Where is Heimat? Can Germans find a new one even in the American West? These were the core questions of a conference in Los Angeles, organized by the Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project’s volume editor Jeff Fear and Paul Lerner, director of the Max Kade Institute for Austrian-German-Swiss Studies (USC), that offered an exciting opportunity to compare the well-known German exiles and immigrants of the interwar period with many German-American immigrant entrepreneurs, most notably in the movie and entertainment industries.

The participants and many guests were welcomed at the Max Kade Institute by the organizers, Bill Deverell and German Deputy Consul General Stefan Biedermann. The latter had clarified that the large German(-American) community in Los Angeles, at least one-half million people, is quite disperse. He named four groups: The Holocaust survivors and exiles, the emigrants who arrived after World War II, the young urban professionals in the entertainment businesses, and the pioneer generation of German-Americans, who had come
to California already in the 19th century. Although all from German heritage, these groups did not commonly interact with one another.

The first session, chaired by Marje Schütze-Coburn, dealt with Intellectuals, Writers, Artists. Ted Bahr presented “Weimar on the Pacific Revisited.” He not only discussed the general history of German exiled intellectuals in Los Angeles but reflected on the meaning of the term “Weimar” for those who had to leave their Heimat. Thomas Wheatland added a very nuanced analysis of “Critical Theory. The Los Angeles Years.” He emphasized the differences between the New York and the Los Angeles time of the Frankfurt School and gave new light to the often complicated relation of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno on the one side, and Franz L. Neumann on the other side. Michaela Ullmann spoke on “A lasting legacy: Lion and Marta Feuchtwanger’s impact on preserving the memory of German-Speaking exiles in Southern California.” She gave an overview both on the large number of German writers in the Los Angeles region and on the activities of the Feuchtwanger Memorial Library. The following vivid discuss circulated around the relevance of space and place for the immigrant’s experience and work.

After a culinary break, delivered by the Currywurst Truck of Los Angeles, session 2 dealt with Exhibiting the Émigrés. Chaired by Bill Deverell, Karen Wilson gave powerful insights into the exhibition “Jews in the Los Angeles Mosaic,” presented by the Autry National Center from May 2013 to January 2014. Banker Isaias Hellman and the large number of Jewish movie producers were used as examples to discuss the specific flavor of Southern California. Wilson’s thesis, “Jews made Hollywood, and Hollywood made LA,” however, was discussed only as a tapering, not as a valid empirical, statement. Doris Berger, presented the structure of the forthcoming exhibition “Light & Noir: Exiles and Émigrés in Hollywood 1933-1950.” Again, the Jewish-German relations were debated vigorously.

The third session focused on a quite different and much broader group, namely Immigrant Entrepreneurs in California. Chaired by Jeff Fear, the presenters focused predominantly on those German-Americans, who contributed to the rapid rise of Los Angeles as the leading metropolis in the U.S. West. General editor Hartmut Berghoff started with a detailed overview on “The German-American Immigrant Entrepreneur Project.” He also highlighted some of the most interesting biographies, namely Henry J. Kaiser, Harry Cohn, Jacob Beringer, and Emanuel Bronner. General editor Uwe Spiekermann
continued with a case study on “The Spreckels Family in Southern California.” The urban development of Los Angeles’s main competitor, the “one man town” San Diego, is closely linked to the investments of John D. Spreckels into urban infrastructure and both the beautifying and industrializing of the metropolis, now ranked eighth in the U.S. metropolitan regions. Kathleen Feeley drew the attention back to Los Angeles, speaking on “American, then German: Irving Thalberg and the Second Generation in Hollywood.” The “wonder boy” of first Universal Pictures and then MGM was able to combine European and American traditions and to anticipate the desires of audiences in motion. Again, the discussion was intense and challenging: Core questions of the Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project were discussed, namely the differences between German and German-Jewish businesspeople, the meaning of being German for doing business abroad, and the sources of the case studies. Jürgen Kocka (UCLA), one of the guests, requested the other side of the success stories and wanted to hear more on loses and failures. Finally, the relevance of philanthropy for businesspeople and immigrants was discussed in detail.

These and more questions continued to be debated during dinner at the USC University Club. The main dish, however, was served by Cornelius Schnauber, who shared his memories on Fritz Lang, Fred Zinnemann, Billy Wilder and many others in his talk “Speak German You Are in Hollywood: Episodes and Experiences with German-Speaking Exiles and Émigrés.”

The second day, February 8, 2014, was held at a different location: The conference met at the Villa Aurora in Pacific Palisades. This mansion, bought in 1943 by Lion and Marta Feuchtwanger, was once a center of German emigrant’s intellectual life. After restoration, the villa today hosts the 20,000-volume Feuchtwanger Memorial Library and is an open place for literature, fine art, film, and music. Villa Aurora director Margit Kleinman welcomed the group and gave some details on the history of this German-American landmark.

Session 4 widened the perspective to Exile, Science and the State. At the beginning, chair Jonathan Steinberg expressed the gratitude of all participants to the German State, who financed the restoration of the Villa Aurora and opened its doors for the conference. Afterwards, Judith Goodstein returned to history, presenting “Caltech’s German Connection.” From the early 1920s, physicist Robert A. Milikan hired first-class experts in Germany to develop American science and to teach American students. Paul Epstein, Theodore von Karman, and
Benno Gutenberg were the most pronounced examples; while German-trained Linus Pauling, already a prominent pioneer for the politics of U.S. self-recruiting, practiced at Caltech until the early 1960s. Anne Schenderlein added archival based research on “Making German History in Los Angeles: German-Jewish Refugees and the West German Foreign Office.” Focusing on Jewish refugees in Los Angeles, she analyzed how they found a new Heimat in California and how this group interacted with the diplomatic representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany. Trust-building and the reciprocal use of the German diplomats and the Jewish community for their different goals of reconciliation and restitution were analyzed. Although fraught with tension, post-Holocaust German-Jewish relations were not only resulting from negotiations between Bonn, Jerusalem, and New York but were also influenced from the periphery — at least in the U.S. The session was completed by Giles Hoyt’s presentation on “Max Kade: Pertussin and Philanthropy.” The German-American immigrant entrepreneur invested most of his fortune, earned in the pharmaceutical industry, for the improvement of German-American relations after World War II. Although very prominent, Kade’s biography still offers many research opportunities because he was a quite private and modest person.

Los Angeles gives dreams to the world, and consequently the fifth session tackled Film Worlds. Those who only had Hollywood in their mind were surprised by Nicole Neuman’s contribution on “Home Sweet Heimat: Finding Germanness in LA’s Moviegoing Culture.” She analyzed the history of the La Tosca Filmbühne, a Los Angeles cinema, which presented German-language movies, mostly Heimatfilme, to a German and Austrian immigrant audience from the late 1940s to the early 1980s. The movie theater offered the idea of an ideal Germany far beyond National-Socialism and the controversies in democratic West Germany — a dream world of the fatherland still existing for many of those who came to the U.S. after World War II. Margrit Frölich, in contrast, presented in her paper “Liberties and Constrictions: Émigré Producers in Hollywood Motion Pictures” Los Angeles as a typical American place — in some opposition to more international New York. Joe Pasternack, Eric Pommer, and Sam Spiegel were biographical examples for her analysis of the movie industry predominantly during the 1940s. Finally, Tom Kemper contributed another gatekeeper business in talking about “Sue Mengers and the Rise of the Hollywood Agents.” While producers lost importance in the post-war era, Hamburg-born Sue Mengers represented leading actors of the new cinema from the late 1960s on and became a power in
Hollywood until her retirement from International Creative Management in 1986. The discussion not only added biographical examples but also focused on the ongoing challenge for Los Angeles/Hollywood to remain the dominant place for the global film business.

The concluding session, entitled *Weimar on the Pacific Revisited: Exiles between Two Worlds* and chaired by Paul Lerner, again broadened the scale and scope of German immigrants. Marion Kant, in her presentation “For the Time Being a Row of Palm Trees Is Nothing but a Nice Façade,” offered a challenging and paradoxical analysis of theatre and dance in emigration and exile in the U.S. Collective undertakings, like the German theatrical culture, suffered intensely and the German concept of theatre had no real chance in an entertainment culture. In dance, however, the modernism supported by the Nazis (for instance Mary Wigman and Hanya Holm) was integrated in the U.S. Cristina Stanca Mustea led — in her lecture “No More Crossings: Carl Laemmle’s Last Visit to Germany” — the focus on the Universal Studio founder’s interaction with Germany. In 1918 and 1919, he produced anti-German *Hetzfilme*, re-established Universal on the German market from the early 1920s on, and suffered under the ban on his anti-war movie “All Quiet on the Western Front” in 1929. As a consequence, he began to bring his relatives and many other Jews from Germany to the safe haven of the U.S. The final paper was given by Joachim Schlör, who addressed “Werner Richard Heymann in Hollywood: A Case Study in German-Jewish Emigration after 1933 as a Transnational Experience.” In spite of all the musical exchange between Europe and the U.S., even a leading composer like Heymann could not continue his work in exile but had to deal with the necessities of the film music market in Hollywood. The market triumphed over the individuality of an artist; and the composer, although really successful, suffered abroad, missing the opportunities of early 1930s Germany.

The conference put the immigrant entrepreneurship experience in a broad and challenging perspective. Many of the pioneering German-Americans had already made their fortunes by the time this wave of exiles and emigrants arrived in Los Angeles. In spite of their common national background, there was not much interaction between those already established and the Jewish, social democratic, and communist newcomers. Although the movie industry offered many opportunities for the emigrants, even those who succeeded did not really find a new *Heimat* in the West.

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