

## Conference Report: Summer Seminar “Europe – Migration – Identity”

A workshop held at the University of Minnesota (UMN), Minneapolis, in cooperation with the German Historical Institute (GHI), August 24-27, 2011. Conveners: Donna Gabaccia (UMN), Sally Gregory Kohlstedt (UMN), Jan Logemann (GHI). Participants: Hartmut Berghoff (GHI), Daniel Bessner (Duke University), Tobias Brinkmann (Penn State University), Clelia Caruso (GHI), Gary Cohen (UMN), Mimi Cowan (Boston College), Andreas Heil (Institute for European History, Mainz), Poul Houe (UMN), Andreas Joch (GHI / University of Giessen), Corinna Ludwig (GHI / University of Göttingen), Shira Klein (New York University), Saara Koikkalainen (University of Lapland), Laura Miller (U Mass Amherst), Leslie Page Moch (Michigan State University), Christine von Oertzen (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin), Kiran Klaus Patel (European University Institute, Florence), Riv-Ellen Prell (UMN), Barbara Reiterer (GHI / UMN), Amanda Ricci (McGill University), Aviel Roshwald (Georgetown University), Jessica Sperling (City University of New York), Jens Wegener (European University Institute), Thomas Wolfe (UMN), Elizabeth Zanoni (UMN / Old Dominion), Marynel Ryan Van Zee (UMN Morris).

This seminar set out to build bridges between migration studies and research in the history of Europeanization and Europeaness which has generated much interest in recent years. Beyond histories of European political integration and the intellectual and elite movements that have supported this process, scholars increasingly pay attention to the constructedness of Europeaness and European identities, and to the multiplicity of ways in which this construction happens. On the everyday level, concepts of Europe and Europeaness have been constructed through sports and music, travel, and also migration. Migrants can be a particularly useful lens on Europeanization processes as they provide a perspective from the periphery in two ways: by providing a view literally from the outside as in the case of those who left the continent or by providing a view from the margins of the European societies in which they live. The field of migration studies has long shifted away from straight-forward questions of assimilation and integration towards an interest in more fluid and complex processes. We now see an emphasis on multiple, shifting and hybrid identities, on transmigrants who oscillate between countries and between national, ethnic, and cosmopolitan affiliations, and on the transnational networks and institutions they build and sustain. Considering Europeaness with its supranational, but also regional, cultural, religious, ethnic and racial connotations can provide an additional fruitful dimension to such inquiries. The seminar thus asked what Europe meant to migrants abroad and within the continent. Can we trace the emergence of European identities among different groups of migrants and, if so, what form did they take (e.g. as European-Americans)? To what degree are such identities comparable to the crystallization of national identities within migrant communities in e.g. nineteenth century North America?

Two key-note lectures provided the thematic frame for the seminar. *Leslie Page Moch* approached the topic from the perspective of migration history. Europeanization, she argued, would be

an anachronism if applied to most migrants in European history. Unlike the mobile elite of “Euro-Stars” that moves within the EU and European capitals of today, the majority of inner-European migrants over the past centuries remained attached to regions and states or perhaps considered themselves as “internationals,” but rarely primarily as Europeans. While European history was full of transnational migration movements, cross-cultural integration was frequently only localized and temporary, depending on political and economic circumstances as much as on the type of migration at hand. Coming from the field of Europeanization research, *Kiran Klaus Patel* stressed the social-constructedness of Europeanness and the importance of not essentializing this concept or conflating Europe with the European Union. Explicit European identities, he agreed, were a rare and recent phenomenon. Especially since the nineteenth century, however, being European was often defined vis-à-vis the “other” by Europeans migrating abroad or in discourses over non-European in-migrants. The ethnic “melting pot” of the United States, Patel noted, was envisioned by some as a place to create a “new” American yet quintessentially “European man.” While the term “European-American” has not enjoyed the success of its hyphenated national counterparts (Italian-American etc.) and has remained both vague and secondary in the American discourse, Patel suggested that it still may be fruitful to look for the spaces and places where concepts of Europeanness did pop up among migrants to the U.S., as for example with those who took refuge from political persecution during the 1930s and ‘40s.

The first panel of graduate student presentations focused very much on this latter group as well as more broadly on the role of transatlantic elites in networking the United States and Europe during the middle of the twentieth century. *Jens Wegener* traced the migration careers of three European scholars--Moritz Julius Bonn, Hajo Holborn, and Carlo Sforza-- who were part of the Carnegie Endowment’s interwar campaign to foster an “international mind” in war-torn Europe and were later forced to emigrate to the United States. *Andreas Joch* analyzed the group of European architects and urban planners who came to the United States during the middle of the twentieth century and as part of a transnational elite helped shape contemporary understandings of the “American” and the “European” or often simply of the “modern” city. *Daniel Bessener*, finally, presented a close reading of Émigré-sociologist Hans Speier’s work while at the New School for social research in New York, in which Speier engaged fellow émigrés in a debate over the opportunities and obligations of exile as well as on the need to overcome the dogmatism of interwar Europe and to embrace life in American society. All papers inquired into the intellectual and institutional underpinnings of transnational exchanges. Still, they also suggested that even among this often quite cosmopolitan group of émigrés who actively reflected on Europe past and future, national communities and networks frequent remained vital.

Career migrants who – at least temporarily - left their native country in the employ of a company or institution stood at the center of the second panel. *Andreas Heil* studies European missionaries in colonial Africa and showed that – prompted by exchanges with the non-European “other” – Europeanness, inflected through several recurring topoi from “Christianity” to “Education,” became a central category of reflection in their writings. *Corinna Ludwig* focused on “business migrants,” managers and employees of German companies who were sent to the United States to establish American branches and helped negotiate company image, corporate identity and marketing strategies for European products abroad. By stretching traditional conceptions of “the migrant,” this panel opened a discussion about different categories of migrants and forms of mobility and their impact on subjective identifications.

The following two panels shifted the view towards the more “traditional” communities of European immigrants to the United States. *Shira Klein* examined the lives of Italian-Jewish émigrés to the United States and their identity struggles between Jewish and Italian immigrant communities as well as American society in general; their look back to Europe frequently oscillated between nostalgic memories and the painful rejection of the racist and fascist currents at the time. *Elizabeth Zanoni* presented a comparative look at Italian immigrants in Argentina and the United States and the transnational commodity exchanges between Europe and the Americas they sustained by exporting and (re)producing “Italian” products as entrepreneurs, traders, and consumers.

Consumer identities as a way to negotiate transnational belonging were similarly central to *Laura Miller’s* paper on ethnic resorts in the Catskills. Miller complicated the notion of a postwar emergence of a white or European-American identity by demonstrating the longevity of ethnic resorts for New York’s immigrant communities, yet noting some degree of growing fluidity and exchange between various immigrant groups. Cross-ethnic solidarity was also an important facet of *Mimi Cowan’s* presentation on nineteenth-century transnational Irish nationalism in Chicago, where Fenians rallied other immigrant groups by appealing to the brotherhood of nationalist republicanism, but also provoked the image of radical, “un-American” Europeans among nativist American critics. All papers in these two panels transcended traditional histories of immigrant communities by emphasizing transnational entanglements and cross-ethnic interaction, or by offering comparative perspectives. Despite the many connections back to Europe and a high degree of exchange among European immigrant communities, however, attachment to Europe or notions of a shared European-Americanness appear to have been even less prominent among the majority of labor migrants to the United States than among elite migrants.

Such Europeanization has been more meaningful to migrants within contemporary Europe, as two sociological papers in the following panel suggested. *Jessica Sperling* shared parts of her research on Latin-American immigrant adolescents in Spain among whom she found a subset who identified as “Latin-Europeans,” finding it in some ways easier to identify with the supra-national than the national level. *Saara Koikkalainen* examined more highly educated Finnish labor migrants who worked in several European countries. While the majority of her subjects continued to identify primarily as Finnish, a sizeable percentage also self-identified explicitly as Europeans. In both these cases, however, identifications with Europe often had to be prompted by the survey questions, suggesting that outside of a small group of highly educated “Euro-Stars” (who often see themselves even more broadly as “global citizens”), European identities are frequently secondary to other forms of collective identification.

The genderedness of migration experiences was the topic of the last panel. *Barbara Reiterer*, taking the example of female émigré sociologists and social-workers from German-speaking central Europe, emphasized the positive opportunities afforded by exile to some women on both a personal and professional level, thus qualifying existing research that has long focused on the disadvantages and hardships experienced by female exiles. *Amanda Ricci* presented on the entangled history of Quebecoise second-wave feminism in which Jewish, Italian and other immigrant voices complicated and fostered a gradual transformation in Quebecoise self-understanding from a post-colonial discourse about francophone Canadians as the “white negroes of America” to a more recent self-image as European-Canadian or “Euro-American.”

The concluding discussion underlined that the interplay of migration experiences and identifications with Europe cannot be packaged into a single, neat story. To what degree (if at all) migrants identified with Europe very much depended on time and circumstances as well as type of migration. Much like the “Euro-Stars” of today, educated elites of exiles and cosmopolitans were most likely to understand themselves in terms of Europeaness while for many others national identifications remained primary. For Europeanization research, the look from the outside still holds promise and especially the juxtaposition with post-colonial studies may provide a fruitful avenue for further study to come to a more global understanding of what Europe and Europeaness have meant and can mean. While many conference participants agreed that both the concepts of Europeanization and identity remain at times only vaguely defined and not unproblematic for migration research, the papers certainly put empirical meat on the theoretical bones of transnational history, which itself had also long been a lofty concept that is now gradually filled with more concrete meaning.

Perhaps more important than such theoretical and methodological considerations, the seminar succeeded in fostering transatlantic exchanges among graduate student presenters and more senior commentators across academic cultures and disciplinary divides. In group discussions and individual exchanges, students received extensive feedback on their dissertation projects. The University of Minnesota provided an ideal setting for this, and the seminar included tours of Minneapolis' culturally-rich immigrant neighborhoods as well as the extensive archival collections held by the university's Immigration History Research Center. We are grateful for the support we received from various university sources, the German Historical Institute as well as the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education which made this seminar possible.

Jan Logemann, GHI

## **Program**

### **Wednesday, Aug. 24**

*Keynote Lecture "Building Bridges from Migration History to Europeanization"*  
Leslie Page Moch, Michigan University

### **Thursday, Aug. 25**

Panel *Networking Europe and America: the Role of Transatlantic Elites*

Chair: Hartmut Berghoff, GHI

*The European Network of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933-1945*

Jens Wegener, European University Institute, Florence

*European Migrants and the "American City": Urban Planning in the Context of Transatlantic Migration*

Andreas Joch, GHI / University of Giessen

*The German Origins of the Defense Intellectual*

Daniel Bessner, Duke University

Commentator: Thomas Wolfe, UMN

Panel *Looking Back to Europe: Career Migrants in a Global World*

Chair: Gary Cohen, UMN

*Images of Europe: Basel and LMS Missionaries, 1918-1970*

Andreas Heil, Institute for European History, Mainz

*German Business in the United States after the Second World War*

Corinna Ludwig, GHI / University of Göttingen

Commentator: Aviel Roshwald, Georgetown University

### **Friday, Aug. 26**

Panel *European or National Belonging? Negotiating Identity in American Immigrant Communities I*

Chair: Riv-Ellen Prell, UMN

*Disrupted Lives: Italian Jewish Migration and Relocation*

Shira Klein, New York University

*Commercial and Migratory Links between Italy, the US, and Argentina, 1880 – 1940*

Elizabeth Zanoni, UMN

Commentator: Tobias Brinkmann, Penn State University

Panel *European or National Belonging? Negotiating Identity in American Immigrant Communities II*

Chair: Donna Gabaccia, UMN

*Ethnic Resorts in the Catskill Mountains and the Formation of Identities*

Laura Miller, University of Massachusetts Amherst

*Chicago's Irish Nationalist Gatherings: Promoting Ireland and Irish-Americans*

Mimi Cowan, Boston College

Commentator: Jan Logemann, GHI

*Keynote Lecture "Places and Spaces of Europeanization: Building Bridges between Europeanization and the History of Migration"*

Kiran Patel, European University Institute

## **Saturday, Aug. 27**

Panel *Becoming European: Migration and Identity in Contemporary Europe*

Chair: Clelia Caruso, GHI

*Availability of European Identity for Immigrant Children in Madrid*

Jessica Sperling, City University of New York

*Finns in Europe: Transnational Highly Skilled Migrants and their Identity*

Saara Koikkalainen, University of Lapland

Commentator: Poul Houe, UMN

Panel *Gendered Europeanness: The Appropriation of Europe among Migrant and Minority Women*

Chair: Marynel Ryan Van Zee, UMN Morris

*Gender, Exile, and the Framing of Social Science Careers in Central Europe and the United States, 1920-1980*

Barbara Reiterer, GHI / UMN

*Race and Ethnicity in the Quebec Women's Movement: A Transatlantic Perspective, 1967-2007*

Amanda Ricci, McGill University

Commentator: Christine v. Oertzen, MPI History of Science, Berlin

Concluding Plenary Discussion

## **Places of publication:**

- Transatlantic Perspectives website

- GHI bulletin and website
  - H-Soz-Kult
  - H-Migration
  - Richie / Heir listserv
- perhaps add also H-Ethnic (which the more traditional U.S. immigration historians still read)