

## **Australia Centre (Potsdam) – down under**

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The Australien Zentrum (Berlin) tells its history in these terms:

The Australia Centre was established in 1995, the brainchild of the then Australian Prime Minister Mr Paul Keating, and the Prime Minister of the State of Brandenburg, Dr Manfred Stolpe.

In its first incarnation, the Australia Centre was housed in the Dutch Quarter of Potsdam, and was a research centre of the University of Potsdam. The Centre had two Directors: Dr Ditta Bartels (Australia), and Dr Hans-Georg Petersen, Professor of Economics at the University of Potsdam. Mr Rico Janke held the position of Executive Officer from 1997 to 2001.

In June 2001 the Australia Centre became an independent Australian university company with its own offices in central Berlin. In her capacity as Managing Director, Dr Ditta Bartels has overseen the transition, in collaboration with the Centre's then Executive Officer Felix Zimmermann.

This story has been criticized many times. The Centre has not seen fit to write a more adequate account. But it is less this inability to give a fair account that has made us write this report than a concern with German-Australian relations.<sup>1</sup> The centre's organization and funding structure has shifted from a collaborative venture between the University of Potsdam and an Australian university consortium to one that is under the sole control of the consortium with no direct input from the German side. The Australian Centre is not the only cultural institute, broadly speaking, that works along these lines. The British Council, the Alliance Française or the Maison de France (Berlin) do the same. The Japan-German Foundation (Berlin), the Italy-Centre (FU Berlin), the French Centre (TU Berlin) and many others do not and include local expertise and competence. The question then is if the Centre is as successful as the British Council to justify the pursuit of such a cultural policy approach or not.

To tell the story in detail is beyond the scope of this paper. It was a long and, at times, frustrating story. It was crowned with success, when the centre was set up at the University of Potsdam and opened by Prime Minister Paul Keating and Minister President Manfred Stolpe in March 1995. We will outline some of the peripeteias of the Centre, highlight the broad multi-disciplinary concept and what it became at the end, a public relations office of some Australian universities.

One late afternoon in the autumn of 1990 there was a phone call from the newly appointed Consul-General in Berlin, Dr. David Charles, to say that the Australian government had re-opened a diplomatic representation in Berlin. That ended a period of non-representation in the former divided city. A welcome change at a momentous period in Berlin! We met and had a fruitful discussion. A number of colleagues from Berlin and Australia gathered and planned the first *Australia Day* symposium, to be held January 26, 1991, at the Museum of

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<sup>1</sup> The backup to it can be verified in the archives at the Dept. of English, Freie Universität Berlin and the Dept. of German, Monash University.

Ethnology in Dahlem. The theme was to survey research and teaching in Berlin and the surrounding region and the program included a presentation on Australia's economic policies by Dr. D. Charles, talks on German-Australian relations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Prof. I. Veit-Brause, Deakin U), urban planning and ethnicity (Prof. B. Hofmeister, TU Berlin), constitutional issues (Prof. Doeker, FU), Australian media (Prof. Schäfer, FU), myth and art (Prof. Veit, Monash U), Aboriginal-white interactions (Prof. S. Levinson, UK), Aborigines in literature (Dr. Raddatz, FU), language and migration (Prof. G. Leitner, FU). A panel discussion ended the event and included Prof. Kuhbier, the first Vice-President of the FU. It turned to the need of an Australia-oriented centre that would reflect Australia's role as a hub with the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. The Berlin *Tagesspiegel* reported on the significance of event and the talk by the Consul-General on January 27, 1991. The symposium had proved the high level of Australian competence in Berlin, which had developed since the late 1970s and was fed by co-operation with Monash U (Melbourne), Deakin U and other universities.

Australia was on the map again. And at a time of change, of expansion in the Eastern states, restructuring in Berlin and, somewhat later, signs of financial constraints. It was a time when trends towards integrative, inter- and multidisciplinary research and appropriate institutional frames were discussed that would promise synergy effects, applications and – of increasing interest – a faster turnover of the student population. The time was ripe for area centres to be discussed. And Berlin was rich in such centres and had, for instance,

- the John-F.-Kennedy Institute of North American Studies at the Freie Universität (FU)
- the Italian Centre (FU)
- the East-Europe Institute (FU)
- the Latin America Institute (FU)
- the Great Britain Institute (Humboldt Universität)
- the North Europe Institute (HU)
- the French Centre (Technical University)
- the Japan-German Institute (free-standing)

That would guarantee a stimulating context for cross-fertilization in which an Australia Centre (AC) would find its place. But the concept had, as expected, opponents. Professor Stilz (Tübingen U), for instance, argued that regional studies may destabilize old and proven structures and he locates them only at a 'second layer' of organization:

I will not propose a radical change in the organizational structures of the university. However, it may be well to reflect upon Eduard Spranger's early thoughts about what he called *Auslandsbildung*, i.e. the use of foreign nations as models for a humanistic education, and about the unity of science. One may consider a *second layer* of organisation for the interconnections between academic disciplines, which have been neglected for so long. (my translation; my italics; 1990:2-3)

A second layer amounted to organizational, but not institutionalized, structures and avoided, he thought the demotion of some disciplines – generally speaking, the arts subject – to a 'serving' function, while others – business studies, economics, political science, etc. – to leading ones. The German *Wissenschaftsrat* (federal council to advise on university disciplines), too, warned of the dangers of regional centres (c. Leitner 2000:6). The concept

of space, which underlies such centres, it maintains, has no systematic relationship to any scientific discipline, methods, theories and theory construction. As a result, it

- does no more than point to *researchable topics*
- does not lead to the formation of comprehensive degree programs
- does not lead to convincing theories, methods, leading research output, etc.

But it recognizes exceptions in the case of "the well established large cultural regions (*Kulturräume*) outside Europe, such as East and West or South and South-East Asia (Leitner 2000:6), which would otherwise be relegated to 'small' departments. Unconvincing logic it was and the *Wissenschaftsrat* later withdrew its negative evaluation of the Berlin centres. At the time the AC idea was raised, this view had neither been formed nor revised but, looking at it in hindsight, the academic context was favourable to that idea.

As the symposium had shown, there was a significant academic base in Berlin, which had been developed over a period of some 20 years by some *pioneers* and those at Monash and Sydney University who engaged in academic exchanges.<sup>2</sup> The current climate of opinion and the presence of a consular representation with a very perceptive and active consul, a group of Berlin-Monash experts formed and wrote up a sweeping concept of an "Australia-Asia-Pacific Institute" (AAPI). The first phase had begun. An undated draft by Doeker and Leitner after the symposium argued that the AAPC would include the whole Pacific rim and, as far as academic disciplines were concerned, anthropology, ethnology, political science, Anglistics, Japan Studies, economics, etc. It referred to the need to integrate the Australian competence into the newly emerging tertiary education structure in the region; to build up links with Australia and the Asian-Pacific region; and to push for institutionalized structures of bilateral cooperation. An AAPI would be able to form a crystallization point that would feed into academic research and teaching and branch out into the business domain and politics. These are ideas that did not change much in the future. A letter to the Vice President of the Freie Universität date 13 May 1991 listed a range of themes relevant to the wider region. Prof. Doeker, Prof. H.-J. Mengel, and Prof. I. Schäfer summed up major aspects related to the Australia-Asia-Pacific region from the perspective of political science. Dr. V. Raddatz and Prof. G. Leitner looked at Anglistics, Dr. M. Schindlbeck covered ethnology, and Prof. B. Hofmeister turned to geography. The proposal had created some unease between those in the group who had a very wide conception of what should be done and those who supported Australia. The AAPC proposal was put to the FU and the Berlin Senate of Science and Research but was soon scaled down to an Australian Institute (AI).

Negotiations went on for some time. The Senator, Prof. Dr. Manfred Ehrhardt, wrote to Leitner that he thought the Centre was "an interesting idea in principle" and that its realization would "be a significant enrichment of Berlin's science and research landscape"; he would pass it on to the *Landesstrukturkommission*, the commission that was to provide a framework for the future development of Berlin's tertiary institutions (May 31, 1991). The *Fachbereich für Fremdsprachliche Philologien* discussed the smaller AI proposal at its

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<sup>2</sup> The first multidisciplinary Australian event was held in 1984 at the *Internationale Begegnungsstätte* in Glienicke, Berlin, and included as speakers Ms Schwabsky (Australian Embassy), Prof. Veit and Prof. Clyne (both Monash) and, the later federal minister of economy, Dr. Günther Rexrodt. The Australian embassy enabled the showing of "Breaker Morant". After the event, a small cinema close to the FU had an Australian film week and students formed a drama group that presented "What if you died tomorrow" by David Williamson.

meeting July 9, 1991. It did not take a formal decision and pointed out that the proposal was outside its sphere of influence – though it could have provided some support. The reasons for Berlin's reluctance cannot be discussed here and were unknown to us then. The group re-organized and confined its interests to Australia as a hub of the Asia-Pacific region. But it would be wrong to deny any validity to this wide concept – after all large area centres exist worldwide. In fact, the Consul-General wrote to Leitner that

[D]uring a well attended Australia Day seminar run at the Freie Universität in January this year the concept of the establishment of an Australia Institute was discussed. Subsequently Professors Leitner and Doecker have worked with the Consulate General to develop the idea and in principle support for it has been received both from the authorities in Canberra and Berlin. (October 14, 1991)

He said before that "[T]he fundamentally changed role which united Berlin will play in united Germany means that there is scope and indeed the need for Australia to expand the range of activities and relationship".

However, the one defect that the early AC proposal had, i.e. that would be hard to convince Australia that it should be the *sole* non-German support, was soon overcome, when the group regrouped. That marked the second planning phase which ended with the foundation of the *Interdisziplinäres Zentrum (IZ)* in March 1995. The idea of an AC was, of course, not confined to Berlin. Professor Stilz (University Tübingen), for instance, was involved in this when the question of reform came up in Baden-Württemberg of its prominent *Auslandsinstitut* in Stuttgart. But the high level of public interest made the idea of an AC a quite palatable idea in Berlin, especially since Dr. Charles showed more than a *diplomatic interest*, and co-operation with Monash was doing well. It so happened that the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AV-CC) visited Germany in May 1991 and Dr. Charles arranged a meeting that Professor Leitner and Professor Doecker attended. Though still with an AAPC concept in mind, the Australian reception was positive but showed a clear preference for an Australian Centre. Very concrete ideas were discussed that would be put to Prime Minister Bob Hawke, who was to visit Germany later in 1991. Prior to that, Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, wrote to Dr. Charles that

If the German and other interests involved can find a way to develop this project it would be possible to provide some funding to assist its development though not on a recurrent basis.

We should also seek to keep Australian business support for the project, given the urgent need to expand the range and scope of our trade and investment links with Germany. The business advisory group for Europe is a logical place to start. (15 July 1991)

With that background, Dr. Charles convened a meeting of interested people from business, culture and science to form an *Australian-German Group* in Berlin on 14 November 1991. It had representatives of Siemens, Schering, TNT, the *Treuhandanstalt* (which dealt with the privatization of former state-owned businesses), the *Land Development Agency (LEG)* of Brandenburg, headed by Germanus Pause. Boral, Wakefield Wines and other companies followed. There were representatives of politics, culture and universities. One of its goals was to build up the support for the creation of an AC. In 1992 the *Berlin Außenhandels-Organisation (BAO)* provided a list of companies with a likely interest in Australia that could be used to find further allies. This circle continued to meet till late 1994 and monitored the progress made on the AC front. There was even a very firm proposal on a German-Australian association.

A great deal of activity developed in Australia at that time as a result of the AV-CC's report and the correspondence with the Consulate-General. One stable pillar was Monash University and its Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Mal Logan. As a result of close contacts with Walter Veit, Professor of German, a very successful partnership between Monash and the FU had been established in 1986. Prof. Veit and Prof. Veit-Brause, who had been speakers at the *Australia Day* symposium 1991 and were part of the team to write the first submission, continued to canvass for the AC inside their universities. Monash soon became the second pillar at a time when it was involved in its internationalization in Asia and the Pacific. In Berlin, submissions were written and, by mid-1991, a revised draft formed the basis of discussions and negotiations with the Potsdam University. Potsdam, a city on the border to Berlin's south-west, was seen to be the best possible alternative to Berlin. Its university was in a process of expansion and re-structuring. Among many other benefits, an AC would enrich Brandenburg's as yet poor international exposure and provide a focal point in the emerging profile of the university. The AC would be close enough to Berlin to be attractive to Australia. Dr. Charles gained the support of the AV-CC (letter of 11 February 1991). Its EO F.S. Hamblyn sent a supportive fax to Dr. Charles on February 18, 1991.

Like other vice-chancellors, Prof. D. Pennington (University of Melbourne) wrote to Dr. Charles, for instance, "I wanted just to let you know that this University is very keen to be involved in any development of this kind." (27 November 1991). He pointed to the interest shown in European Studies, economics, literature, Australian Studies etc. On May 8, 1992 he informed Dr. Charles of a proposal put to the AV-CC to provide some funding to the ACs in Berlin and London. Failing that, he suggested the formation of a university consortium. In November 1993 he addressed a large audience in Potsdam on educational policies and the likely benefits for Germany.

At the Berlin-Potsdam end, Leitner had now informed the Minister for Culture and Science, Hinrich Enderlein, December 16, 1991, of the establishment of *Australian-German Group* in Berlin and the idea of an AC in Potsdam. Manfred Walter, lawyer and former state secretary in the (post-communist GDR) Ministry of the Interior and Member of Brandenburg Parliament managed to convene a meeting between Minister Enderlein, Dr. Charles and Professor Leitner on February 12, 1992. An English summary of this meeting says this:

After an outline of the Australian historical connections with Brandenburg and the current interest in setting up an Australian Institute (AI) by Dr. Charles and of the basic conception of such an Institute by Prof. Leitner, Dr. Enderlein showed himself extremely well ... disposed towards establishing it at Potsdam University. Dr. Enderlein<sup>3</sup> in particular expressed the following views:

- an AI should have a wide academic scope, covering the arts right to high tech and ecologically relevant disciplines, such as geology and climatic research;
- an AI should have close connections with industry and business and also function as a cultural institute;
- an AI would make a much more important impact on public, business and academic life than at Berlin where it would be likely to be immersed in the plethora of other institutions.

On this positive evaluation Dr. Enderlein ... thought that the AI should not be an integral part of the university but an institution associated with it as a private company fully owned by the Land Brandenburg. On this basis of the conversation the head of the parliamentary

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<sup>3</sup> Minister Hinrich Enderlein was wrongly called "Dr.", as he kindly reminded me (GL) of several times,

budget committee suggested more concrete proposals. Dr. Enderlein suggested that the AI might be part of the 1993 budget....

In a letter to Leitner, Minister Enderlein wrote that he

thought the proposal to create an Australian Institute Berlin-Brandenburg is a good possibility to open up a new direction for international contacts for tertiary institutions in Brandenburg. I have taken the liberty to pass on your discussion paper to the foundation senates of the three newly established universities in Brandenburg... I would only be too pleased of a success of our joint activities. (16 April 1992)

The ground work had been done thanks to a combination of a consensual concept, an open-minded Brandenburg minister and support structures. Work did not end there. In May 1992 an Australian Studies conference was held in Debrecin, Hungary, which was attended by Australian academics and, amongst others, Senator Margaret Reid. There was a wide-ranging debate about the failure of Australian cultural diplomacy. The so-called *Debrecin Declaration* called for a more active role of the Australian government. On June 10, 1992, Dr. Charles confirmed to the rector of Potsdam University, Prof. Mitzner, the support of the AV-CC. The AC idea spread like wildfire. There was press coverage in Germany, the ABC reported on it. *Die Zeit*, the major German weekly, published a one-page article (4 February 1994) by Prof. Claus Leggewie, sociologist, on Australia which referred to the *Australia Day* symposium on migration and the AC. DFAT issued an unclassified inward report that said, after a visit by Manfred Walter:

It has been decided to provide as seed funding AUD 40,000 for the first year (1993-94), 25,000 for the second year, and 15,000 for the third and last year.... These levels had not been mentioned in any of the meetings that Mr. Walter had whilst in Australia.

A massive proof of support by any Australian government! I will pass over the many meetings at Potsdam and come to the deplorable fact that the University of Potsdam rejected the proposal. Minister Enderlein wrote to Leitner

the foundation rector of the University of Potsdam, Professor Mitzner, has already informed you of the decision of the Foundation Senate on your proposal of an Australian Institute. I deplore the fact that the Foundation Senate was not able to reach a positive decision at this stage despite the fact that my ministry had intensively tried to create the necessary support...

However, I don't think that this is already the final decision and am hopeful that .... there will be another debate on your proposal. (19 June 1992)

Leitner's reply to this letter was the crucial step to revive the idea at the Potsdam end. It turned the university's decision upside down:

Dear Minister,

your office informed me of the fact that the Foundation Senate of the University Potsdam rejected the proposal of an Australian Institute that had been agreed upon with you and your ministry. The Foundation Senate argued that such an institute was 'an option' [German *Kann-Sache*, GL]. The Senate saw its primary task in deciding on urgent, unavoidable matter, everything else could be decided by a regular Senate.

It does not befit me to comment on the way the Foundation Senate defines its tasks. And yet, this formalistic decision makes clear that the subject matter of this draft proposal was not rejected.

It would seem to me that the question of the foundation of this institute remains in your hands... I would consider it useful to have another meeting at your office about the way one can proceed.

The Australian Consul-General, Dr. David Charles, should take part at this meeting... (22 June 1992)

The AI was on course again. Numerous meetings were held at the Ministry and elsewhere to make the proposal and its benefits concrete. After the 1991 *Australia Day* symposium, two others were held in Berlin and Potsdam on urban planning Berlin-Potsdam and the ACT (1993) and Immigration and Integration (1994), which were co-financed by Ministries concerned in Berlin and Brandenburg, the Australian government, several large companies and the LEG. The symposia drew large national audiences; promoted Australian business investment and political contacts. Federal ministries, the Standing Committee of Ministries of Culture (KMK), the German Research Foundation, Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service, UNHCR, and others institutions were informed and brought on board. The Ethnic Affairs Council equivalents in Berlin and Brandenburg were indeed co-organizers of the Immigration symposium and Frau Barbarba John (Berlin) continued to devote a lot of energy to Australia-Berlin cooperation. Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel was informed prior to his visit of Australia in April 1993. The office of the Federal President Dr. Richard von Weizsäcker wrote

Federal President von Weizsäcker asked me to express his sincere thanks for your letter of 22 December 1992 and to reply.

Mr. Buchrucker had informed you then how much the Australian Centre would be welcomed as a platform for debate and how important and necessary it is with regard to "follow-up" activities after the state visit of the Federal President. (18 January 1994)

Since all proposals had thus far been signed by Leitner in his capacity of a professor of English at the FU, the idea of a formal structure to support the AC had been aired in the summer of 1993. A *Förderverein Australian Institute* (FAI) was established at Potsdam university October 13, 1993 (minutes of meeting, RA Manfred Walter, 28 January 1994) and the foundation meeting included the new Consul-General Margaret Adamson, deputy consul, Alexander Brooking, the rector of Potsdam University, Prof. R. Mitzner, the director of the LEG, Germanus Pause, Jan Cappelen (Boral Resources), Klaus Hildmann (Siemens), Prof. Achim Hoffmann (U Potsdam), Harald Piltz (Ministry of the Economy), Dr. Rainer Ruge (Ministry of Science, Research and Culture), Manfred Walter (lawyer) and Gerhard Leitner. The FAI was headed by Prof. Mitzner and the Consul-General M. Adamson; Leitner was its Executive Officer. The articles of an "Australian Association in Berlin-Brandenburg" were drafted but it was decided eventually to continue as an informal FAI group. The FAI negotiated with Ministries and Parliament and canvassed support elsewhere. Its work covered the revision of the draft, the identification of personalities of its managing and academic advisory boards (e.g. former Minister of Science, Professor George Turner, Berlin, Professor Leggewie, Gießen, Professor Bade, Osnabrück, Professor Stilz, Tübingen). On the request of the Ministry of Higher Education (Potsdam), it drafted budget proposals for 1994 and later years. The political factions of the Brandenburg Landtag now showed their support and on the Australian side negotiations with DFAT were more and more detailed, especially since the money already allocated for 1994-96 was not being used. The anticipated creation of the AC was now common knowledge and proposals of cooperation were received from Australian universities. Dr. David Headon, Director of the Centre for Australian Cultural Studies, (ADFA, Canberra), for instance, was very enthusiastic about collaboration (letter of May 2, 1994).

Important details were now high on the agenda. One was the internal structure of the Centre and its functions for Potsdam University and beyond. That led to a potential conflict between the Centre, the initiatives in Stuttgart, which did not seem to get off the ground, and the *Gesellschaft für Australienstudien*. The latter favoured de-centralized support systems for Australian Studies. To quote from a report on Prof. Stilz's visit to the University of Brisbane:

The German university system is a very old and at the same time very successful federal structure which has always resisted tendencies towards centralization. It is in fact the quality of competition and of a decentralized dialog that has kept German research and university life so fruitful and interesting. What we need, therefore, is not one but several centres for Australian Studies. How else could we competently cater for the many students who are interested in Australian topics? ... any claim of one "Centre" to represent Germany or Europe on the map of Australian Studies will be doomed under the prevailing policy of regionalism. (quoted from a letter to Prof. Mitzner, 26 September 1994)

While that was dealt with as a point of conflict for some time, our deeper-seated interest was in the structure of German academia and the business and other support systems which form the context for foreign cultural diplomacy that wants to be successful. It seems to have been too late to debate alternatives, though the draft proposals had always emphasized the collaboration with universities in the region and beyond. Planning for the establishment of an AC went ahead, new versions added details but otherwise reflect a significant level of continuity. We will highlight the following points. The first one was that the centre would have a triple function, i.e. as

- (a) a general areal inter- and multidisciplinary centre for the universities of the region
- (b) a centre for German-Australian relations outside academic life
- (c) an institute serving partially cultural centre

In its capacity as an areal centre, the AC would coordinate teaching and (to a level desired) research in the Berlin-Brandenburg region, conduct innovative lecture series, colloquia, summer schools and the like, and enter into partnerships with Australian (and other) universities. As a German-Australian centre it would be a platform for high-level political, economic, legal or other issues (such as dealt with in previous *Australia Day* symposia). It would target politicians, parliaments, management or media. It would collaborate with the Menzies Centre (London) and others so as to yield synergetic effects at a time increasingly marked by funding cuts in universities both in Australia and Germany. In its role as a cultural centre it would offer literary readings, films, or advise to the general public. It would house an Australia library, host e-learning and other hi-tech facilities. The draft of February 2, 1992, contained a detailed action plan for a 'regular year' and a list of research and teaching topics from modern history, geography, political science and sociology, anglistics, economics and ethnology. The draft dated March 3, 1992, added further detail and translated the concept of *space* mentioned earlier by those of *heterogeneity* and *diversity*. The draft said that

[O]ne of the characteristics of the Australian continent is its heterogeneity, its diversity. One may think here of its ethnic composition and the effects that has had on the broad cultural development and the language ecology, which numbers well beyond 100 languages. Heterogeneity has had political and economic implications as is shown by debates about the uses of natural resources as raw materials or about the ownership of collections in museums worldwide. As to geography it is the very different vegetation and climatic zones that come to mind. From the economic and



political angle it is the interaction of (post-) colonial with pre-colonial systems or the changing relationships with Europe, North America and (South) Asia.

Whatever angle one may choose, this heterogeneity is a challenge and interdisciplinarity is the characteristic methodological tool. As a result, heterogeneity is a challenge to all disciplines concerned to gain new insights about a complex object of research in collaboration, to reflect on them and to search for applications in research, education and beyond.

It is therefore the general objective of a centre to conduct research and teaching on this region and to embed it inside larger geo-political, economic, cultural nexuses and to explore links with Europe. (p 16)

There followed a series of short passages on Anglistics by Dr. Volker Raddatz, Prof. G. Leitner (both FU), geography by Prof. B. Hofmeister (TU), ethnology by Dr. M. Schindlbeck, Museum of Ethnology, and modern history by Prof. I. Veit-Brause, Deakin U. Detailed course plans for economics, politics and sociology were added. The July 1993 draft outlined the budget for 1993/4 and re-confirmed the crucial role of the Australian consortium.

Before we move on to the third phase, the realization of the IZ, we must return to what happened at the Australian end, since there, too, developments had proceeded fast and, without them, no centre would have materialized.

A good look at documentation available at Monash makes quite clear that the history of the AI in Berlin started at least more than five years before its final establishment in 1995. The discussion at Monash regarding the establishment of such an institute ran, intellectually and temporally, in parallel with the initiative by Prof. Leitner and Dr. Charles in Berlin during the 1990s. In fact, the interested parties remained in close contact during the whole time of the development which, for reasons known better to the administrations in Australian universities than the initiators of the project, turned out to become unexpectedly tortuous and side-tracked.

At Monash, the initiative for the establishment of an AIB came from members of the Department of German Studies whose most pressing concern was and still is, apart from research facilities at and collaboration with German universities, for finding ways of facilitating and organising ongoing *in loco* supervision of Monash students studying for a semester (undergraduate) or a whole year (graduate research) at German universities mainly with the financial assistance of the DAAD but also of the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation and the Goethe-Institut, and later under the auspices of the Monash Studies Abroad Scheme, too. But it was obvious at the time that other Australian universities had also started or needed to rethink effective schemes of research co-operation of supervision for students on secondment in Germany. Up to that time, individual exchange agreements between Australian and German universities tended to be cumbersome arrangements which depended for their efficacy largely on good relationships between individual members of academic and administrative staff in both countries. After official visits by members of the German Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK, the equivalent of the AV-CC) and the German Research Association (DFG), agreements were signed in 1993 between Australian and German national government and university agencies to facilitate academic co-operation on all levels. Unfortunately, the stipulated waiver of university fees – which had been introduced in Australia – for undergraduate studies was not extended to graduate studies, arguably the

most important area of scientific co-operation between the two nations. However, university studies in Germany, graduate and undergraduate, are still free of charge in Germany.

In October 1990, while in Berlin on research leave from Monash and Visiting Professor at the FU, Professor Walter Veit submitted to the then Vice-Chancellor of Monash University, Professor Malcolm Logan, two proposals called *Notes on the extension and improvement of the exchange agreement between the Free University of Berlin and Monash University and Monash University House. Considerations towards the establishment of a Study Centre in Berlin* (the Veit-Proposals). Both plans met with a very positive responses from colleagues at Monash and in Berlin, particularly from Prof. Leitner, with whom the submissions had been discussed in detail. Both proposals represented, in the first place, the teaching and research interests of Monash University. Their first result was the FU-Monash Exchange Agreement.

These proposals were subsequently enlarged and elaborated in detail, taking into account Prof. Leitner's proposal for an AIB mentioned above, and became the new *Monash Proposal for an Australian Institute Berlin*. On the basis of the need for such an institute in support of German and European research, undergraduate and graduate studies, a favourable report from the AV-CC delegation to Germany and the initiatives in Berlin, the proposal recommended that Monash University initiate the establishment of an AIB, "pursue its interests vigorously, build on its strength and become the principal Australian sponsor of the proposed AIB." Assuming that Monash wished to seriously pursue its own and the national interest, the proposal recommended

that Monash University appoint as soon as possible a Director with a brief to establish an AIB in full co-operation with the Australian Government and its representative in Berlin, the AVCC, and the Berlin Group; to seek funding from Australian governments, universities, industry and commerce as well as from private sponsors; and to take responsibility for running the Institute in co-operation with the German directors for an initial period of two to three years.

It also recommended that the Institute should be known as The Leichhardt Institute of Australian Studies in Berlin.

The proposal and its recommendations were handed to Professor Logan on January 15, 1992. The rest is history, unfortunately a history of developments not anticipated in the initial proposals and, as far as can be assessed now, not in the interest of academic research or student supervision.

Despite the progress made at many fronts in Brandenburg and Australia, the AC had come to a dead end again. There had to be a new stimulus that signalled the start of a third phase. There were backroom negotiations between the rector of the university and the consul-general. The Australian side shifted from a multi-disciplinary and applied concept to the idea of an Interdisciplinary Centre (IC) confined to political science. At an FAI meeting on November 21, 1994, Prof. Mitzner reported on the unwillingness of the Brandenburg government to consider funding for 1994. It was not even clear that it would do in 1995. The University Senate, too, ruled out financing. Mitzner referred to the academic weakness in Australian-related areas and especially in the Humanities. He proposed a university-internal centre based in political science where some newly appointed professors could produce some synergy. The Consul-General, he reported, also rejected the refined draft and maintained that

political science and economics should be the key areas.<sup>4</sup> Mitzner felt compelled, for external and internal reasons, to promote the idea of an IC, based at the Political Science department. It would still be directly responsible to the senate and thus have, at least, partly a structure that had been envisaged before. He sought the support of the FAI and the firm commitment from the Australian side to stand by its support, which he received. He decided to go ahead with this IZ, which the senate established formally at its meeting December 15, 1994. It was opened by Prime Minister Keating and Minister President Stolpe in 1995. Despite a university-internal structure, planning for an academic advisory board, etc., went on so as to create an outer face to attract business funding and draft of the statutes was prepared early 1995.

In the meantime, the Australian side formed a universities' consortium that comprised Monash University, the University of Melbourne, the Australian National University, Sydney University, the University of Canberra and the University of NSW. Its first chairman was Prof. Peter Spearritt (Monash). He was succeeded by Malcolm David Hamilton Smith, Professor of Asian Law, and Director of the Asian Law Centre (University of Melbourne). In 1995 Dr. Ditta Bartels (UNSW) took over. Looking forward briefly, the University of Melbourne left the consortium in the late 1990s and was replaced by the University of Adelaide then. One of the ideas that had persistently been put to the German side was to "sell" Australian degrees or to co-organize, amongst others, satellite-transmitted Australian study courses, which was dropped when, after a considerable period of time, it was realized that the sale of courses to either German universities or to students would be much more difficult than expected, if it could be done.

On the German side, the first director of the IZ was to be Prof. Wallraf, who negotiated with the first Executive Officer of the Australian consortium, Prof. P. Spearritt (Monash), about collaborative details and with DFAT in December 1994 where he received the support of the Australian government (memo of DFAT, December 9, 1994). He resigned from the university due to irregularities in his description of past activities. The dice now fell on Professor Bürklin, Professor of Public Finance, who declared from the beginning that he had no intention of holding that position for long. He campaigned for the IC in Australia and he and Leitner addressed the Australian-German Association in Melbourne in February 1995. After his resignation, the newly appointed professor of economics, Hans-Georg Petersen, was persuaded to become head of the Centre. He held that position to 1999 when the centre relocated to Berlin.

During his time a number of activities developed which reflect the narrowing to a research-oriented concept and a base in a very specific departmental context. There were, for instance, some major conferences on Public Sector Reform (1997), Higher Education Reform (1998), Tax and Transfer Reform (1999), and Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning (2000). They were supported by Federal Ministries and Australian bodies. There was one conference held in association with the Association for Australian Studies on "Australian Studies: A Topic for Tertiary Education?" in 1999 which reflected some of the initial objectives. The conference proceedings were published in the Centre's academic series and financed by the Australian consortium. There was also a lecture series for a general audience from 1998-99. It was chaired by G. Leitner and entitled *Ludwig Leichhardt Lectures* and included talks on,

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<sup>4</sup> From a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Monash U of 27 November 1994.

for instance, "Australian federalism" (Prof. Spahn, U Frankfurt/Main), "German-Australian relations prior to World War I" (Prof. Veit-Brause, Deakin U), "Australian German trade relations" (Dr. French, Australian Embassy), "The ombudsman – a model for Germany" (Prof. Brusten, U Wuppertal), "Ludwig Leichhardt" (Prof. Tampke, UNSW), and "East German literature – an Australian perspective" (Prof. Milfull, UNSW). Though audiences tended to be small, they drew in a number of recognized experts from the Ministry of the Interior in Berlin, academics from the very famous cultural circle located in Kleinmachnow, a small village directly bordering the south-west of Berlin and hence closed even to GDR citizens; others came from Berlin universities and from elsewhere. On the occasion of Prof. Tampke's talk on Leichhardt, the Humboldt-Gymnasium in Cottbus staged a self-produced drama on "Humboldt and Leichhardt", which drew in a large and young audience from Cottbus and Berlin. The series was discontinued after two semesters for reasons unknown so that a number of talks such as on the role of missions in colonizing Australia (Prof. Veit, Monash U), an Aboriginal perspective on reconciliation (Dr. Eve Fesl), a German experience of soccer in Australia (former East-German coach in Perth, Bernd Stange), etc., could not take place. The IZ also ran a student exchange with the UNSW's law school and some other programs. And the DAAD financed an Australian *Lektor* at the Department of English so as to promote *Australische Landeskunde* (Australian cultural studies) as a study component.

If compared with the original concept, the Potsdam centre was a much scaled down project. But its creation was, at the time, the best option that the rector could take. Thanks to the ground work being done at the Berlin-Potsdam and Monash end, it managed to attract support from, for instance, the former president of the federal parliament, Prof. Rita Süßmuth, the federal ministry of education, the DAAD, and others. Though limited in its scope, it could have, given time, developed along lines intended. Why it was closed in 1999 to be relocated to Berlin is beyond the scope of this paper. But what followed – in the fourth phase – was an AC in Berlin, solely in the hands of the Australian universities' consortium. It began with a promising, far-reaching *mission statement* (taken off the web) that contained many of the elements of the original concept. The AC was to act as an areal (academic) centre, a semi-cultural institute and a platform of debate for German-Australian contacts. Crucial measures of its success would be its attraction of outside funding and a few other criteria. In practical terms, it seems to act as a commercial public relations branch of the universities consortium though it emphasizes an *Australian* role.

In conclusion, the history of the AC is a good deal longer and more interesting than what is told on the website of the AC (Berlin). As to its planning and conceptual history, we have distinguished four phases, which amount to a continuous process of scaling down and, in the fourth phase, radical revision. The general, positive up-take of the drafts to 1993 showed the willingness to accept areal studies, multi- and interdisciplinarity as methodological tools, and the link of academic institutions with politics and business. The transition from phase 1 to 2 is marked by the conceptual focus on Australia that was crucial to the success of the AC. The idea that the "Asian" competence on both sides should be integrated was, however, maintained even by the IZ. The short-lived student exchanges and co-operative courses for law students went a long way towards showing the fruitfulness of the original concept. None of the major tenets had lost their validity and, when the Australian universities consortium decided to shift to Berlin, it had, in fact, re-confirmed many of them in its grand, but inconsequential, mission statement of 1999.

While the Potsdam IZ was a far cry from the initial proposal, it was part of a university whose infra-structures it could use and influence. It could and did – on a small scale – offer Australian-related courses in various departments and, had a potential to expand and become a centre with a regional function for the Berlin-Brandenburg area. It sought the collaboration with, for instance, the Menzies Centre in London, which is a part of King's College London and which does offer a wide range of courses including an MA in *Australian Studies*. That did never materialize in Berlin or Potsdam, nor did the centre ever seek to develop the idea. The centre promoted an elitist view of its functions, which was also visible in the discontinuation of the *Leichhardt Lecture* series. Its activities were far removed from the needs of many departments in the area. The current financial cuts in Germany's universities – which parallel similar cuts in Australian universities – will make it clear that *Australian Studies* and Australian-related topics have a fragile status in Germany. There is no body in Australia similar to the German Academic Exchange Service to cushion some of the effects that are likely to happen.

The new Berlin AC, in contrast, has severed institutional academic ties and has no direct link – nor can and does it attempt to draw much on local academic support. Importantly, it reflects a very different monopolistic cultural policy where all decisions are taken by the Australian consortium. Which of the approaches – a collaborative or a monopolistic one – are more successful in the long run is a mute question. The time may yet be too short to make a valid comparison with the IZ in Potsdam. But the Menzies Centre and – from a different angle – the British Council and others provide yardsticks by which the cultural policy approach of the Berlin centre must be measured.

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