

On the Move. Migration and Mobility in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. International and Area Studies, Washington University in St. Louis, 05.04.2013-07.04.2013.

Reviewed by Jan Musekamp

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On the Move. Migration and Mobility in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia

For the workshop: “On the Move. Migration and Mobility in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia” scholars from the fields of history, political sciences, anthropology, literature, art history, and migration studies convened at Washington University in St. Louis to discuss issues such as technology transfer, migration, identity, and international cultural exchange. The common ground for cross-disciplinary discussions was the vast region reaching from Europe to China.

On April 5th, ANIKA WALKE (St. Louis, MO), coordinator of the research cluster “Migration, Identity, and State” within International and Area Studies (IAS) at Washington University, opened the conference. In two panels, undergraduate and graduate students had the opportunity to present their research in the field. In her paper “Conflict Management in the Southern Caucasus: National Narratives and Geo-politics” KATIE AYANIAN (St. Louis, MO) introduced the audience to nation building, statehood, and ongoing border disputes in Armenia and Azerbaijan. ERIN HUMPHRIES (St. Louis, MO) presented a paper entitled “Understanding Russian Decision-Making in Kosovo and Georgia”, focusing on the historical and political background of Russia’s involvement in these two entities. With “Afghanistan’s Bane: The Crippling Legacy of the Durand Line” MATTHEW LEE (St. Louis, MO) focused on the ongoing controversy

over a borderline that European diplomats agreed on in 1893. PAULA DOUMANI (St. Louis, MO), a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology, discussed “Mobility, Technology Transfer, and Material Culture at the Heart of Eurasia: Prehistoric Nomads of Kazakhstan”. On the basis of archaeological data on prehistoric pottery production she addressed the role of regional traditions in material culture. In his paper “‘In unserem Kreise’: Czech-Jewish Activism and Immigration in America, 1939-94”, JACOB LABENDZ (St. Louis, MO), Ph.D. candidate in History, addressed immigration patterns, the role of memory, and nostalgia for the small cohort of Czechoslovak Jewry in America. His special focus was on the interaction between larger Jewish institutions and Jewish national communities.

In the evening, director of IAS Timothy Parsons and postdoctoral fellow Jan Musekamp welcomed the participants on behalf of IAS and Volkswagen Foundation respectively, the latter being the co-sponsor of the conference. The plenary session started with Anika Walke’s introduction to the keynote paper given by LESLIE MOCH (East Lansing, MI) from Michigan State University. In her paper “Repertoires and Regimes of Human Mobility”, Moch focused on the idea of bringing together research on state involvement in migration (regimes) on the one hand and research on the active role of migrants within social networks on

the other (repertoires). Using Russia as an example, she pointed out that most scholars focus on emigration and forced migrations, disregarding the broader context of voluntary settling of new lands, seasonal migrations, and migration into cities. Another important observation concerns the changes in migration patterns individuals embrace during their lifetime.

The morning session on April 6 started with a welcome by Nicole Svobodny, coordinator of the Eurasian Research Cluster. Volkswagen Foundation liaison at Washington University Paul Michael Lützel introduced the audience to the foundation's transatlantic research initiatives. Panel I, "Visions of mobility", focused on the role of technology for changing and imagined mobility patterns. JAN MUSEKAMP (St. Louis, MO/Frankfurt an der Oder) pointed out that transportation and communication innovations of the 19th century had dramatic globalizing effects. He focused on decisive improvements before the advent of the rail that already before 1840 altered cross-border mobility patterns between Prussia, France, and Russia. HARRIET MURAV (Urbana-Champaign, IL) shifted the attention to contemporaries' perception of technological innovations. In "Technology, the City, and Literature: Bergelson and Shklovsky in Berlin" she analyzed the work of two Russian avant-garde émigré writers. NATHANIEL WOOD (Lawrence, KS) examined "Bicycles, Automobiles, and Dreams of Personal Mobility in Poland, 1885-1939". He argued that despite the Kingdom of Poland's relative backwardness in terms of infrastructure, upper class Poles embraced the introduction of bicycles and automobiles and set up various cycling and automobile clubs.

Panel II, "Circulating Identities", discussed questions of migration and identity. In "The Ruble in Manchuria: The Circulation of Money and Conceptions of National Sovereignty" CHIA YIN HSU (Portland, OR) focused on the prestige of different currencies at the Chinese and Russian frontier between the 1890s and the 1920s. She pointed out

that the usage of varying currencies helped shape Russian and Chinese conceptions of national sovereignty. In his contribution "Far from Home: Railway Workers' Experiences Abroad during Construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline Railway (BAM)" CHRISTOPHER J. WARD (Morrow, GA) examined the role of railway workers sent abroad to promote the Soviet Union's achievements. Both young Soviet BAM workers and those coming from abroad to work on the BAM did not fulfill the state's expectations, instead following global patterns of informal socializing and various kinds of personal experimentation. ADRIAN WANNER (University College, PA) discussed the identity of "Recent Post-Soviet Writers in Germany". Out of a group of more than 200,000 Russian-speaking Jews that settled in Germany since the 1990s, a number of successful writers emerged. Their literary work often reflects their multi-layered identities, with the appeal of Russianness vs. Jewishness vs. Germanness becoming a particular brand in Germany's literary economy.

The third panel "Bodies in Motion" looked at different forms of migration in Poland and Russia of the 19th century. KEELY STAUTER-HALSTED (Chicago, IL) analyzed "Sex trafficking as a Migration Problem in Partitioned Poland". She challenged the image of vulnerable young female emigrants capturing contemporary public imagination as part of the drama of white slavery. In contrast, the presentation highlighted the autonomy of these labor migrants that in many cases made their own difficult albeit deliberate choices. In "Composition and Authorship in the Manuscripts of *Sybiracy* from the Inter-Revolutionary Era", ELIZABETH BLAKE (St. Louis, MO) portrayed the lives of Polish Siberian exiles between 1830 and 1863. She evaluated the nature of several accounts in an effort to define the parameters of authorship. TOBIAS BRINKMANN (University College, PA) offered the paper "Invisible Borders and Missing Migrants: Retracing the Journeys of Russian Subjects through Central Europe and Canada, 1880-1914". He focused on the role of steamship

lines for the emigration of Russian subjects and the de facto privatization of transit migration in Germany and Canada.

The last Panel "Life in Translation" concentrated on art, literature, migration, and identity. ANNA WINESTEIN (Oxford and Boston, MA) discussed the "Russkii Artisticheskii Kruzhok v Parizhe", an institution fostering artistic exchange between French and Russian émigré artists. Unlike many other Russian artistic institutions in Paris, its members were highly mobile between the two countries and saw their stakeholders as being in both France and Russia. GEORGE GASYNIA (Urbana-Champaign, IL) introduced "Andrzej Stasiuk and the Myth of the Literary *Gastarbajter*". In his autobiographical quasi-travelogue *Dojczland*, Stasiuk situates Germany as a place suitable for labor, not cultural interchange. In her paper "Performance-walks in the Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky" NICOLE SVOBODNY (St. Louis, MO) focused on the Polish-Russian famous dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky. He perceived his four notebooks not as a diary but as a work of art, entitling it *Feeling*. Svobodny argued that Nijinsky presents *Feeling* as performances revealing his experiences and expectations.

The concluding roundtable, chaired by Anika Walke, highlighted recurring themes of the conference. The synthesis outlined the need for further inquiry into the connections between distinct forms of mobility and migration and the impact of technological advancement and economic processes, or how they facilitate and are reflected in artistic productions. A final discussion revolved around the need for a critical assessment of categories such as "internal/ international" migration in regions where borders change frequently; the reevaluation of the continuously contested micro and macro-level orientation of scholarly analysis in contexts of highly normative state systems; and the utilization of critical borderland studies that have shaped analyses of migrations across the US/

Mexican border for the European and Eurasian space.

Conference Overview

Undergraduate Student Panel

Chair: Andy Sobel (Washington University)

Katie Ayanian (International and Area Studies): Conflict Management in the Southern Caucasus: National Narratives and Geo-Politics

Erin Humphries (International and Area Studies): Understanding Russian Decision-Making in Kosovo and Georgia

Matthew Lee (International and Area Studies): Afghanistan's Bane: The Crippling Legacy of the Durand Line

Graduate Student Panel

Chair: En Li (Washington University)

Paula Doumani (Dept. of Anthropology): Mobility, Technology Transfer, and Material Culture at the Heart of Eurasia: Prehistoric Nomads of Kazakhstan

Jacob Labendz (Dept. of History): "In unserem Kreise": Czech-Jewish Activism and Immigration in America, 1939-1994

Keynote Roundtable Discussion

Paper by Leslie Page Moch (Michigan State University): Repertoires and Regimes of Human Mobility: On the Move in 20th Century Eurasia

Panel I: Visions of Mobility

Chair: Lynne Tatlock (Washington University)

Jan Musekamp (European University Viadrina, Frankfurt and der Oder (Germany)/ Washington University): Paris - St. Petersburg: Shrinking Spaces in the 19th Century

Harriet Murav (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign/ Stanford Humanities Center): Technology, the City, and Literature: Bergelson and Shklovsky in Berlin

Nathan Wood (University of Kansas): "A main station at one's front door": Bicycles, Automobiles,

and Dreams of Personal Mobility in Poland, 1885-1939

Panel II: Circulating Identities

Chair: Lori Watt (Washington University)

Chia Yin Hsu (Portland State University): The Ruble in Manchuria: The Circulation of Money and Conceptions of National Sovereignty at the Chinese and Russian Frontier, 1890s-1920s

Chris Ward (Clayton State University): Far from Home: Railway Workers' Experiences Abroad during Construction of the Baikal-Amur-Railway (BAM), 1974-1984

Adrian Wanner (Pennsylvania State University): Recent Post-Soviet Immigrant Writers in Germany: Russians, Jews, or Germans?

Panel III: Bodies in Motion

Chair: Hillel Kieval (Washington University)

Keely Stauter-Halsted (University of Illinois at Chicago): Sex-Trafficking as a Migration Problem in Partitioned Poland

Elizabeth Blake (Saint Louis University): Composition and Authorship in the Manuscripts of Sybiracy from the Interrevolutionary Era

Tobias Brinkmann (Pennsylvania State University): Invisible Borders and Missing Migrants: Retracing the Journeys of Russian Subjects through Central Europe and Canada, 1880-1914

Panel IV: Life in Translation

Chair: Derek Pardue (Washington University)

Anna Winstein (University of Oxford, UK / Ballets Russes Cultural Partnership, Boston): Dynamic Bohemians: The Russki Artisticheskii Kruzhok v Parizhe

George Gasyna (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): Andrzej Stasiuk and the Myth of the Literary Gastarbajter

Nicole Svobodny (Washington University in St. Louis): Performance-walks in the Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky

Concluding Roundtable

Moderator: Anika Walke, "Migration, Identity, State" Research Cluster

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