EDITORIAL

GEOGRAPHISCHE ZEITSCHRIFT 106, 2018/1, 2–3

DOI 10.25162/GZ-2018-0001

ANNALISA COLOMBINO / ULRICH ERMANN

Geographers and Geographies on the Move

This special issue is based on a panel discussion about the internationalization of geographical debates, held in Graz, Austria, at the conference “Neue Kulturgeographie XIII”, on January the 28th, 2016. For the first time, the “NKG-Tagung” was taking place outside Germany. The organising committee included members with different nationalities and academic backgrounds, which stretch beyond the borders of their countries of birth (Austria, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and USA). Considering that nowadays many German geographers present and publish in English at international venues, the German member of the committee struggled to clarify to the others why German-speaking geography matters, and how “Neue Kulturgeographie” is a specifically German thing, far from being a straightforward translation of “new cultural geography”. The title of the Conference – *Integrating Geographies: Geographers and Geographies on the Move* – emerged out of these discussions and aimed at provoking thoughts on the effects of crossing and maintaining the national and language borders of our academic practices (Korf et al. 2013; Minca 2013).

A panel animated by geographers with a transnational academic career opened the Conference. This special issue presents a new format for the *Geographische Zeitschrift* as it includes four articles – respectively authored by the panellists Matthew Hannah, Heike Jöns, Ferenc Gyuris and Shadia Hussein de Araújo – which respond to Claudio Minca’s opening intervention on the survival of national geographical traditions in a context marked by the emergence of ‘cosmopolitan geographies’; namely, by an increasing internationalization of academia, in which English has been adopted as the *lingua franca* and scholars are expected to work abroad to strengthen their profiles (Jöns and Freytag 2016).

The rise of ‘cosmopolitan geographies’ may sound attractive as some of us enjoy travelling and exchanging ideas with colleagues from other countries. A more ‘cosmopolitan’ academia might also contribute to challenging local, national nepotism. Yet, this ‘cosmopolitanism’ generates a number of hegemonic trends at different scales. Anglophone geography is often perceived as dominant over geographies produced in other countries and written in other languages. The hegemony of British and North-American geography may thus disguise power imbalances and reproduce hierarchies and contrapositions: the dominance of the geographies from the Global North versus the geographies from the Global South; and, more generally, Western geographies versus non-Western

geographies (Timar 2004; Pickles 2005). By ‘geographies’, here, we mean the geographies shaped by both academic practices (established within powerful academic infrastructures such as geography departments, research funds and publishers) and scholarly ideas and approaches (about, for example, how society is seen to be spatially organised and on what, exactly, the Discipline should focus). Hegemonic trends may also be observed within German-speaking geography. At Austrian geography departments, there are currently eighteen chairs of geography: three professors are Austrian, fourteen are German and one is Swiss (including interim professors for vacant positions). Many colleagues from Germany do not find this situation problematic. However, the increasing number of Germans hired in Austrian universities is an object of public debate (Seiser 2017).

To conclude, the current transgression of the borders between national scientific communities seems to have brought about a more creative exchange of ideas, practices and experiences and also the emergence of shifting power relations and hegemonies within and across the porous boundaries of established national geographical traditions. These dynamics are in part reflected by the biographies, international academic profiles and multi-language skills of the authors of the papers included in this special issue. The articles, which also draw on the authors’ international professional experiences, shed some light on the effects, sometimes ironic and often contradictory, of the rise of ‘cosmopolitan’ trends in contemporary academic geography.

References

- Jöns, H. and Freytag, T. 2016. Boundary spanning in social and cultural geography. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 17 (1), 1–22.
- Korf, B., Klauser, F. and Söderström, O. 2013. Les fabriques des “géographies” – making academic geographies in Europe. *Geographica Helvetica*, 68 (1), 1–6.
- Minca, C. 2013. (Im)mobile Geographies. *Geographica Helvetica*, 68 (1), 7–16.
- Pickles, J. 2005. ‘New cartographies’ and the decolonization of European geographies. *Area*, 37 (4), 355–364.
- Seiser, M. 2017. Aus der Internationalisierung wurde eine Germanisierung. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26.12.2017
- Timar, J. 2004. More than ‘Anglo-American’, it is ‘Western’: hegemony in geography from a Hungarian perspective. *Geoforum*, 35 (5), 533–538.

DR. ANNALISA COLOMBINO

Universität Graz, Institut für Geographie und Raumforschung, Heinrichstraße 36, 8010 Graz,
E-Mail: annalisa.colombino@uni-graz.at

PROF. DR. ULRICH ERMANN

Universität Graz, Institut für Geographie und Raumforschung, Heinrichstraße 36, 8010 Graz,
E-Mail: ulrich.ermann@uni-graz.at