

MIGRATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Panel Series at the 40th Annual Conference of the German Studies Association in San Diego, September 29 — October 2, 2016, sponsored by the German Historical Institute Washington. Conveners: Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), Swen Steinberg (University of California, Los Angeles, and University of Dresden). Participants: Daniel Bessner (University of Washington), Lisa Gerlach (University of Braunschweig), Deniz Göktürk (University of California, Berkeley), Jan Logemann (Göttingen University), Rebekka von Mallinckrodt (University of Bremen), Caitlin Murdock (California State University, Long Beach), H. Glenn Penny (University of Iowa), Kristina Poznan (College of William & Mary), Miriam Rürup (Institute for the History of the German Jews, Hamburg), Anne Schenderlein (GHI Washington), Allison Schmidt (University of Kansas), Philipp Strobl (Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne), Konrad Sziedat (University of Munich), Anna Vallye (University of Pennsylvania), Brian Van Wyck (Michigan State University).

This panel series focused on a field of research that is emerging at the intersection of the history of knowledge and the history of migration. This dynamic field, as series organizer Simone Lässig emphasized in her opening remarks, offers potential not only for historians but also for scholars from other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Up to this point, the historiographies of migration and of knowledge have not had much to say to each other. State, NGO, and academic actors have produced knowledge about migration and migrants, and the production of this knowledge is sometimes studied. We know little, however, about how knowledge was used, produced, and mediated by the migrants themselves. We can fill this gap, we can shed new light on migrants as actors, Lässig argued, by linking the two research fields. In this way, we can learn how migrants acted as bearers, translators, and producers of knowledge in their old and new homelands. It is also possible to investigate how and the degree to which migrants were able to convert the knowledge they brought with them into usable cultural capital in new social, economic, and cultural contexts.

Of course, there is also much more to learn about the production and distribution of governmental knowledge in the face of migration processes. This topic was the focus of the first panel, entitled “Knowledge and Trans-Migrants in the Late Holy Roman and Habsburg Empire.” In the first paper, Rebekka von Mallinckrodt investigated

the history of trafficked persons within the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in the eighteenth century and how this forced migration changed legal concepts within the state. German individuals such as soldiers, seamen, missionaries, and merchants actively participated in colonization and slave trading, trafficking people back to the empire. Consequently, German courts and administrations eventually had to take a stance on the issue of slavery. In order to find a solution, they looked to their own past and that of their European neighbors — mostly France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. But it took time for the empire to establish its own system — much of the eighteenth century, in fact. According to Mallinckrodt, “the otherwise eloquent parties” involved in these discussions were “relatively laconic” when it came to differentiating between terms such as “slavery” and “serfdom.” She showed that the Holy Roman Empire was not looking for a debate about slavery as such but rather trying to find practical solutions that served its own purposes at the time.

Moving to the next century and in part beyond the German-speaking lands, Kristina Poznan focused on the influence that migration had on governmental knowledge and the challenges Austria-Hungary faced as a Dual Monarchy. Concentrating on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Poznan investigated a timespan that was shaped by transatlantic migration from Europe to the United States. She showed that governmental institutions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire had a strong interest in gathering knowledge about how and why their residents migrated and what happened to them overseas. This interest was rooted in the contradictory circumstance that the Dual Monarchy was able to profit from emigration monetarily because of remittances but at the cost of losing a significant portion of its population. In the particular case of Austria-Hungary, some aspects of governmental supervision over migration fell to the Empire’s joint foreign ministry while others fell into the jurisdiction of Austria’s and Hungary’s respective “national” governments, which controlled domestic policy. This situation evinced both advantages and disadvantages for the stability and outreach of their administrative networks as well as for the flow of information. Changing perspectives at the end of her presentation, Poznan also shed light on the considerably lower interest displayed by American authorities in the new migrants’ countries of origin.

In the last paper on this panel, Allison Schmidt investigated the “German and Austro-Hungarian Surveillance of Transmigrants in the Age of Open Borders,” using the example of Josef Gärtz, a Transylvanian Saxon who migrated to the United States in 1910. For this case study,

Schmidt drew on Gärtz's diary, which she supplemented with documents produced by steamship companies and government health officials on the millions of eastern Europeans who traveled by train from Austrian-Hungarian territories to the northwestern ports of departure in Germany. In this way she was able to connect institutional perspectives with individual experience. At the individual level, the protagonist found himself forced to ride atop two trains to avoid migrant inspectors when he crossed the Austrian and the German border. At the institutional level, Schmidt convincingly argued that there was strong governmental interest in monitoring and policing the travelers. In this way, her research confirms recent scholarly findings on the existence of state border controls even before the First World War.

Caitlin Murdock's comment on the first panel spoke to the broader project of linking the historiographies of migration and knowledge. She characterized migration as a process that — by its very nature — requires the active construction, interpretation, and appropriation of knowledge by a variety of historical actors. Murdock suggested that the people and institutions mentioned in these papers created knowledge about migration through the lenses of their own circumstances and in this way were acting on strategic choice and/or selective ignorance. The main challenge for historians is to approach migration and knowledge as a multivalent conversation in which they have to look for the subtext of underground knowledge intertwined with official understandings — and in which they have to consider not just what information people had but what they chose to embrace or discount.

The second panel, "Transfers and Disconnects," considered transatlantic migration since the 1930s and the transfer and cultural translation of knowledge. In his paper, "Lost in Translation," Jan Logemann shifted the focus from stories of "successful" transfers of knowledge and the positive influence of migration on home and host countries to knowledge transfers that led to conflicts or failure. Concentrating on European emigrants rooted in industrial design and marketing who came to the United States between 1930 and 1950, he demonstrated that translation is not a question of language but of culture. He also made clear that successful translation efforts depended not only on émigrés as cultural brokers open to adapting their knowledge to new contexts. These brokers also needed to find "receiving partners" interested in their new perspectives.

How and why the "Ghosts of Weimar" were present in the thoughts of émigrés from the 1930s to the 1960s was the topic of Daniel Bessner's

paper. He argued that some German intellectuals who immigrated to the United States between 1933 and 1939 were influential in shaping the Cold War and U.S. foreign relations. Focusing on Hans Speier, who became a propaganda specialist and then a Germany expert for the U.S. government, Bessner showed that some exiles saw their fate as an opportunity to combat the regime that had forced them to migrate. As a counterpoint to Speier's efforts to adapt to and integrate himself into the American intellectual and governmental establishment, Bessner turned to Max Horkheimer and his circle, who continued to see themselves as German scholars and thus isolated themselves from their American colleagues. Bessner's talk also spoke to the larger question of the role personal trauma can play in shaping political and cultural knowledge and thought.

In the last paper of this panel, Miriam Rürup focused on the translation of migrant experiences into law, showing how the fates of stateless migrants shaped the human rights discourse of the United Nations. Emphasizing the rising influence of supranational institutions and discourses after the Second World War, Rürup focused on events and discussions that lead to the 1954 U.N. convention on the status of stateless persons. She showed that stateless Jews and émigrés played a significant role in shaping the human rights discourse, as for example in the work of Hannah Arendt, Stéphane Hessel, Hans Kelsen, and Hersch Lauterpach. Their knowledge and experience manifested itself in three important ways — as legal knowledge from the past, as biographical experience through their own migration experience, and sometimes as personal encounters regarding the situation in the Displaced Persons camps. In addition, she showed that the post-World War Two right of belonging — and therefore the right to be granted citizenship that had been revoked — in its consequences did not always comport with the intentions of the displaced persons themselves.

In her comment, Anna Vallye summed up some things the papers had in common. All three emphasized the role of individuals. Working within and against institutional structures or philosophical systems, these people shaped the discourse as social actors vested with certain kinds of social and political agency. This circumstance made Vallye wonder about what kinds of social actors the papers in this panel were actually dealing with, positing in Foucauldian terms that they resembled more “specific” and not “universal intellectuals.” She also pointed out the pitfalls of the notion of “Germany” itself, asking how German sovereignty as a historical problem framed the

German diaspora as paradigmatic for the study of twentieth-century transnational processes.

The last panel focused on the role of knowledge as profession, network, and experience in processes of migration from and to Europe. H. Glenn Penny's paper investigated "German Migrants and the Production of Knowledge in Latin America, 1880s-1960s." Focusing on Guatemala, while also taking Argentina and Chile into account, Penny looked at a variety of German communities with German schools, communities that took part in shaping the knowledge of these countries. Those communities, he argues, drew on global pedagogical networks. Furthermore, they contributed not just to the knowledge of children with German heritage because the children of local elites also attended the schools. Investigating textbooks produced in Germany with knowledge of mostly German researchers for German schools abroad, Penny showed how mindsets of race and nationalism challenged those transnational communities.

Philipp Strobl's paper examined the case of Anton Charles William, who migrated to Australia in 1938, the year of Austria's *Anschluss* to Germany. Strobl showed how the knowledge William accumulated in the interwar years in Austria traveled with him and gave him the idea to bring Austrian skiing to the Australian mountains. He founded the Australian Alpine Club in the 1950s, drawing on his knowledge of Austrian and German Alpine Clubs and maintaining contact with Austrian experts. This knowledge needed to be adapted when skiing was transformed from an elitist sport to a leisure activity for the masses. Consequently, William, who had rejected mass tourism before 1938, accepted the new circumstances and opened a chain of ski lodges. In this way, he can be seen as a textbook social agent who transferred ideas between two countries.

Turning to West Germany between 1972 and 1992, Brian Van Wyck examined the history of Turkish teachers' "dual responsibility." German education officials entrusted Turkish teachers — chosen by the Turkish education ministry — with instructing children of Turkish "guest workers" in Turkish language, culture and history in Germany. These teachers were tasked with ensuring the integration of Turkish children in West Germany. On the other hand, and more contested, they were responsible for preparing students for a planned return to Turkey, preventing their alienation from their Turkish cultural heritage, or, according to some, helping them come to grips with their bifurcated identities. Showing how the priorities of integrating and

reintegrating differed not only over time but also across regions, van Wyck made clear that this phenomenon was more complex, fluid, and diverse than recent research would have it.

In the final paper, Konrad Sziedat highlighted the importance of “biographical capital,” showing how not only academic expertise and overlapping opinions and ideals but also the migration experience of the Listy Group (leaders from the Prague Spring) influenced political discourse on the West German left in the 1980s. Characterizing this group of experts as “managers of collective expectations,” Sziedat outlined their major impact in the late 1980s on ideas about future political change in Eastern Europe. Thus, he illustrated how exiled experts helped shape both the *Ostpolitik* of the SPD and the foreign policy stances of the Greens in the late so-called Bonn Republic — with implications for the latter party’s attitude toward NATO collaboration with the United States outside the borders of the alliance’s member countries.

Summing up the different types of “migrant knowledge” in her comment, Deniz Göktürk argued that it is useful to distinguish three types of knowledge: knowledge produced and carried by migrants, knowledge about or for migrants produced by state institutions, and migrating knowledge. Scholars have to ask who produced, stored, and disseminated this knowledge and to what end. Which positions, intersections, and interests mattered in the circulation of knowledge? How did knowledge as cultural capital relate to the consolidation of elites and the hardening of class distinctions? One of the main challenges scholars face, according to Göktürk, is to understand knowledge as situated and moving.

At the end of the last panel, series co-organizer Swen Steinberg identified two key fields for further research at the intersection of migration and knowledge. On the one hand, many papers highlighted the potential of focusing work on concrete actors, both individuals and groups, in order to analyze processes of knowledge modification, translation, or adoption. This perspective is promising for migrant groups such as families and their intergenerational relationships. On the other hand, the intersection of migration and knowledge also reveals the role of ignorance as well as the various relationships of “knowledge in the plural,” such as tacit knowledge or situated knowledge, in the process of migration and integration (e.g.). This perspective also deserves to be given greater attention in the future.

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