DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY, AND “GERMANNESS” IN LATIN AMERICA DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

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At the outset of her anthology on being Korean in Japan, Sonia Ryang asks: “how many Koreans are there in the world today?” Given that “Korea is a small nation,” she quips: “this question would appear to be a relatively simple endeavor.” Yet it is not. It involves a calculus of “demography” combined with “political allegiance, social affiliation, and cultural identity.” Moreover, while scholars can locate Koreans in many places, they can be difficult to count. Their numbers shift quickly, “reflecting temporary or permanent repatriation, migration, immigration, naturalization, acquisition of residence, and other residential arrangements.” Such problems will be familiar to anyone intent on pursuing Germans abroad. So too, at least for scholars focused on the period 1871-1933, will be her contention that depending on the “legal practices and demographic methods of the host nation” a “Korean” could be either a person of Korean ethnicity who claims citizenship in a host country, or a person of actual Korean nationality. Those designations are much like the notions of Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans living abroad) and Reichsdeutsche (German citizens anywhere) that became robust around the turn of the century. From there, however, the similarities tied to identifying Koreans and Germans abroad diverge markedly. For “the demographic map of Koreans residing outside of their homeland,” Ryang argues, “reveals the cartographic traces of colonialism, World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War,” whereas the demographic map of Germans outside of the German nation-state reveals an altogether different set of traces. The German story also comes with heavier political baggage.

Indeed, in the wake of National Socialism and World War II, pondering the kinds of questions Ryang so lightly raises has been terribly fraught in the German context. The mere contemplation of a German demographic map similar to Ryang’s Korean one is highly contentious. Even the language she employs is all but taboo. For scholars focused on the middle of the twentieth century, for example, the term Volksdeutsche often calls up visions of Nazi interests in eastern Europe and the horrific violence they unleashed upon it, leaving suspect any historical actors’ use of the term, even when it occurred decades before the Nazis gained power. There are good reasons for such
associations and concerns; but they do little to help us understand the inclusivity of *Deutschtum* or “Germanness” during the interwar period or the great diversity of Germans who felt they belonged to a broader *Kulturgemeinschaft* (cultural community) long before the Nazis usurped that language, leaving it untouchable in the postwar era.

Moreover, worries about exclusionary, racist associations will do little to help us identify either the origins or breadth of the inclusivity inherent in terms such as *Deutschtum* and *Kulturgemeinschaft* — which were conglomerate rather than unitary categories that could accommodate a great deal of difference and multiple forms of hybridity. Those worries might even deter us from pursuing the kinds of global, diasporic networks that Stefan Manz has identified taking shape among Germans during the late nineteenth century into the interwar period or understanding how those networks emerged from inclusive notions of Germanness and an acceptance of diversity that evolved over the previous century. Yet both are worth doing for precisely the reasons Ryang has pursued Koreans and scholars such as Jun Uchida have done the same with Japanese.

We know that as nation making and globalization merged during the first decades of the twentieth century it was often outside of the nation-state that notions of ethnic and national character and belonging, notions of Japaneseness or Germanness, were most tested and defined. Yet in German history the historiographic focus has long remained on the rise of exclusionary forms of ethnic nationalism from the 1890s through the Weimar Republic and into the Nazi era. Has that focus misled us? In many ways it has. It has obscured the simultaneous promotion of inclusive forms of German cultural nationalism and the ways in which they fit into a global moment identified by scholars working on completely different parts of the world. It has also reified the complexity of diaspora nationalism in the German case.

This essay draws on Germans in three Latin American states to engage this broader phenomenon of diaspora nationalism and to underscore the degree of diversity and inclusivity that was inherent in many German places that took shape abroad. Specifically, after a brief discussion of German polycentrism, this essay uses the information produced by and about German schools in three very different locations — Guatemala City, the provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, and Santa Fé in Argentina, and southern Chile — as windows into German communities in those, and by implication, in other Latin American locations.

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More than any other institution, German schools became sites where the consistencies and great varieties of Germanness that arrived and evolved in Latin America gained their clearest articulation. Because those schools were both centers of communities and nodes in a global pedagogical network that thrived during the interwar period, they allow us to trace out the diversity and inclusivity tied to the notions of Germanness that were being shaped by Germans abroad, by Germans in Germany or its neighboring European states, and by members of host societies who often sent their children to these schools. This essay uses the records produced by and about those institutions as its primary empirical base.

I. German Polycentrism in Europe and Abroad

To understand the inclusivity and diversity that Stefan Manz identified around the turn of the century and pursue it into the interwar period we must first acknowledge that Germany and German history have been polycentric since the age of the Holy Roman Empire, and that for centuries the dominant notion of Deutschtum, or Germanness, was a conglomerate rather than a unitary category, one that easily accommodated difference and multiple forms of hybridity.8 This is not a radical premise. Indeed, in her contribution to The Oxford Handbook of German History Celia Applegate argued that many who “sought to capture Germany’s essence by cataloguing its places . . . understood place not as would the single-minded hedgehog or the multi-visual, inattentive fox, but as some hybrid creature who knows the one through the many.”9 Moreover, as those people sought to map out the location of Germanness in Europe, they had difficulty delineating the boundaries containing its multiplicity. As one of her subjects put it, those boundaries must “correspond to a line beyond which manifestations of German life cease.”10 Yet such lines were challenging to draw. For during the nineteenth century one could find those places in central, eastern, and western Europe, in Russia, and across the oceans in many other lands.11

German places, in short, were not always contiguous, and as Pieter Judson made clear with regard to the many inhabitants of such places in central Europe, the Germans living in them did not necessarily feel drawn to the German nation-state.12 In part, that was because their communities predated its founding in 1871, but it was also because the Germans who lived within those communities often had little trouble reconciling their cultural nationalism as Germans with their political loyalty to the states in which they lived — although many of the central and eastern European states that emerged in the wake of

10 Ibid., 49.
World War I were much less accommodating to their hybridity than the empires that preceded them. 13

One objective of this essay is to argue that the great diversity of German places identified by Applegate and others extended far beyond Europe and the German nation-state’s brief colonial possessions (1884-1918). Indeed, they were widespread across Latin America, and they could be found in Australia, North America, South Africa, and Russia as well. A second objective is to underscore that the communities inhabiting those places shared many of the characteristics identified by Judson among Germans in central Europe. Those characteristics mattered a great deal. For it was largely because of the ability of many Germans who went abroad to reconcile their cultural nationalism as Germans with their political loyalty to (or at least neutrality toward) the states in which they lived that such German places became common in Latin America by the end of the nineteenth century. Those places thrived because the German imagination easily accommodated this variety of

13 For a pithy discussion that draws on Judson and expands his arguments see: Maxwell and Davis, “Germaness beyond Germany.”
German places, and they most flourished where host societies found virtue in having Germans and German places in their states.14 During the interwar period, that included much of Latin America.

Comprehending the diverse and often interconnected nature of these German communities in Latin America requires understanding that Imperial Germany (1871–1918), much like the Italy portrayed by Mark Cohate, had become an emigrant nation by the early twentieth century.15 Just as the Italian state sought to make itself a global nation by tying itself to the millions of Italians who had left the peninsula by the turn of the century, Imperial Germany sought to capitalize on Germans abroad. Indeed, the central point of the 1913 German citizenship law was to formally bind German citizens who went abroad to the German state through the codification of *jus sanguinis*, which Nancy Green argues was “not simply an ethnicizing concept of citizenship but also a powerful way of constructing the nation even across space.”16 Official German colonialism thus sat within a much broader engagement of Germans with the world and a more complex set of transnational entanglements, which predated the acquisition of those colonies and persisted with new vigor after their loss.17 In fact, Germans abroad, who were instrumental in initiating the citizenship law for their own reasons, redoubled their efforts at network building after the Weimar Republic replaced Imperial Germany in 1919.18

Moreover, Europeans and their nation-states were hardly alone in this effort to construct nations across space during the decades before and after World War I. The Chinese state, for example, anticipated the German effort, extending citizenship to Chinese abroad in 1909. It too sought to capitalize on the millions of Chinese living under the auspices of other states, and neither they, nor the Germans, nor the Italians acted in isolation. All this happened during a particular global moment, at precisely the same time Koreans and Japanese, as Ryang and Uchida note, were beginning their modern history of living among each other.19

The point, then, is that if the act of harnessing former nationals (or ethnic compatriots whose ancestors came from the territory bounded by a modern state) was widespread among emerging nation-states during the decades before and after World War I, in many cases, including the German one, nation-states followed rather than led those efforts. As a result, as we move into the interwar period, multiple actors in and outside of the German nation-state were promulgating an inclusive notion of Germanness, and that notion thrived in many parts of the world. Indeed, its production, as Manz has argued, was essentially global;20 it

14 Penny and Rinke, “Germans Abroad,” 182.
20 Manz, *Constructing a German Diaspora*, 4.
was made possible by global transformations in networks of communication, trade, and travel.21

II. Inclusivity under Siege: Guatemala City

In her contribution to a recent volume on German colonialism, Jennifer Jenkins argued that the flight of ethnic Germans from Russia into Iran during the interwar period led to tense discussions about Germanness in Tehran.22 “Issues of ethnicity and citizenship — how to define the first and how to grant the second — were central to how both the German and Iranian governments sought to manage the refugees.”23 Given the wide mix of Germans among those refugees (including many Mennonites) and their long histories in Russia, that process of identifying, negotiating, sorting, and the stories that emerged “fit uncomfortably in the literature on German colonialism.”24 To begin with, Iran, much like many of the places Germans settled outside of Europe, was never meant to be an official colony. The German government’s interest in the area, such as it was, remained economic from 1871 through 1933. Individual Germans went to Iran for commercial and economic interests, and the German and Iranian governments facilitated those efforts with treaties of friendship and trade. While those brought advantages to both states, Otto von Bismarck’s regime and those that followed remained eager to ensure that economic relations did not lead to political liabilities. Direct political intervention was not deemed advantageous or wise.

Nevertheless, German economic involvement increased during the first decade of the twentieth century. Ruling elites in Tehran were keen to work with the Germans and pleased to have some living there. As rulers in Latin American states also noted, such Germans brought advantages — capital, commercial connections, skills, and a variety of characteristics they and the Iranian elites associated with Germanness, such as efficiency, reliability, and a strong work ethic. German institutions and associations provided the groundwork for a small German community in Tehran, especially the German School, founded in 1907. As Jenkins explains, it was “conceptualized as a Realschule,” and it employed “eight German and eight Persian teachers for the teaching of three hundred Persian students.” Moreover, “with its scientific laboratories and sporting facilities,” it “symbolized in Iran what it meant to be ‘German’ and ‘modern’,”25 and it provided German and Persian children access to both.

21 On the communication and trade networks and the ways in which they were quickly rehabilitated after WWI see: Michael B. Miller, Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth-Century History (Cambridge, 2012). For a broader discussion of travel and Central and eastern European states’ attempts to negotiate these transformations see: Tara Zahra, The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World (New York, 2016).


23 Ibid., 148. For similar debates about Germanness and refugees closer to Germany, see, for example, Winson Chu, The German Minority in Interwar Poland (New York, 2012).


25 Ibid., 150.
Much the same could be said about the presence of Germans in Guatemala and the German school in Guatemala City, which became the most highly regarded school in Central America by the 1930s. As in Iran, the presence of Germans in Guatemala should not be confused with a German presence — a kind of political beachhead. The Germans who lived there were not sent or managed by the German state. Rather they arrived independently over decades, beginning before 1871, continuing through the interwar period, and becoming the largest concentration of Germans in Central America (Guatemala retains that distinction today). Here too, although their numbers were much greater than in Iran, their goals were economic and commercial, treaties of friendship and trade between the Guatemalan and German governments facilitated their efforts, and they shied away from direct political intervention.26

Most importantly, Germans became a dominant force in the production and distribution of coffee — Guatemala’s most lucrative export by the turn of the century. In fact, German-owned coffee plantations, which sold almost all their product on the Hamburg coffee exchange, were responsible for a huge percentage of Guatemala’s gross national product.27 The transnational and transcultural connections that produced these plantations benefited Germans on both sides of the Atlantic, and Guatemala’s elites eagerly welcomed German capital and entrepreneurs, viewing them as integral to their liberal efforts at modernization and nation-making.28

The German school was founded in Guatemala City in 1901, and much like the school in Tehran, it brought a coveted, high-quality education to a diverse community — surprisingly diverse given the ethno-national rhetoric of the age. Guatemalan elites eagerly sent their children there. Even the children of the Guatemalan president, Manuel Estrada Cabrera, attended the school during its first decade.29 Its support was a priority for Guatemala’s German community. It was an essential part of their efforts to maintain their Germanness abroad and foster ties with their hosts.30 Consequently it promoted a highly inclusive notion of Germanness, of belonging, that could accommodate this diverse community with its multiple hybridities. That inclusivity and diversity were thrown into stark relief when the school came under siege in 1933. Wilhelm von Kuhlmann, the German ambassador to Central America, made this abundantly clear. He complained to his superiors in the German foreign office in Berlin that Nazi supporters, most newly arrived, were organizing a Hitler Youth group

26 The foundational work is: Regina Wagner, Los Alemanes en Guatemala, 1828-1944 (Guatemala City, 1991).


28 Those efforts, however, were based on a state-sanctioned plantation economy built on the legalization of debt peonage and what some scholars have termed neo-colonialism. Indeed, the history of that plantation economy and the Germans’ role in it remains highly controversial today. J. C. Cambranes, Coffee and Peasants: The Origins of the Modern Plantation Economy in Guatemala, 1853-1897 (South Woodstock, VT, 1985); Julie Gibbings, ‘Another race more worthy of the present’: History, Race, and Nation in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, c.1860-1940s (Madison: PhD Dissertation University of Wisconsin, 2012); Matilde González-Izás, Modernización capitalista, racismo y violencia: Guatemala (1750-1930), (México, D. F., 2014).


30 Wagner, Los Alemanes en Guatemala.
in the German school in Guatemala City. That group, he explained with exasperation, excluded non-German children, German children from mixed marriages, and anyone Jewish. Those actions, he protested, were destroying the school, and they were undermining the German community. Parents were removing children; local elites were withdrawing support; and leaders of the German community and its school association, which had slowly, and painstakingly built up the institution over decades, were dismayed. Based on the inclusion of all kinds of Germans, and dependent on tenuous and intimate relations with Guatemalan elites, Nazi agitation threatened to destroy the community.31

At the heart of Kuhlmann’s complaint was a conflict between two modes of Germanness: the first, which provided the foundation for the school and the community it served, was flexible, inclusive, and frequently flourished in places where Germans found themselves abroad. The rise of the second, however, has often obscured that inclusivity from our view. The second, of course, was a more exclusive, racialized nationalism — embraced, heightened, and promulgated by National Socialists — which was completely unsuited to German communities in Latin America. The central problem, as Kuhlmann and many others immediately recognized, was that there was no place for cultural, linguistic, and racial hybridity in this second notion of Germanness; more importantly from their perspective, there was also no place for German communities in Latin America without it.32

The German school and its community developed organically and dialogically with Guatemalan society, and this school, like the thousands of German schools extant in Latin America during the interwar period, functioned as a nodal point in networks that connected Germans in

31 Kuhlmann to Auswärtiges Amt (AA) 14 November 1933 in PAAA RZ 508 R62673.

32 Kuhlmann spoke for the generation of Germans who had created this community. After his transfer to Ireland, they continued to lobby his successor and to warn that Nazi propaganda was undermining the German community and disturbing relations within and among families. Further, even those like the merchant Friederich Körper, who had welcomed a Nazi electoral victory, agreed. As he and a dozen other leading members of the German community in Guatemala wrote: “It is not necessary for the promotion of the German school that German teachers act the part of registered Party members or even spread National Socialist propaganda among the children. German character, German Kultur and science are rich enough, so powerful and so well received among others, that further propaganda is superfluous, even damag- ing to good developments and consensus, and it also could ultimately lead to the closing of the school here.” This protest was signed and sent to the German Ambassador on 7 May 1934 “mit deutschem Gruss” by Körper and twelve other leading members of the German community, including the head of the German Club, G. M. Staebler. Friederich Körper Nachlass, Bremen Staatsarchiv, Karton 1: 7.13-1 Vermischte Korrespondenz.
Guatemala, and particularly Guatemala City, with people tied to other schools in and outside of Guatemala, as well as to associations of educators, groups of bureaucrats, and a wide range of institutions and organizations — churches, scientific associations, shipping companies, a variety of non-governmental support groups, such as the Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland (Association for Germanness Abroad — which began as an association to support German schools abroad), not to mention the German government and the governments of many German cities and states.33 The city government of Hamburg, for example, contributed money directly to the school in Guatemala City. So too did German business concerns, shipping companies, and financial institutions, all of which recognized decades before the German national government that such institutions helped ensure the retention and growth of local interests in German products and trade relations with Germans and German companies on both sides of the Atlantic.34

In order for the school to serve such a diverse set of interests, it had to be inclusive. It had to welcome the great variety of Germans who arrived in Guatemala, regardless of their confession, gender, place of origin, or class. Indeed, despite the considerable success of some Germans in Guatemala’s coffee industry (as well as other areas of commerce), not all the parents of German children in Guatemala were wealthy. Many, in fact, could not afford the tuition demanded by the German school in Guatemala City (which was supported by donations, fundraisers, school board dues, and tuitions). Yet the success of the school’s dual mission — to promote Germanness (i.e. German language, culture, and a sense of shared affinity) among the Germans who had settled there, and to champion German culture, industry, science and trade among Guatemalans, necessitated including the children of German craftsmen and laborers as well. In fact, as the directors of the school articulated in their reports, excluding German children from less prosperous families could have undermined the project of nurturing Germanness abroad by tipping the balance between native and non-native German speakers in the school. That, in turn, would have upset its curricula (bi-lingual plans based on Prussian models), further distanced it from German schools in Europe, reduced its ability to award coveted degrees recognized in Germany, Guatemala, and many other countries, and thus also diminished the school’s status within the eyes of the Guatemalan state and Guatemala’s elites.35

Every year the German schools abroad issued reports on their affairs. Those reports not only detailed their finances and listed acquisitions,
donors, and important events, they also categorized their students. Those reports have much to tell us about the character of the German communities in places like Guatemala. The breakdown in the 1933 report from the Guatemala City school, for example, which boasted that it held the rank of a Prussian Oberrealschule, states that it counted 240 students. Of the 130 students who were citizens of Germany, ninety-four spoke German as a mother tongue, while thirty-six did not; seventy of the students were Catholic, forty-five Protestant, and thirteen were Jewish. Only eighteen of the total number of students in the school were Jewish (about 7.5 % of the student body). Two of those were from Cuba and were not native German speakers; one of the remaining three from the United States may have been. It is unclear. The report is ambiguous on that point because it lumps the Jewish and non-Jewish Americans together. The rest, however, is quite clear: of the seventy Guatemalan children listed in the tables, eleven were identified as native German speakers; of the thirteen Swiss eleven were German speakers; so too were two of the seven Dutch; one of the six U.S. citizens; two of the four British subjects; and the single Austrian was also a native German speaker. The three Italians, two Nicaraguans, one Colombian, one Czech, and one French student were not native German speakers, but they were learning the language.36

Statistics can obscure as much as they reveal. For example, these numbers show that the student body was composed of about 50% native German speakers (119/240). We also learn that about 75% of the students (159/240) were Catholic.37 Still, the chart does not tell us who “the Germans” actually were. Indeed, little was made of the distinctions between Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche, indicating that such distinctions were of less consequence in this community than we might assume after the Nazis came to power. Perhaps that was because such a simple division could not accommodate its great diversity in 1933 any more than it could have in earlier decades. Nor could those categories help with the kinds of concerns that emerged in the annotations. Those notes explained that the children who spoke German in their homes included many from mixed marriages. The Spanish-speaking German children were “primarily” from mixed marriages as well, but they mainly spoke Spanish at home.38 It remains uncertain, however, if the Spanish-speaking mothers in those families who spoke Spanish at home were European, of European descent (Ladino), claimed an indigenous background, or were something else altogether. When taken in aggregate, these statistics and notations also help to explain why Kuhlmann and other leading members of the community were so upset by the efforts

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid
38 Ibid.
of local Nazis to transform the school and how incompatible the Nazi vision of Germanness was with a community composed of families whose orientations were necessarily transnational and local.

Kuhlmann’s warning against undermining the diversity of the German community in Guatemala, coupled with his suggestion that German teachers could do more for the German state by focusing on nurturing good relations with locals rather than aggravating them, only earned him a transfer to Dublin. Moreover, the German foreign office and the organization created for directing Nazi Party groups outside of Germany [Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP, or NSDAP/AO] were embittered at what they considered the recalcitrance of the school board in Guatemala City, which adamantly opposed Nazi Party members.40 After the initial scandal over the Hitler Youth group, the board resisted any effort to have members of the Nazi Party participate in the school, and it refused to allow even one of their representatives on the board. Threats from the German foreign office about cutting off the German government’s contributions to the school had little impact, because the board stopped requesting them. Only when Erich Kraske, Kuhlmann’s successor, refused to allow the five German teachers whose contracts ended in 1934 to be replaced with certified teachers from Germany, and then delivered threats from Berlin that the board members might lose their German citizenship, did he see results. Those, however, were not the results he wanted: the board resigned.

A new board of Nazi Party members and their supporters quickly replaced them; but only for a moment. This overtly political act led to scandals in the Guatemalan press, the Guatemalan Minister of Education’s refusal to recognize the results of the new school board election, and ultimately President Jorge Ubico’s decision to close the school. Kraske issued his resignation shortly thereafter, while writing to his family that with the closing of the school they had lost the best possible propaganda for Germany, the best insurance for good interstate relations, and squandered the labors and successes of two generations of “the best of the Germans abroad.” That was not the half of it. By the end of World War II, there would be little of this community left in Guatemala.

III. Managing Diversity in Argentina

If Guatemala’s diverse German community was small and vulnerable, and thus perhaps driven to its efforts at inclusion by a kind of negative...
integration, the German community in Argentina was much larger, even more diverse, and spread across a broad landscape of industry and agriculture. Indeed, much of the technology one encountered in the city of Buenos Aires was the product of German firms, and there was no shortage of German banks, trading houses, and other financial institutions and businesses.\textsuperscript{45} There were many other markers of German culture as well: multiple German-language newspapers reported local and international news, much of the latter drawn from German sources elsewhere in the world. These newspapers were divided along political lines, they were often antagonistic, and they included the German-Argentine socialist newspaper Vorwärts.\textsuperscript{46} That paper emerged and flourished because the class-antagonism characteristic of Imperial Germany at the end of the nineteenth century was also present among the tens of thousands of Germans in the city of Buenos Aires. Moreover, that only worsened during the interwar period when over 100,000 new German speakers poured into the city seeking employment after the war. There were also confessional divisions and many other factions — most of which had been made in Germany and became part of the diverse German-Argentine world.\textsuperscript{47}

Here too, Germans created schools. The city of Buenos Aires possessed some of the oldest and most respected of the German schools in Latin America, while across the region north toward Santa Fé and Misiones the schools varied widely with their communities: from the prestigious German school in Rosario, Argentina’s second port city, to the many one-room school houses in the Russian-German villages. Indeed,


\textsuperscript{47} For estimates of immigration numbers see: Ronald C. Newton, German Buenos Aires, 1900-1933: Social Change and Cultural Crisis (Austin, 1977), 78-82. For greater discussion of the many divisions in the community see: Anne Saint Sauveur-Henn, Un siècle d’émigration allemande vers l’Argentine 1853-1945 (Cologne, 1995).
while Guatemala never had more than three German schools of note, Argentina had over sixty-five by the turn of the century, and hundreds by the 1930s.48

We have the same kinds of statistics from Argentine schools as those compiled by the Guatemala City school — yearly reports testifying to the character of the student bodies and the communities that supported these many institutions. The upshot of these reports is that those communities varied greatly, and their diversity informed the debates over German study plans that took place in Argentina at the outset of the twentieth century. Reinhold Gabert, the director of the Rosario school, for example, underscored that diversity in the curriculum for his school, which later became the basis for his dissertation.49 It opens with the argument, and the promise, that the German School in Rosario should offer “approximately the same level of educational material as a corresponding school in the homeland.” At the same time, however, he wrote that the school board must also bear in mind that German children and their needs are different in Argentina. They have to be “raised and educated like Argentinians, because they will live and work as Argentinians, their future lies here.” Consequently lesson plans produced for German schools in Argentina must give the Spanish language as much weight as the German, and given the importance of international trade for the families of children in the port city of Rosario, other languages must be integrated into the curriculum as well. Those considerations would necessarily increase the total amount of material covered in the plan. Indeed, any such plan must also take into account the climate in which the classes were conducted, the makeup of the student body, the degree to which the students were exposed to other languages and cultures at home, in the street, and in their spare time. According to Gabert then, each school — because of its particular student body and unique community — would require its own plan in order to ensure the proper balance between the demands of a German education, the conditions in the school, and the particular challenges posed by the local environment.

That was a tall order, and one that made standardization next to impossible. It also undermined the efforts by German-Argentine elites, the German ambassadors and consuls, as well as other leaders in the German community, such as Wilhelm Keiper, to integrate the great variety of Germans in Argentina under a clear rubric of Deutschtum.

Keiper worked on this problem for decades, and he reflected on it at length. He lived in Argentina from 1904 to 1938, and he held a number

49 R. Gabert, “Lehrplan für die Deutsche Schule in Rosario de Santa Fe” in Bundesarchiv R/901/38672. See also: Reinhold Gabert, Das deutsche Bildungswesen in Argentinien und seine Organisation (Ph. D. Erlangen University, 1908).
leading positions in the German-Argentine community. He was the first director of the Instituto Nacional del Profesorado Secundario, helping the Argentinian government recast their teacher training. He also advised a series of German ambassadors on how best to manage and support German schools across Argentina, and thus how to maintain their communities’ ties to Germany. Ultimately, he became responsible for coordinating and directing higher school examinations in the country; he led an effort to centralize the German schools and their lesson plans; and the German foreign office often asked him to travel to German schools across Latin America that either applied for financial assistance or sought credentials that would allow them to confer higher degrees endorsed and recognized by the German ministry of culture. For nine years he also headed the Belgrano-Schule, one of Argentina’s elite German schools in a neighborhood of Buenos Aires, and for many years he was the director of the city’s German Scientific Association (Deutscher Wissenschaftlicher Verein).

Most importantly, Keiper worked closely with the German foreign office to improve and expand German schools in Argentina as part of its effort to promote and maintain the Germanness of these highly varied German-Argentinean communities. That was challenging, because as Keiper knew all too well, German speakers arrived in Argentina from many different places — Alsace, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, North America, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, other areas of central Europe, and other Latin American countries. Moreover, all of these groups changed once they settled in Argentina. After wrestling with this problem for decades, Keiper concluded that the very notion of “the German” had to be regarded as a “free and fluid concept,” one that could not be clearly demarcated. It could only be precisely discussed in terms of “tribal origins” (Stamm) and “tribal

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50 On Keiper’s importance see Rinke, “Der letzte freie Kontinent,” 356.

51 Wilhelm Keiper, Das Deutschtum in Argentinien (Berlin, 1943).
membership.” Even then, he lamented, precisely identifying those particular orientations “will always be hopeless” because of their fluidity. Germans did not arrive as eclectic groups and settle into stasis. They continued to develop as they combined into new groups, interacted with other groups of German and non-German Argentines, and as they adjusted to the Argentine environment. As they did that, they continued to develop their particular characteristics — adding variations to the themes of Germanness that were as fluid as culture itself.52

Keiper did see consistencies within that fluidity. He was adamant, for example, that the great variety of Germans who were part of Argentina’s cultural mixing had contributed “in a German way” to the nation-state. Their Germanness, he noted, was most evident when they came together for festivals and public events. For example, when they gathered for the ubiquitous Christmas parties and national celebrations in German schools and clubs, varieties of Germans came together. They often appeared in native dress, which he recognized had been shaped by disparate histories. Each of the costumes encountered at a Christmas bazaar in a German school, for instance, stemmed from particular regions in Europe, marking the differences among Argentina’s Germans even as the collective singing, dancing, and use of “high German” during these festivities underscored their unity.53

Within those circumstances, the greatest hope for nurturing the Germanness of these Argentineans, Keiper believed, was in the constantly renewed German neighborhoods of the big cities, with its incessant influx of new immigrants, or the kinds of rural isolation chosen by so many groups of Russian Germans, who far outnumbered those who wandered into Iran. In the city, one had constant access to the best German schools, the German-language theaters, newspapers, libraries, as well the many German associations, where German culture and German products were circulating freely, where Germanness was continually performed and renewed.54 In the countryside, he realized, it was the home that mattered the most. Indeed, in many ways it was the settlements of Russian Germans that he found most exemplary. Although they were strictly divided into separate Catholic and Protestant villages with their own churches and schools, they all shared critical characteristics. In particular, he emphasized the material traces of Germanness, such as “whitewashed houses with green shutters, white curtains, and potted geraniums, friendly

52 Ibid., 36-40.
53 Ibid., 221.
gardens with fruit trees and flowers." Everywhere one encountered “cleanliness and maintenance” and “good-natured, solidly-built” people in folk attire. In such settings, he wrote, “one believes to have encountered people from eastern Germany or eastern Pomerania or western Prussia.” Their “parlors and kitchens” made equally strong impressions, and he praised the “old fashioned household tools,” many made of copper or tin, the freshly turned beds, all of which brought forth a sense of a “good, old farming culture,” one that was “taken to Russia in the 18th century,” and remained “loyally cared for and hardly changed” in Argentina.55

The creation and support of their schools, Keiper wrote again and again, was essential for maintaining the Germanness of these communities, either rural or urban, and thus for retaining their ties to Germans in Europe and other places. The schools offered a correction for those families that could not afford the high culture of the cities or could not maintain the rigorous spirit Keiper and others had observed in many Russian-German homes.

During the 1920s, Keiper worked with some success toward a consolidation of the schools in Buenos Aires. Under his direction, the Belgrano School was integrated with another institute to create the Goethe School, which was soon able to award the highest of German degrees. As a result, he was able to claim in the school’s 1930 report that Buenos Aires now had an entire collection of schools that could allow students in the city to seek a variety of German degrees from primary through secondary schooling without leaving the city. Indeed, at that moment in time he was incredibly pleased. His efforts over many years had created a unified system, in which the Goethe school could be regarded as the ultimate institution for “an education in German culture and at the same time a preparation for life in Argentina.”56
The exceptional position of the Goethe School in this network, however, belied the great diversity of communities and characters that one would encounter in both the hundreds of other German schools scattered across smaller cities, towns, and villages and the schools that served working-class Germans in Buenos Aires itself. Those schools also strove to be essentially German. Yet much like the homes of the Russian Germans Keiper and many other German officials admired, these schools were bodenständig (down home) rather than bürgerlich (bourgeois). Many shared a work ethic and a commitment to German character similar to that pursued by Keiper and his colleagues. Still, they had smaller budgets and fewer faculties than the wealthy metropolitan schools, many could offer only primary education, and in many cases they defined German character differently as well. Consequently, the directors of the hundreds of other German schools in Argentina had no more interest in his plans for centralization than the leaders of their disparate communities. Indeed, the great diversity rivaled even what one would have found in Weimar Germany where centralization was also unlikely, and where cultural affairs, and thus the schools, remained in the hands of the various Länder or regional states. But then finding unity in that diversity was the point, at home and abroad.

IV. Inclusivity, Fluidity, and Persistence in Chile

Keiper argued, perhaps unsurprisingly, that Chile, and German Chileans, were different than Argentina and German Argentineans. Still, he had no problem including those differences within his understanding of German people and places. Like Argentina, Chile had groups of German traders and merchants in its big cities, especially in the capital, Santiago, and in the key port city of Valparaiso. Yet southern Chile and its chief cities of Concepcion, Osorno, and Valdivia were distinct. Southern Germans began settling in isolated regions of southern Chile during the middle of the nineteenth century. There, they cultivated and retained a vibrant Deutschtum supported by their churches and schools far from the auspices of the Chilean state. Many things changed around them over the course of time: the German nation-state took shape and trade increased; southern Chile was tied to the north through roads to the sea; railways and eventually highways cut across the landscape tying them even more to the capital. Moreover, the descendants of those early settlers also spread to the north. That eliminated their isolation, and many thought it threatened the vibrant Germanness in the territory. Nevertheless, Germanness persisted in these regions.

57 Keiper, Das Deutschtum in Argentinien, 528. For a broad discussion of Germans in Chile see: Jean-Pierre Blancpain, Les Allemands au Chili, 1816-1945 (Cologne, 1974).
Would we include those regions in a map like the one Ryang has considered producing for Koreans? How much diversity and hybridity would we accept in our mapping? Indeed, would not the character of such a map be dependent on our notions of inclusivity as much as those of the historical actors? Narrating such a history poses great challenges. Those are present in the Argentine, Guatemalan, and other Latin American contexts, but they are perhaps most explicit in the Chilean case. In order to effectively narrate the history of Germans and German communities in Chile from the middle of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, one must reconcile the fluidity driven by global networks of communication and exchange described so masterfully by Michael Miller in his *Europe and the Maritime World* with the persistence of bilingual, German-Chilean communities (including their many divisions and local peculiarities) over the course of a century.60

Thousands of Germans arrived in Chile during the nineteenth century.61 As German-Chilean communities grew, their members interacted and communicated with other individuals and groups — Germans and non-Germans alike. Indeed, the tens of thousands of Germans who lived in Chile by the turn of the century were never a unitary community. Much like those in Argentina, they were often fractured along class and confessional lines, and divided by political views, by the different immigration waves, even by their places of origin in German-speaking Europe. Moreover here, much as in the European locations studied by Judson, the vast majority integrated into the host society, becoming loyal Chilean citizens. In that sense, their communities were much like those fractured communities they had left in German-speaking Europe, except that they lived within settings (particularly the urban locations) that often included a majority of non-Germans together with the descendants of earlier German settlers, new German-speaking immigrants, as well as numerous German sojourners, travelers, and during the interwar era and through the Second World War, over 13,000 German-Jewish exiles — all of whom were integrated into Chilean *Deutschtum*.62

If the German communities within the Chilean nation state were in flux — ebbing, flowing, expanding, dividing, uniting — so too was the character of the cities, towns, and regions they inhabited. Migrations and technical innovations were constantly transforming them. The reverberations of the railroad that eventually cut across southern Chile in 1912 were perhaps the most striking manifestation of this more general trend. Even during its planning, German merchants and their advocates in Imperial Germany underscored the value of gaining and retaining footholds in Chile’s southern port cities, such

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60 Miller, *Europe and the Maritime World*.

61 George F. W. Young estimates that some 10,000 Germans arrived during the second half of the nineteenth century, and that their numbers more than doubled by the outbreak of World War I. Poor immigration and census records, however, make it very difficult to establish precise population numbers. Young, *The Germans in Chile: Immigration and Colonization, 1849-1914* (Staten Island, 1974), 1-10, 159.

as Puerto Montt. They wrote excitedly about the strategic economic and political investments that were to be made by supporting German communities and especially their schools in that dynamic region.

Here too, much as in Rosario or Guatemala City, financiers, industrialists, merchants, officials, shipping companies and many others in Imperial and later Weimar Germany lent support to German schools in the hope of tying new German emigrants and established German-Chilean communities to German-speaking Europe. Those cultural and economic ties, they consistently argued, would provide German industries with access to southern Chile’s wealth of natural resources and raw materials as well as markets for their goods among the South’s more prosperous inhabitants. In short, a wide variety of players had a stake in promoting Germanness in Chile.

At the same time, however, the eventual creation of the railroad led to ever-greater cries of fear, as a wide variety of people moved in and out of the region together with the raw materials and finished goods transported on those rails between Puerto Montt and Santiago. That movement of people ended the isolation of German settlers in the south. Many observers not only perceived the ethnic mixing that followed as a threat to the region’s German character but also to German industry’s continued access to the region’s materials and markets and a loss of economic interconnections between Germans in Chile, Europe, and other parts of the world. That too led to renewed support for the schools, regarded as the very anchors of Germanness in this and other regions of the state, and thus the anchors of the economic ties from which many Chileans, Germans, and German Chileans profited.

As a result of that on-going financial support and those economic connections, Germanness remained, as George Young noted, “decidedly apparent” in the region. While completing his book on the history of Germans in Chile in 1973, he wrote with appreciation that one could still hear German in the streets of Osorno, Puerto Montt, Temuco, and Valdivia. Much of the built environment, the houses and stores, testified to the history of German settlement as well. Moreover, he noted enthusiastically, it was still possible to gain an “entire primary and secondary education ... in German schools where even the very language of instruction is German!” Chile, he exclaimed, “is the only country in both Americas ... where that can happen today [1974].”

Young argued that the isolation of the German settlements and the efforts of German officials in Berlin, Santiago, and Valparaiso were...
responsible for that longevity. Isolation and officials certainly played their parts; but so too did the communities’ actions. Although the Germans in the south suffered from a strong confessional division between Catholics and Protestants, they all supported their schools and their connections to German-speaking Europe. That drew them together and set them apart. There were no schools, for example, in southern Chile when settlers from southern Germany arrived in the 1850s; and during the first decade of the twentieth century, even after considerable pedagogical reform, and despite the fact that Chile had more public schools than either Argentina or Brazil, over 60% of Chileans remained illiterate.\(^69\) That distinguished all factions of German-Chileans from their neighbors through the interwar period. It affected the characteristics attributed to people included in the category “German,” and it provided them with a consistency that ran across the confessional, economic, and political factions in their communities. As a result, the schools that emerged within German communities in Chilean cities, towns, and villages became ever-stronger focal points of German communities, grounding and linking them over time.\(^70\)

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\(^69\) Christel Converse “Die Deutschen in Chile,” in Die Deutschen in Lateinamerika: Schicksal und Leistung, ed. Hartmut Fröhlich (Tübingen, 1979), 301-72, here 321-23.

\(^70\) Indeed, Kerstin Hein notes that the schools in Santiago became the center of its German community and held it together across the twentieth century and into the period of her sociological study. Kerstin Hein, Hybride Identitäten: Bastelbiografien im Spannungsbereich zwischen Lateinamerika und Europa (Bielefeld, 2006), 196-98. For discussion of such hybrid identities and the schools during the early postwar era, see Carlos Grandjot and Ernesto Schmidt, Die beiden Heimatsprachen der Chilenen deutscher Abstammung (Santiago, 1960); and Marianne Lapper “Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache an den Auslandschulen in Lateinamerika,” Der deutsche Lehrer im Ausland 2 no. 2 (1955): 37-38. See also: Harry Werner, ed., Die Deutschen Schulen in Chile: Beiträge zu ihrem Verständnis und Selbstverständnis, zu ihrer Kritik und Selbstkritik (Köln, 1970). For a short history of the school in the capital that agrees with Hein’s study see: Nora Lucidi, Die Deutsche Schule Santiago de Chile: Gründung und frühe Entwicklung (Berlin, 2009).
The Chilean state also played a role. It actively encouraged the creation of these schools, and it helped support them financially. As Gustav Lenz wrote in *Die Deutsche Schule im Auslande* in 1903, many German schools received stipends from both the Chilean and German governments. The Chilean state often provided the schools with funds in exchange for educating numbers of non-German Chileans. It also took German schools as a model for its public schools; it hired many German teachers to work in them; and it also hired German pedagogues to reshape their pedagogical institutions.  

Already in 1903 there were thirty-two German schools in the country, and some, such as those in Osorno, Valdivia, and Valparaíso dated back to the 1850s. Valdivia, a year before Lenz published his essay, had the largest German school outside of Germany, boasting 430 students, 20 teachers, and lesson plans based on Prussian models.

Thus even after the financial crises following World War I forced the Chilean state to discontinue its financial support for the schools, and despite the loss of German stature following Imperial Germany’s demise, German Chilean schools and their communities thrived during the interwar period. They did so, however, because it was never these nation-states, or the Argentinian or Guatemalan states, that made and nurtured these schools. It was the German communities themselves and the ties they retained with a diverse collection of locals in their host societies as well as other Germans, or variants of Germans tied together by ever-faster sea lanes, communications networks, international German-language press, and global pedagogical networks that, focused on the world outside the German nation-state since their inception in the 1880s, sustained German schools and their communities across radical political ruptures and geopolitical shifts, or helped to re-establish them in many cases.

Nevertheless, the nation-states did matter a great deal, and Keiper was correct when he wrote that Chile was different. Thus while...
scandals erupted around Chilean schools from 1933 through 1936 that were much like those in Guatemala and later in Argentina, Chile offered the German schools and their communities a uniquely safe environment that allowed most to survive into the postwar era. That was not the case in Brazil, Argentina, or many other Latin American states, which, like Guatemala, purposefully closed German schools for internal political reasons, in response to U.S. pressure, out of a desire to support the Allied powers, or some combination of all three.73 Chile did sever diplomatic relations with the Axis powers in 1942, but it never declared war on Germany or closed the German schools.

As a result, many of their communities and interconnections remained. Thus, not long after the new West German government developed a respectable budget for the German foreign office, its officials quickly turned to Germans in Chile to reestablish relationships.74 To do that, they immediately offered support for Chile’s thirty-three German schools. Consequently, by 1964 those schools, which instructed some 9,800 students, boasted 150 “verbeamtete” (civil servant status) German teachers, and another 230 German-speaking teachers.75 The character of those schools, like schools in Germany, changed over time, yet as Kerstin Hein has noted in her study of German Chileans who attended these schools at the end of the twentieth century, many things remained the same. Most strikingly, many of the children who came out of these institutions retained the kinds of vibrant cultural hybridity that was integral to their existence a century earlier. They described, as they spoke to Hein, how they occupied multiple subject positions, and how German they were in Chile, even if they seemed somewhat less so to the Germans living in the Federal Republic. From their point of view, their notion of Germanness was more inclusive than that of West Germans, accommodating greater diversity. Indeed, their notions of Germanness were more akin to the ideas brought to Chile by some of their ancestors, ideas that many scholars who remain focused on a German history centered on the nation-state, are largely unable to see.

Conclusion

There are a number of revealing consistencies in these tales of German schools and their communities in Latin America during the interwar period. Taken together, they have broad implications. The diversity of Germans in Latin America and the inclusive notion of Germanness that tied them together from the Imperial period through the Weimar Republic matters: it reminds us that there were competing discourses of

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73 Friedmann, Nazis and Good Neighbors.

74 Georg Dufner, Partner im Kalten Krieg: Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Chile (Frankfurt, 2014); on schools in particular see: Hein, Hybride Identitäten.

75 See: Dziembowsk to Franke, “Instruktion für den neuen Missionschef der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Santiago de Chile,” 9 June 1964, in PAAA B 93 Band 372.
Germanness during the interwar period, and that they did not all succumb to the exclusionary racial vision of National Socialism. Indeed, many Germans abroad, as we can see most clearly in the Guatemalan example in this essay, pushed back against that vision. So too did many others, and as a result, Nazi efforts to create a uniform set of party groups in Latin America was an unmitigated failure. In case after case, local concerns trumped directives from the putative center of Berlin.\textsuperscript{76} That is not only important for our understanding of the interwar period but also for the ways in which the global interconnections that tied interwar Germans together could be so quickly reconstituted after economic disasters, regime changes, and the world wars.\textsuperscript{77} Multiple, local actors with transnational interests made that happen.

One of the implications of these observations is that German history also took place outside of the German nation-state, and thus it must be pursued outside of what Sebastian Conrad has called “container-based paradigms.”\textsuperscript{78} In some ways, that should not surprise us. Modern national histories look different through a global lens, be they Uchida’s Japanese history, Ryang’s Korean history, or Thomas Bender’s re-cast history of the United States.\textsuperscript{79} To my mind, however, that global lens should not simply be a means for rethinking or re-spatializing those national histories. It is not enough to re-cast the container. For as my examples hopefully illustrate, the Germans at the center of my narrative participated in a combination of simultaneous and interconnected histories, much of which was driven by individuals, groups, and non-governmental organizations that shared common notions of Germanness, and thus senses of affinity and belonging across great distances and over a long period of time.

That, more than the actions of states, explains the persistence of these communities in places such as southern Chile, and it helps us understand the speed with which transnational networks established before World War I could be so quickly re-established afterwards. It was not simply that interwar Germans turned, as Stefan Rinke once argued, to the last colonial opportunities, which were putatively in Latin America.\textsuperscript{80} It was that many, in places such as Hamburg and Bremen, reconnected with associates, compatriots, and co-nationals, and worked jointly with others who had benefited from their global interconnections before World War I and suffered from their destruction during the war.\textsuperscript{81} That included, as their parents well knew, the children in these many German schools abroad as well as the diverse communities that created them. By the interwar period, that community also included many adults who had themselves attended these schools.

\textsuperscript{76} For a broader discussion see: Jürgen Müller, \textit{Nationalsozialismum in Lateinamerika: Die Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP in Argentinien, Brasilien, Chile und Mexico, 1931-1945} (Stuttgart, 1997).

\textsuperscript{77} Rinke, “Der letzte freie Kontinent;” Müller, \textit{Europe and the Maritime World}.

\textsuperscript{78} Sebastian Conrad, \textit{What is Global History?} (Princeton, 2016), 4.

\textsuperscript{79} Thomas Bender, \textit{Rethinking American History in a Global Age} (Berkeley, 2002).

\textsuperscript{80} Rinke, “Der letzte freie Kontinent.”

\textsuperscript{81} Müller, \textit{Europe and the Maritime World}.
Moreover, this is not, indeed, it cannot be, a Eurocentric story, even if many of the things in it, the ships, the school books, the teachers, and some of the students were arriving from Europe. As I argued above, these were never simply German schools, they were Argentine/Chilean/Guatemalan-German schools filled with people whose orientations were necessarily transnational and local. Thus this is not only a tale of German history happening elsewhere. It is a tale of simultaneous histories, filled with actors — Gabert, Keiper, Kuhlmann, and others — who knew that the German children in these schools were all living transnational lives, developing affinities that tied them together and linked them with other German children around the world, even as they were preparing to join distinct, non-German polities. Indeed, a vast majority of the Germans who appear in this study were citizens, or their children were citizens, of these Latin American nation-states. They were not just German. Nor were they always identified by their respective hyphenated identities. They were, for example, as much Chilean as German-Chilean. That is why the school directors were so consistently adamant about preparing good German citizens for these states, endowing the non-German students with those same characteristics, encouraging them to share in their sense of transnational affinity as they also became part of aggregate Latin American communities. Many of the German parents or their ancestors had done the same in Europe. Many of their contemporaries were doing the same in Europe until the Nazis came to power and then transformed much of the continent. Thus, as we conceptualize diasporic nationalism and the situational identities that characterize such people in these and other settings, it is worth listening to these planners, students, teachers, and supporters as they articulate their affinities. They shared a clear and accommodating sense of self that may well help us understand the actions and motivations of other people in similar circumstances.

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