# Migrant Knowledge: Concepts, Voices, Spaces

Workshop at GHI West, Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington DC
Berkeley, April 20 - 21, 2018
Conveners: Albert Manke (Bielefeld University), Lok Siu (UC Berkeley), Andrea Westermann (GHI West)

## Friday, April 20

**Keynote & Reception**

- **5:00 p.m.** Welcome Addresses:
  - Andrea Westermann (GHI West)
  - Simone Lässig (GHI)
  - Jeroen Dewulf (Institute for European Studies)
- **5:15 p.m.** Keynote with Evelyn Hu-Dehart (Brown University)
- **6:30 p.m.** Reception

## Saturday, April 21

**Roundtables**

- **9:00 a.m.** Coffee
- **9:30 a.m.** Roundtable A: Concepts
  - **Speakers:**
    - Kijan Espahangizi (University of Zurich)
    - Julia Roth (Bielefeld University)
    - Nicholas de Genova (Independent Scholar, Chicago)
    - Carlos Sanhueza Cerda (University of Chile)
    - Claudia Roesch (GHI Washington)
  - **Moderator:** Andrea Westermann (GHI West)
  - **Commentator:** Kevin Ostoyich (Valparaiso University)
- **12 p.m.** Lunch
- **1 p.m.** Roundtable B: Voices
  - **Speakers:**
    - Madeline Hsu (University of Texas)
    - Kathleen López (Rutgers University)
    - Fredy González (University of Colorado)
    - Leslie Hernández Nova (ERC-BABE project, EUI)
    - Massimo Perinelli (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation)
  - **Moderator:** Albert Manke (Bielefeld University / GHI West)
  - **Commentator:** Sören Urbansky (GHI West)
- **3:30 p.m.** Coffee Break
- **3:45 p.m.** Roundtable C: Spaces
  - **Speakers:**
    - Eiichiro Azuma (University of Pennsylvania)
    - Ana Paulina Lee (Columbia University)
    - Sofie Steinberger (University of Cologne)
    - Vivek Bald (MIT)
  - **Moderator:** Lok Siu (UCB / GHI West)
  - **Commentator:** Monica DeHart (University of Puget Sound)
- **6:00 p.m.** Concluding Remarks
- **7:00 p.m.** Dinner

Restaurant FIVE
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In 2017, the German Historical Institute (GHI) Washington DC opened a Pacific Regional Office on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. One of GHI West’s aims is to invite interdisciplinary dialogue between history and neighboring fields to develop research on “migrant knowledges”, a conceptual focus that brings together two seemingly disparate fields, migration studies and the history of knowledge. In its multi-faceted meaning, “migrant knowledges” points to the knowledge made and held by migrants, as well as to the knowledge of and for migrants. Last but not least, the notion brings epistemological issues to the fore. Knowledge differs in kind and form across space, time, and cultures; it is both produced in specific (gendered and class-structured) contexts, and recurrently in transit, translated, forgotten, or questioned. With particular but not exclusive focus on the inter-area and interdisciplinary history of the Americas from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first, our workshop seeks to explore the possible methodologies, narratives, and empirical sources that facilitate a critical engagement with the concept of “migrant knowledges.”

The format of the workshop is interactive and seeks to engender exploratory debates within and among three consecutive roundtables. Each session is guided by three central questions, to which participants will prepare pre-circulated responses. Each speaker will have 10 minutes to present his or her ideas. As the format of the workshop includes ample time for discussion, we encourage everyone to participate actively in all three sessions. In each session, a commentator will reflect on key points and raise questions for further inquiry (10 minutes).

We would like to thank our co-sponsors at UC Berkeley:
Roundtable A: Concepts. Creating a Conceptual Space for Migrant Knowledges

Peter Burke, in his 2016 book *What is the History of Knowledge?*, sees a veritable “epistemological turn” at work in the humanities and social sciences at large. Without labelling themselves as historians of knowledge, many scholars of migration are dealing with the production of knowledge such as the categorization, racialization, or legalization of migrants by state officials. They also study migrants’ knowledges and explore the making and impact of memory in transnational communities; cultural enactments and social networks; or instances of intentional forgetting. They analyze the strategies migrants employ in order to enter labor markets, mobilize for public support, and practice cross-ethnic/cross-racial solidarity. Historians of science or intellectual history have started to look beyond university campuses and state bureaucracies, beyond (Western) elite or expert knowledge. They explore what and how people know about such diverse topics as history, climate change, the world economy, democracy, identity politics, or the new media. Moreover, they think about how this knowledge is embedded in and, in turn, feeds into larger systems or infrastructures of knowledge, such as (social) science, popular culture, or religion.

Guiding questions:

1. How do you identify and access migrant knowledges from your field of study?
2. How do the history (and sociology or anthropology) of knowledge and the field of migration studies imagine each other?
3. What are your ambitions of interlinking both fields of research, methodologically and/or in terms of subject matter?

Roundtable B: Voices. Framing Expressions of Migrant Knowledges: A Contested Ground

As migrants move, so do the knowledges they convey. The production of migrant’s knowledge, like knowledge production in general, is framed by cultural patterns and socio-economic structures that reflect sovereignties of interpretation in dispute. Unequal access to knowledge, as well as unequal distribution of concepts and unequal establishment of guiding ideas have an impact on how migrants’ voices and memories can be (made) heard by migrants and others. Moving from one place to another, the ongoing transcultural and multidirectional necessity to adjust to different cultures and contexts produce a higher probability that continuities are altered, ruptures occur, and silences prevail. In this panel, we want to analyze the ways in which migrants’ knowledge is expressed and at the same time framed by a complex set of intersecting markers that more often than not lead to a silencing of migrants’ voices and memories in the Americas and beyond.

Guiding questions:

1. Under which framing conditions is migrants’ knowledge being produced and distributed?
2. What impact can migration have on the production of knowledge?
3. Which strategies have migrants used to make their voices heard or to counter the silencing of their voices and memories?
Roundtable C: Spaces. Spatial Frameworks for Studying Migrant Knowledges: Hemispheric, Transpacific, Diasporic, Spanish Pacific...

Over the past few decades, since the “transnational turn” called into question the strict borders of area studies, we have witnessed a vibrant exploration of alternative conceptual-geographical metaphors, including diaspora, transborder, hemispheric, transpacific, and Spanish Pacific formations. This panel examines how these conceptual-geographical frameworks shape our approach to studying and understanding migrant circulations and migrant knowledges. For instance, theories of diaspora have facilitated investigations into homeland-diaspora relations and relations among the diaspora; hemispheric studies have focused our attention on the uneven inter-American dynamics that shape migration across the Americas as well as the practices developed by migrants themselves; the transpacific approach turns our attention to the historical as well as the revitalized and emergent circulations and relations forged across the Pacific. In all these instances, migrants not only activate existing networks but also produce new ones in order to navigate the ever-shifting conditions they confront. The challenge of this panel is to bring into conversation these different frameworks, to critically assess their particular interventions and overlaps, and to imagine new framing devices that can address, as fully as possible, the complexity of migrant circulations, practices, and knowledges.

Guiding questions:

1. Choose one conceptual-geographical framework: How would you evaluate its utility in addressing the study of migration and migrant knowledges?
2. Can you provide a concrete example that illustrates how the approach shapes and helps sharpen our analytical focus on migrant circulations and knowledges?
3. What are the convergences and divergences of this particular framework with others?