popular cultures. Understanding their dynamics requires an analytical approach that deals with trends as cultural flows marked by a high visibility in societies, public media, as well as more closely confined networks.[1] A plethora of understandings regarding how trends are constituted and how they spread must therefore be taken into account. In an era in which processes of globalisation and global exchanges are accepted as the norm, cultural flows such as trends can no longer be examined solely within the confines of national boundaries or so-called national cultures.[2] Instead, we must focus on aspects of transculturality and travel. Such an emphasis may at first glance apply only to contemporary trends. But historical scholarship has

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1 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Following Appadurai's approach to "cultural flows," trends are conceived here as carriers of concepts, commodities, and products, as well as of lifestyles within or across different publics.

2 Many authors have already elaborated on this point. See for example: Koichi Iwabuchi, *Re-centering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Chua Beng Huat (ed.), *Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities* (London: Routledge, 2000); Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexities: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Roland Robertson, *Glocalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Thousand Oaks Press, 1992); Joseph G. Tobin, *Re-made in Japan: Everyday Life and Consumer Taste in a Changing Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Göran Therborn (ed.), *Asia and Europe in Globlization: Continents, Regions and Nations* (London: Brill, 2006); David Marley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1995).

revealed just how pervasive transcultural trends were long before they became a subject of academic inquiry.[3]

This series of articles brings together case studies of trends that journeyed between East Asia (China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan) and Europe (most notably Germany and England) from the late nineteenth century until the beginning of the twenty-first century. The contributions cover examples of artistic, political, sociocultural, and consumer trends. The trends discussed in this series were not short-lived fads.[4] Instead, they were and are notable for their comparative longevity and endurance. Each case study describes in detail the specific historical and social circumstances under which a trend succeeded, or sometimes failed, in travelling across cultures. What impact such transcultural trends had and continue to have on their recipients, society, politics, and everyday life is thus the question that guides all articles. In the last two decades, scholarship has set out to reevaluate the importance of popular culture phenomena. Following these works, the present series of articles brings together case studies that challenge the arbitrary divide between popular, consumer, mass, and elite culture.[5] Ranging from literature, magazines, and

3 Economic, political, and cultural exchanges between Asia and Europe have a long history, which also impacted on patterns of clothing and consumption, see: Christopher A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004); Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topic, *The World Trade Created. Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006). Paola Colaiacomo and Vittoria C. Caratozzolo, "The Impact of Traditional Indian Clothing on Italian Fashion Design from Germana Marucelli to Gianni Versace," *Fashion Theory* 14 (2010) 2: 183-214. Frank Dikötter has highlighted the importance of investigating the circulation of commodities between cultures and their creative appropriation by users in changing historical contexts in China, see: Frank Dikötter, *Things Modern. Material Culture and Everyday Life in China* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007), 8. The evolution of clothing and fashion in China in its international contexts is discussed in: Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

4 Short-lived fads characterise, for example, the fashion industry, which relies upon the short life span of fashion trends to ensure a quick turnover, maximised profit margins and a continuous demand for novelty. See for example: Frank W. Hoffmann and William G. Bailey, *Fashion & Merchandising Fads* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gary S. Becker and Kevin M. Murphy, *Social Economics: Market Behaviour in a Social Environment*, Belknap Series (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003); Henrik Vejlgaard, *Anatomy of a Trend* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 11f.

5 See: Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, "Introduction: Rethinking Popular Culture" in: *Rethinking Popular Culture. Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, ed. by Ibid. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 1-60; see also: "Special Issue: Chinese Popular Culture and the State, Guest-editor Wang Jing" *positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 9 (2001) 1. Previous popular and academic works have shown the social, political, and cultural impact of transcultural exchanges of movie and food cultures to different localities: See for example: Pico Iyer, *Video Night in Kathmandu. And Other Reports from Not-So-Far East* (London: Bloomsbury, 1988); James L. Watson (ed.), *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Mark Liechty. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Raminder Kaur and Ajay J. Sinha (eds.), *Bollyworld* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005).

cinema to fan communities and political subcultures; from new, trendy gender images and children's literature to food culture, the articles take seriously popular culture as a terrain of social and political interaction and conflict, as well as an arena of transcultural exchange.

Transculturality and Trends: Travellers Beyond Borders

Transculturality and the travel of trends are the focal points of this series of articles.[6] The authors of the upcoming articles in this and the following volumes argue that transculturality has been crucial to the formation and proliferation of a large number of trends. In fact, as is suggested throughout, transcultural trends have been the norm rather than the exception, both in the past and today. Yet, connectivity between different trend agents and networks and the speed in the circulation of trends across Europe and Asia has always varied. Thus, the transcultural trends discussed in this series travelled with varying speeds and via different routes.[7] Two approaches to transculturality dominate the analyses. First, transculturality serves as a lens through which to examine trends. Moving beyond the confines of national and cultural boundaries[8] broadens our perspective and leads to new sets of research questions. When boundaries are perceived as flexible variables in the movement of cultural flows such as trends, we can trace those factors that contribute to the fortification of boundaries and those that advance the eradication of such boundaries. Such an approach makes it possible to probe the cultural attributes and alleged roots of trends. Cultural attributes can then be treated as discursive constructs that agents employ in the proliferation of any trend. Accordingly, whether a trend is perceived or treated as "Chinese," "American," "European," or else depends on the perspectives and intentions of individuals and institutional agents. Undeniably, the digital revolution, the increase of international travel and the growing dominance of transnational conglomerates have substantially accelerated the dissemination of trends. Nonetheless, directing the focus of

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6 The notions of transculturality proposed in this volume are based on: Wolfgang Welsch, "Transculturality–The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today" in: *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 194-213; Hans-Jörg Sandkühler and Hong-Bin Lim (eds.), *Transculturality: Epistomology, Ethics and Politics* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004); Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), ch. 4.

7 For a discussion of the issue of connectivity, circulation, and speed see: Arjun Appadurai, "How Histories Make Geographies: Circulation and Context in a Global Perspective," *Transcultural Studies* 1 (2010): 4-13.

8 Such an approach focuses on localities, agents and networks, and shifting borders that redefine these elements, see: Ibid., 5.

research not only to contemporary but also to historical case studies (to times when, for example, the nation state supposedly figured more strongly than today) demonstrates that trends more often than not transcended not just one but numerous boundaries in the process of gaining popularity.

Second, all articles implicitly ask whether trends that successfully travel across nations and cultures possess specific transcultural qualities that other, more localised trends do not. Here, transculturality is understood as a characteristic rather than being employed as an analytical approach. However, this is a much more difficult question to answer. Nonetheless, some trends, like that of Harry Potter or "hot moms"—middle-class mothers who model their lifestyle after celebrities' way of life—are successful across many parts of the world, while other trends fail to gain popularity outside of their original regions. The upcoming articles suggest that one vital factor of transculturality is a trend's potential for reconfiguration. A trend's capacity to be embedded discursively and made to fit a new culture, while potentially retaining an aura of "foreignness," may render it transcultural.

The articles do not attempt to cover a global framework. The case studies deal mostly with select areas in East Asia and Europe. Claiming global validity for a restricted scope of research might fail to take into account regional specificities that are characteristic of transcultural trends. Therefore, the authors emphasise not only similarities but also differences and changes. Moreover, the global is understood as a suprastructure for a myriad of transcultural exchanges: what seems global often reveals itself as transcultural on closer examination, or will translate into transcultural forms during processes of localisation.[9]

Thick Descriptions: The Case Studies

Since the mid-twentieth century, the term "trend" has been attributed with two different meanings, both of which are in accordance with its initial connotations of "direction," "tendency," and "inclination." One definition, which has been prominently employed since the early 1960s in the wake of the consumer revolution, sees trends as "current styles, vogues or popular

9 An extensive collection of insightful articles on localisation processes can be found in: David Howes (ed.), *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global Markets, Local Realities* (London: Routledge, 1996); Anthony Y.H. Fung, *Global Capital, Local Culture: Transnational Media Cooperations in China* (New York, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008); Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (eds), *Global-Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); William Mazzarella, *Shoveling Smoke. Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

tastes."[10] Conversely, social scientists and economists use the term to indicate social, political and economic developments, and numerical increases that can be tracked and measured by means of statistical and quantitative analysis.[11] Market researchers combine both notions, employing the term "trend" to denote changes in consumption patterns and behaviours. As such, market research often encompasses both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of a trend. Many market and trend researchers, however, attempt to predict future developments (also termed "trends") by way of quantitative and partially qualitative analyses.[12] The latter two definitions thus emphasise any kind of development over time expressed in a measureable increase, while the former traces popular patterns of consumptive behaviour and choice. Yet these researchers mostly limit trend research to economic development and consumer behaviour. Aspects of temporality, context, and process are only optional variables in the making of statistics. Such methods restrict the analysis of trends to a mere detection of their existence and, in part, structure.[13] They do not enable a better understanding of the forms and contents of trends, nor of their origins and trajectories. In lieu of such comparatively simplifying methods and definitions, the case studies here examine trends by providing thick descriptions of the production, dissemination, and travel of specific trends and, wherever possible, their related patterns of consumption. In aiming at thick descriptions of trends' developments, our studies offer detailed analyses of itineraries as well as in-depth accounts of the sociocultural and historical contexts in which these trends prospered or failed to prosper.[14]

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10 Philip Babcock Gove and Noah Webster (eds), *Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language. Unabridged, 3 vols, vol. 3* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 2002), 2438; Duncan Black (ed.), *Collins Dictionary, 10th Edition* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2009), 1740; Oxford University Press (ed.), *The Oxford English Dictionary. 20 vols, vol. 20: Thro-unelucidated* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 483.

11 See for example: Werner Kröber-Riehl and Gundolf Meyer-Hentschel, *Werbung: Steuerung des Konsumverhaltens* (Würzburg: Physika-Verlag, 1982); Holger Rust, *Zukunftsillusionen: Kritik der Trendforschung* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008).

12 John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1982); Robert Nieschlag, Erwin Dichtel and Hans Hörschgen (eds), *Marketing* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2002); Heribert Meffert, *Marketing: Grundlagen marktorientierter Unternehmensführung* (Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2000); Matthias Horx and Peter Wippermann (eds), *Was ist Trendforschung?* (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1996); Matthias Horx et al., *Zukunft machen: Wie Sie von Trends zu Business-Innovationen kommen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2007).

13 Henrik Vejlgaard, *Anatomy of a Trend* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

14 This approach is inspired by Geertz' notion of thick description. See: Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30. Appadurai has highlighted the importance of the notion that historical agents create geographies. The series thus emphasises the importance of agents and networks over spatial conceptions. Yet the issue of borders and space also matter to the authors. See: Appadurai, "How Histories Make Geographies," 9.

This series of articles thus showcases the technological as well as social and cultural dimensions of certain trends' transition over time. The topics covered span from the fields of historical trends in literature, cinema, and print media, to trends in politics and popular culture today. The trend of depicting sociopolitical change in popular films in China during the 1920s and 1930s is the focus of Huang Xuelei's piece. Huang demonstrates how Victorian sentimentalism travelled from England to China via Japan. Chinese filmmakers of the time found the themes and tropes of Victorian sentimentalism well suited to expressing Chinese conditions of social modernisation. These themes spoke to a wide Chinese audience in Republican China, who enjoyed watching sentimentalist films just as English readers had devoured sentimentalist novels in Victorian times. Just as Victorian sentimentalism found its pendant in China, so too did many of the European nude images which travelled to China in the early twentieth century. In her investigation of how one magazine, *Beiyang huabao* (*The Pei-yang Pictorial News*), contributed to the trend of publishing nudity in China, Sun Liying illustrates how concepts and practices of nudity, at least in artistic intellectual circles, translated from Europe to Republican China.

But China has not only received and adapted trends from abroad; China has often exported trends as well. Chinoiserie, an aesthetic trend of the eighteenth century in which Europeans intensively assimilated Chinese cultural goods, has been well studied.[15] By contrast, little is known about the more recent influence of the People's Republic of China on European trends. Sebastian Gehrig's article seeks to redress this balance by chronicling the highly politicised impact of the Chinese Cultural Revolution ongoing in the People's Republic of China on popular political trends in the 1960s and 1970s. Gehrig traces how Mao Zedong's political ideology and imagery were adopted by West German intellectuals and, in a second but no less important step, advanced to being one of the most potent forces in German popular political protest at that time. Maoist "Red Guard" shirts, Mao portraits, and Mao's "Little Red Book" became trend objects that expressed a subversive alternative to the hegemonic public culture. Subcultural left-wingers embarked on their protests by using the icon Mao to introduce new protest rituals.[16] The article thus demonstrates how propaganda icons can undergo curious transformations and comebacks as trendy role models in new contexts.

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15 Martin Woesler, *Zwischen Exotismus, Sinozentrismus und Chinoiserie, Européerie* (Bochum: Europäischer Universitäts-Verlag 2006).

16 For a discussion of political resistance through rituals see the work of Stuart Hall and others at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Birmingham since the 1970s in: Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (ed.), *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006). See also: Thomas Hecken, *Gegenkultur und Avantgarde 1950–1970. Situationisten, Beatniks, 68er* (Tübingen: Narr Franke Attempto, 2006).

Role models also figure prominently in Annika Jöst's multinational investigation of the "hot mom" trend. Contemporary fashion and lifestyle magazines, as well as blogs in the United States of America, Europe, and the People's Republic of China increasingly promote images of "hot moms." Although "hot moms" may seem to be a global trend, especially since they are promoted in women's magazines run by transnational conglomerates such as *Vogue and Elle*, and are discussed in internet blogs across the globe, their appearance, qualities, and values are often distinctly local.[17] Thus, Jöst investigates the "hot mom" trope as a transcultural trend, and shows that its potency lies in its amenability to local adaptation.

In comparison to the case studies of Huang, Sun, and Gehrig, new trendy images of motherhood and food culture have travelled with accelerated speed since the advent of the digital revolution. In her analysis of coffee culture in contemporary China, Lena Henningsen detects links and bridges between popular literary trends and trends in food consumption. A Taiwanese novel that became a bestseller on mainland China was a source of inspiration to Chinese youngsters and young couples who frequented Western coffee houses such as Starbucks in search of romantic love. Henningsen points to the intricacy of analysing the travels of a single trend. A trend such as drinking coffee as a marker of modernity may become visible in many different locations and media simultaneously with little evidence of clear-cut links. Consumers creatively adapt and incorporate different impressions into their daily lives. They practice trends often without knowing why they have chosen one trend over another, other than as a matter of preference. Petra Thiel makes similar observations as she traces the travels of famous characters in children's literature such as Harry Potter, Pippi Långstrump, and Sun Wukong from Europe to East Asia and vice versa. Why one figure is more popular and trendy when it travels, rather than another, is a fascinating question that can only be answered on a case-by-case basis. The monkey king Sun Wukong and Pippi Långstrump would both seem as likely to gain popular acclaim abroad as Harry Potter. Moreover, publishing houses that facilitate the travels of children's books have gone to great lengths to popularise these books in foreign markets. Nonetheless, for several reasons ranging from parental guidance to market concerns and, finally, young readers' preferences, some trends succeed in travelling successfully while others fail. Pippi Långstrump and Harry Potter appear to have become truly global trends in the children's book market, while Sun Wukong remains almost exclusively East Asian.[18]

17 For a discussion of "locality" vs. "the global" in relation to the evolution of markets in the twenty-first century see: Appadurai, "How Histories Make Geographies."

18 In form of Hanuman, the figure of the monkey king also exists as a deity in India.

Sandra Annett's survey of Japanese anime and contemporary transnational fan communities covers trends in cartooning from a broader perspective. Charting several examples that span the course of the past century, Annett highlights the important role that anime trends have had in reconfiguring national and cultural borders *from below* via new media such as the internet. In her article, Annett demonstrates the importance of single agents in the dissemination of any trend. Only via numerous agents, passing a trend on to other people, is a trend able to spread. As a result, Annett argues that change and transformation, both at the producing and the receiving ends, are essential characteristics of any trend. In the process of being passed on, trends are changed by the needs, desires, and fears of those adopting them.

Cumulatively, the articles question what is often taken for granted: the presence of trends, their development and their nature. In the process of researching trends, several key elements have crystallised as constitutive and central to the emergence, proliferation, and endurance of trends: desire, the agency of trendsetters, trend followers and gatekeepers, and the existence of networks and publics which serve as multipliers for a given trend.[19] Each of these elements, and the transcultural processes, practices and concepts that bind them, are examined in context in each of the articles. As a result, the authors trace some of the patterns and trajectories that have characterised the transcultural travel of trends over the past century.

A Desire for Trends or Trendy Desires?

All of the trends described in our case studies were propelled by desires. A multitude of individual and collective desires provides impetus, reason, and glue to the formation and success of trends. The desires described here were the result (or expression) of likes, admiration, wishes, yearnings, and hopes. In any attempt to fulfil a desire, the powers of imagination, interpretation, creativity, nostalgia, invention, improvisation, and imitation come into play.[20]

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19 These categories may facilitate a better understanding of what Appadurai has called "bumps and blocks, disjunctures and differences…(that are) produced by the variety of circuits, scales and speeds which characterize the circulation of cultural elements." See: Appadurai: "How Histories Make Geographies," 11.

20 The importance of the concept of desire for identity formation, consumption, fandom, tastes, and behaviour has attracted attention in many academic disciplines ranging from the humanities to cultural studies, social sciences and history. See for example: Tani E. Barlow, "What is Wanting?," *positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 9 (2001) 1: 267-75; Russell W. Belk, Güliz Ger and Sören Askegaard, "The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion," J*ournal of Consumer Culture* 30 (2003): 326-51; Lawrence Grossberg, "Is there a Fan in the House? The Affective Sensibility of Fandom," in: *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. by Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge,

For example, as Sun's study shows, the editors of the Chinese pictorial *Beiyang huabao* (which ran from the 1926 to 1937) admired new concepts of beauty, some of which had been imported from "the West." Nudity, especially Western nudity, soon came to be regarded as a beauty ideal, at least in the intellectual elite circles that the magazine catered to. In a similar vein, but from a contemporary perspective, Jöst describes middle-class mothers' admiration for the lifestyle and child-rearing philosophies of celebrity mothers. Just as the readers of *Beiyang huabao* chased a modern, fashionable beauty ideal, Jöst's middle-class mothers' desire to turn themselves into "hot moms" capable of tackling the challenge of combining motherhood, beauty, and a career. Their diverse attempts to emulate celebrity mothers' lifestyles have resulted in popularising motherhood as stylish and hip among the urban middle class in places as diverse as the United States of America, Europe, and the People's Republic of China.

Nowadays, celebrities such as famous "supermoms" are taken as role models or serve as points of reference for many middle-class mothers. Young people, too, tend to look to role models in the course of developing their own individual self. In this process, parents initially take on a guiding function when they select specific works of children's literature for them to read. Thus, as Thiel shows, parents pick children's stories replete with likable, appealing heroes and heroines that transport their own ideals. In many cases, the consumption and publication of children's literature is also fuelled by nostalgia: parents tend to buy the books they themselves used to love when they were young in order to relive them through their offspring. In doing so, they unconsciously propel some stories into becoming long-term bestsellers: the so-called children's classics. These works are then often copied and partially reinvented by new authors, whose books may set new trends in national and international children's book markets. Gehrig's study, in turn, highlights how the fervent desire of West German political activists to alter social realities prompted them to pin their revolutionary aspirations to the rather unlikely role model of the

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1992), 50-65; Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Jeremy Gilbert, "Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect," *Culture Machine* 6 (2004). On the formation of practitioners of trends, as discussed in the following paragraph, see also Kenneth MacKendrick's discussion of the importance of desire and fantasy as constitutive aspects of intersubjective relations. See: Kenneth G. MacKendrick, *Discourse, Desire, and Fantasy in Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2008); Joel Marks (ed.), *The Ways of Desire: New Essays in Philosophical Psychology on the Concept of Wanting* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1986); Timothy Schroeder, *Three Faces of Desire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). How the advent of consumerism in India has impacted on consumption patterns and consumer desires was brilliantly discussed by William Mazzarella in his account on the Indian advertising industry and their attempt to negotiate the local and the global in their visual discourses: Mazzarella, *Shoveling Smoke.*

"Great Leader", Mao Zedong, and his allegedly successful "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," then underway in the People's Republic of China.

Just as desires may create trends, trends, once underway, also create desires; desires for something new, something revived, something fashionable, something foreign or simply something better. As Henningsen argues, desires are intricately linked to experience, both past and prospective. Desire may lend meaning to experience: having read a novel with a strong focus on food consumption, a reader may be tempted or induced to consume the products mentioned. Henningsen contends that the consumption of coffee may allow a reader to experience (or imagine experiencing) the same kind of romance as the protagonist of a novel who drinks coffee with his girlfriend. Desires, therefore, contribute to the unintentional or deliberate constitution of the self. In the process of living a trend, an adherent will eventually come into contact with other trend followers or join the ranks of those who share similar desires and interests. A trend can only be established through this process of gradually growing numbers of practitioners and proponents. For such a process to take place, the target audience or culture must be susceptible (and desirous) to adopting the trend in the first place.

Exploring the Facets of Agency

Proponents and practitioners play central roles in the diverse institutions, networks and publics that are instrumental to the formation and proliferation of any trend. To facilitate analysis, the case studies employ two basic categories of agency: trendsetters and trend followers. Both can be found at the individual and institutional levels. It should be kept in mind, however, that these categories are methodological aids to help grapple with the complexities of each case study. They may at times suggest artificial boundaries. Trend followers, for example, can be trendsetters at the same time. All of the authors in this series therefore attempt to balance the demands of producing a detailed thick description, which inevitably has to account for the intricacies of real life, with the necessity of reducing these intricacies for the purpose of discussion.

In his treatment of human agency, Giddens argues that "to be an agent is to have power." "'Power' in this highly generalized sense," he continues, "means 'transformative capacity,' the capability to intervene in a given set of events so as in some way to alter them."[21] Recently, Appadurai too has stressed the importance

21 Anthony Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence. Volume Two of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 7.

of agents and agency in the creation of cultural landscapes and spaces as well as their importance to the circulation of cultural elements.[22] Trendsetters in our case studies are therefore assumed to possess agency because they command a certain degree of authority within networks and publics of trends. Trendsetters are consequently in a position to propagate, popularise, and disseminate a trend. Whereas Giddens bases his notion of agency on a model that takes human reason as a precondition, this series of articles shows that trendsetters may also assume a guiding role without volition. An individual or an institution may be a trendsetter whether they are aware of it or not. Celebrity moms (Jöst), left-wing intellectuals, and prominent subcultural activists (Gehrig), a popular periodical (Sun), or film company (Huang), novelists and playwrights (Henningsen), international fan bloggers (Annett), and publishing companies (Thiel): they all have acted as trendsetters promoting the development of a trend.

The agency of trend followers may at first seem less intricate. Anyone who adopts and lives a trend may be called a trend follower. Trend followers express their individual agency through their personal choices, which are expressions of their personality. They may be middle-class mothers (Jöst), young couples (Henningsen), grassroots subcultural activists (Gehrig), high-brow intellectuals (Sun), anime and manga fans (Annett), or parents and their children reading children's literature (Thiel). Empirical growth in the number of followers is evidence that a trend is underway. Here, diachronic and synchronic analyses complement each other in detecting trend followers and their networking dynamics in both historical and contemporary case studies. But this is only one side of the coin. A trend follower can always also be or become a trendsetter. This may occur when a trend follower turns into an outspoken proponent of the trend, as in the case of Thiel's parents who promote their favourite works of juvenile literature to their children. It may be a matter of accidental and momentary authority, for instance when a trend follower practicing a trend is observed by an outsider who consequently adopts the same trend. In such a case, the initial trend follower is made into a trendsetter by anonymous association, as Jöst's study of the fire-like spread of the international "hot mom" culture shows. A chain reaction thus underlies the propulsion of any trend from the marginal to the mass.

Moments of gatekeeping are pivotal to the development of trends. Again, both individual and institutional trendsetters may function as gatekeepers. Whereas trendsetters promote a trend through practice or advocacy, gatekeepers may alter or restrict trends. Gatekeeping, a term mostly employed as a methodological aid in media studies, helps to delineate the obstacles that trends can face throughout

22 See: Appadurai: "How Histories Make Geographies," 8f.

their travels. Although Levin and White restricted their description of gatekeeping to processes of news dissemination, their notion of the gatekeeper as a person or institution that decides whether to permit or restrict passage has informed the notion of gatekeepers applied within the case studies.[23] White argued that the gatekeepers' own social background and presumptions about the designated audiences' preferences influenced their choices.[24] Similarly, gatekeepers are presumably guided by their own interests or by the interests they represent. Even desire, as described above, can play a key role in the decision to promote or stall a trend.[25] In Thiel's piece, parents attempt to restrict their children's access to works that they deem to be of no educational value. The West German left-wing intellectuals in Gehrig's analysis functioned as gatekeepers in two ways: through their choice of Chinese works to be translated into German, and subsequently, by providing prefatory commentaries to their German translations with the intent to guide their readers' interpretation of Chinese revolutionary theory and adapt it to the German context. Similarly, as Huang describes, Japanese and Chinese authors of the early twentieth century translated and adapted themes from Victorian England to suit and often guide the tastes of Chinese publics that demanded popular entertainment.

Transcultural Production in the Creation of Trends

Many of the individual and institutional gatekeepers and trendsetters discussed in the articles, including editors, authors, playwrights, film directors, cartoonists, musicians, journalists, intellectuals, publishing houses, advertising agencies and motion picture companies, were initially part of national chains of cultural production. In a globalising world, however, chains of cultural production, while perhaps national in certain respects, are in fact increasingly transnational and transcultural. Producers of cultural goods, production locations, and products cannot easily be attributed to one isolated nation. Instead, the very development

23 Since the publication of David Manning White's study, many scholars have further developed his theory by taking the complicated social structures of society and/or working groups into consideration. See for example: Stefan Frerich, *Bausteine einer systematischen Nachrichtentheorie. Konstruktives Chaos und chaotische Konstruktionen* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2000); Gertrude Joch Robinson, "Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Gatekeeper-Forschung. Eine kritische Rückschau und Bewertung," in: *Gesellschaftliche Kommunikation und Information. Forschungsrichtungen und Problemstelluugen*, ed. Jörg Aufermann, H. Bohrmann, R. Sülzer, F. Naschold (Frankfurt am Main.: Athenäum Verlag, 1973), 344-55; Diana Crane, *The Production of Culture: Media and the Urban Arts* (London: Sage Publications, 1992).

24 See Robinson: "Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Gatekeeper-Forschung," 344-55.

25 The actions of gatekeepers are not necessarily deliberate but may instead be determined by their social and cultural backgrounds. For a detailed description of these factors, see Pamela Shoemaker, *Gatekeeping* (London: Sage Publications, 1991).

of a cultural product is often already the result of a transcultural production process. *East Lynne*, the novel discussed in Huang's contribution, is a prominent example. The storyline travelled from Victorian England via Meiji Japan to Republican China in the 1910s, undergoing a number of (re-)interpretations along the way. Indeed, agents of cultural production may, as Thiel shows, be aware of the necessity to adapt their product to differing local environments. While these adjustments are not always successful, they must nonetheless be taken into consideration when examining journeys of trends across borders. Chains of production may be formal and institutionalised, as is the case with publishing houses and motion picture companies with their respective staff and contracted artists. Conversely, they may be more informal, like the fan bloggers and fan communities that discuss Japanese anime on the internet. The articles thus focus on well-established circulatory paths as well as newly developing networks.[26] In fact, Annett's study of transnational fan communities illustrates how the changing nature of cultural production in the internet age (i.e., new production processes and channels of dissemination) can render a trend entirely transcultural. As a result, such trends seem detached from any national boundaries or able to move flexibly between them.

Knowledge of transcultural production, both its national and transnational branches, is crucial to understanding trends. Agents and institutions seek to profit from emerging trends or even try to create them in the first place. Trend followers are potential buyers of artistic products and consumer products alike. Transcultural production seeks to cater to the desires of trend followers. To this purpose, producers continuously search for emerging trends that they might take up and promote. At the same time, they also attempt to steer or at least influence the followers of trends that are already underway. In doing so, agents of transcultural production strive to gain some say over emerging and established trends. Thus trends play a crucial role in initiating and regulating the terms, conditions, and processes of transcultural production.

In turn, cultural producers and industries may determine a trend, bring it into being by naming it, or initiating its wider dissemination. In the case of Jösts's "hot moms," the media can even be considered as tastemakers. Over national and cultural borders, they are gatekeepers and mediators of trends in their attempt to solicit a global trend. Transcultural production may thus be both a trend follower as well as a trendsetter. *Beiyang huabao* is a case in point: as one of the most influential pictorials in 1920s Republican China, the magazine successfully interpreted the trend of publishing nudity. The magazine skilfully reconfigured the "Western"/German *Freikörperkultur* (FKK, free body culture) trend, giving

26 See: Appadurai, "How Histories Make Geographies," 7.

the Chinese version a distinctly Chinese look while retaining the lure of its foreign roots. The publisher's anticipation of the *Zeitgeist* and the demands of the cultural market was, in Sun's opinion, the reason why this trend and its trendsetter, *Beiyang huabao*, achieved such wide popular acclaim.

Dissemination and Consumption: Networks and Publics

The bond between transcultural production and trend followers is not limited to the relationship between producers and consumers. Instead, trend followers may form networks. Such networks may be face-to-face, virtual, or a combination of both. Shared common practices and interests, interconnection, and exchange make up the foundations of such networks. Emerging trends may induce trend followers to create networks, but networks also create trends.[27] Some participants follow trends with the deliberate goal or accidental result of joining a network. Others attempt to express themselves by initiating or participating in an emerging trend. Fans sharing their opinions about anime on a fan website or blog (Annett), local supermoms chatting on community websites about attending events organised by the Hot Mom Club (Jöst), and left-wing political activists rallying to promote the iconic image of Mao Zedong as a revolutionary leader (Gehrig), are three very different examples of trend networks.

Regardless of whether trend followers primarily seek to join networks or aim to demonstrate their individuality by adopting a trend, they all belong to greater groups of agents. Groups of agents form what the authors in this series have termed "publics."[28] The formation of publics is key to the proliferation

27 In context of shaping geographies and spaces, Appadurai has argued a similar point. The making of local spaces is shaped by agents and networks, which change over time. Thus, also the spaces they create are reconfigured, see: Appadurai, "How Histories Make Geographies," 9.

28 The term "public(s)" has been chosen both as a derivate of Jürgen Habermas' concept of the "public sphere," but also as an alternative term that focuses less on the establishment of democratic decision making through public discourse and more on community formation without the imperative political connotation. Our notion of publics borrows from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "fields," Arjun Appadurai's "communities of sentiment," and Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities." Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied/Berlin: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Arjun Appadurai, "Topographies of the Self: Praise and Emotion in Hindu India," in: *Language and the Politics of Emotion* ed. by Catherin Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 92-112; and in Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). An insightful criticism of Habermasian theory can be found in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992); and Nick

of any trend. Clusters of online anime or "hot moms" fan communities create transcultural fan publics (Annett, Jöst); nudity and Victorian romance were themes that dominated publics formed by readers of similar backgrounds or shared interests, many of whom were not in direct contact (Sun, Huang); and urban youths, whose perusal of novels leads them to consume foreign lifestyle products, have formed a public of "modern-minded" young adults (Henningsen).

Publics are therefore not understood here as fixed social fields that possess firmly demarcated borders. Instead, they are heterogeneous and amorphous, bound by a common interest. Yet some members of publics are either not aware of their membership or do not seek contact in networks. Publics are shaped by shared desires and trend practices. Aspects of gender, class, culture, lifestyle or political and religious beliefs, however, may figure strongly as well. Gehrig highlights that both West German intellectuals and subcultural left-wingers sought to improve the social situation of their state by exploring Maoism as a "third way" distinct from US capitalism and Soviet communism. Nonetheless, starting in the late 1960s, they formed different publics (all of which again split into numerous factions) based on differing philosophies and conceptions of how to further their various political agendas.

Publics are thus defined as shifting social realms formed by similar desires and practices that enable and encourage emotional participation and engagement. Because trends' publics are constituted by sociocultural processes, they are highly fragmented and firmly bound in their historical temporalities. Moreover, just like transcultural production, publics are not confined to national borders, cultural borders, or even to the subcultural borders within which they originate. A popular Victorian story, for example, triggered intense emotional response in publics well beyond England, expanding to North America, Japan, and China over the course of a decade, as Huang's article shows. Nude images photographed in China by Heinz von Perckhammer were first published in book form in Berlin and Zurich. They subsequently found their way into the Chinese magazine *Beiyang huabao* even before the book version was published in Chinese translation in Shanghai (Sun). Young people frequenting Starbucks or drinking Coca-Cola form publics that can grow to be as transcultural as the brands of the products they consume (Henningsen). How and why a public constitutes around a trend is therefore contingent upon its respective historical context. The dynamics of how publics form were fundamentally different in Republican China during the 1920s, as opposed to Germany in the 1960s, or the seemingly global internet of today.

Crossley and John Roberts (eds), *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

The Elusive Tipping Point: Accounting for Contexts and Popularity

Structural susceptibility thus determines the travels of trends. When a trend moves between cultures, publics, and networks, certain preconditions may facilitate, hinder, or even obstruct its movement. Such preconditions may be political, social, economic, or a shifting combination of all three. Historical temporalities, that is, the social, political, economic, and cultural context of a certain trend at a given time, are crucial at the moment that a trend reaches a new location. Preconditions and historical temporalities are never static; they are constantly in flux and are subject to societal negotiation. Networks and publics may be susceptible to trends, thus permitting a trend's inward travel into a new context. Furthermore, whenever a successful trend traverses borders, there is a "tipping point" when the trend gains momentum in the new context into which it has entered.[29]

Each of the case studies describes a particular instance of structural susceptibility in a particular historical temporality: once translated and adapted, *East Lynne*, a stereotypical love story set in Victorian England, which was wrought by industrial and social modernisation, answered Chinese audiences' desire for sentimentalist storylines while mirroring Republican China's social class conflicts (Huang); Republican China's less strict approach to public morals created for the editors of *Beiyang huabao* a friendly social climate to experiment and successfully introduce nude images to Chinese pictorials (Sun); the global revolutionary tide of the late 1960s inspired political activists in Germany to explore and adapt Chinese communist ideology (Gehrig). China's economic reforms of the late 1970s, rising income levels, and the gradual opening of domestic markets to foreign products were preconditions for several of the trends discussed in the case studies: a niche in the Chinese market for children's literature facilitated Harry Potter's popularisation (Thiel); Chinese urban youth's desire for modern and hip food franchises, induced by their reading of bestsellers, may have helped transnational corporations such as Starbucks gain a foothold in China because they offered popular meeting points (Henningsen); transnational media conglomerates such as *Vogue and Elle* portray celebrity "supermoms," thus promote new notions of motherhood amongst urban middle-class mothers in search of a new identity that permits them to combine motherhood with careers and fashionable femininity (Jöst). Finally, the internet offers a space in which fan communities across the globe may communicate about their likes and dislikes of cartoons, anime and manga (Annett).

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29 In an anthology of his articles published in *The New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell argues that "The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire." Cf. Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (New York: Little, Brown Book Group, 2002).

Gatekeepers are important agents in determining a location's structural susceptibility. Their influence in restricting or promoting a trend is decisive the moment a trend enters a new context. A comparison of historical and contemporary gatekeepers illustrates their changing importance over time. Newspaper editors in Republican China had a different influence on media trends than internet bloggers do today. Gatekeepers also introduce trends to a new context, either by helping an existing transcultural trend make its way into a foreign market, as in the case of Starbucks in China, where a new public developed around a trend promoted by a transnational company; or, trends' publics may cross national and cultural borders, as in Annett's study. Moreover, gatekeepers often reconfigure the content or form of a trend to suit what they perceive to be the requirements of the intended context; for example, authors translating foreign works, advertising agencies promoting foreign products, and political activists reconfiguring foreign ideologies.

While structural susceptibility is a necessary precondition for the success of any trend's travel across cultures, the nature of the concept, object, or practice that becomes trendy must also be considered. As every case study in this series of articles shows, historical and contemporary trends have been successful because they lent themselves to processes of localisation. At the same time, the trends did not mutate and take on totally new forms. Adaptation, incomplete transformation, enabled the trends to spread through networks and publics in their new environment.[30] Consequently, a trend and its objects must also lend themselves to individualisation. For a trend to become popular, its concepts, objects, and practices must be versatile enough to transcend several boundaries. Popularity, which is often taken as proof of a trend's existence and, subsequently, success, can result when a trend has moved across different social networks and publics or given rise to a single large public. Transmediality, in this context understood as a trend's permeation of and to different media and genres, reflects the increased popularity of a trend.[31] Media coverage of celebrity mothers has travelled through the internet, blogs, popular magazines, literature, television, and music (Jöst). Sentimental storylines were translated into novels, stage melodramas, and Chinese tragic love films (Huang). The release of Harry Potter movies prior to the appearance of

30 See Appadurai's notions of "forms of circulation and circulation of forms," both of which also apply to transcultural trends: Appadurai, "How Histories Make Geographies," 7ff.

31 The term "transmediality" is borrowed from Henry Jenkins' concept of "transmedial storytelling," but is used more conservatively to denote the ability of a successful trend to penetrate different media and genres in its process of becoming even more popular. Cf. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

the first authorised Chinese translation of the books propelled the young wizard's popularity in China (Thiel).

Branding and brand merchandising[32] are further indicators of a trend's popularity. Consumer products without a specific brand can belong to a transnational and transcultural trend. One famous historical example of such a global consumer appliance trend is the proliferation of television and other electronic household appliances. Branding, however, adds another layer to the dissemination of consumer products when the product's innovative quality is not provided by the product itself, but by the brand attached to it. Starbucks is a case in point. Consumption of coffee in China—a drink not commonly considered "typically Chinese"—commenced with the introduction of coffee at the end of the nineteenth century, which in turn resulted in the establishment of Chinese coffee plantations. Coffee was therefore available throughout much of the twentieth century in China. But the introduction of the "Western-style" coffee culture in the form of cafés and, more recently, coffee shops, together with the Starbucks brand, has attracted much larger groups of Chinese consumers to the beverage. Nowadays, the notion of coffee shop culture as something fashionable is reinforced by its (branded) appearance in novels, on television, and in advertisements (Henningsen). Transmediality and branding permit a better understanding of the nature and logic of a trend's popularity as it travels across different networks.

Why Trends Matter: Fields of Future Debate

Collectively, the upcoming articles represent an early attempt to contend with the complexity of trends as transcultural flows. A move away from thinking about trends within the confines of methods offered by marketing studies or the quantitative social sciences has opened up new perspectives and approaches. By describing the life cycles of trends through detailed descriptions and contextual analyses, the articles' authors have arrived at a number of conclusions and categories, as described above, which permit us to ask new questions about trends, all of which merit further consideration: How do we, from the perspective of the humanities and cultural studies, deal with the so-called "tipping point"? Does the transcultural travel of a trend already point to its rising popularity? How much agency do trend agents really command? Is desire the only motivation guiding these

32 According to the Oxford Dictionary of Business and Management a brand can be defined as "a tradename used to identify a specific product, manufacturer, or distributor." Cf. Oxford University Press (ed.), *A Dictionary of Business and Management* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 71-72.

agents?[33] Are the relationships between agents purely asymmetrical, based on power relations? Finally, when some borders, such as national ones, are deconstructed in the travel of trends, do other borders come to matter or even be built in their stead? This series of articles on transcultural trends offers first answers to these questions and hopes to invite further debate on the transcultural travel of trends.

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33 Since Thorstein Veblen's critical writings on "conspicuous consumption," scholars have been debating how consumption impacts on consumers' social identity. Tani Barlow advanced the idea of writing the history of social desire. Furthermore, she questioned whether we need to distinguish between the terms "desire" and "emotion" in the investigation of popular culture or "the popular". See: Barlow, "What is Wanting?," 269ff. Within cultural studies theory, the definition and importance of "affect" has also attracted wide attention. See for example: Gilbert, "Signifying Nothing."

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