

THE NEXUS OF MIGRATION, YOUTH, AND KNOWLEDGE

Panel series sponsored by the GHI at the Annual Conference of the German Studies Association in Pittsburgh, September 27-30, 2018. Conveners: Andrea Westermann (GHI Washington) and Onur Erdur (Humboldt University of Berlin). Participants: Sheer Ganor (University of California, Berkeley), Hans Leaman (Sattler College, Boston), Andrzej Michalczyk (Ruhr-University Bochum), Jacqueline Vansant (University of Michigan, Dearborn), Akasemi Newsome (University of California, Berkeley), Matthew Specter (University of California, Berkeley), Barbara Laubenthal (University of Texas at Austin), Katharina Seehuber (University of Munich), Lilly Maier (University of Munich); Hannes Kaeckmeister (University of Strasbourg), Deniz Göktürk (University of California, Berkeley), Anne-Christine Hamel (Leipzig University), Martin Kalb (Bridgewater College), Stefan Zeppenfeld (Centre for Contemporary History, Potsdam).

The GHI Washington sponsored a panel series on the nexus of migration, youth, and knowledge at the 2018 Annual Conference of the German Studies Association in Pittsburgh. The panels inquired into the knowledge that young people on the move — be it forced or deliberate displacement — had about past and present state politics; the panels also examined their economic rationalities and assessments and explored the uses of letter writing, bureaucratic interviews, and other performative acts to voice concerns, articulate oneself or make sense of the world.

The first panel, “Migrants’ Knowledge and the Economy,” chaired by Andrea Westermann, explored how young migrants gauged their own economic and educational futures and scopes of action abroad. It discussed how notions of generation, youth, uncertainty, and time came to bear on these migrants’ (everyday) conceptualizations of political economy. Last but not least, the panelists looked into the work-related making of both subjectivity and a sense of collective. The latter was particularly well demonstrated in Sheer Ganor’s paper “Farming a Future: The Youth of the Gross-Breesen and their Paths of Migration.” Ganor looked at the surprisingly quick formation of a Ludwik Fleck-like collective, an esoteric agricultural youth community massively influenced by their teacher. Established in 1936 to prepare Jewish youth for emigration from Nazi Germany, the 130 boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 17 acquired diverse agricultural skills. The school was closed down at the end of 1938. The paper

traced the ways in which the dispersed exiles used their emerging transnational network of letters as a vehicle for knowledge-sharing, addressing a variety of themes and questions — from day-to-day agricultural tasks to localized experiences of the Second World War. In their transnational conversation, the former farm trainees chronicled the story of their community, establishing their belonging to it as a life-long identity marker.

In the panel's second paper, "German-American Printing Networks in the Immigration Accounts of Rep. Richard Bartholdt and Dr. Heinrich Fick," Hans Leaman explored the creation of "Germanness" as a business model. Both protagonists found ways to capitalize on their German-related knowledge via their work for German-language newspapers. They created new "consumer groups" or constituencies addressing political and cultural issues that were salient to the German-American population and, in Bartholdt's case, to America's immigrant population at large: Bartholdt was elected to serve in Congress from 1893 to 1915 and became a leader in immigration policy debates.

The panel's third paper, "Peasants' Mobility from Polish-German Borderlands and National Identities in the Making, 1890s-1930s," presented by Andrzej Michalczyk, adopted a biographical approach in order to investigate migration networks and cultural transfer between Germany and Poland since the 1850s among young peasants and craftsmen. Michalczyk demonstrated how the temporary absence from home and the opportunity for professional and social advancement fostered a sense of national belonging fluctuating between Polish and/or German identities among young migrants from the eastern provinces of Prussia that came to Western Europe or the German Western provinces before WWI.

The panel's final paper, "70c ist zwar ein Haufen Geld": The Meaning of Money as Reflected in the Correspondence of Young Jewish-Austrian Exiles (1938-1944)," by Jacqueline Vansant, followed the changing functions of work and money expressed in this correspondence. In her approach, the materiality of transactions characteristic of commodity money (stamps or "Antwortscheine" in this case) served as her entry point for studying the making of ordinary people's economic knowledge. The young men had to deal with different economic conditions depending on where they were and whether their parents were with them or if they were unaccompanied. As they adapted to their new surroundings, which ranged from Switzerland, England,

the U.S.A., Palestine, and France, these discussions assumed an ideological dimension, which reflected the economic system of their host country. Commentator Akasemi Newsome had a range of questions for each paper. Newsome urged the panelists to create even more fine-grained pictures of the economic geographies or contexts of their case studies. She also suggested attending even more to the multifactorial details implied in (commodified) processes of subjectivization and collective identity building.

The second panel, chaired by Matthew Specter, compared the experiences of Jewish minors escaping Nazi Germany — individually or in an institutional context — with the experiences of unaccompanied minors in the ongoing “refugee crisis” in Europe. This panel brought to attention the strategies of information passing and of dealing with daily challenges. How did unaccompanied minors assess, explore, and expand their individual scopes of action within the given structures? Katharina Seehuber’s paper ““Meine Vergangenheit liegt in München, die Zukunft vor mir”: Unaccompanied Jewish Minors on Their Way from Munich to the World” followed the paths of four unaccompanied minors: While 16-year-old Erwin Schwager participated in the Youth Aliyah, 20-year-old Lilo Cahnmann ended up in the waters of Haifa bay after the explosion of the ship *Patria*, which illegally carried her to Palestine. The persecuted sisters Elfriede and Annemarie Goldschmidt (19 and 20) found themselves on the deportation train to Auschwitz after an unsuccessful attempt to find shelter in a monastery in the Netherlands. All of them moved alone, obliged to make their own decisions based on the knowledge they had throughout each step of their migration process, and forced to deal with the consequences individually.

Based not only on archival material, but on interviews with her protagonist, Lilly Maier’s paper “Saving Arthur Kern: A Biographical Study about the French “Kindertransports”” explored Kern’s experiences as a child refugee, paying special attention to how much he knew about his own situation at any given point. In 1939, Kern was one of 200 unaccompanied minors brought to Paris from Vienna on a *Kindertransport* organized by the Rothschild family. In France, the refugee children lived together in orphanages operated by the Jewish relief organization *OEuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE). In 1941, the OSE — working together with other organizations — managed to rescue Arthur Kern and 250 other children on a second *Kindertransport* to the United States.

The panel's third paper, by Hannes Kaeckmeister, adopted an ethnographic approach to observe current selection procedures in Germany and France that determine whether or not young migrants are "eligible" for youth care. State officials need to know whether young refugees are less than 18 years old and whether or not they live separated from their parents. Kaeckmeister sought to distinguish layers of experiential knowledge: young migrants experience life as foreigners, as children, and as unaccompanied minors. He also studied their coping strategies: how did they know where to go, whom to meet and, most importantly, how did they learn to fit the bureaucratic category of "unaccompanied minor"? A series of interviews with different actors in the field of child protection services and research within the local administrations in charge of child protection revealed that information is an important asset. In her concluding remarks, Barbara Laubenthal commented on the methods and narrative strategies with which the panelists managed to problematize the highly emotional grounds of their research while remaining sympathetic to the protagonists of their stories.

The final panel of the series, chaired by Onur Erdur, focused on migrant youth cultures in postwar West Germany. The first paper, titled "The German Youth of the East: the German Displaced Youth as Go-Betweens, Conveyors, and Preservers of Knowledge in the Migration Process of German Expellees," was presented by Anne-Christine Hamel. Focusing on Die Deutsche Jugend des Ostens, the second largest youth organization in the Federal Republic, Hamel gave insight into the vast group of displaced young German individuals from Eastern Europe and their political engagement in postwar West Germany. She argued that the expulsion of this generation of children and adolescents involved a biographical break that decisively shaped their socialization within the host society. Not only did these young individuals perceive the experiences of war and migration differently from the older generation, but their strategies of coping with those experiences reached far beyond attempts to assimilate rapidly into the host society. Hamel showed that, over the course of its history, the organization's internal decisions, negotiations, and directives vividly reflected the ties and tensions between the parent generation's values, on the one hand, and the search for autonomous identity and societal change among the displaced youth, on the other.

Martin Kalb presented the second paper, titled "Troubled Youth in Transit? 'Gammler', Social Anxieties, and Moral Panics in 1960s West

Germany.” Sharing his recent research on juvenile delinquency and images of youth, Kalb spoke about the societal hysteria around so-called *Gammler*: These were young vagabonding drop-outs roaming the streets of numerous German cityscapes in the 1960s, feared by many bystanders and contemporaries. Borrowing from sociologist Stanley Cohen’s concept of a “moral panic,” Kalb convincingly argued that media coverage and conflicts surrounding *Gammler* can tell us much about contemporary anxieties as well as shifting practices among the young generation. On the one hand, he described the efforts by some individuals and authorities to expand mechanisms of social control. Those concerned about traditional values and the state of society conveniently pointed to the supposed widespread appearance of *Gammler* on city streets to defend their own values and roles in society. On the other hand, Kalb pointed out that young people found themselves repeatedly harassed and stereotyped, yet also increasingly able to carve out agency for a now much more international youth. He emphasized that *Gammler* encapsulated the global youth of the 1960s well before student revolts and organized backpackers.

The panel’s last paper, “Moving to West Berlin in the 1960s: The Experiences of Young West Germans and Guest Workers in the Siemens Factories,” by Stefan Zeppenfeld, examined these two groups within the West Berlin labor force by focusing not only on these workers’ experiences at the Siemens factory but also on the gap between their expectations and the inhospitable living conditions of West-Berlin. With this approach to West-Berlin’s migration history Zeppenfeld explored knowledge and imagination of young workforce in different contexts: First, both groups were understood as possessing professional work-related knowledge that qualified them for different jobs in West-German companies. Second, both group’s limited knowledge of Berlin’s living conditions often lead to unsatisfied expectations and subsequent relocation to their places of origin. In a third perspective, Zeppenfeld showed how the Berlin staff of Siemens, due to a lack in tolerance, reacted with hostility to what they perceived as the ‘other,’ both towards West Germans and “guestworkers”. Deniz Göktürk closed the panel with her comments on all three presentations and with general remarks on the difficulty of writing the history of migration in postwar West Germany.

Andrea Westermann (GHI Washington) and Onur Erdur (Humboldt University of Berlin)

