

Sixth Annual Bucerius Young Scholars Forum. Histories of Migration: Transatlantic and Global Perspectives

Sixth Annual Bucerius Young Scholars Forum at the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington in Berkeley, California, October 10–12, 2022. Sponsored by the Zeit-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius. Conveners: Frithjof Benjamin Schenk (University of Basel) and Sören Urbansky (GHI Washington). Participants: Joshua Donovan (GHI Washington), Meta Cramer (University of Freiburg), Vitalij Fastovskij (GHI Washington), Elisa Frei (Boston College), Deniz Göktürk (UC Berkeley), Rebekka Grossmann (Hebrew University Jerusalem), Gulzat Egemberdieva (Humboldt University Berlin), Mayada Madbouly (Université Paris Nanterre), Rebekah McCallum (Pennsylvania State University), Thore Menze (University of Tübingen), Edward Mohr (University of Tübingen), Leroy Myers Jr. (University of Oklahoma), Akasemi Newsome (UC Berkeley), Shalini Randeria (Central European University Vienna), Özge Sezer (Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus), Olga Sparschuh (Technical University of Munich), Nino Valen (GHI Washington).

This year's Young Scholars Forum focused on patterns of internal migration and displacement. Co-conveners Frithjof Benjamin Schenk and Sören Urbansky offered introductory thoughts on thematic and methodological issues raised collectively by the pre-circulated papers. All of the presentations considered the various causes and actors that have shaped patterns of migration. Because internal migration often does not involve travel across national borders, it can sometimes be difficult for researchers to find records

of these migrants in traditional state archives. Nevertheless, by considering migrants as producers of knowledge and relying on diverse methodological approaches, participants asked important questions about how scholars can include migrant voices in their work.

The first panel revolved around questions of traveling knowledge in two very different historical contexts: Meta Cramer examined predominantly male, middle-class students from the West Indies who traveled to London and later became renowned colonial scholars. She showed the impact that these mobile actors had on the dissemination of anti-colonial knowledge and the emergence of new perspectives on the Caribbean. Elisa Frei examined writings from three Jesuit missionaries from the seventeenth century. Although there was no professional training for missionaries at this time, the reports took the form of pragmatic instructions, showing how their authors adapted to political circumstances. The ensuing discussion addressed methodological and theoretical questions related to the reconstruction of intellectual practices and the study of asymmetrical power relations.

The second panel dealt with questions of power and knowledge. Thore Menze addressed the question of how the federal laws of the German Empire were implemented at the local level. One of the most important freedoms available to the citizens of the newly created Reich (1871) was the freedom of movement. Menze came to the conclusion that internal borders continued to have great importance, especially when they were crossed by people from the lower strata of society and that the new legislation was implemented only gradually by local authorities. Edward Mohr showed how various actors attempted to overturn restrictions on internal migration from the late 1960s to the 1990s. Mohr argued for drawing from historical examples of the production of migrant knowledge to improve the negotiation of migration by relevant organizations today. The participants discussed

questions of labor and migration control, the perception of migration by state and non-state actors and stressed the need to study migration not only as a linear process, but as a movement of people that could often take a circular form.

The third panel examined post-slavery mobility. Özge Sezer discussed the internal migration of Afro-Turks, former slaves from Africa, in the Ottoman Empire. She interpreted these state-initiated processes as a component of internal colonization. New settlement areas with modern infrastructure were created, fostering the creation of a new Ottoman identity. While these agricultural sites were designed to strengthen loyalty to the imperial center, Afro-Turks preserved distinctive elements of their culture and wove them into their built environment. Leroy Myers Jr. discussed the aspirations and the ideology of black farmers in the late nineteenth century who had become disillusioned with the prospects for social progress in the racial order of the Southern United States and moved to the Old West, hoping to create a majority-black state there. Myers shed light on this story by analyzing the rhetoric of Edward McCabe, a leading businessman who encouraged the settlement of African Americans in the territory of Oklahoma. During the discussion the participants spoke about source problems related to migration history, including ego-documents of the First Nations, such as interviews in indigenous newspapers. They emphasized how important it is to keep in mind the different motivations of historical actors, including migrants as well as state bureaucrats.

The second day of the conference began with a panel that grappled with displacement. Rebekah McCallum discussed patterns of labor migration on British tea plantations in South Asia. She examined the economic and environmental factors that compelled workers to leave their homes to work on the plantations, complicating the distinction between “forced” and “voluntary” or “economic” migration. Mayada

Madbouly analyzed the famous Nubian novel *al-Shamandoura*, which recounts the displacement of Nubians by flooding from development projects in British-occupied Egypt. Madbouly described *al-Shamandoura* as a fragment through which scholars can begin to piece together indigenous voices that would otherwise be difficult to find in state or colonial archives. Comments and questions focused particularly on the methodological approaches and insights offered by these papers.

The fifth panel focused on perceptions and representations of migrants. Rebekka Grossmann considered the rise of humanitarian photography as a global phenomenon in the mid-twentieth century. She explained that international organizations like the United Nations and UNESCO were particularly interested in sharing pictures of families to argue for the universality of human experience. She argued that photographs of migrants are effectively their voices, too. In her paper on Italian migration to Turin and Munich, Olga Sparschuh made a compelling case for overcoming the ongoing fixation of migration research on national categories. Whereas in Turin the idea of the inner-Italian binary with its strong contrast between North and South continued to impact the perception of (southern) Italian labor migrants, in Munich their perception was initially more favorable. Both pieces highlighted the benefits of a comparative approach when untangling questions of identity.

The final panel featured a short documentary by Gulzat Egemberdieva. It offered a window into the lives of the historically nomadic Pamir people of Central Asia, who now find themselves living in different nation-states. The film incorporated quotidian footage taken by Pamirians themselves and dealt with themes of memory, the preservation of cultural heritage, and restricted mobility. The discussion focused on the intersection of emotions and migration, as well as the ways in which migrants imagine communities

and kinship ties that may conflict with or transcend national boundaries.

After the final panel, each of the participants shared final reflections on how the forum helped them think through their own work. Several people stated that the diversity of geographic, disciplinary, and methodological perspectives pushed them out of their comfort zones in productive ways and encouraged them to ask different kinds of questions. The papers revealed how diverse migrant knowledge can be; we saw that it can include photographs, artwork, built environments, literature, social movements, memoirs, travel advice, and more. The migrants studied were similarly diverse. At the same time, being able to compare so many different cases revealed commonalities in the forms that state regulations and restrictions on migration can take. Participants also returned to the conference theme of internal migration. Unlike migration across national borders, which often focuses on a single moment of a person's movement, internal migration can capture longer periods of mobility.

The three-day meeting concluded with a well-attended public keynote lecture by Shalini Randeria entitled "Whose Knowledge? Knowledge about Migrants vs. Migrants' Knowledge," followed by a commentary by Deniz Göktürk. Randeria underlined the differences in knowledge production between state and migrant actors and pleaded for a stronger research focus on the state, which is the decisive actor in migration issues.

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