Forum Transregionale Studien

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Transregional Academy

Call for Applications

Submission Deadline:
October 25, 2018

Histories of Migrant Knowledges in and across the Transpacific

Agencies, Scales, Translations

May 28 – June 4, 2019, University of California, Berkeley

Forum Transregionale Studien

Max Weber Stiftung
Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland

GHI GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE WASHINGTON DC

IS INSTITUTE OF European Studies
University of California, Berkeley

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MARIA SIBYLLA MERIAN CENTER

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The Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung – German Humanities Institutes Abroad in cooperation with the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute Washington DC (GHI West) at UC Berkeley, The Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (CALAS), and the Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley, invite scholars with an interest in history from all fields, including history, literary studies, geography, environmental humanities, sociology, political science, anthropology, ethnic studies, economics, or legal studies to apply to attend a Transregional Academy that will be convened from May 28 to June 4, 2019, at UC Berkeley on the theme of

Histories of Migrant Knowledges in and across the Transpacific: Agencies, Scales, Translations.

Rationale

The Transregional Academy sets out to study migration across time and the metageographical space that we call the "Transpacific": The Transpacific entangles various continents, islands, cultures, and epochs. It includes histories, people, materials, natures, and societies whose shapes and boundaries have been in flux comprising, by way of example, the Americas, coastlines and seascapes, European, Asian, and US empires, fish stocks, Oceania, religions, minerals, the ocean floor, water, plantation cultures, etc.

To come to comparative, cross-cultural work on the issues of migration, we suggest that researchers focus on and explore the usefully broad approach of tracing histories of migrant knowledges. What exactly counts as knowledge? Who knows what? And who or what is on the move? Histories of migrant knowledges, objects or materials remind us that there are plural ways of knowing the world: It cannot be described in only scientific or mono-cultural terms. As a heuristic device, the approach has the capacity to push us towards more intense collaborations between the disciplines assembled in the steering committee, which are history, literary studies, anthropology, Latin American Studies, Pacific Studies, and political science.

We ask participants to explain the ideas, methods and strategies that have allowed them to come to helpful notions of agency and to devise frames of analysis that recover the capacities, incentives, media and translations necessary for making knowledge in situations of transit, refuge, forced resettlement, or mobility. We encourage creative approaches that explore diverse forms of knowledge production (such as textual, visual, embodied, artistic, material or performative) as well as ways of studying how this knowledge traveled, together or separate from its creators, together or separate from the objects or persons defined by it; simultanously with the events described or analyzed by it; or how it lagged, was stored, or even forgotten; how it did or did not change over time, or in encounters with epistemologies that differed from the context of its production.

The knowledge dimension has long resonated or been directly addressed by the social and political sciences of migration. Think of processes of bureaucratic and societal (re)classification of individual persons or social groups triggered by flight, migration, and questions of citizenship. Or think of the paradox inherent in the fact that refugees and migrants both make visible and dissolve state territoriality. As a consequence, states have recurrently used refugees and migrants to strengthen their geographical borders, while, at the same time, they have tended to de-territorialize geographical

borders through regimes of outsourcing control and securitization. All these phenomena are currently being studied with new verve; they show just how productive an epistemological lens in migration studies and, by extension, the history of migration, promises to be; this is all the more true, we argue, when this lens is used to look into everyday society and its material forms that unfold with and beyond the knowledge infrastructures of states.

In a second and closely linked move towards fostering new opportunities for dialogue and collaboration in migration studies, we have selected a transregional scale. As a region, the Transpacific highlights the fact that our knowledge must be situated, i.e., place- and culture-based. This is why the epistemological stakes in talking about it are high. US historian Eiichiro Azuma urged researchers in his Amerasia Journal article of 2016 to understand "how skewed our mapping of the Pacific is." Historians of different areas, he argued, are conditioned "to envision a geographical bounded space in particular prescribed ways when they frame their own studies around the theme of the Pacific." This results in many Pacifics, which are often incompatible with each other. Against this background, we will benefit from oceanic and indigenous approaches with their sensitivity for studying the actual ocean and landscapes that knowledges are formed across, but which also are transformed and move (as specimens or natural resources, for instance) because of the agency and movement of people. We will also benefit from the fact that studying oceanic and transoceanic cultures and societies over time questions Western notions of sociology or political theory, disciplines which are biased, some claim, towards a sedentary logic (Liisa Malkki 1992; Engseng Ho 2017). Literary studies will be decisive for our endeavor (see for instance, Shu-mei Shih's 2013 ideas on relational comparison). Compelling narratives of borders and borderlands often find ways to illuminate and extract meaning from their material using literary tools, juxtaposing established genres, data, bodily experiences, or people's voices without aiming at an authoritative, seamless interpretation (see Francesco Cantu in his essay "When The Line Becomes a River").

That is a tentative sketch of envisaged methodologies in conversation. We invite participants to highlight and reflect on the transpacific relations and angles in their histories of migrant knowledges and materials (18th to 21st centuries). We are particularly interested in exploring the following sets of questions, which might well overlap empirically:

1. Agencies: Why do some people move? On the other hand, why do other people decide to stay? How can we think about agency if the movement was instigated and shaped by (settler) colonialism, extractive economies, war and their political, material, economic, and cultural afterlives? How do people assess and assert their options; how do they make sense of, navigate, and help to shape migration regimes, mobility regimes, or refugee regimes (with their inexorable notions of legality, illegality)? From a perspective less invested in the micro-politics of state power, we might inquire less into "regimes" than into "cultures": How do they make sense of, navigate, or help shape cultures of migration, cultures of mobility, and cultures of humanitarian action?

2. Scales of Migration and Migrant Knowledges: How does the adoption of different spatial, temporal, or causal scales define and shape the migration phenomena and histories we study? In turn, which everyday, aesthetic, economic, or political practices of scaling and commensuration do migrants themselves deploy for narrating, justifying, subverting or resisting their migration (duration, scope, patterns) or their (protracted) transit? What does it mean for individuals to be(come) part of larger processes of migration, mobilities, relocation, urban or world politics, and the global economy? (See, for instance, the 2018 edited volume by Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Caglar.) Last but not least, how does the sheer vastness of the Pacific Ocean impact both the actors we study and our scholarly imagination?

3. Efforts, Media, and Practices of Translation: Shifting the scale is only one form of translation. How do migrants, refugees, settlers cope with divergent bodies and cultures of knowledge and conflicting epistemologies or ontologies? How do they distinguish between natural, cultural, economic, or political phenomena, and what are their practices of reassembling them? What terms, networks, and languages do they use or create in doing so? Are there bodies, devices, or objects of knowledge that specifically emerge in view of, on, or after the move? Why are migrants considered translators or mediators between geographical or cultural spaces or different times and temporalities in the first place? By whom?

Application and Procedure

Travel, accommodation, as well as meals for the participants will be fully covered. The program targets doctoral and postdoctoral researchers who wish to present their ongoing projects in both a comparative perspective and in relation to the aforementioned themes and questions. The discussion will take place in various formats, including project presentations, thematic workshops, scholars in conversation, archival projects. The working language is English. The application should likewise be in English and consist of:

— a curriculum vitae;
— an outline of the project (300 words max.) on which the applicant is currently working;
— a brief motivation letter that describes the relevance of one's own research to the Academy's topic;
— two suggested readings relevant to the Academy that you would like to discuss with other participants (please provide bibliographical data only, no copies of the suggested readings are required);
— the names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees (no letters of recommendation required).

Deadline: **October 25th, 2018**.
Send your application by **e-mail** as **one PDF file** to **academies@trafo-berlin.de**.

Applicants will be notified whether they have been selected in December 2018. Successful applicants will be asked to submit the draft of a research paper, draft chapter of their PhD or book project, or the rationale and pictures of their artistic or performative work (6,000 words max.) to be discussed at the event.

Steering Committee: **Simone Lässig** (Professor of Contemporary History, Braunschweig, Director of the German Historical Institute Washington DC); **Andrea Westermann** (Historian of Science, Technology, and the Environment, Head of Office of GHI West); **Juliane Braun** (Assistant Professor of English, Auburn University), **Olaf Kaltmeier** (Professor of Iberoamerican History, Bielefeld and Founding Director of the CALAS Merian Centre, Guadalajara); **Akasemi Newsome**, (Associate Director of the Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley); **Ryan Jones** (Associate Professor of History, University of Oregon); **Katerina Teaiwa** (Associate Professor of Pacific Studies, Australian National University).

Contact: academies@trafo-berlin.de

The Transregional Academy is a format of the Forum Transregionale Studien and part of the strategic cooperation with the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad. It is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF). For more information on the format please visit the Transregional Academies Blog: https://academies.hypotheses.org/

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien is a research platform that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. The Forum provides scope for collaboration among researchers with different regional and disciplinary perspectives and appoints researchers from all over the world as Fellows.

The Max Weber Foundation promotes global research, concentrated around the areas of social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. Research is conducted at ten institutes in various countries worldwide with distinctive and independent focal points.

GHI West is the Pacific Regional Center of the German Historical Institute Washington DC with a focus on history of knowledge and migration as well as transcoceanic history.

The Institute of European Studies (IES) at UC Berkeley is the leading center for research and education on Europe in the Western United States, and among the top three such organizations in the United States.

The Maria Sibylla Merian Center for Advanced Latin American Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences (CALAS) is a university-based Center for Advanced Studies founded by a consortium of Latin American and German universities.

For more information please visit:

www.forum-transregionale-studien.de
www.maxweberstiftung.de
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