



**University of  
Zurich** UZH

**University Research Priority Program (URPP) Asia and Europe  
Department of Geography  
Ethnographic Museum**



# **Sense of Place, Sense of Taste, Sense of Skill**

**Hawkers and Cookshops in Public Spaces of Asian Cities**

**Workshop  
Zurich, Ethnographic Museum, October 10–12, 2013**

## Conference Outline

Mobile kitchens operated by street vendors or hawkers are an important part of public urban and suburban life in Asia. They are at once food stalls for hurried people, tourist attractions, and a symbol for traditional gastronomy and taste that many customers have given up. Moreover, special skills come together at the hawker stall: the skill to prepare a certain dish with limited space as well as the skill of consuming the dish by the customers. Mobile and flexible, they occupy niches in urban spaces, such as bridges, overpasses, bus and train stations or sidewalks. In this way, they try to be as close as possible to their customers.

2 However, this informal business and appropriation of space comes increasingly under threat. In modern building blocks or business districts, they are regarded as a nuisance. They are obstacles to growing traffic and are regarded as non-modern and as unhealthy (not always unjustly so). During big events they are often banned from the streets, which is not difficult for the authorities inasmuch as the hawkers usually do not have formal rights to produce and sell their goods in these public places. More and more, hawkers are replaced by shopping malls where they sometimes receive a formalized place. However, for many citizens and commuters, the street vendors are part of the urban landscape and thus provide a positively connoted sense of place. The authorities therefore try often to integrate street vendors into shopping malls, where they add color and provide a distinct atmosphere. With this move the hawkers are at the same time removed from the streets and their activity is formalized and standardized. However, not all hawkers are willing and able to move to a shopping mall and not all customers are happy about this change, for the hawker places are not only sites of cooking, but also social meeting places that make the neighborhood safer. The practice of hawking thus does more than provide fast food to people in a hurry. It creates sites that encompass artisanal traditions, encounters, abundance, security, social control etc. that are tourist attractions as well as places of ethnic segregation.

The workshop starts with a keynote by Prof. Dr. Mark Swislocki and comments by Prof. Dr. Françoise Sabban and Dr. Benjamin Etzold, addressing the meaning of the hawker practice with regard to the preparation and consumption of (seemingly) traditional dishes. Moreover, their role in creating a sense of place will be discussed.

The workshop will be attended by junior researchers preparing a special volume on European Contributions to Chinese Everyday Food Technologies for the Journal Chinese Dietary Culture, Taiwan. Among them are Ael Thery, Restaurant-Ecole de l'Institut Paul Bocuse, Shanghai, and Lena Kaufmann, University of Zurich.

*Mareile Flitsch and Norman Backhaus*

# Program

Thursday, October 10, 2013

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University of Zurich, Rämistr. 71, 8006 Zurich, KOL E 21

**18:15–20:00** **Public Lecture** by Prof. Dr. Mark Swislocki, Brown University Providence  
Indian Chinese Food in Abu Dhabi, or What Makes Chinese Food  
“Chinese”?

Friday, October 11, 2013

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Ethnographic Museum, Pelikanstr. 40, 8001 Zurich, Seminar Room

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**09:30–12:30** **Part I: Food, Taste, Preparation and Authenticity**  
Introduction by Mareile Flitsch & Norman Backhaus  
Inputs by Prof. Dr. Mark Swislocki and discussant Prof. Dr. Françoise  
Sabban (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris)  
Discussion

**12:30–14:00** Lunch

**14:00–17:00** **Part II: Sense of Place: Appropriation of Public Space**  
Input by Benjamin Etzold (Dept. of Geography, University of Bonn)  
Discussion

Saturday, October 12, 2013

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Ethnographic Museum, Pelikanstr. 40, 8001 Zurich, Seminar Room

**09:30–12:00** **Part III: Pathways to Future Research on Street Food**  
Discussion

# General Information

<b>Locations</b>	<i>October 10</i> University of Zurich Room KOL E 21 Rämistrasse 71 CH-8006 Zurich	<i>October 11–12</i> Ethnographic Museum Room PEA E 16 Pelikanstrasse 40 CH-8001 Zurich
<b>Organizers</b>	Prof. Dr. Mareile Flitsch & Prof. Dr. Norman Backhaus	
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	Mareile Flitsch University of Zurich Ethnographic Museum Pelikanstr. 40 CH-8001 Zurich Email: <a href="mailto:flitsch@vmz.uzh.ch">flitsch@vmz.uzh.ch</a>	
<b>Registration</b>	Registration is requested by October 5, 2013.	
<b>Internet</b>	<a href="http://www.asienundeuropa.uzh.ch/events/conferences/sense.html">www.asienundeuropa.uzh.ch/events/conferences/sense.html</a>	