

## editorial

# Inventories as Texts and Artefacts

## Methodological Approaches and Challenges

Interest in things is booming. Take Karl Schlögel, seeking a return to the material, after a long dominance of language,<sup>1</sup> in the harrowing experience of 9/11.<sup>2</sup> Scientific publications, for example in the format of a handbook<sup>3</sup> as well as books aimed at a broader audience, like MacGregor's *A History of the World in 100 Objects* from 2010<sup>4</sup>, are evidence that things, as historical actors, artefacts, repositories of knowledge and sources of insight and sensual experiences<sup>5</sup> currently attract great interest in a range of disciplines.

When looking at things from a historical perspective, we face the problem that only a miniscule part of artefacts from the time before the emergence of large-scale and systematic collections,<sup>6</sup> which started in the sixteenth century, has survived.

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- 1 Karen Barad, *Agentieller Realismus. Über die Bedeutung materiell-diskursiver Praktiken*, 2. edn., Berlin 2017; Rich Dolphijn/Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism. Interviews & Cartographies*, Ann Arbor 2012. – I thank all contributors of the workshop which stands at the beginning of this volume and Oliver Kühschelm as commentator for their many impulses to the concept of this volume and this introductory chapter. My warmest thanks go to all co-authors of the proposal for a research project on castle inventories, which have also contributed to the genesis of this introduction – Claudia Posch, Gerhard Rampl, Gerald Hiebl (all Innsbruck) – and above all Ingrid Matschinegg (Krems/Salzburg) for her contribution to the state of research.
- 2 Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, 3. edn. München/Wien 2009.
- 3 Stefanie Samida/Manfred K. H. Eggert/Hans Peter Hahn (eds.), *Handbuch Materielle Kultur. Bedeutungen, Konzepte, Disziplinen*, Stuttgart 2014.
- 4 German: Neil MacGregor, *Eine Geschichte der Welt in 100 Objekten, Jubiläumsausg.*, München 2013.
- 5 Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt a. M. 1995.
- 6 Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*, Berkeley 1996; Dominik Collet, *Die Welt in der Stube. Begegnungen mit Außereuropa in Kunstkammern der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2007; Renata Ago, *Il gusto delle cose. Una storia degli oggetti nella Roma del Seicento*, Roma 2006.

Johann Michael Fritz estimates that less than one per cent of medieval goldsmithing works still exist,<sup>7</sup> and these are among the better kept objects, compared, for instance, with textiles. All the more important for the appraisal of historical objects is the written and pictorial evidence.

Along with things, written sources that captured objects thus become central. In this context, inventories as texts created to list objects are paradigmatic. In contrast to research on objects, the exploration of inventories as texts and historical sources is still in its infancy. This results, on the one hand, from the long practice of quarrying them as sources for investigating single exceptional artefacts of art-historical significance without treating them as a type of source in themselves. On the other hand, inventories are difficult to grasp with the standard toolkit of historical critical interpretation and textual analysis: their sometimes enormous volume and the listing structure contain a wealth of detailed information that make them true precursors of modern databases. Thus it is no surprise that they were among the first sources to be analysed using quantitative and computer-based methods of 1980's social history.<sup>8</sup> Yet though they still count among the sources predestined to be explored with digital methods, we should be careful to not reduce inventories to the mere data they convey but to consider them as texts in their own right and with their own specific narratives. Gabriela Signori has rightly warned that by using such computer based serial analyses the sources literally die a "formalized" death on the dissecting table of the historian specialized in digital methods.<sup>9</sup>

So far, inventories have attracted only sporadic attention, as shown in the state of research section below. Individual lists have been edited or special aspects summarized in anthologies.<sup>10</sup> Lacking are systematic investigations of inventories as a specific type of source. With the renewed interest in material culture, written sources that document objects receive increasing attention. However, the focus is most often not on the sources themselves but rather on the information they convey about objects of the past

While inventories have so far been mainly analysed with regard to single issues – predominantly to identify exceptional works of art – this volume places the inventories themselves centre stage, as both texts and artefacts. It is based on an international workshop on inventories as texts and artefacts held at the University

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7 Johann Michael Fritz, *Goldschmiedekunst der Gotik in Mitteleuropa*, München 1982, 35.

8 See Ad van der Woude/Anton Schuurman (eds.), *Probate Inventories. A New Source for the Historical Study of Wealth, Material Culture and Agricultural Developments*, Utrecht 1980.

9 Gabriela Signori, *Vorsorgen, Vererben, Erinnern. Kinder- und familienlose Erblasser in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters*, Göttingen 2001, 61.

10 Thomas Ertl/Barbara Karl (eds.), *Inventories of Textiles – Textiles in Inventories. Studies on Late Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, Göttingen 2017; Edoardo Rossetti (ed.), *Squarci d'interni. Inventari per il Rinascimento milanese*, Milano 2012.

of Salzburg from 5 to 6 September 2019. 23 scholars from Austria, Germany, Italy, the UK, Portugal, and Belgium discussed interdisciplinary approaches to inventories from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries as sources. By bringing together scholars from a range of academic disciplines and national backgrounds as well as covering different time periods, we have established a collaborative network dedicated to the investigation of inventories as source types across the centuries and geographical areas.<sup>11</sup>

Contributors were invited to reflect on the specific textual quality of the sources as well as on their material aspects as objects themselves, and discuss methodological approaches in use such as classical auxiliary sciences, quantitative methods, cultural historical approaches, textual analysis, or literary theory. Of special interest were new possibilities offered by the Digital Humanities.

Above all, contributors were asked to address the following main questions:

- How does your approach to inventories as sources differ from traditional and rather descriptive approaches that considered inventories predominantly as lists of things?
- What are the significant results of research on inventories so far and how are they important for your approach?
- Can research on inventories add to a history of science and a history of power, and if so in what respect?
- How can you define *inventory* from the context of your research and what are other concurring concepts? How can they be differentiated?

This volume thus takes the dynamic situation of research as outlined in the following chapter as a starting point to reflect on current methodological approaches to inventories in an international arena.

Contributors were selected according to several criteria to ensure the volume covers a representative sample of sources regarding the complete ‘age of inventories’, starting from the early roots in the High Middle Ages up to the twentieth century, and regarding a wide geographical range to allow comparison with examples from Italy, Portugal, Burgundy, Belgium, England, Germany, and Austria. Finally, the inventories presented in this volume were to stem from different institutional backgrounds – princely, ecclesiastical, urban, commercial, private, and institutional – and the contributions were to reflect innovative methodological approaches.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://inventories.sbg.ac.at/> (10.8.2020).

## State of research

The inventory is definitely *the* paradigmatic source on objects. While the roots of inventories can be traced back to the Ancient Orient and all through the Middle Ages, considerable numbers of inventories were only passed down from the fourteenth century onwards, increasingly after the second half of the fifteenth and with another peak in the early sixteenth century. Even today, however, it remains unclear whether this situation of transmission in fact reflects the actual production of inventories during the Middle Ages or whether it rather documents the beginning of systematic archiving of inventories from the fourteenth century onwards. Like other products of the so-called *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit* (pragmatic literacy as result of administrative processes), inventories were unlikely to be passed down since they were usually destroyed when they were no longer of importance. Like bills they certainly belong to the most ephemeral types of sources.<sup>12</sup> If inventories are studied in connection with other sources, such as wills or wedding contracts, it becomes clear that many more inventories were produced than have actually survived to the present day.<sup>13</sup>

We still know very little about the genesis of inventories and their development during the Middle Ages. Likewise there is no valid study on the characteristics of inventories as a specific type of source. Traditional introductions to medieval sources neglect inventories or simply summarize them under administrative sources.<sup>14</sup> Although a stronger interest in inventories, based on traditional cultural history (*Kulturgeschichte*) approaches, was being expressed as early as the late nineteenth century, hardly any systematic work on inventories exists. Starting in the nineteenth century, inventories were above all searched and edited for specific social groups or geographical regions with a focus on the objects mentioned in the documents.<sup>15</sup> From this time period, very important editions of inventories have survived, which had often been published in journals on regional or local history. With the interest in social and economic history of the post-war era, inventories became an important source for these branches of historical research. With their

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12 Mark Mersiowsky, *Die Anfänge territorialer Rechnungslegung im deutschen Nordwesten. Spätmittelalterliche Rechnungen, Verwaltungspraxis, Hof und Territorium*, Stuttgart 2000.

13 Alphons Lhotsky, *Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestandes*. Bd. 2. *Die Geschichte der Sammlungen. Erste Hälfte. Von den Anfängen bis zum Tode Kaiser Karls VI. 1740*, Wien 1941–1945.

14 Briefly mentioned in: Alphons Lhotsky, *Quellenkunde zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte Österreichs, Graz/Köln* 1963.

15 Oswald von Zingerle (ed.), *Mittelalterliche Inventare aus Tirol und Vorarlberg*, Innsbruck 1909; Julius von Ficker, *Ausstattung einer apulischen Braut im zwölften Jahrhunderte*, in: *MIÖG* 2 (1881), 455–458.

growing amounts and coverage, they also became ideal sources for quantitative analysis, as is outlined above.<sup>16</sup>

New approaches of cultural history and history of consumption have brought about a growing number of studies on inventories.<sup>17</sup> Some earlier works resulted from the ongoing interest in inventories as legal sources<sup>18</sup> and as sources for the history of castles.<sup>19</sup> Vital impulses have also come from research on pragmatic literacy, which – inspired by new approaches of a cultural history of sources – has directed our attention towards the textual qualities of long neglected administrative sources.<sup>20</sup> The renewed interest in material culture has fuelled interest in treasures and courts, which also directed attention to inventories as sources for the reconstruction of objects stored in treasures and in use at courts.<sup>21</sup> Inventories also became of vital importance as sources for room structures, above all in the context of the growing concern for domestic space.<sup>22</sup> While possessions of the elite were and still are among the key foci of material culture studies with regard to consumer

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16 See e.g. van der Woude/Schuurman, *Inventories*, 1980.

17 Carola Fey, *Inventare*, in: Werner Paravicini (ed.), *Höfe und Residenzen im spätmittelalterlichen Reich*. Bd. 3. Hof und Schrift, Ostfildern 2007, 473–483; Jens Friedhoff, *Inventare des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts als Quelle zur Ausstattung und zum Alltag auf Burgen und Schlössern*, in: Joachim Zeune/Hartmut Hofrichter (eds.), *Alltag auf Burgen im Mittelalter*, Braubach 2006, 26–34; Lorenz Seelig, *Historische Inventare. Geschichte, Formen, Funktionen*, in: Monika Dreykorn (ed.), *Samlungsdokumentation. Geschichte, Wege, Beispiele*, München/Berlin 2001, 21–35; Rossetti, Squarci, 2012.

18 Peter Löffler, *Inventare. Historische Entwicklung und rechtliche Grundlagen*, in: *Rheinisch-westfälische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 23 (1977), 120–131.

19 Kurt Andermann, *Die Inventare der bischöflich speyerischen Burgen und Schlösser von 1464/65*, in: *Mitteilungen des historischen Vereins der Pfalz* 85 (1987), 133–176; Hermann Ehmer, *Schadensinventare fränkischer Burgen aus der 1. Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts (Schweinberg 1437, Bartenstein 1443)*, in: Hermann Ehmer (ed.), *Burgen im Spiegel der historischen Überlieferung*, Sigmaringen 1998, 105–122; Christofer Herrmann, *Burginventare in Süddeutschland und Tirol vom 14. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, in: Ehmer (ed.), *Burgen*, 1998, 77–104.

20 Hagen Keller/Klaus Grubmüller/Nikolaus Staubach (eds.), *Pragmatische Schriftlichkeit im Mittelalter. Erscheinungsformen und Entwicklungsstufen*, München 1992; Christel Meier/Volker Honemann/Hagen Keller/Rudolf Suntrup (eds.), *Pragmatische Dimensionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur*, München 2002; Christoph Dartmann/Thomas Scharff/Christoph Friedrich Weber (eds.), *Zwischen Pragmatik und Performanz. Dimensionen mittelalterlicher Schriftkultur*, Turnhout 2011.

21 Elisabeth Vavra/Kornelia Holzner-Tobisch/Thomas Kühtreiber (eds.), *Vom Umgang mit Schätzen*, Wien 2007; Jenny Stratford, *Richard II and the English Royal Treasure*, Woodbridge 2012; Carola Fey, *Fürstliche Kultinnovationen im Spiegel sakraler Schätze. Beispiele von wittelsbachischen Höfen des späten Mittelalters*, in: Matthias Müller/Karl-Heinz Spieß/Udo Friedrich (eds.), *Kulturtransfer am Fürstenhof. Höfische Austauschprozesse und ihre Medien im Zeitalter Kaiser Maximilians I.*, Berlin 2013, 122–138; Katherine Anne Wilson, *The Power of Textiles. Tapestries of the Burgundian Dominions (1363–1477)*, Turnhout 2018.

22 Marta Ajmar-Wollheim/Flora Dennis/Elizabeth Miller (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, London 2006; Maryanne Kowaleski/Jeremy Goldberg (eds.), *Medieval Domesticity. Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, Cambridge 2008; Christopher Michael Woolgar (ed.), *The Elite Household in England, 1100–1550. Proceedings of the 2016 Harlaxton Symposium*, Donington 2018.

history,<sup>23</sup> inventories as well as wills have also been of crucial importance for reconstructing possession histories and material cultures of broader social strata, above all including urban contexts.<sup>24</sup>

Most recent studies pay attention to the fact that, like other texts, inventories do not give a complete or objective picture of the historical facts,<sup>25</sup> but that they have to be regarded as narratives with their own fictional character.<sup>26</sup> Art historians have been among the first to ask for new methodological approaches to inventories as a source type.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, new editions<sup>28</sup> and studies on specific types of inventories, such as inventories of textiles<sup>29</sup> or general practices of inventorying<sup>30</sup>, as well as new applications in the field of Digital Humanities<sup>31</sup>, add to the current dynamic research situation. They reflect the renewed interest in this source type with the rise of the so-called ‘material turn’ and new impulses of cultural historical approaches to sources.

Any investigation of inventorying as a social practice moreover benefits from taking into account the spatial design of the recorded buildings, including rooms as

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- 23 See Evelyn S. Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance. Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400–1600*, New Haven CT/London 2005; Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600*, Baltimore 1993.
  - 24 Gerhard Jaritz, *Österreichische Bürgertestamente als Quelle zur Erforschung städtischer Lebensformen des Spätmittelalters*, in: *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 8 (1984), 249–264; Gabriela Signori, *Vorsorgen, Vererben, Erinnern. Kinder- und familienlose Erblasser in der städtischen Gesellschaft des Spätmittelalters*, Göttingen 2001; Katharina Simon-Muscheid, *Die Dinge im Schnittpunkt sozialer Beziehungsnetze. Reden und Objekte im Alltag (Oberrhein, 14. bis 16. Jahrhundert)*, Göttingen 2004.
  - 25 Giorgio Riello, ‘Things Seen and Unseen’. The Material Culture of Early Modern Inventories and Their Representation of Domestic Interiors, in: Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early Modern Things. Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800*, Abingdon 2013, 125–150.
  - 26 Lena Cowen Orlin, *Fictions of the Early Modern English Probate Inventory*, in: Henry S. Turner (ed.), *The Culture of Capital. Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, New York/London 2002, 51–83; Gerhard Jaritz, *The Stories Inventories Tell*, in: Lucie Doležalová (ed.), *The Charm of a List. From the Sumerians to Computerised Data Processing*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2009, 160–166.
  - 27 Jessica Keating/Lia Markey, Introduction. Captured Objects. Inventories of Early Modern Collections, in: *Journal of the History of Collections* 23.2 (2011), 209–213. Online: <https://academic.oup.com/jhc/issue/23/2> (6 August 2020); Christina Normore, *On the Archival Rhetoric of Inventories. Some Records of the Valois Burgundian Court*, in: *Journal of the History of Collections* 23.2 (2011), 215–227. Online: <https://academic.oup.com/jhc/issue/23/2> (6 August 2020); Francesco Freddolini/Anne Helmreich, *Inventories, Catalogues and Art Historiography. Exploring Lists Against the Grain*, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 11 (2014), 1–14.
  - 28 Fernando Checa Cremades (ed.), *Los inventarios de Carlos V y la familia imperial. The Inventories of Charles V and the Imperial Family*. 3 vols., [Madrid] 2010; Richard Stapleford (ed.), *Lorenzo De’ Medici at Home: The Inventory of the Palazzo Medici in 1492*, Pennsylvania 2013.
  - 29 Ertl/Karl, *Inventories*, 2017.
  - 30 Xavier Hermand/Jean-François Nieuw/Étienne Renard (eds.), *Décrire, inventorier, enregistrer entre Seine et Rhin au Moyen Âge. Formes, fonctions et usages des écrits de gestion*, Paris 2012.
  - 31 Cf. the interdisciplinary DOC-Team project RaumOrdnungen at the Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture in Krems. See <http://raumordnungen.imareal.sbg.ac.at> (6 August 2020).

linked to representational purposes or demonstrations of power and domination.<sup>32</sup> These social practices of exploring and using spaces in the widest sense are closely linked with the use of objects. Inventories therefore lend themselves to be analysed as instruments of ordering and domination. Looking at the relations between people and objects in my *Habilitation* thesis, I have systematically investigated princely trousseaus and inventories from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>33</sup> One central insight here was the fundamental difference between room-based inventories and those related to individuals. While the former are structured by rooms, the latter usually focus on the possessions of a person, are subdivided by product groups (silverware, textiles, etc.) and are largely unrelated to rooms.<sup>34</sup>

This is just one first step into developing a systematic approach to different forms inventories could take on, from mere *lists* recording single items often in very ephemeral situations to systematic *inventories* with legal character linked to specific events, above all like post mortem inventories, to whole *catalogues*, reflecting scientific interests in ordering and systematizing various items.<sup>35</sup> There is, in fact, no clear definition of what an inventory is, and different types of sources can be subsumed under this notion, depending on how it is used in the literature on the topic and also in the sources.<sup>36</sup> In a literal sense, inventory simply means the “ensemble of what has been found”.<sup>37</sup> In a very specific sense *inventory* can be regarded as a legal term. In this context it means that the inventory is the description of things that have been found among the belongings after someone’s death.<sup>38</sup> However, the term

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32 Martina Löw, *Raumsoziologie*, Frankfurt a. M. 2001; Susanne Rau, *Räume. Konzepte, Wahrnehmungen, Nutzungen*, Frankfurt a. M. 2013.

33 Christina Antenhofer, *Die Familienkiste. Mensch-Objekt-Beziehungen im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*. 2 vols., Ostfildern 2022 (forthcoming).

34 Christina Antenhofer, *Das Brautschatzinventar der Paula Gonzaga, verh. Gräfin von Görz*. Edition und Kommentar, in: *Tiroler Heimat. Zeitschrift für Regional- und Kulturgeschichte Nord-, Ost- und Südtirols* 83 (2019), 11–57. Fluid transitions can be found in probate inventories, which sometimes become inventories of an entire court or building, cf. for instance Stephan Molitor, *Natternzungen im Silberschatz. Zu merkwürdigen Zimelien im Hinterlassenschaftsinventar Graf Eberhards III. von Württemberg († 1417) und ihrer Deutung* (mit Edition), in: Peter Rückert/Sönke Lorenz (eds.), *Die Visconti und der deutsche Südwesten. Kulturtransfer im Spätmittelalter*, Ostfildern 2008, 317–334.

35 See in this respect also Christina Antenhofer, *Inventories as Material and Textual Sources for Late Medieval and Early Modern Social, Gender and Cultural History (14th–16th Centuries)*, in: *MEMO. Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture* 7 (2020), 22–46, DOI: 10.25536/20200702, and Fred-dolini/Helmreich, *Inventories*, (2014).

36 See e.g. Michela Barbot, *Il valore economico degli oggetti di lusso nella corte viscontea e sforzesca*, in: Paola Venturelli (ed.), *Oro dai Visconti agli Sforza. Smalti e oreficeria nel Ducato di Milano*, Cinisello Balsamo 2011, 79–85.

37 („Gesamtheit des Gefundenen“), cf. Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, 23. edn., Berlin/New York 1999, 405.

38 „1. INVENTARIUM, Descriptio rerum, quæ post alicujus decessum in illius bonis reperiuntur. Ulpianus leg. 1. D. de Administ. et periculo tutor.: (26, 7.) Tutor, qui repertorium non fecerit, quod vulgo Inventarium appellatur. Occurrit non semel in Legibus Wisigoth. et apud Scriptores practi-

has a far broader meaning, which is shown by historical sources and respective terminologies.

The essays in this volume therefore pay specific attention to the question of terminology used by the sources themselves to classify these various documents that are often subsumed by the concept of *inventory*. While research on inventories clearly shows that the time from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries may be considered the core phase of inventorying with a clear peak starting from the sixteenth century, inventories and related documents nonetheless existed well before and after that period and they have been in use up to the present day. It is thus the aim of this volume to extend this time period from the early Middle Ages to the twentieth century rather than only focusing on the core centuries of inventorying processes.

## Organization of this volume and contributions

The essays of this volume offer a wide range of different perspectives on inventories as sources. In order to avoid a simple chronological approach to the topic we decided to arrange the contributions in thematic groups. It is clear that a different topical arrangement would have been possible, for instance with a focus on ecclesiastic history, which was very important for the development of inventories (contributions of Pickles, Curzel, Fey), on art history (Fey, Pinto, Rossetti) or on approaches regarding the spatial settings of buildings (Hinds, Antenhofer/Matschinegg, Rossetti). However, since these perspectives are rather common within the historiography on inventories, it seems more stimulating for the further research to highlight aspects that have so far not been fully taken into consideration.

In view of the primary topic of this volume the first group of essays uses specific methodological approaches to inventories as sources. Katherine Anne Wilson opens this section, offering a performative approach. She presents inventories from the Burgundian court to reconstruct political 'theatres' and 'actors' involved in the performance of power at court. In her reading the people mentioned in the inventories as well as the objects can be regarded as active agents in the displaying of power, and the maintaining and creation of networks and social relations. The inventories themselves play a role as agents in a critical political moment for the Burgundian dynasty in so far as their creations can be looked at as political acts via the relationships they display among objects and people visualizing networks of power. In

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cos.<sup>4</sup> Charles du Fresne Du Cange, et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*. 10 vols., éd. augm., Niort 1883–1887, vol. 4, col. 409b, <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/INVENTARIUM1> (28 May 2020).



doing so, Wilson takes the new approaches of the material turn seriously<sup>39</sup>, bringing documents, objects, and people together in a new social reading of cultural history at court. Sarah Hinds presents a narratological approach to inventories, using the frameworks of Gérard Genette to explore the narrative elements within inventories. In doing so she convincingly shows that late medieval probate inventories not only recorded objects and spaces of late medieval houses in a more or less objective way but also constructed narratives based on the interplay of “legal frameworks, the inventorying genre, and the organizational techniques of individual appraisers”. Reconstructing such narratives helps reveal hidden objects and spaces as well as the movement of appraisers through the buildings that are condensed in the text of the inventory. Thomas Pickles moves the issue back to the origins of inventorying in the High Middle Ages with a specific look at the historiographic quality of texts in the form of lists. He challenges the older approach which regarded lists as simple bureaucratic texts – this is why they had often been removed from their original manuscript contexts. Using classical rhetorical history he unveils the moral quality of lists, which only becomes visible by interpreting the list in the context of other texts that were related to it, in his case a book list in the context of an abbatial election narrative and a re-foundation narrative of Whitby Abbey. Manfred Kern also draws on the argument of the interdependence between literary texts and forms of lists. He shows the ‘catalogue’ and the ‘description’ as traditional rhetoric means in literary texts. ‘Inventorious’ elements, as he calls them, add to creating cultural, social, and gender orders and practices and they might be regarded as the background of historical inventories as Pickles had shown in his contribution.

A second argument that several contributions in this volume share is the importance of inventories for the history of gender and family. While in his seminal essay on early modern inventories Riello stated with regard to probate inventories that they above all document male belongings,<sup>40</sup> several papers in this volume show that this is generally not the case and rather depends on the source material. The fact that inventories reflect power structures, which has been outlined in the opening section, makes it necessary to interpret these sources through the lens of gender history and particularly of women’s history, as women often remain invisible in the male-centred interpretation of sources and buildings. Carola Fey uses inventories and related documents on sacred objects that were recorded after the death of two widowed prin-

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39 See e.g. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford/New York 2005; Christina Antenhofer, *Die Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie im Kontext der Geschichtswissenschaften. Anwendungen & Grenzen*, in: Sebastian Barsch/Jörg van Norden (eds.), *Historisches Lernen und Materielle Kultur. Von Dingen und Objekten in der Geschichtsdidaktik*, Bielefeld 2020, 67–88. This summary is based on the abstracts of the essays.

40 Riello, *Things*, 2013, 136.

cesses from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to reconstruct their pious practices. By contextualizing the documents using e.g. letters she can clearly show how they were also influenced by questions of power regarding the belongings of the princesses disputed by male heirs and ecclesiastic institutions. Fey concludes the sources show that late medieval princesses had limited power over their belongings. Carla Alferes Pinto uses the inventory of the dowry of a Portuguese Infanta from 1522 to reconstruct the biography of the document. Its eighteenth century print shows how important the document was for the Portuguese dynastic and political history of later times. The inventory survives in two versions, a Portuguese and a Savoyard one, both illustrating the bride moving from her father's to her husband's house. By carefully comparing the two versions Pinto shows that they reflect different gendered constructions of the bride with regard to her political roles at the respective courts. The documents also become sites of negotiations for example on the value of the items of the dowry. Inventories are therefore also discourses on power and gender. Edoardo Rossetti places the focus on the history of families. Analysing a huge sample of inventories of the Visconti-Sforza families from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries he shows how these families rediscovered their glorious (medieval) past to claim their legitimation and prestige against their new Austrian Habsburg governors. Rossetti uses the mentioning of family portraits and other past related objects as indicators for the quality of inventories as sources for family memories. Finally, Ingrid Matschinegg and Christina Antenhofer question inventories and related documents as well as spatial structures and material remnants such as spurs to challenge the male view on castles. With regard to castle Bruck in Lienz (Eastern Tyrol) they shed light on the role this castle played for the counts of Görz and, most importantly, how it was used by male and female family members.

Whereas many essays in the first part are related to ecclesiastic and noble contexts – which largely reflects on the situation of (surviving) documents from the earlier time period – inventories are also extremely important sources for urban and commercial history. While Hinds touches the urban context and Pinto also looks at questions of trade, the third group of contributions in this volume deals with these topics in a more systematic way. Mona Garloff presents catalogues of books as sources for the history of book trade in the eighteenth century. She thus highlights a perspective different from the predominant view on book catalogues as indicators for the history of ideas and science, blurring the line of the distinction between catalogues as 'scientific' sources and inventories as 'administrative' ones. The catalogues she studies primarily serve to attract customers and display stocks of books available. Reinhold Reith and Elias Knapp discuss merchant probate inventories of Salzburg from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a key to the "world of goods"

available at that time.<sup>41</sup> The final section of essays addresses fundamental methodological questions, which are at the core of this volume, namely how inventories function as instruments of power and authority. A second aspect emerged as equally important; the fact, that inventories also often take on the form of ego documents as defined by Winfried Schulze.<sup>42</sup> In fact they provide insights into the lives of individuals, often in institutional contexts of people who otherwise might have left little or no traces in sources. Emanuele Curzel opens this section with a view on the role the Church played for the formation of inventories in the Late Middle Ages. It becomes clear that so many inventories for ecclesiastical properties survive because starting from the Early Middle Ages the Church had made it mandatory to regularly record mobile belongings of its institutions. Inventories in these contexts appear as highly regulated legal instruments of ecclesiastic authorities. Andreas Oberhofer takes the example of the inventories of a small town's museum to show how, starting from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, the museum changed its function reflected in the forms of the inventories. The founder of the town's collection integrated his 'inventory' of the collection into the story of his own life, which he similarly recorded in the form of a list. This example clearly shows the potential of inventories as ego-documents within the context of families and merchant writings. When the collection was later integrated into the town's museum, the new inventories now developed into academic catalogues. A third step occurred during the fascist regime when the museum was transferred to the regional capital and a new inventory was compiled now taking on the form of an instrument of power (of confiscation). Michael Span looks at probate inventories of rural communities from the eighteenth century. Even though such inventories were highly controlled by the authorities and mandatory legal documents, he can show that the way how they were made left considerable agency for local actors. This is most strikingly proven by their apparent incompleteness and suggests far more cooperative elements in subject-authority-relationships than often assumed. Finally, Ulrich Leitner treats inventories with a clear institutional background, namely inventories in administrative records of reformatories. He shows how the child welfare case files regularly included lists

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41 We regret that two further contributions that had originally been planned for this section could not be included due to other commitments. Bart Lambert (Brussels) on the occasion of the workshop presented registers of auctions of shipping cargoes from shipwrecked vessels in fifteenth-century Netherlands discussing whether they were inventories or accounts. These sources also shed a light on the history of commerce and the people working on ships and at auctions. Elisabeth Gruber (Krems/Salzburg) explored accounting books with regard to lists of objects created on specific occasions to examine the use and arrangement of things in late medieval Vienna.

42 Winfried Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte? Vorüberlegungen für die Tagung „Ego-Dokumente“*, in: Winfried Schulze (ed.), *Ego-Dokumente. Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte*, Berlin 1996, 11–30.

and inventories documenting the children's bodies, their behaviour and the objects they possessed and received. While these documents are clearly media of power discourses, they can also be read as ego-documents since they are among the very few sources that give insight into children's lives.

Though covering the latest time period, the final contribution of this session leads back to the observation Pickles expressed in his essay on the earliest inventories: namely that traditional scholarship often overlooked lists regarding them as simply administrative sources difficult to interpret and of little interest. It is no wonder that so far they have been disregarded by traditional approaches to the study of historical primary sources (*Quellenkunde*). This observation sheds significant light on the importance of the often hidden (textual) context of inventories as well as on their value as texts in their own right – a theme that emerges in many essays of this volume. Inventories and lists were often neglected and regarded as less important than other more explicitly narrative sources only because of their listed forms. This is why they had less chance of surviving and were often separated from their original context making it hard to interpret them, as for example the contribution of Carla Pinto for the sixteenth century but also Ulrich Leitner's essay for the twentieth century prove. It is about time to consider 'listed telling' as a form of narration in its own right as Manfred Kern proposes in his contribution.

To sum up, all essays clearly show that inventories must be regarded as texts in their own right; they fulfilled political functions like other more narrative sources, and they can be regarded in themselves as social actors that displayed and created networks among people, objects, and spaces. Far beyond being simple bureaucratic lists they always developed narratives that add to their interpretation and can be used to reconstruct inventories as complex texts on social and political relations revealing these documents as key elements in a history of power.

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