Summer School 2011
Cultures of Consumption in Asia and Europe
“Cultures of Consumption in Asia and Europe” was the topic of the Cluster’s Summer School 2011. More than 20 young scholars from a dozen countries discussed about “Consumer Society” and the spread and appropriation of consumer goods in the new cultural contexts.

The Summer School started with a keynote lecture by Prof. Sheldon Garon (Princeton University). The renowned japanologist explained “Why America Spends While the World Saves”. On the following days, “Gender Images and Consumption”, “Global Patterns of Consumption”, “Contemporary Shifts in Consumption” and “Reflecting on Japanese Consumer Culture” were the topic of discussion. The last day was reserved for group activities and the concluding discussion.

The Summer School 2011 was organised by Prof. Harald Fuess, Cluster Professor of Cultural Economic History, and David Mervart, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Japanese History.

In the following report, Tine Trumpp reviews the four-day programme that combined lectures by the foremost researchers in the respective disciplines with interactive seminars and workshops. The Summer School was held in July 2011 at the Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies.
Participants of the Summer School in front of the Karl Jaspers Centre
The summer school “Cultures of Consumption in Asia and Europe” attracted over 20 students from a dozen countries, who enjoyed lectures and discussions headed by scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, including cultural and economic history, the social sciences and anthropology. The aim of the four-day programme was to gain a transcultural understanding of cultures of consumption and to explore the ways in which consumer goods and cultural frameworks of consumption have provided crucial interfaces of entanglement between Asia and Europe in a global context.

The opening keynote lecture “Why America Spends While the World Saves” was held by Prof. Sheldon Garon (Princeton). He focused on the histories of saving, consumption, and credit in the U.S., modern Europe, Japan, and other Asian nations. He pointed out the differences and similarities of mass consumption and saving between Europe and Japan on the one and the U.S. on the other hand. Adopting a transnational-historical perspective, he argued that the similarities in savings-promotion across the globe resulted from international exchanges of knowledge on how to organise prosperous, powerful nations.

In the session “Introducing Novelty Consumables”, Prof. Francoise Sabban (Paris) gave a talk titled “A New Consumption Pattern – Drinking Milk in Shanghai (1845-1945)”. By tracing the consumption of milk in Shanghai from the nineteenth century onwards, she explored the origins of contemporary food practices in China. Before, milk only played a role as a nutritional supplement for the fragile and sick but was never produced on a large scale. In the late nineteenth century, the production of cow’s milk was imported into the foreign settlements of big cities, such as Shanghai, mainly for the consumption by foreigners. Over the time, it became a popular product and was consumed mostly by wealthy Chinese people.

In the following lecture, Prof. Anjali Roy (IIT Kharagpur) asked the question “Why is Bollywood Making a Song and Dance about Bhangra?”. She explained how Bhangra, a traditional Punjabi harvest rite, became removed from its original cultural context and transformed into national dance music, becoming an important part of modern Bollywood cinema. For Anjali Roy, the contemporary Bollywood film is a metaphor for a globalised India characterised by the ethic of consumption as well as
for the image of a new India, selling itself to an American consumerism.

The morning session of the second day “Gender Images and Consumption“ was opened by Dr. Mio Wakita (Heidelberg). In her talk “The Locus of Multiple Desires: Women in Yokohama Souvenir Photography”, she investigated images of Japanese women in post-1880 Meiji souvenir photography. She focused on the social and cultural statuses of female models, the mediality of photography and female visibility. She examined earlier views of women’s statuses in these photographs as commercial products, consumed by western males which cater only to the western expectation of and desires for “exotic” Japanese things. In addition, she embedded these images in the context of Japanese visual culture and looked into the making of images of Japanese femininity in Meiji souvenir photography.

Under the title “The Future of a Modern Woman or Man? Gender Images in German Tobacco Advertisements”, Prof. Katja Patzel-Mattern (Heidelberg) examined the construction of gender images in German tobacco advertisements, especially during the decades between the 1920s and 1930s and the 1950s and 1980s. She stated that the generations of meanings transported by these images are highly conditioned by the media but give at the same time a deep insight into the historical context of Germany during these periods.

“Global Patterns of Consumption” was the topic of the next session. Jun.-Prof. Joanna Elfving-Hwang (Frankfurt) gave a talk on “Cosmetic Culture and the Practice of Aesthetic Surgery in South Korea”. She addressed meanings and practices of cosmetic surgery in South Korea and showed how decisions to undergo aesthetic surgery are influenced by a number of different, sometimes contradictory, and often intersecting factors, which are implicated in both the prevalence of surgery and the types of surgeries practiced.

Moving beyond a traditional focus, that the process of socio-economic integration in the Pacific Ocean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was driven by Western European nations and the United States, Robert Hellyer (PhD, Wake Forrest) presented an alternative view on trade and demand in this area. In his talk “The West, the East and the Insular Middle: Consumption and the Integration of
the Pacific, 1750-1880”, he traced the influence of reciprocal consumer demands with a focus on forest and marine products.

The session “Contemporary Shifts in Consumption” was opened by Manpreet Janeja (PhD, Cambridge) with a talk on “Eating and Not-Eating in South-Asia (and Beyond)”. She focused on consumption as a mundane practice as explored through social anthropological accounts of food and eating in South Asia and beyond. She linked issues of agency, place, hospitality, and ownership to a new field that places food as an “artefact” at the centre of its inquiry, using Bengali, Hindu, and Muslim eating habits in India (Calcutta) and Bangladesh (Dhaka) and school meals in Britain as examples.

Next, Prof. Seungsook Moon (Vassar) spoke on “Consumer Culture and Changing Attitudes Toward Hegemonic Masculinity in South Korea”. She explored the interplay between experiences of mandatory military service and consumer culture in shaping the masculinity of South Korean men. The focus was laid on men in their 20s, who have grown up in industrialising and democratising Korea because this group has developed ideas and practices of masculinity which are significantly different from those of former generations.

In the last session, “Reflecting on Japanese Consumer Culture”, Angus Lockyer (PhD, SOAS, London) talked about “Golf Clubbing in Modern Japan”. He raised questions about how we do and how we might think about and study consumption. Along with these questions, he pointed out some potential avenues in which one might find stories of consumption that can account not only for the imagined consumers of Europe but the consuming practitioners of Asia as well.

By following the “Flow of Beer to East Asia”, Prof. Harald Fuess (Heidelberg) explained how German beer found its way to Japan and became one of the world’s most popular beers during the last century. In this process, he argued, imports and foreign-owned companies were gradually replaced, a highly concentrated market structure for beer emerged, a mass market for beer consumption with a high social tolerance for drinking alcoholic beverages was created, and beer markets were enlarged through the inclusion of previously ignored consumer groups, such as women.
The last day of the summer school was reserved for various group activities, organised by Anna Andreeva (PhD), David Mervart (PhD) and Dr. Mio Wakita (Heidelberg), to summarize interactively the findings of the previous days. Consumption and consumerism were discussed, focusing on the tension between conceptualisation, cultural settings, agency, meaning, transformation, actual forces and concrete case-studies, as well as on their moral, psychological, political and economic vocabularies and languages.

The summer school, organised by Prof. Harald Fuess and David Mervart (PhD), received very positive feedback from the participants. Many were very enthusiastic about the variety of topics discussed.

The evening programme, which included a guided tour through the old town of Heidelberg and a visit to the German Packaging Museum, was also very much appreciated. These informal excursions provided excellent settings for further social exchanges between the participants. The next summer school of the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” will be held in July 2012.

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Keynote lecture by Sheldon Garon on “Why America Spends While the World Saves?”
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Sheldon Garon during his keynote lecture on savings in the world
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

The first day: Audience at Sheldon Garon’s keynote lecture
Young scholars attentively follow the panel on “Introducing Novelty Consumables”
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Question from Chung-Yam Po to the plenum
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Young researchers in a discussion during the coffee break
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Discussions continue during the break: Fletcher Dubois and Robert Hellyer
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Seungsook Moon in a discussion with a student
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Mio Wakita, Harald Fuess and David Mervart from the Chair of Cultural Economic History
Robert Hellyer (Wake Forest) speaking on “Consumption and the Integration of the Pacific, 1750-1880”
Students at the Summer School listen to a discussion on future consumption patterns
Changing Attitudes Toward the Completion of Military Service

☐ A majority
  - accept military service as a necessary duty for men in Korea.
  - try to make best out of the inevitable situation.
☐ A minority
  - view military service as a mostly negative experience
  - support the replacement of conscription with all-volunteer professional military.

☐ Strengthening or acquiring disciplinary habitus through military service
  - obedience to authorities (logic of command and obedience, personal service)
    Accepted because as time passes, conscripts move up in the military rank and enjoy the privilege and comfort
  - collective orientation
    Conventions in the military that disregard individual rights, concerns, and preferences
    Accepted because of repeated bodily discipline and punishment

Seungsook Moon (Vassar) during a lecture on “Masculinities and Korean Men in their 20s”
Angus Lockyer (SOAS, London) speaks on “Golf Clubbing in Modern Japan”
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Audience listening to a especially engaging lecture by Angus Lockyer
Angus Lockyer’s lively talk on Japanese Golf Clubbing
Discussion also takes place in small groups during the last day of the Summer School.
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Group activities during the last day of the Summer School
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Lively discussion during the group activities
Lively discussion among the participants
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

Participants engaging in discussions and group activities
CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION

David Mervart listening to one of the groups’ arguments
Group members prepare to present their results in the final discussion
Students presenting the results of their groupwork
Students give a presentation on their results of the groupwork
The Summer School 2011 “Cultures of Consumption in Asia and Europe” was organised by the Chair of Cultural Economic History at the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe”.

Cultural Economic History is an innovative area of historical inquiry blending traditions of economic and business history with the insights of modern cultural studies by also considering the social science discourse on economic development, the cultural economy, and globalization. Culture, often treated as a residual or irrelevant factor in standard economic interpretations, will be given due concern through the exploration of the cultural dimensions of economic behaviour in the past.

Prof. Harald Fuess, Ph.D. (Harvard)
Harald Fuess studied History and Japanese Studies at the Universities of Princeton (B.A.), Tokyo and Harvard (M.A., Ph.D.), and is now Professor for Cultural Economic History at the Cluster “Asia and Europe”. His research interests are transcultural business and consumption history of Asia and Europe as well as social and legal history of Japan.

David Mervart, Ph.D. (Tokyo)
David Mervart is Assistant Professor of Japanese History and member of the Cultural Economic History research team. His main interest is the history of political discourse in the broad sense, in the period when this includes both the debate over moral foundations of sociability and the questions raised by the rise of commercial society.
About the Cluster “Asia and Europe”

The Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” is an interdisciplinary network of researchers at Heidelberg University. It was founded in October 2007 as part of the Excellence Initiative launched by the German state and its federal governments.

Today, the Cluster has about 300 affiliated researchers, who examine the processes of cultural exchange between Asia and Europe. In particular, they analyse the shifting asymmetries in cultural, social and political flows. Their work probes issues relevant to contemporary concerns about globalisation by investigating the cultural transfer of ideas, knowledge and commodities.

The Cluster is located at the Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies. Among its partners are Harvard University (United States) and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (India).