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Histories of Migrant Knowledge Transatlantic and Global Perspectives

Edited by Andrea Westermann and Onur Erdur



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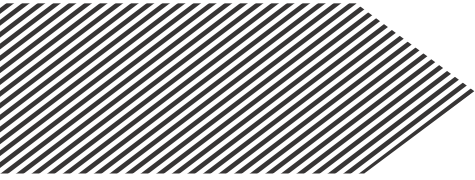
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Cover: Prof. Dr. Curt Bondy reviews youth from the Gross-Breesen agricultural training center at roll call. Photo used with the permission of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Landecker.



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Introduction

MIGRANT KNOWLEDGE: STUDYING THE EPISTEMIC DYNAMICS THAT GOVERN THE THINKING IN AND AROUND MIGRATION, EXILE, AND DISPLACEMENT

Andrea Westermann and Onur Erdur

To historians of science or knowledge, the notion of migrant knowledge comes across as a convenient shortcut for an object of research long studied in different disciplines and places.¹ It suggests the multiple logics, rationalities, and bodies of knowledge that both undergird *and* spring from individual and collective action linked to migrations. From an epistemological perspective — or perhaps even a *political* epistemological one — the notion of migrant knowledge brings together three different yet interconnected semantic strands or associations between knowledge and migrations: 1) knowledge about migrations; 2) scientific knowledge as a phenomenon established through generalization, which entails it successfully moving away from its place of creation; 3) knowledge that migrants or those expelled possess or have come to possess before, in, or after displacement. Let us look at each of these associations with migrant knowledge more fully in turn.

First, the notion of migrant knowledge invokes knowledge about migrations and migrants produced by state agencies, international institutions, scientists, and politicians. What did these historical actors know about particular migratory phenomena in specific times and places? How did they know it, and how were ideas of social order shaped by these strands of expertise?

Second, migrant knowledge resonates with and amounts to what science and technology studies address as “knowledge in transit,” following the coinage of James Secord.² In this strand of meaning, migrant knowledge invites us to emphasize and explain the historicity of (social) scientific knowledge by focusing on the insights and ideas people have sought to transform into well-established facts about the world, societies, or human beings. This semantic strand is about inquiring into how time- and place-specific observations, data, and arguments are turned into “immutable mobiles,” robust enough to retain their form when traveling away from their local contexts — a journey that is necessary to validate and naturalize scholarly facts. It is also about mapping what David N. Livingstone has called “geographies of scientific knowledge,” that is, readings, adaptations, and

1 For an alternative mapping of research strands and questions related to the notion of migrant knowledge, see Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, “Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43, no. 3 (2017): 313–46.

2 James Secord, “Knowledge in Transit,” *Isis* 95 (2004): 654–72.

rephrasings of scholarly knowledge that are specific to a particular place of group of people.³

3 On mutable mobiles, see Bruno Latour, "Drawing Things Together," in *Representation in Scientific Practice*, ed. Michael Lynch and Steve Woolgar, 19–68 (London, 1990); David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago, 2003). It is worth asking whether these approaches can be made useful for bodies of knowledge outside of science and scholarship — for instance, for religious articulations.

4 Sabine Hess, Bernd Kasperek, Stefanie Kron, Mathias Rodatz, Maria Schwertl, and Simon Sontowski, eds., *Der lange Sommer der Migration: Grenzregime III* (Berlin, 2016).

5 For German and Swiss views and reviews of the new research and approaches being taken internationally in migration studies, see Maren Möhring, "Jenseits des Integrationsparadigmas? Aktuelle Konzepte und Ansätze in der Migrationsforschung," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 58 (2018): 304–30; Barbara Lüthi, "Migration and Migration History, Version: 2.0," *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 06.07.2018 http://docupedia.de/zg/Luethi_migration_v2_en_2018; Maria Alexopoulou, "Vom Nationalen zum Lokalen und zurück? Zur Geschichtsschreibung in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft Deutschland," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 56 (2016): 463–84.

6 For an overview, see Peter Burke, *What Is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge, 2015); Monika Dommann, "Alles fließt. Soll Geschichte nomadischer werden?," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 42, no. 3 (2016): 516–34. For a programmatic appeal to study the history of knowledge, see Simone Lässig, »

Third, migration studies, ethnic studies, and diaspora studies as pioneered in the United States, in particular, have long adopted the practice of highlighting diversity, mechanisms for coping with inequalities and racism, and collective attempts to create more inclusive societies. It is due to this ambition that scholars are interested in what migrants or diaspora communities know and how they voice and use their knowledge. German-speaking academia took up the trend toward putting migrants in the center of such inquiries with new verve after the European "summer of migration" in 2015.⁴ In this strand of meaning, migrant knowledge takes different forms, including the production, use, and transmission of knowledge (community, religious, professional, academic, political, or economic); the cultural capital that migrants bring, transform, and acquire; or the questions of how knowledge is shared to ensure that migrants acquire the benefits of social and political citizenship in their new homes.

Each of these three semantic strands of migrant knowledge correlates with specific research interests. At the same time, the umbrella notion reminds us that these aspects overlap and that our analyses can benefit from taking their interdependencies and entanglements into account.

Two multi-disciplinary scholarly fields, in particular, have aimed to explore migrant knowledge as an object of research: migration studies⁵ and the history of knowledge.⁶ A basic insight in both fields — that is, among historians of science and knowledge, on the one hand, and scholars at the intersection of migration, ethnic, or diaspora studies, on the other — concerns the temporal dimension of knowledge and perception. Whether they look at the making of state-centered depictions of migrants and migrations (the first semantic strand of migrant knowledge noted above), whether they look at how ideas travel in specific ways to become facts or take on rather autonomous trajectories in different geographies of knowledge (the

» "The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (Fall 2016):

29–58. Lorraine Daston critically weighs the claims in the history of knowledge against longstanding achievements in the history of science

in "The History of Science and the History of Knowledge," *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 1 (2017): 131–54.

second semantic strand), or whether they take an actor-centered “history-from-below” approach focusing on migrants and those labeled as such (our third semantic strand), these scholars have found that knowledge is neither made quickly nor necessarily plays out directly. Once established, knowledge orients individual and collective action, and it might do so quietly long after any conscious understanding of its impact has faded from collective memory. In other words, forms of knowledge long present and unconsciously taken for granted generate specific epistemic dynamics, as indicated in our title, that enable or constrain various actions. The given epistemic dynamics within specific historical situations — in our case, specific migration-related situations — channel and determine what people think and do.

If we agree that the question of epistemic dynamics governing the thinking around migration and displacement is a key concern for those who analyze migrant knowledge, then we can acknowledge predecessors who made this concern pivotal to comprehensive social and cultural theories of difference or inequality. Take, for example, eminent emigré social and cultural theorists Hannah Arendt, Michel-Rolph Trouillot, and Edward Said, to name only three scholars of European, Caribbean, and Middle Eastern origin, respectively, who all ended up having academic careers in the United States. Arendt fled Nazi Germany to finally settle in the United States, where she taught at Brooklyn College, the University of Chicago, and the New School of Social Research. Said was born in Mandatory Palestine, went to a British boarding school in Egypt, studied in the US and became a professor of literary studies at Columbia University in New York. Trouillot was born in Haiti. As a student, he fled from the Duvalier dictatorship to New York and ultimately worked as an anthropologist at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Chicago. All three intellectuals chose to conduct research on the inclusion or exclusion of people according to racialized hierarchies that were, themselves, entangled with forced and voluntary migration. Historians of ideas who analyze their works are eager to emphasize the impact of displacement on the way they crafted their political or cultural theories. In Arendt’s writing, the notions and implications of Jewish refuge and exile, camps, and statelessness took center stage.⁷ Edward Said, whose thoughts were central to the development of postcolonial studies, made Europe’s deeply entrenched impulse to classify and rank others according to racialized cultural categories a focus of his work.⁸

7 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1968 [1951]); and idem, “We Refugees” (<https://amroali.com/2017/04/refugees-essay-hannah-arendt>, first published 1943 in *Menorah Journal*); on Arendt, see Julia Schulze Wessel, *Grenzfiguren: Zur politischen Theorie des Flüchtlings* (Bielefeld, 2017).

8 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978); on Said, see Dominique Eddé, *Edward Said: His Thought as a Novel* (New York, 2019).

9 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 2015 [1995]); on Trouillot, see Ethel Hazard, "Alterity and History: The Cross-Current Contributions of the Work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 19, no. 2 (2013): 33-46. The creation of counter-archives has been an effort ever since; see Fatima El-Tayeb, "The Archive, the Activist, and the Audience, or Black European Studies: A Comparative Interdisciplinary Study of Identities, Positionalities, and Differences," *Transit*, no. 1 (2005): 1-7; Andrew Flinn and Ben Alexander, "Humanizing an Inevitability Political Craft": Introduction to the Special issue on *Archiving Activism and Activist Archiving*, *Arch Sci* 15 (2015): 329-3, doi:10.1007/s10502-015-9260-6. For an artistic project as an archive of migrant knowledge, see Dan Thy Nguyen's play about the pogrom in Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Germany, in 1992 (<https://www.danthy.net/projekte/sonnenblumenhaus-theaterstueck/>). In an oral history effort, the playwright collected voices of the Vietnamese victims who had originally come to Germany as contract workers in the former German Democratic Republic. Nguyen made these voices into a textual assemblage, producing a testimony that powerfully conveys a truthful depiction of social reality.

10 Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-44; Philip Marfleet, "Refugees and History: Why We Must Address the Past," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2007): 136-48; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, 2004).

Trouillot meditated on the wide-ranging effects of silencing racialized subalterns or subjugated persons for the writing of history.⁹

Scholars in migration studies or the history of migration, in turn, have found that the writings of social and cultural theorists like Arendt, Said, and Trouillot contain valuable tools for studying the processes and rationalities at work in the administrative making of migrants.

They insist on inquiring into how migrants have been subjected to bureaucratic and academic routines of classification, racialization, and the definition — even elimination — of their legal status, personhood, and cultural output.¹⁰ The administrative making and objectivization of migrants, which falls within our first semantic strand of migrant knowledge, continues to be a promising object of historical research. Several empirical studies are now underway that reside at the intersection of the history of migration and knowledge. Three projects of the research group "The Scientific Production of Knowledge about Migration" of Osnabrück, for instance, examine the discriminatory aspects of statistics, the knowledge police possess about migrants, and the making of transnational migration data centers at universities and research institutes, respectively.¹¹ Such studies analyze the sociopolitical, technological, and scientific conditions involved in the professional making of migrant knowledge, as well as the societal consequences such knowledge about migrants has had over time. What role have economists, sociologists, ethnologists, or pedagogues played in establishing, enacting, and reforming migration regimes? And how has this "scientification of the social"¹² created a space within which migration research could

11 The research group is housed at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies at the University of Osnabrück. The group is led by Christiane Reinecke and Isabella Löhr; see: https://www.imis.uni-osnabrueck.de/forschung/nachwuchsgruppe_wissen_ueber_migration.html. For a history of bureaucracy initiative beyond migration, see <https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/research/projects/history-bureaucratic-knowledge>.

In an interesting twist, Debbie Kahn combines the study of bureaucratic logics and actor-centered perspectives with her focus on bureaucratic agents on the ground, i.e., in borderlands: S. Deborah Kang, *The INS on the Line: Making Immigration Law on the US-Mexico Border, 1917-1954* (Oxford, 2017). Along similar lines, see Margit Fauser, Anne Friedrichs, and Levke Harders, "Migrations and Borders: Practices and Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion

in Europe from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 34, no. 4 (2018): 483-88, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2018.1510334.

12 Lutz Raphael, "Die Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen als methodische und konzeptionelle Herausforderung für eine Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22, no. 4 (1996), 165-193.

develop as a field in its own right among the aforementioned disciplines?¹³

Migration history and neighboring disciplines such as ethnic studies have not stopped at the office desks of state officials and scientific and scholarly experts, though. Historians and other scholars also study the everyday consequences of bureaucracies trying to define and characterize migrants. Immigrants, refugees, “illegal aliens,” and other subaltern subjects have inhabited and often actively interrogated the contradictory categories and conflicting goals with which they have been confronted.¹⁴ Consequently, researchers are coming to understand migrant responses to such knowledge regimes about migrants as knowledge in its own right, even though it does not manifest itself in the learned books of émigré scholarship or in sophisticated autobiographical memoirs. Moreover, as with any type of knowledge, scholars are finding that such migrant knowledge is not self-contained. It remains tied to state-produced knowledge and other bodies thereof. Many scholars in German-speaking academia are currently joining in on this trend toward a “history of knowledge from below” — the third strand of meaning associated with the notion of migrant knowledge.¹⁵

Our account of the disciplinary engagements with the various ramifications of migrant knowledge does not aim to comprehensively review the state of the art. Rather, we wish to highlight topical research avenues and observations that might inspire scholars in the field of the history of science and knowledge as well as in migration studies. As historians of science and knowledge ourselves, we strongly believe that the study of migrant knowledge is not confined to the

13 Recent histories of migration research resort to the methodological repertoire offered by science and technology studies or history of knowledge approaches. On the history of German-speaking migration research, see Kijan Espahangizi, “Migrationsforschung und epistemische Teilhabe. Vier historische Schlaglichter auf die Zürcher ‘Fremdarbeitersozologie’ in den 1970er Jahren,” in *Urban Citizenship: Democratizing Democracy*, ed.

Katharina Morawek and Martin Krenn, 89–111 (Vienna, 2017); Kijan Espahangizi, “The ‘Sociologic’ of Postmigration: A Study in the Early History of Social Research on Migration and Integration in Switzerland 1960–73,” in *Switzerland and Migration. Historical and Current Perspectives on a Changing Landscape*, ed. Barbara Lüthi and Damir Skenderovic, 33–59 (London, 2019); See also: Tobias Brinkmann, “Acquiring Knowledge about Migration: The

Jewish Origins of Migration Studies,” *Migrant Knowledge*, September 25, 2019, <https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/09/25/acquiring-knowledge-about-migration/>; Michelle Lynn Kahn, “Rebels against the Homeland: Turkish Guest Workers in 1980s West German Anthropology,” *Migrant Knowledge*, October 23, 2019, <https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/10/23/rebels-against-the-homeland/>.

14 Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States* (Berkeley, 2013).

15 Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015); Nicholas De Genova, “The ‘Native’s Point of View’ in the Anthropology of Migration,” *Anthropological Theory* 16, nos. 2–3 (2016): 227–40; Risto Lenz, “Mediators of Knowledge: WPA Folklorists and 1930s Migrant Culture,” *History of Knowledge*, <https://historyofknowledge.net/2018/04/11/mediators-of-knowledge-wpa-folklorists-and-1930s-migrant-culture/>; Damir Skenderovic, “Vom Gegenstand zum Akteur. Perspektivenwechsel in der Migrationsgeschichte der Schweiz,” *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 65, no. 1 (2015): 1–14; Ulrike Jureit, “Hoffnung auf Erfolg. Akteurszentrierte Handlungskonzepte in der Migrations- und Flüchtlingsforschung,” *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 3 (2018): 509–22, online edition <https://doi.org/10.14765/zzf.dok.4.1295>.

intellectual, scientific, or bureaucratic logics — that is, the classic institutional assemblages that migrants are caught up in, and in which knowledge is the dominant currency. The umbrella term of migrant knowledge includes but goes beyond the administrative routines of inclusion and exclusion, their everyday discriminatory effects, and subsequent efforts to counter them. We argue for a clear extension of what one considers valuable research objects. Histories about migrant knowledge can and should focus on a greater range of social actors and phenomena.

In addition to emphasizing a *longue-durée* framework, scholars in the history of science or knowledge argue that the logics and epistemologies underpinning societal interactions are not linear but, rather, are ramified. By applying a history of knowledge perspective to migration, we can bring together phenomena whose interrelations might otherwise go unnoticed. We could, for instance, sort out the long-term effects that the agricultural protectionism of the European Union and its predecessor states has had on today's flight and economic migration patterns. Such an undertaking need not amount to an exercise in macroeconomics but could instead lead to empirically rich, actor-centered narratives about a myriad of factors that people in rural and urban Africa consider when deciding whether to leave their homes in order to survive and perhaps prosper. Such factors might include the effects of industrial countries' agricultural nostalgia, the consequences of inter-European developmental policies, the worldwide circulation of visions of consumer democracies, advances in agrochemistry and biotechnology, or competing models of economic growth in a decolonizing world.¹⁶

An object-centered history of knowledge could look, for example, at the inflatable dinghies marketed as refugee boats for the Mediterranean Sea as valuable artifacts. Many types of knowledge are manifested in or attached to these inflatable boats. Studying them could unpack factors ranging from high-tech material testing of synthetic rubber or vinyl, makeshift bricolage, nautical expertise, political calculations, sales estimates, individual bets on the future, legal and illegal monetary flows, group sociologies, and more. This shows just how far we might have to cast our empirical net to understand why collective routines, once established, are difficult to end.

Let us reflect on a few more examples. Welcoming networks and solidarity groups produce their own knowledge that is worth analyzing;

16 In an epistemological approach, Loren B. Landau criticizes European answers to current out-migration from African states to Europe: "A Chronotope of Containment Development: Europe's Migrant Crisis and Africa's Reterritorialization," 2019, *Antipode* 51, no.1 (2019): 169-86.

migrants have been involved in unionized labor relations, schools, and memory politics. Analyzing such constellations calls for history of knowledge approaches. So do the alternative geographies that emerge from tracing the paths that migrants follow. Borderlines become borderscapes: Migrants aim to evade ever expanding, even deterritorialized, border control techniques. In other cases, migrants and border enforcement personnel count on the advantages and disadvantages of the physical landscapes that people on the move need to traverse.¹⁷ And, last but not least, let us consider “big” societal concerns — that is, those that are currently at the forefront of global public debates — and combine them with migrant knowledge: What can we learn about the environment, global markets, sexual relations, or violence in a given historical time and place if we also factor in what migrant workers, their families, or political refugees have or had to say about these phenomena?¹⁸

This disparate list exemplifies our suggestion to look for both *alternative sites of migrant knowledge production* and hitherto *overlooked repositories of migrant knowledge*. Histories of migrant knowledge will not necessarily end with classic migration-related topics such as citizenship, xenophobia, or hybrid identities. We suggest that scholars apply the methods in the history of science and knowledge to new and old sources related to migration that have been accumulated beyond academia and state institutions, or, perhaps, to sources within such institutions that are categorized under rubrics that are not specific to migration. A similar idea is manifested in the concept of “postmigration,” which was developed in German-speaking migrant activist and migration studies circles.¹⁹ Scholars within these circles increasingly conceptualize migration as a cross-sectional research category.

We want to conclude our reflections on migrant knowledge as a shortcut for studying epistemic dynamics in and around migration on a note very dear to us. Approaches in the history of knowledge call for studying all actors and bodies of knowledge in equal measure and with similar methods. This is how the field differs from more conventional approaches in the history of science and the history of ideas. At the same time, the premise of studying different actors and spheres of knowledge symmetrically does not mean ignoring asymmetrical power effects. Different types of knowledge

17 Jason de Leon, *The Land of Open Graves* (Berkeley,

2015); Francisco Cantú, *The Line Becomes a River:*

Dispatches from the Border (New York, 2018).

18 Benjamin Nobbs-Thiessen, “Marginal Knowledge: The Transnational Practices of Latin American Mennonites,” *Migrant Knowledge*, March 22, 2019, <https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/03/22/marginal-knowledge-the-transnational-practices-of-latin-american-mennonites/>; Chelsea Shields, “Eros Against Empire: Visions of Erotic Freedom in Archives of Decolonisation,” *Journal of Gender Studies/Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 22 (2019): 145–61; Claudia Roesch, “Love without Fear: Knowledge Networks and Family Planning Initiatives for Immigrant Families in West Germany and the United States” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 64 (Spring 2019): 93–113.

Andrea Westermann, “Migrations and Radical Environmental Change: When Social History Meets the History of Science,” *NTM Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Wissenschaften, Technik und Medizin* 27, no. 3 (2019): 377–89.

19 Erol Yildiz and Marc Hill, eds., *Nach der Migration: Postmigrantische Perspektiven jenseits der Parallelsellschaft* (Bielefeld, 2014); Francesca Falk, “Telling History from a Migration Perspective Is Not an Add-On,” *Migrant Knowledge*, March 15, 2019 <https://migrantknowledge.org/2019/03/15/telling-history-from-a-migration-perspective-is-not-an-add-on/>; Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft: Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie* (Bielefeld, 2019).

are backed by very specific sources of authority and enjoy unequal social currency.

Our Bulletin Supplement

Our GHI Bulletin Supplement adds to this ongoing discussion about the histories of migrant knowledge. The contributors are scholars of migration history who participated in workshops or panels hosted by the Pacific Regional Office of the German Historical Institute of Washington DC in 2018. We asked them to take a significant point, principle, methodological consideration, or concrete analysis from their own work testing a history of knowledge approach. Whereas each case study presents a unique perspective, their juxtaposition in this volume, and particularly their groupings, illuminate what they have in common and enrich the analyses, as we elucidate below after summarizing the individual contributions.

Sheer Ganor's essay "To Farm a Future: The Displaced Youth of Gross-Breesen" looks at the making of an agricultural youth community. Established in 1936 to prepare Jewish youth between the ages of fifteen and seventeen for emigration from Nazi Germany, the school trained its disciples in diverse agricultural skills before the trainees were dispersed much earlier than they had hoped. Ganor traces the ways in which the exiles formed a transnational network, utilizing letters as a vehicle for knowledge-sharing, addressing a variety of themes and questions. From a history of knowledge perspective, Ganor recounts a knowledge collective in the making along the lines of the thought collectives theorized by Ludwik Fleck.²⁰ In Fleck's view, academic studies are not only syllabi but multifaceted initiation rituals with which each scientific discipline "disciplines" its students; it subjects them to a particular collective habitus and thought style. The Gross-Breesen youth collective formed, among other things, around the thought style of a charismatic teacher. The emerging collective still varied in an interesting way from university students. A good deal of the knowledge and identity formation of the group happened after the fact, so to speak: It was only in the medium of the life-long communication network among the former members of the agricultural utopian project, Ganor argues, that a dynamic migrant knowledge, highly localized in each individual case, was brought into being.

20 Ludwik Fleck, *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago, 1979 [first German edition, 1935]).

In "Small Strangers at the School of Friendship: Memories of Mozambican School Students of the German Democratic Republic," Marcia C. Schenck examines the memories of the former child

migrants, revealing that the knowledge-transfer program that saw 900 Mozambican schoolchildren attend secondary school in East Germany from 1982 to 1988 played out differently from what both the organizers and participants expected. As the young adults returned to their home country with professions and political attitudes that had been valued in East Germany but had little use or prestige in Mozambique, many were disappointed. They had been groomed as a revolutionary vanguard workforce for a socialist world that had ceased to exist upon their return. This contribution sheds light on how bodies of knowledge become obsolete, are partly appropriated through transformation, and reemerge as tools for citizens to criticize state politics.

Risto Lenz's essay "The South and the Making of the American Other: Folk Music, Internal Migration, and the Cultural Left" identifies the importance of internal migration for cultural knowledge formation in US urban leftist circles, often located on the East Coast. It does so by exploring the political epistemology underpinning the (re)making of "folk music." Folk singers attached to the Great Migration of black Southerners, the dust bowl migration, and the Appalachian migration differed in terms of their backgrounds, regional heritage, as well as class, race, and sex. Yet, for many Northern leftists these three Southern strands of folk song all carried on dying rural traditions and symbolized the Southern tensions of their native homes: racism, poverty, as well as the plight during the Great Depression. An abstract entity, "The South," became a proxy for Northern urban intellectuals' projections in the face of national crisis. This was no unidirectional appropriation of historical and sociological bodies of knowledge about rural America, though. Seen from the angle of a history of knowledge from below, the migrants contributed to shaping the overall depiction of a fundamentally unequal US society. They controlled the message of their songs and deployed their public personas as migrants, political activists, and heritage preservers.

In her contribution, "From 'Ethnic Community' to 'Black Community': The Cultural Belonging of Migrants between Race-Relations Research and the Politics of Blackness in 1970s and 1980s Britain," Almuth Ebke focuses on the shifting sociological knowledge about cultural belonging of postcolonial migrants. Using the debate following the riots and confrontations between predominately black youths and police in a number of English cities in spring and summer 1981 as a case study, Ebke explores the ways politicians, commentators,

as well as first- and second-generation migrants, assigned blame for the unrest, but also how they proposed solutions. The controversy surrounding the riots became interwoven in longer-lasting scholarly debates about immigration, racism, and race in post-war Britain. In this essay, colonial and postcolonial immigrants are protagonists on a par with more familiar knowledge players such as the government, journalists, and academics: While the conception of “ethnic communities” by race relations experts had proved decisive in setting the vocabulary for the wider political discourse on the place of colonial and postcolonial immigrants in British society, black activists challenged these interpretations both on academic and political grounds by using the adjective “black” to describe their own communities.

In his contribution “Displaced Knowledge and Its Sponsors: How American Foundations and Aid Organizations Shaped Émigré Social Research, 1933-1945,” Joseph Malherek examines how foundations and aid organizations in the United States helped bring about émigré social research in the 1930s and 1940s. Philanthropic institutions, refugee assistance organizations, and university administrators in the United States responded to the global refugee crisis with efforts to place these exiled scholars at US-American universities and research institutions. Malherek looks at the motives and values, both broadly humanistic and intensely personal, that drove the émigrés’ sponsors, including the officers of the respective philanthropic institutions and assistance organizations, especially in their relationship to two of their most prominent beneficiaries: Max Horkheimer and his Institute of Social Research, and Paul Lazarsfeld and his Office of Radio Research (later the Bureau of Applied Social Research), which coexisted for a time at Columbia University and represented what came to be known as “Critical Theory.” The boundaries between fields of knowledge, and between the university and the practical world of sponsors and business, were in flux for the émigré scholars and their sponsors, but that very disciplinary liminality provided the crucial context in which Critical Theory could flourish as a new form of social research.

Avi Sharma’s essay “Mass Displacement in Post-Catastrophic Societies: Vulnerability, Learning, and Adaptation in Germany and India, 1945-1952” uses insights from migration, forced migration, and urban studies to look at post-catastrophic cities where locals encountered displaced persons arriving on a mass scale. In Berlin (1945-1948) as well as in post-Partition Calcutta (1947-1952) both migrant *and* local populations shared vulnerabilities because the catastrophes subtly

and radically transformed rules and routines for everyone. Sharma's analysis conceptualizes migration as work. Informed by a history of knowledge perspective, Sharma closely follows the economic rationality that all involved parties and actors embraced. He not only shows that this economic grammar was spelled out in a variety of languages but also discerns a distinct body of knowledge among the migrants and locals: knowledge used for coping and survival.

The final essay of the volume, "Humans, Not Files: Deportation and Knowledge in Switzerland," by Barbara Lüthi, addresses shifting deportation regimes in Switzerland from the 1970s to the present. Against the backdrop of sweeping historical shifts on both the national and global level during the 1970s and 1980s, migration governance in Switzerland and Western Europe in general was marked by far-reaching administrative reforms, including those relating to deportations. The Swiss federal authorities and their administrative apparatus developed enormous powers, not least because they systematized and radicalized the deportation logic and logistics in Switzerland. However, administrations were not the only decision makers, but rather part of a dynamic field involving numerous actors such as politicians, administrative officials, doctors, lawyers, NGOs, media, and the migrants themselves. In trying to grasp the responses of migrants to these changes, it is important to understand how they struggled with uncertainties, contingencies, and chances during their multiple moves across continents and in the face of active deportation policies in Europe. In this context, an economy of migratory knowledge played an important role which also included solidarity and support networks. By example of the specific trajectory of one migrant during the 1980s, Lüthi's article tells the entangled history of administrative and individual migrant knowledge.

While the essays just presented do not each neatly map exclusively onto one of the semantic strands outlined at the outset, here we have highlighted their specific take on migrant knowledge. The essays can also be put into conversation with each other and thus illuminate ways one can generalize from individual case studies. Marcia C. Schenck deals with academic exchange programs between the German Democratic Republic and Mozambique that were established to prepare young people for an imagined future that never came true because history took a radically different turn. In this respect, Schenck's contribution is comparable to Ganor's case of a Jewish agricultural youth community established to build a collective future

in exile (Section 1: Futures That Never Were). Risto Lenz and Almuth Ebke look at internal migration within the United States and within the British Empire, so to speak, as well as the impact of such migration on cultural leftist societal visions and politics (Section 2: Internal Migration and the Left). Last but not least, we have three inquiries into how place-specific material resources shaped the migrants' professional and economic engagements: Joseph Malherek examines the cultural, material, and financial contexts of émigré social research in the United States of the 1930s and 1940s; Avi Sharma's case study focuses on mid-twentieth century Berlin and Calcutta, with the aim of determining common features of mass displacement in urban environments with scarce material resources; and Barbara Lüthi studies how a refugee journalist from the Palestinian territories of Israel navigated and contested asylum procedures in Switzerland and was helped do so by intellectual resources and solidarity networks (Section 3: Place-Specific Material Resources).

With this collection of articles, we hope to spark further research into the epistemic dynamics of displacement, into alternative sites of migrant knowledge production, and into overlooked repositories of migrant knowledge.

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Futures That Never Were

TO FARM A FUTURE: THE DISPLACED YOUTH OF GROSS-BREESSEN

Sheer Ganor

Introduction¹

Eight days after arriving at Hyde Farmland near Richmond, Virginia, Ernst Löwensberg wrote to his friends back in Germany in June of 1938. He wanted to portray his new home to them in the most accurate way possible, describing in great detail the curvy roads leading to the farmhouse, the mailbox that was located at a distance of six miles from the residence, and the garden, where, among other things, he grew corn, cabbage, spinach, beans, cherry tomatoes, and potatoes. Löwensberg wrote of the horses, the mules, and the cows on the farm, paying attention to the quality of the hay that the animals were fed. He mused about the old Ford trucks that his neighbors, local Virginia farmers, were fond of driving; about the sweltering heat that melted his ice cream on his much-anticipated Sunday break from work; as well as about the six-foot black snake that had visited his bedroom one night. “With intensive labor,” Löwensberg assured his readers, “and backed by our short training in Gross-Breesen, we will cultivate the soil here and will reap great crops.”² In this letter, Ernst Löwensberg did not simply address his friends with news about his acclimation to his new home in the United States. Anticipating that they would soon join him on the farm in Virginia, he was preparing them for their own migration.

Löwensberg and his addressees were all members of an agricultural youth community based in Gross-Breesen, a small village in Silesia, close to the German-Polish border at the time.³ Established by the Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden (Reich Representation of German Jews) to shelter Jewish teenagers from Nazi persecution and to prepare them for life abroad, this operation sought to train youth at Gross-Breesen to emigrate as a collective, establish a farm, and start a new life together. At the time of Löwensberg’s writing, Hyde Farmland in Virginia was one option that the group’s leadership

1 I would like to thank Andrea Westermann and Onur Erdur for their helpful and insightful comments, as well as to the participants and audience

of the 2018 GSA panel series, “The Nexus of Migration, Youth, and Knowledge,” generously sponsored by the GHI. Many thanks also to the

US Holocaust Memorial Museum and to Michael Simonson of the Leo Baeck Institute, NY, for their help with the images used in this article.

2 Letter from Ernst Löwensberg, June 16, 1938, in “Erster Brief an die alten Gross Breesener,” July 1938; Jüdisches Auswanderungslehrgut (Gross-Breesen, Silesia) Collection; AR 3686; box 1; folder 1; Leo Baeck Institute. The newsletter was also digitized, edited, and partially translated by former Gross-Breesen trainees in a three-volume collection that they titled *A Testament of the Survivors, A Memorial to the Dead: The Collection of Gross-Breesen Letters and Related Material*. This collection is available in Word format on CD at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum under reference number 2006.302. When referring to newsletter issues from the CD collection, I indicate the title of the specific document and the volume it is located in. Translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

3 The history of the Gross-Breesen youth farm has been studied in Werner T. Angress’s *Between Fear and Hope: Jewish Youth in the Third Reich*, trans. Werner T. Angress and Christine Granger (New York, 1988). For further information, see also Susanne Guski-Leinwand, ed., *Curt Werner Bondy. Psychologe und Strafgefangenenfürsorger* (Berlin, 2018); Walter Laqueur, *Generation Exodus: The Fate of Young Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (London and New York, 2004), 17–18, 85, 215–16.

considered a potential place of settlement. But the radicalization of Nazi violence against German Jews foiled the Gross-Breeseners' plan to emigrate together as a group. The farm's trainees soon found themselves dispersed to all corners of the world. From their places of refuge — permanent new homelands as well as temporary shelters — Gross-Breesen trainees retained an ongoing lively dialogue and cultivated lifelong relationships.

In the following article, I trace the ways in which they used this transnational network 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. But this conversation across borders served not only to circulate information to dispersed Gross-Breeseners. In a series of correspondences and in their circulated newsletter, the former trainees chronicled the story of their community, establishing their belonging to it as a life-long identity marker. In their communications, moreover, they found a forum for negotiating the place of their community in the broader arch of German-Jewish history. Outlasting the farm's short-lived existence (from 1936 until its dissolution in 1943), the decades-long relationships that were maintained after the trainees' removal became, in and of themselves, a defining feature of the Gross-Breesen community.

Two characteristics of the Gross-Breeseners' continued engagement make it noteworthy for the study of migrant knowledge. First, it compels us to look beyond the model in which migrants act as mediators, transmitting knowledge between their places of origin and the environments that they enter. In the case of the German-Jewish forced migration in the 1930s and 1940s, this paradigm has motivated a number of excellent studies devoted to analyzing the integration of refugees into various professional spheres of expertise and how they influenced knowledge development within these spheres.⁴ While the biographies of many Gross-Breeseners certainly would fit this paradigm well,⁵ this article is instead concerned with the diasporic connections they fostered with each other as a forum of transnational exchange. Thus, it links the phenomena of migrant knowledge and diasporic networks to examine the causes and interests that animated communications across this dispersed community.

Second, Gross-Breeseners moved beyond the dissemination of professional information related to their training in agriculture. In their communications, they fostered an exchange of knowledge that was

4 A few examples include Mitchell G. Ash and Alfons Söllner, eds., *Forced Migration and Scientific Change: Émigré German-speaking Scientists and Scholars after 1933* (Washington, DC, 1996); Julius Carlebach, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Aubrey Newman, Arnold Paucker, and Peter Pulzer, eds., *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tübingen, 1991), especially 101-464; Andreas W. Daum, Hartmut Lehmann and James J. Sheehan, eds., *The Second Generation. Émigrés from Nazi Germany as Historians* (New York, 2016); Gerd Gemunden, *Continental Strangers: German Exile Cinema, 1933-1951* (New York, 2014); see also Josef Malherek's contribution to this volume.

5 Ernst Cramer offers perhaps the best illustration of such a biography. After his internment in Buchenwald together with other Gross-Breesen trainees, he emigrated to the United States in 1939 at the age of 16. He joined the US military and in 1944 was stationed on the frontline in Germany. After the end of WWII, Cramer worked for the US military occupation in Germany and eventually started a career in journalism and reached senior positions in the Springer Corporation.

deeply rooted in their experience of everyday life in displacement. Sociologist Avtar Brah has noted that the identities and principles shared across diasporic communities are not fixed but are rather “constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively.”⁶ The Gross-Breesen communications illustrate this continuous shaping of cross-border group affiliation particularly well. Combining practical information about agricultural work, daily anecdotes about living conditions in various countries, harrowing details about the seismic events of WWII and the Holocaust, and recurring inquiries into their shared past on the farm, the Gross-Breesen exchange did not merely maintain the bonds of a dispersed community; it helped shape how this community understood itself. From their new places of residence, the Gross-Breeseners contemplated the accomplishments and the unfulfilled promises of the agricultural-educational exercise they had been a part of. Often recalled by former members as a formative life event, the project as a whole was also viewed as a failed experiment by some: it aided in saving lives by securing paths of migration but did not succeed in creating a society of cultured Jewish farmers. Examining this paradox in perception, the article will address the peculiar legacy of the Gross-Breesen utopia as it manifested itself in the transnational dialog cultivated by dispersed former trainees.

Beginning with a brief account of the project’s history, which culminated in the farm’s demise, the article continues with an examination of the paths Gross-Breesen trainees took following their escape from Nazi Germany. Analyzing the lively exchange of letters they maintained across five continents, it then addresses the Gross-Breeseners’ reflections on their own commitment to the ethos of their community, and the prodding and questioning that characterized their continued conversations.

Rescue in Training: The Gross-Breesen Youth Farm in Germany

The idea of establishing an agricultural youth community emerged in late 1935, following the declaration of the Nuremberg Laws. With the future of Jews in Germany appearing increasingly bleak, the Reichsvertretung, in its capacity as the national representative body of German Jews, focused its efforts on facilitating Jewish emigration out of Germany.⁷ The Gross-Breesen youth farm was established in this context. A public announcement by the Reichsvertretung clarified that emigration was “imminent for large parts of the Jewish youth

6 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London, 1996), 183.

7 On the history of the Reichsvertretung and its various permutations under Nazi rule, see Esiel Hildesheimer, *Jüdische Selbstverwaltung unter dem NS-Regime: Der Existenzkampf der Reichsvertretung und Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (Tübingen, 1994); on German-Jewish organizations’ emigration policies during the Nazi Period, see David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit: Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938* (Göttingen, 2017).

in Germany,” and that the program was designed to aid their quick and safe passage and their acclimation abroad. Aiming to prepare Jewish boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 17 for migration by training them in various agricultural tasks, the organization hoped that two years of versatile instruction on the farm would improve the trainees’ chances of obtaining immigration permits as well as secure employment in their new places of residence. Next to this chief goal of expediting emigration, the Reichsvertretung stated an additional important aim of the project: through a combination of labor, physical training, rigorous education, character building, and instilling Jewish values, life on the farm was supposed to cultivate the young trainees into outstanding individuals.⁸

The youth farm initiative was modeled on existing agricultural youth villages, known as *Hachshara* centers (Hebrew for “preparation”). These were established by Zionist Jewish organizations in both Western and Eastern Europe, with the purpose of training members for their anticipated immigration to Palestine and to cultivate them — both physically and mentally — to build a homeland for the Jewish people.⁹ The youth community that the Reichsvertretung sought to create, however, was explicitly non-Zionist. While no detailed immigration path was declared at these early stages, Palestine was not the intended destination.

To lead the project, the Reichsvertretung recruited Curt Werner Bondy (1894-1972), a prominent scholar and social reformer who specialized in youth pedagogy and psychology. Following the April 1933 legislation that removed Jews from professions in the civil service, Bondy was dismissed from his position as Honorary Professor of Social Pedagogy at the University of Göttingen. He then immersed himself in social work inside the Jewish community, focusing on educational programs, in particular.¹⁰ Bondy was the decisive figure in establishing the agricultural youth farm in Gross-Breesen and in developing its utopian vision. At a later stage, he would become central to sustaining communal bonds between the farm’s trainees after their dispersion. Deeply influenced by his own induction to the German Youth Movement shortly before World War I, Bondy saw in Gross-Breesen an opportunity to implement the movement’s most positive ideals, as he understood them.¹¹ He sought to create a self-sustaining collective of cultured farmers, connected to the earth through their labor and to the human spirit through their Jewish and German education.

8 Bruno Sommerfeld, “Erziehungsplan für die Jüdische Auswanderungsschule,” February 24, 1936, in *A Testament of the Survivors*, Vol. 1, file “1. R’schr’n 1-p39-’36 new,” 14-15; Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 43-44.

9 On the Zionist program of Hachshara (youth training villages), see Israel Oppenheim, *The Struggle of Jewish Youth for Productivization: The Zionist Youth Movement in Poland* (Boulder, 1989); Jehuda Reinharz, “Hashomer Hazair in Germany (II): Under the Shadow of the Swastika, 1933-1938,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 32, no. 1 (January 1987): 183-229.

10 Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 44-45; Julian Bondy, “Curt Bondy — ‘A Giant in the Family,’” in *Curt Werner Bondy*, ed. Guski-Leinwand, 13-24, here 15-16.

11 On the German Youth Movement in the Wilhelmine and Weimar periods, see Robert-Jan Adriaansen, *The Rhythm of Eternity: The German Youth Movement and the Experience of the Past, 1900-1933* (New York, 2015); Joachim H. Knoll and Julius H. Schoeps, eds., *Typisch Deutsch. Die Jugendbewegung: Beiträge zu einer Phänomengeschichte* (Opladen, 1988); Walter Laqueur, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (New York, 1962); Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement, 1900-1945: An Interpretative and Documentary History* (New York, 1981).



Curt Bondy with his horse at the Gross-Bresen farm, ca. 1937-1938; © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric F. Bowes

While the urgent need to rescue young people by promoting their emigration from Germany was clear to Bondy, his approach to recruiting trainees reveals that it was not his sole motivation. He believed that only select individuals could be allowed to take part in the initiative, and one of the first steps he took as its director was to begin the application and screening process of potential trainees. Applicants were requested to write an essay describing their educational aspirations, their cultural habits, their familiarity with Jewish history and religion, and the social circles in which they traveled. Among other questions, applicants were asked about their reading preferences, which youth movements they were affiliated with, and whether or not they smoked.¹² Successful candidates were invited to an interview with Bondy, which he utilized to determine whether

¹² Sommerfeld, "Erziehungsplan für die Jüdische Auswanderungsschule."

they would make a good fit. Werner Angress, himself a former trainee who had experienced these selection methods, explained that, in Bondy's eyes, "a trainee with character deficiencies could become a danger to the community that was to be built."¹³ With hundreds of applications coming in and space for only about 120 trainees in each cohort, Bondy had to be highly selective. This resulted in a sense of chosenness among the trainees who made the cut but also prompted accusations of elitism that they continued to grapple with on the farm and even later in their lives. Bondy, it appears, did not merely try to engineer a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, a community of fate that revolved around a common set of circumstances, but rather something that would resemble what Ludwik Fleck has termed a "thought collective" (*Denkkollektiv*), wherein members of the community share a commitment to a set of questions and methods.¹⁴ In the case of Gross-Breesen, this was a commitment to solving the supposed challenge of leading a confident and productive Jewish life inspired by nature and steeped in humanist values.

Gross-Breesen opened its gates to the first cohort of trainees in May 1936. A year afterwards, ninety-two young members were living and working on the farm, seventy boys and only twenty-two girls. The gender disparity — which extended beyond these numbers to include ongoing discrimination in the division of labor — continued until the farm was forcefully shut down. The female members' work was limited to small animal farming, gardening, and housekeeping, while male members were trained in a larger variety of tasks and professions. This inequality was to some extent an outcome of Bondy's own prejudices but also his response to concerned parents. In his efforts to recruit more female trainees to join Gross-Breesen, Bondy encountered the opposition of parents hesitant to send their daughters away from their middle-class family environment to an agricultural training program. In his pleas to these parents, Bondy had to emphasize not only the cultural education offered on the farm but also the availability of training in tasks traditionally seen as more suitable for women.¹⁵

The daily routine in Gross-Breesen was spartan. Trainees rose at 5 a.m. and performed various tasks — from milking cows to ploughing fields and construction work. With the exception of the laborers who worked in the cow barn (and had a strong odor afterwards), trainees were allowed cold showers only.¹⁶ Twice a day they performed a military-style roll call with Bondy as inspector. After completing their work duties, they attended classes in a variety of subjects, including

13 Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 46.

14 Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, ed. Thaddeus J. Trenn and Robert K. Merton, trans. Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn (Chicago and London, 1981).

15 Letter from Bondy to a concerned mother from July 3, 1936, in "A Testament of the Survivors, Vol. I," file "1. R'schr'n 1- p39-'36 new," 29-30.

16 Hot showers were allowed once a week, on Friday evening. Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 51-52.



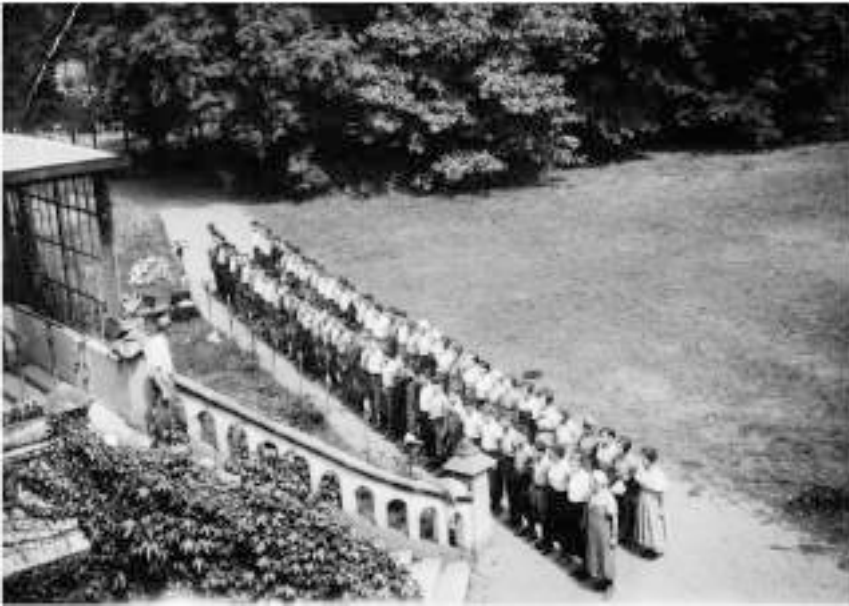
Trainees unloading a hay cart, ca. 1936-1938. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Landecker

history, geology, foreign languages, biology, physics, Jewish history, and religion — all topics on which they were also examined and graded. At the end of each work day, following a communal dinner, a short concert of classical music took place, performed by Bondy and a group of students. Attendance was mandatory.

In addition to this regiment of labor and learning, Bondy's pedagogical philosophy was embedded in everyday life on the farm. He held routine *Lebenskunde* (life-teaching) sessions, in which he sought to impart his moral lessons upon trainees. When needed, he arranged individual or small-group consultations that he termed *Klärungen* (clarifications), in which he aided trainees in achieving clarity in light of a problem or a concern. Bondy's chief goal in these introspections was to spark in his young audience a strong and honest desire for living consciously — *Bewusstleben* — and the continued strive for self-betterment. Attaining this goal, Bondy reiterated to the Gross-Breeseners again and again, depended on four pillars: agricultural labor, the Jewish spirit, German culture, and a sense of community. Decades after their escape from Nazi Germany, these four pillars continued to animate discussions among dispersed Gross-Breeseners throughout the world.¹⁷

Initially, each cohort of trainees was expected to complete two years of education on the farm. Trained together as a community, the cohort would then emigrate together and establish

¹⁷ For a detailed description of the four pillars, see, for example, "Verkürzte Niederschrift einer Ansprache von Curt Bondy," September 7, 1937, in *A Testament of the Survivors*, Vol. 1, file "2a. R'brief 3- p125-'37new," 95-97.



Gross-Breeseen trainees standing in formation while Curt Bondy inspects them from the stairs, ca. 1936–1938. © United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of George Landecker

an independent agricultural collective somewhere abroad. Bondy and the Reichsvertretung considered several possible destinations where such a plan could be fulfilled, including Brazil, Argentina, and the United States, and were able to proceed with the early stages of raising funds and implementation. The founding of Hyde Farmland in Richmond, Virginia, was perhaps the most successful of these.¹⁸

The plan to build an agricultural community in a new homeland was nevertheless shattered when the *Kristallnacht* attacks transformed circumstances for Jews in Germany. Until that point, Bondy and his staff had been able to shelter the farm's population from the distress and anxiety that reigned in Jewish communities in the country at the time. On November 10, 1938, the rampant violence arrived at their doorstep. SS men stormed the farm and, with the help of some of the non-Jewish hired workers, wrought destruction across the premises. About twenty young men and boys, including Curt Bondy, were arrested and sent to Buchenwald. They were released upon the condition that they leave Germany immediately. The farm's trainees and staff could no longer afford to wait for the fulfillment of collective departure and made plans for an urgent escape.¹⁹

18 Dozens of Gross-Breeseen trainees would find their way to Hyde Farmland, whence Ernst Löwensberg wrote to his fellow Gross-Breeseeners in June 1938 (as cited in the beginning of this article). See Robert H. Gillette, *The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalheimer and A Rescue from Nazi Germany* (Charleston and London, 2012).

19 An account of the events of *Kristallnacht* as they transpired in Gross-Breeseen is available in Angress, *Between Fear and Hope*, 61–64. On the imprisonment of the group in Buchenwald, see Curt Bondy's article, "Problems of Internment Camps," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 38, no. 4 (1943): 453–75. In this scholarly article, Bondy discussed the experience of internment without identifying himself as the subject of research.

The majority of Gross-Breeseners living on the farm during the *Kristallnacht* events were able to emigrate in the coming months, some of them following the few who had already left in pursuit of suitable locations for the desired collective farm. Bondy himself left immediately upon his release from Buchenwald, first to England and then to Virginia, to join Hyde Farmland. After this first wave of migration, Reichsvertretung representatives continued to house Jewish youth in Gross-Breesen, attempting to continue the program to the best of their ability under increasing pressure from the Nazi regime. Eventually, the farm was transformed into a forced labor camp, and the remaining trainees were gradually deported to death camps in Eastern Europe.²⁰ Out of a total of approximately 266 trainees that lived in Gross-Breesen between 1936 and 1943, when the farm was officially dismantled, it is estimated that about 158 were able to leave Germany before the deportations had started.²¹

A Community in Dispersion

Despite the distance that now separated them, many Gross-Breeseners remained invested in preserving the links that had been formed on the farm. To that end, Bondy established a newsletter that circulated updates from dispersed members in Kenya, the Netherlands, the United States, Palestine, Argentina, Chile, Canada, Australia, and other countries. The first of these circulars appeared even before *Kristallnacht* and was intended to forge contact with the early “pioneers” from Gross-Breesen who, like Ernst Löwensberg, had already left the farm and immigrated overseas in the attempt to prepare the grounds for the arrival of other group members. But with the hastened flight that followed November 1938, and with the outbreak of the Second World War thereafter, the newsletter soon attained a new meaning for their readers.

The transnational conversation that emerged out of the Gross-Breesen newsletter fostered a unique channel for knowledge transfer. This transfer evolved over time, contingent upon the historical developments unraveling worldwide in the 1940s and in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the early stages, the newsletter exchanged elaborate information about agricultural practice and technologies in various geographic contexts. Corresponding to the belief — shared by Bondy but also by many of his former pupils — that Gross-Breeseners could still fulfil their dream of becoming cultured agriculture laborers, these early reports celebrated the efforts of trainees who had found work on farms. Bondy, who edited the early issues, collected and

20 The last months of the Gross-Breesen farm were recorded in the diary of Günther Marcuse, one of the youth trainees who arrived at the farm in early 1939 and was one of the last to be deported in the winter of 1943. Translated excerpts from his diary are available in Joseph Walk, “The Diary of Günther Marcuse: The Last Days of the Gross-Breesen Training Centre,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 8 (1970): 159–81.

21 This is Herbert P. Cohn’s assessment in *A Testament of the Survivors*, Vol. 3, file “38. 1537–2006 new,” 1526.

then circulated lengthy descriptions of the responsibilities they were given, the challenges they had encountered, and the innovations they discovered in their new places of residence and work.

In the newsletter published in March 1939, for example, Alexander Neumeyer published a letter from the Avigdor Colony in Argentina, located in the province of Entre Ríos, that included lengthy details about novelties and difficulties he encountered there.²² Neumeyer joined the farm not as a trainee but as an employed intern and left for Argentina together with his wife already in the summer of 1938. Among other things, his letter described the harvest of wheat, oats and flax — the crops most significant to the colony's economy. To give readers a point of reference, Neumeyer wrote that the combine harvester used in Avigdor was pushed from behind by horses rather than pulled from the front, like the devices they had been accustomed to in Germany.²³

In the same issue, Heinz Kahn wrote from the farm in Virginia that one important task their budding agricultural community faced was the integration of market considerations into their farming work so that it could increase profitability. His suggestions included, for example, extending egg-production later into the wintertime, or growing the type of small cucumbers that reach the length of two inches only, which were apparently very popular with local consumers.²⁴

Gerhard Pifngst's letter from Njoro, Kenya, described the Anthrax virus that had spread on the farm where he was employed, which had resulted in the death of three bulls and had caused a serious panic. Immunization, Pifngst explained, was far more important on the Kenyan farm than "at home," and higher dosages were being used on the cattle. He took the opportunity to inquire with Herr Scheier, who instructed the dairy workers in Gross-Breesen, how he would recommend mixing whole and skim milk when feeding eight-week-old calves. As these examples illustrate, the Gross-Breesen newsletter thus provided an opportunity for dispersed community members to compare farming techniques in new places of residence to the ones they were familiar with from their farm in Germany, and also constituted a forum in which they could continue the instruction and learning process that was cut short by their forced migration.²⁵

The exchange surrounding agricultural labor in unfamiliar environments also reflect the ways in which Gross-Breeseners adapted to life in particular colonial settings. The trainees who had emigrated

22 Avigdor was one of the settlements established by the Jewish Colonization Association, or ICA. One of the Gross-Breesen emigration plans focused on establishing an independent farm within the Avigdor Colony. On the ICA, see Yehuda Levin, "Labor and Land at the Start of Jewish Settlement in Argentina," *Jewish History* 21, nos. 3/4 (2007): 341–59.

23 Letter from Alexander Neumeyer (Wastl), undated, in "Vierter Brief an die alten Gross Breesener," March 1939; AR 3686; box 1; folder 3; LBI.

24 Heinz Kahn's (Haka) letter from January 10, 1939, *ibid.*

25 Gerhard Pifngst's letter from October 25, 1938, *ibid.*

to Latin American or African countries, as white Europeans, largely separated themselves from the native population, while, for the most part, they themselves were not accepted into the established white-elite classes in those countries. Writing from Contulmo, Chile, Walter Lebrecht described how an audience of locals gathered together to watch him tame a horse, fully expecting that “the Gringo” would spectacularly fail at the task. Lebrecht was happy to report that he had been spared public humiliation: “[T]hey did not get their money’s worth,” he wrote with glee but continued to confess that “I was very lucky. The foal was really, exceptionally tame.”²⁶

Alexander Neumayer, in his letters from Argentina, mentioned the indigenous population as yet another novelty of his new home environment: with curiosity he reported to his fellow Gross-Breeseners, for example, that native residents rode their horses in a galloping style, and that they often had parrots as pets. Neumayer was judgmental of the locals’ approach to combating the swarms of locusts that regularly threatened the crops in the region. He reported that the Jewish farmers of the Avigdor Colony were zealous in battling the locusts with blowtorches, and he claimed that the native farmers were “generally unbothered and rather let everything be eaten than work hard fighting it.”²⁷

If Neumayer’s letter shows that indigenous farming habits in Argentina did not meet the standards that he, as a European farmer, believed to be superior, and that he chastised local farmers as indifferent, the racialized berating of native populations was even more prevalent in the case of trainees who settled in Kenya. Several letters depicted the native Kenyans as lazy, dirty, and unreliable. Writing from the town of Songhor, Jochen Feingold lamented that “our natives have not yet got it into their brains, that with [live]stock not quantity but quality counts They look still to their stock as their ‘money’ with which they buy their wives and get it, when they sell their daughters.” Feingold concluded that “people will realize before long, that the ‘old fashioned’ farming methods of Europe are still the soundest and in the long run also the most economic.”²⁸ Employed at a farm owned by a British white settler, Max Neumann described the bitter reality of colonial rule in Kenya in a series of letters that was reprinted in the newsletter. On one occasion, after witnessing his employer confiscate a herd of goats and have the herdsman arrested for not possessing the proper licenses, he explained that every white man could be sworn in as an auxiliary constable and had the freedom

26 Walter Lebrecht’s letter, May 19, 1938, “Erster Rundbrief an die alten Gross-Breeseners.”

27 Alexander Neumayer’s (Wastl) letter, undated, in “Vierter Brief an die alten Gross Breesener.”

28 Translation by Bondy. Once the United States entered WWII, he published the newsletter in English to avoid aggravating censors in his new country of residence. Though he translated many of the letters himself, letters sent from trainees who settled in English-speaking countries may have also been written in English by the authors. After the war had ended, most letter-writers resorted back to writing in German, though many switched to English at a later point. In letters that were published in English in the newsletter — either translated by Bondy or written in the English in the original — I chose not to correct punctuation or spelling mistakes. Jochen Feingold’s letter, April 5, 1942, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 12,” November 1942, AR 3686; box 1; folder 11; LBI.

to police the local population. Though the native herdsmen tried to retrieve their goats, they were helpless when his employer threatened them with his shotgun: “[o]f course, they do not dare to do anything against a white man.”²⁹

Neumann’s narration of this event transmitted the brutality of colonial racial hierarchies to the Gross-Breesen readership, without condemning or commenting on its inherent injustice. In their studies of the German-Jewish refugee population in Kenya, Jennifer Reeve and Natalie Eppelsheimer have described the curious position that the refugees filled in that colonial space, where they both benefited from the power granted by their whiteness and endured antisemitic exclusion and discrimination. British colonial officials, Reeve has argued, feared the arrival of Jewish refugees in the colonies, since their presence could potentially upset the rigid racial hierarchies that the British Empire relied upon. Ethnically, the refugees’ Jewishness situated them outside of the acceptable realm of white British society. Socially, their impoverished status threatened the image of the white settler as a superior — and, therefore, justified — ruler. To integrate into this setting, refugees had to adapt quickly to the strictly defined racial order, which entailed upholding white superiority over the native black population but remaining subordinate to the British settler elite.³⁰ Max Neumann internalized the ladder of white colonial rule quickly and effectively, as evidenced by his professed irritation at the need to closely inspect the work of the “boys” during dairy production at the behest of his employer: he wrote, “well, you try teaching a negro the importance of cleanliness. Impossible.”³¹

From the early 1940s, the newsletter added an additional dimension of knowledge-sharing to its pages. With the Second World War extending beyond Europe, former trainees all over the globe found themselves involved in various ways in the events of a total war. Being German nationals, several Gross-Breeseners found themselves imprisoned as enemy aliens and shared their experience from the internment camps in their letters to the group. Goetz Weiss wrote in August 1942 from the Sherbrooke camp in Canada, where, he was happy to report, conditions were improving and “the new commandant is a very sympathetic person.”³² Inge Fischman wrote from Wiltshire, England, that after nearly twelve months of internment on the Isle of Man, she was “finally declared harmless.”³³ Writing about everyday experiences in the city of Dulwich, England, Anneliese Fraenkel revealed the conditions of war on the home front.

29 Neumann originally authored these letters to his mother. It is not clear how Bondy received them and then included them in the newsletter. Letters from Max Neumann (Edda), undated, “Zweiter Brief an die Alten Gross-Breesener,” August 1938, AR 3686; box 1; folder 2; LBI.

30 Natalie Eppelsheimer, *Roads Less Traveled: German-Jewish Exile Experiences in Kenya 1933-1947* (Oxford, 2019); Jennifer Reeve, “‘No Common Mother Tongue or Fatherland’: Jewish Refugee Children in British Kenya,” in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, edited by Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, 113–31 (London, 2016). See also Patricia M. Lorcin, *Historicizing Colonial Nostalgia: European Women’s Narratives of Algeria and Kenya 1900-Present* (New York, 2012), 121–22.

31 Max Neumann’s letter, June 15, 1938, “Erster Brief an die alten Gross Breesener.”

32 Goetz Weiss’s letter, August 22, 1942, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 12.”

33 Inge Fischmann’s letter, September 20, 1942, *ibid.*

Working as a nurse, Fraenkel described how the top floor of the hospital she worked in was out of use due to the constant fear of air raids.³⁴ And Gerd Tworoger, writing from Virginia, explained that the war had increased the need for local farm products, since importation of produce had decreased significantly. Tworoger predicted that, as a result, agricultural industries would continue to grow during the war.³⁵

An examination of the Gross-Breesen dispersion during the war underscores the significance of age groups in shaping life in displacement.³⁶ Being of military service age and eager to take part in the battle against Nazism, many Gross-Breeseners sought to join the military forces in the countries they had settled in. Bosi Cohn wrote from Australia that he was twice rejected from service because he was classified as an enemy alien. When he was finally admitted to the military, Cohn was deeply disappointed to discover that he was assigned to a labor company and not to one of the fighting ones.³⁷ Werner Angress asserted that it was not revenge that had driven him to volunteer for overseas service with the US military, rather, he did so out of “certainty that we are fighting for a world in which human beings are allowed to live as human beings again.”³⁸ During the war years, letters from the front filled the pages of the Gross-Breesen newsletter, relating experiences from Italy, France, Algeria or from the Pacific.

From his distance in dispersion, Curt Bondy interjected his own commentary in these reports to firmly state his own position towards war and the atmosphere that it cultivated. “During the last few months,” he wrote in November 1942, “I often thought about the problem, how far hate, genuine hate is generally necessary to get a soldier to fight and kill.” Incorporating his famous *Lebenskunde* into the pages of the newsletter, he informed his former trainees: “I don’t know the answer yet but I know that the conscious man, and especially you in your particular situation, who know exactly what you are fighting for, don’t need to hate. Hate can never be brought in accordance with our education to consciousness and friendliness.” Seeking to guide his former trainees to adopt his moral expectations, he reassured them that the experiences of war and expulsion had the potential to lead them to personal growth, but simultaneously warned them of the risks inherent in such traumas: “It depends on you — soldiers and civilians — whether you may become debased or become greater on account of this war.”³⁹

34 Anneliese Fraenkel’s letter, September 4, 1942, *ibid.*

35 Gerd Tworoger’s (Dackel) letter, undated, *ibid.*

36 On the generational dimension of displacement, see Simone Gigliotti and Monica Tempian, eds., *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement* (London, 2016); Walter Laqueur, *Generation Exodus*, especially 1–28, 268–305; Simone Lässig, “The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda,” *GHI Bulletin* 59 (Fall 2016): 29–58, esp. 31–32.

37 Bosi Cohn’s letter, April 5, 1941, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 12”; translated by Bondy.

38 Werner Angress’s (Toepper) letter, undated, *ibid.*

39 Essay by Curt Bondy, November 1, 1942, *ibid.*

In November 1944, Bondy distributed a special newsletter in commemoration of Gerhard Buehler, a former Gross-Breesen trainee who had died in battle in France. Bondy included some of Buehler's recent letters, in which he had shared experiences from his work as an interpreter for the US military. In this role, he had met many German prisoners of war, and concluded that there had been little enthusiasm for the Nazi ideology among the simple soldiers, while the officers were "convinced of the 'mission of Germany' and were saying that they were winning the war anyway, even if they were losing this one [battle]." Buehler had further shared with Bondy his belief that while morale was low and motivation was waning among German infantry soldiers, "the control on the homefront is still very rigid, largely because Nazi party members are not fighting on the front."⁴⁰ Gerhard Buehler's first-hand experience from the front was thus further communicated to the dispersed Gross-Breesen community, circulating to different corners of the world while the war was still ongoing.

Towards the end of the war, when the magnitude of the devastation caused by Nazi violence was gradually revealed, the Gross-Breesen newsletter continued to serve as an intimate transmission apparatus. Former trainees wrote about their own experiences of witnessing or living through internment, forced labor, and mass murder; the letters they shared in this platform revealed the daily, individualized machinations of the Holocaust. Heinz Kahn, stationed with the US military in Europe, wrote in July 1945 of his visit to the Mauthausen concentration camp and the miserable conditions of the prisoners found there: "One of the former prisoners, a Polish Jew, led us through the camp and gave us a vivid description of the camp, the tortures, the killing. Most of his family have found their death in camps" Kahn added that he himself was frantically searching for signs of life from his parents and concluded that "there is little doubt left that they have shared the fate of so many millions and have perished in one of the Nazi concentration camps."⁴¹ Heinz Wolff, who survived the war by performing forced labor for the fire brigade at the Dutch transitional camp, Westerbork, wrote: "With an anxious heart I saw weeks after weeks, transports after transports of all towns and villages come to Westerbork. After a few days the men, women and children went further to their unknown destiny."⁴²

Alfred Cohn, who was deported to Auschwitz and from there to forced labor camps in Germany, succinctly summarized his experience as follows: "I came to Poland with a thousand men and women in '43.

40 Several of Gerhard Buehler's letters were printed (presumably translated by Bondy) in "Gross-Breesen Letter 14," November 1944. AR 3686; box 1; folder 13; LBI

41 Heinz Kahn's (Haka) letter from July 8, 1945, in "Gross-Breesen Letter 15," September 1945. AR 3686; box 1; folder 14; LBI.

42 Heinz Wolf's letter, August 18, 1945, *ibid.*

January 45, before we were evacuated from Poland to Germany on open lorries twelve days without food, there were still living about twenty; after the transportation of course less.”⁴³ When Bondy asked Cohn about the fate of other Gross-Breesen trainees who had been deported, Cohn responded with the following account:

You ask me particular news about the [Gross-Breeseners] in the camps. In Monowitz I met Heinz Berne, Lothar Krakauer, Guenther Marcuse, Hans Rosenthal, Alfred Brauer, also Bernstein. Heinz Berne suffered sometimes from Dysentery, by this he became ‘Muselmann’ and is ‘überstellt nach Birkenau’ what means gas chambers. Lothar Krakauer died in Monowitz from pneumonia in the winter 43/44. I saw Guenther Marcuse until April 44. I don’t know what happened to him later on. Hans Rosenthal and Alfred Brauer were in good condition when we were evacuated on Jan. 18, 1945. I don’t know what happened to Brauer. In March 45, I saw by chance Rosenthal in the camp of Mauthausen, he might be killed by the air raid on April 6. 1945; 3,500 prisoners lost their lives. I saw Bernstein twice in Monowitz, he told me that Alco and Heinz Baehr, both married and with children were in the camp of Birkenau. I am sure Alco is dead, because I got [a] postcard for him from his relatives in East Prussia. The women, one of them is Ruth Schwarz, were as I am sure immediately gassed, because of the children. Bernstein told me also that Claus Peter Raphael had left Breesen in 1941 to be deported together with his parents from Dortmund. Bernstein himself was beaten to death about Nov. 20, 1943 in Monowitz. There is no possible way for me to find out, if anybody of our boys has returned to Germany.⁴⁴

These and other letters with similar content did not simply offer information on the fate of individuals. They provided an unmitigated account of the systematic annihilation of Jews, an account of the implementation of genocide that was shared and disseminated in its immediate aftermath. Compiled in this way, they pieced together a collective fate of destruction and loss. What started as a bulletin for maintaining contacts between a small community in dispersion thus transformed into a forum where the cataclysmic events of World War II and the Holocaust were laid bare.

43 Alfred Cohn’s letter, July 29, 1945, *ibid.*

44 Alfred Cohn’s letter, January 20, 1946, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 16,” June 1946. AR 3686; box 1; folder 15; LBL.

Interrogating the Shared Past in Displacement

While some forms of knowledge that traveled across the Gross-Breesen exchange are to be expected (the details of various farming techniques or the tales of day-to-day life in unfamiliar surroundings, for example), personal experiences of total war and the witnessing of genocidal violence break the otherwise standard themes of conversation, offering a somber reminder of the events in world history that structured the Gross-Breeseners' dispersion. In addition to this stream of knowledge-sharing, however, their communications opened an unexpected discussion, one that focused on the ongoing probing of their group's legacies and its impact on their diasporic lives. This collective grappling linked their formative experience of life on the youth farm with the persecution, forced migration, and dislocation they later endured. It celebrated but also questioned the project's achievements, and in so doing, created the opportunity for reflection on the history and the future of German Jewry more broadly.

The internal dialogue on Gross-Breesen's success or failure was manifest already in the very first issues of the newsletter, and it continued to develop after *Kristallnacht*, when the immediate flight of so many of the farm's residents rendered the goal of collective immigration obsolete. As they scattered across the globe and struggled to build their lives anew, Gross-Breeseners began interrogating their experiences from the farm, their commitment to each other, and the values that Bondy sought to instill in them. Their evaluations varied. While some felt that Gross-Breesen had given them a life-long moral compass,⁴⁵ others believed that the ideals promoted on the farm were at odds with reality.⁴⁶ Some former members acknowledged that their training on the farm enabled them to emigrate from Germany faster and more safely; others claimed that Gross-Breesen could have prepared them better for life as immigrants. Language skills, in particular, should have been prioritized, according to several letters. A few writers complained that the cultivated habitus that Gross-Breeseners were required to uphold had brought them nothing but ridicule in their new places of residence. Nor did former trainees shy away from criticizing Bondy himself for his actions as director.

These exchanges revealed tensions that, while perhaps present already on the farm, were exacerbated by the blunt shock of forced migration. After his arrival at a farm in Argentina in 1938, Hans Werner Abraham wrote Bondy that in following the Gross-Breesen habits and teachings in his new residence, he was treated like an

45 See, for example, Hans Schiff's letter, October 23, 1938, in "Vierter Brief an die alten Gross-Breesener."

46 See, for example, Leo Schiffan's undated letter in "Gross-Breesen Letter 14."

outcast by his fellow workers, who did not shave every morning and had no interest in learning who composed the “Heroika.” But while Abraham, troubled by the alienation he felt from the Argentine farm workers, perceived it as a flaw of the Gross-Breesen education program, Bondy saw it as a sign of its strengths. “We do aim to maintain the desire for a spiritual life [*nach einem geistigen Leben*], even if it cannot be satisfied in the foreseeable future,” Bondy wrote in response. Although he acknowledged that his pedagogy in Gross-Breesen had garnered ridicule — “People accuse us of applying ‘princely education’ and call us ‘Hachshara d’Or’ as an insult,” he remarked — he nevertheless contended that the group’s commitment to seeking a higher, conscious form of living should grow even stronger in light of these attacks. Despite this defense, Bondy assured Abraham that he took his criticism to heart and discussed it with other members of the group.⁴⁷

Throughout the years, critical voices continued to circulate on the pages of the newsletter. In 1944, one former trainee wrote Bondy from Australia that “you forced your ideas into us more drastic than necessary and when we came into the different countries we only realized that we had followed only your ideas blindly without knowing of any others.”⁴⁸ As former pupils gained distance from the farm’s insular environment, they increasingly doubted Bondy’s authority and, in light of the day-to-day reality of life in displacement, they also called the value of his ideas seriously into question. Herbert Kaminski, also writing from Australia, described the difficulties he first encountered with his coworkers in a Sydney factory. Initially, Kaminski was appalled by their cursing and swearing, as well as by their preoccupation with horse races, women, and drinking. Over time, he wrote, he learned how to converse with them and found them to be good-hearted people. “If I had stuck to my Gross-Breesen attitude,” he wrote, “I wouldn’t have had a chance with those men I dropped my ‘Sunday-Church manner,’ as they scornfully called it, and became one of them Now they have accepted me as one of them and that gave me a chance to tell them about my ‘Sunday-Church manner.’”⁴⁹ Bondy’s teaching, Kaminski suggested, was useless in the environment that he had entered as a refugee.

Marianne Regensburger, in her critical letter, addressed Bondy’s failure to recognize and resolve gender inequality on the farm. Writing from Richmond, Indiana, she admonished him for the discriminatory treatment female trainees had been subjected to under his guidance:

47 See Bondy’s response to Abraham, undated, in “Erster Brief an die alten Gross Breesener.”

48 Quoted in Bondy’s essay “Our Attitude,” undated, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 13,” April 1944. AR 3686; box 1; folder 14; LBI.

49 Herbert Kaminski’s letter, undated, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 14.”

If you remember, there always was a demand to work in the garden or in the fields on [the] part of the girls in Gross-Breesen, but if there was any response to that demand at all, it had the nature of a **privilege** granted. There never was any question as to whether the girls after all did not have the **right** to do the same kind of work and acquire the same skills as the boys. If a girl ever ventured to claim that right, there was envy and violent attack on [the] part of most of the boys.

The girls' demand for equality, Regensburger wrote, was never taken seriously, and, ultimately, she and the other girls had left the farm as "unskilled labor."⁵⁰ Though records from the mid-1930s reveal that Bondy tried to battle the demographic gender imbalance and recruit more girls to Gross-Breesen,⁵¹ Regensburger's indictment shows that he neglected to support the female trainees that did find their way to the farm. More than a decade after Regensburger wrote to him, Bondy came to admit that he agreed with her verdict.⁵²

Disagreements and friction among former Gross-Breeseners occasionally surfaced on the pages of the newsletter. For example, when Gerd Braun, who was living and working on a farm in Kenya, learned from the newsletter that so many of his comrades were pursuing a college education, he feared that this signaled a return to patterns of *Bildungsbürgertum* (the educated middle class) that they had hoped to escape. Gerd Tworoger, who was one of the trainees to move to Hyde Farmland in Virginia and eventually went on to study for a degree in agriculture, took offense at what he perceived as Braun's censure of this choice. He responded by arguing that if farming were to remain a real part of their lives, they needed to think of it first and foremost as a business, not as a mere interest.⁵³ At least Tworoger and Braun were both convinced of their dedication to agriculture. Some other former trainees, by contrast, were not. Bill (previously Goetz) Weiss, for example, wrote from Canada that farming was "a poor man's occupation." In a jab at Bondy, Weiss called it "unfair" to advise people to pursue this path.⁵⁴

Their relationship to the Jewish settlement in Palestine and later the State of Israel was another point of division among former trainees. While the vast majority of Gross-Breeseners settled elsewhere, and many continued to reject Zionism, several of the group's members who had immigrated there had come to embrace it. From her home

50 Marianne Regensburger's letter, February 25, 1944, in "Gross-Breesen Letter 13." Emphases in the original.

51 On the question of gender disparity, see note 12.

52 Bondy's letter, October 7, 1956, in "Gross Breesen XX," November 1956. AR 3686; box 1; folder 19; LBI.

53 Gerd Tworoger's (Dackel) letter, undated, in "Gross-Breesen Letter 12."

54 Goetz Bill Weiss's letter, December 4, 1943, in "Gross-Breesen Letter 13."

in Palestine, Alisa (previously Trude) Tworoger went so far as to claim that their former youth farm lacked an ideological backbone: “I am constantly pondering over what the Gross Breeseners have ... that fulfils their lives. The main thing is lacking an idea, for which they live and for which they strive.” In her new life in the Kibbutz, Tworoger wrote, she saw the ideological farmer at work.⁵⁵

Curt Bondy was not oblivious to these divisions, nor to the different paths his former trainees had taken and how far these had led them from realizing his dream of establishing a German-Jewish agricultural utopia. “Reality often proves to be stronger than our ideals,” he wrote in November 1942. Still, he pleaded with the readers not to abandon the pursuit of life on a farm: “We don’t want to forget that [Gross-Breesen] aimed to train and to prepare you for a life as Jewish agricultural pioneers, to prevent you from going back to urbanised vocations. We know that the unsound vocational distribution of Jews is one of the causes for the great Jewish disaster in Germany.” Here, Bondy articulated the erroneous belief that a transformation of Jewish life could battle antisemitism. Yet he also urged his former trainees to hold fast to their Jewish identity and not to shy away from it. Agricultural labor, he wrote, was the way to “fulfill one of our personal Jewish tasks.”⁵⁶

Bondy continued to use the newsletter as a medium for imparting his spiritual guidance, though his emphasis shifted over time. In 1949, he urged readers to continue the legacy of Gross-Breesen by living consciously and not closing themselves off in their own private lives. Were they doing enough to work against injustice in their new home countries? In Kenya or in the United States, he asked, were they fighting discrimination against the black population? Were they doing something to battle anti-Arab sentiment in the Jewish society in Israel? What about the destitute German refugees from the Eastern territories, or the unfair treatment of German civilians by the Allied occupation powers? They, the former Gross-Breeseners, Bondy exhorted them, were ideally suited to fight for justice and peace, not just because they themselves had been victims of hatred and violence, but because they were adherents of the Gross-Breesen (that is, his own) ideology.⁵⁷ Bondy, a proponent of the German Reform Pedagogy movement, embodied in his commentaries the ambivalent position conferred to the leader or educator in the movement’s theories. On the one hand, he continuously sought to engage former trainees in evaluation and assessment of the group’s work in an effort to create

55 Alisa Tworoger’s letter, June 4, 1944, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 14.”

56 Essay by Curt Bondy, November 1, 1942, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 12.”

57 Curt Bondy, “Is there still Need for Circular Letters? November 1948, in “Gross-Breesen Letter 18,” April 1949. AR 3686; box 1; folder 17; LBI.

a sense of collective investment in its ethos. On the other hand, he believed thoroughly in his role as the clarifier of this ethos and the enlightener of the trainees.⁵⁸

It is difficult to assess how these pleas resonated with the former trainees, and to what extent they were interested in leading a life in accordance with what they had come to know as the Gross-Breesen-Gesetz (Gross-Breesen code). The letters they circulated, together with autobiographical writings, reveal ambivalent responses. To be sure, the vast majority of them had become disillusioned with the project of Jewish agricultural collectives, of self-sustaining and auto-didactic communities in which Jews were meant to cultivate their minds and spirits as they cultivated the land. Werner Angress, who, as a historian, chronicled the story of the Gross-Breesen youth farm, declared it beyond a doubt “that Gross-Breesen failed in achieving its major objectives — its ‘ideal,’ so to speak.”⁵⁹ Not only did historical rupture prevent the group members from immigrating together; most of them abandoned agriculture shortly after their migration (though one farm called “Nova Breesen,” which was established by group member Hans Rosenthal in Brazil, actually achieved longevity and success). In terms of their cultural education and their codes of conduct, Angress wrote, former Gross-Breeseners did not display a particular propensity that differentiated them from many other German-Jewish individuals of their generation.

And yet, despite their acknowledgement of shortcomings, even failure, as well as open criticism and doubt, Gross-Breeseners were clearly marked by their experience on the youth farm in deeply meaningful ways, which the newsletter bears witness to. Many of them revered Curt Bondy as a person who had altered the course of their lives. In 1972, at Bondy’s funeral, a former trainee eulogized him, saying: “In those days, when one started to despair of the sense of life, Bondy showed and taught us the true essence of life.” The same former Gross-Breesener, Ernst Cramer, said in 2002 that “[t]o this day I personally am grateful to God that the man Curt Bondy existed, that he could help so many people and that he influenced my life.”⁶⁰ He made this statement at one of several international reunions organized by the Gross-Breeseners between 1984 and 2005.⁶¹ In addition to these gatherings, which brought dozens of former trainees together decades after their displacement, Gross-Breeseners continued to publish and distribute their newsletter until 2006, even though circulation dwindled.

58 On the history of the Reform Pedagogy Movement, see Marjorie Lamberti, *The Politics of Education: Teachers and School Reform in Weimar Germany* (New York, 2002). For an example of a Reform Pedagogy view of the role of the leader in learning environments, see Ralf Koerrenz, *Schulmodell: Jena-Plan: Grundlagen eines reformpädagogischen Programms* (Paderborn, 2012), 44, 61.

59 Werner T. Angress, “Auswandererlehrgut Gross-Breesen,” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 10, no. 1 (January 1965): 168-87, esp. 186.

60 Speech given by Ernst Cramer at the Gross-Breesen reunion, Catskills, NY, September 2002. Reprinted in *A Testament of the Survivors*, Vol. 1, file “1. R’schr’n 1- p39-’36 new,” 3, 2-3.

61 At the same 2002 reunion, several interviews were conducted with the former trainees, who had reached an advanced age by that time. These formed the basis for a documentary film titled *Stones from the Soil*. The film’s director, Marc Caplan, is the son of one of the former trainees, Rudolph Caplan.



Former Gross-Breesen trainees gathered for a reunion in Shavei Tzion, Israel, 1986. Published in newsletter no. 50 (1986/1988). © Leo Baeck Institute, New York

What was it about the short time they had spent on this youth farm that left such a lasting impression? If they were not invested in following the Gross-Breesen tenets that Bondy promoted, what was it that kept them engaged? A close reading of the newsletter reveals that personal friendships, while important, were not the only factor. Gross-Breesen's influence went deeper. In 1985, former trainee George Tworoger reflected on the group's life-long attachment to the youth farm: "The whole Gross-Breesen period lasted just a little over two years for most of us; and yet fifty years later, we can't imagine what our lives would have been like without that experience. I don't believe that there is anyone who went through Gross-Breesen who would not agree that his or her life did take a different turn, because of that period Gross-Breesen seemed to us a secure island in the midst of a Holocaust."⁶² Werner Angress expressed a similar sentiment when he termed the Gross-Breesen experience a "*Zauberland*" — a wonderland in the midst of Nazi Germany.⁶³ The farm, according to these testaments, gave marginalized and persecuted youth a semblance of normalcy. At a time of increasing powerlessness, the youth that lived there structured their everyday lives around agricultural training, around preparation for life as productive farmers abroad, and around Bondy's principles of living in a collective devoted to self-improvement. In Gross-Breesen, they had the legitimacy to plan and shape their own future even as possible futures for Germany's Jews were rapidly being extinguished.

62 George Tworoger, "Gross Breesen and I," undated, in "Gross Breesen 50 — Rundbrief 1986/88," AR 3686; box 1; folder 23; LBI.

63 Werner Angress (Toepper), "Laterna Magica. Zwölf Bilder," undated, in "Gross Breesen XX."

This also explains why, in the years that followed, many Gross-Breeseners felt free to criticize the project or even to speak of it in terms of failure, even though it had facilitated safe passage from Germany for so many of the group's members. Gross-Breesen's most significant accomplishment, in a sense, was that it allowed the farm's trainees to evaluate it not according to the perverted categories of annihilation or survival but simply as a normal process of applying their judgement to the project's achievements and failings. This mode of collective reflection took the form of a transnational exchange of knowledge that was rooted in everyday experiences of displacement and violence. From the midst of catastrophe, Gross-Breeseners cultivated a dialog that reflected an abiding sense of continuation that was fundamentally affected but not desecrated by National Socialism's assault on Jewish life. Gross-Breesen gave its trainees a lens through which they could tell their history not merely as the story of pawns in a game controlled by sinister forces. In Gross-Breesen — and in their continued exchange in its aftermath — they remained individuals who made decisions and took actions, and they were at liberty to question these actions as well.

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SMALL STRANGERS AT THE SCHOOL OF FRIENDSHIP: MEMORIES OF MOZAMBICAN SCHOOL STUDENTS OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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“Why,” Francisca Isidro wonders, “did we have to leave our families and move so far away, only to come back as cooks, waitresses, sales assistants, and the like?” And she recalls: “We came back from our time in East Germany with professions that were not held in particularly high regard in Mozambique. Nobody understood why we didn’t return as engineers, doctors and teachers. ‘A waitress?’, they would wonder. ‘Why, they could have become a waitress in Mozambique. Nobody needs to spend so many years in school for that.’”²

And with that, Ms. Isidro puts her finger right on a misapprehension at the heart of an ambitious state-led education migration program that saw 900 Mozambican children attend the School of Friendship (Schule der Freundschaft, SdF) in Staßfurt in the district of Magdeburg, in what today is Saxony-Anhalt, in the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) from 1982 to 1988.³ Ms. Isidro returned to Mozambique as a trained salesperson for clothing, a profession she neither chose nor ever worked in again subsequently. Like her, these 900 children had to navigate the diverging values that particular environments bestowed upon knowledge. What they learned was interpreted differently in their home communities, at the SdF, and in their German host families.

Examining the memories of the former child migrants, we come to understand that the knowledge-transfer program played out differently from what both the organizers and participants expected. As the teenagers and young adults returned to a country that was turning away from socialism with professions and political attitudes that had been valued at the SdF but seemed to have little use or prestige attached to them in Mozambique, many were disappointed and felt out of place. Thus, rather than making them mediators or connectors, the program made them strangers in their own land. The young adults had been groomed as a revolutionary vanguard workforce for a socialist world that no longer existed upon their return. The end of socialism was, for the time being, the end of the dreams of many of these former students.

When Mozambique achieved independence in 1975, new routes for the circulation of knowledge opened up. Whereas the colonial Portuguese government had done much to limit foreign — including

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2 Francisca Isidro, personal conversation at the conference, “Respekt und Anerkennung” (Respect and Acknowledgement), Magdeburg, Germany, February 22–24, 2019.

3 The Mozambican children were not the only ones at the SdF, but Namibian children were also educated there from 1985–1990, albeit largely in parallel rather than jointly; see, e.g., Annette Scheunpflug and Jürgen Krause, *Die Schule der Freundschaft: Ein Bildungsexperiment in der DDR*, Beiträge aus dem Fachbereich Pädagogik der Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg (Hamburg, 2000).

- 4 Hauke Dorsch, "Rites of Passage Overseas?: On the Sojourn of Mozambican Students and Scholars in Cuba," *Africa Spectrum* 43, no. 2 (2008): 225-44; Michael G. Panzer, "The Pedagogy of Revolution: Youth, Generational Conflict, and Education in the Development of Mozambican Nationalism and the State, 1962-1970," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009): 803-20.
- 5 Mathias Tullner, "Das Experiment 'Schule der Freundschaft' im Kontext der Mosambikanischen Bildungspolitik," in *Freundschaftsbande und Beziehungskisten: Die Afrikapolitik der DDR und der BRD gegenüber Mosambik*, ed. Hans-Joachim Döring and Uta Rüchel, 100-109 (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 100.
- 6 Samora Machel, "Organizar a sociedade para vencer o subdesenvolvimento" (Organize society to fight underdevelopment), *Colecção Estudos e Orientações* 14 (Maputo, 1982), 4.
- 7 See Scheunpflug and Krause, *Die Schule der Freundschaft: Ein Bildungsexperiment*; Lutz R. Reuter and Annette Scheunpflug, *Eine Fallstudie zur Bildungszusammenarbeit zwischen der DDR und Mosambik* (Münster, 2006).
- 8 Uta Rüchel, "...Auf Deutsch sozialistisch zu denken..." — *Mosambikaner in der Schule der Freundschaft*, ed. Die Landesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR in Sachsen-Anhalt, vol. 18, Sachbeiträge (Magdeburg, 2001); Tanja Müller, *Legacies of Socialist Solidarity: East Germany in Mozambique* (Lanham, 2014).
- 9 Scheunpflug and Krause, *Die Schule der Freundschaft: Ein Bildungsexperiment*; Reuter and Scheunpflug, *Eine Fallstudie*.

church — influences on the education system in Mozambique, the socialist alignment of the Mozambican Liberation Front (FRELIMO) broadened international knowledge networks spanning a worldwide web of socialist countries. Mozambican youth attended schools in Cuba and the GDR, and adults received vocational training and military training, or attended universities all over the Eastern bloc as part of state-initiated knowledge transmission migrations.⁴ The idea for a school like the SdF was born in FRELIMO leadership circles at the end of the 1970s. President Samora Machel (1975-86) prioritized professional education to provide the industrializing country with skilled labor in the seeming absence of a professional working class. This was important both ideologically and practically. Not only was the working class the revolutionary class in Marxist-socialist exegesis, but the young People's Republic of Mozambique (PRM) lacked skills across professions. Despite this revolutionary emphasis on the working class, many Mozambicans — including parents, students, and members of the Mozambican Ministry of Education — did not value vocational training as much as general education and advanced degrees.⁵ The SdF was to provide its students with both general knowledge and vocational training to return skilled socialist workers as New Men (and Women) for the Mozambican socialist revolution. According to President Machel, "Education is our principal instrument in forming the New Man; a man, liberated from old ideas, from a mentality that was contaminated by the colonial-capitalist mindset; a man educated by the ideas and practices of socialism."⁶

The East German Socialist Unity Party (SED) leadership took up the idea and developed the SdF, not least because this goal was congruent with the SED's political values, its aspiration to aid the socialist development of so-called brother nations, and its economic interests in Mozambique.

Foregrounding oral history interviews and biographical writings, this article takes up a migrant-centered viewpoint. The existing studies dedicated to the SdF overwhelmingly approach the case study based on the German archival record and aim to understand what this experiment can tell us about the successes and failures of schooling children from a socialist brother state.⁷ Some researchers have given particular attention to the socialist dimension of this education migration project.⁸ Education scholars focus on the education experiment.⁹ All these approaches are useful to embed the autobiographical accounts on which this article draws into a wider literature. This article builds on these studies but shifts attention to the memories of the

former migrants, through which it examines different kinds of knowledge and the formation of a knowledge community among the SdF students. My primary sources are interviews and personal conversations I conducted across Mozambique from Maputo to Beira, Quelimane, Nampula, Nacala, and Pemba, as well as in Germany, mainly in 2014.¹⁰ In addition, I draw on two published sources containing first-person narratives.¹¹ More men than women spoke and wrote about their lives, reflecting the gender ratio at the school (700 boys to 200 girls); these stories include individuals from different regions of Mozambique and from different class backgrounds. I do not claim representativeness for this set of sources; rather, these particular voices provide subjective insights into the complex memories and lived realities of these particular lives. Overall, these individuals are likely to be less critical in their reflection about their time in East Germany, given that they wrote and told their stories to be included in publications by German authors. They were also recorded more than two decades after the return of the former students and colored by their subsequent adult lives in Mozambique.

Examining this education migration from the perspective of the history of migrant knowledge makes it possible to see these Mozambican children and adolescents not only as victims of a state-led migration scheme to educate vanguard workers for the Mozambican revolution, but also to see them as actors in their own right who navigated a shifting terrain of knowledge production and consumption. This article, with its focus on the knowledge of transnational migrant children in a boarding school context, addresses an exciting new research field.¹² Paying attention to the role of children and teenagers as knowledge actors in translocal settings reveals both their contributions as well as limitations to their host and home contexts as translators and producers of knowledge.¹³ The emerging field of the history of migrant knowledge refocuses attention on the immaterial aspects of migration. Knowledge transfer was the explicit purpose of the state education migration program that sent 900 Mozambican children to Staßfurt. Migrant knowledge includes broader forms of knowledge beyond the definition of technical and political knowledge transfer envisioned by the education ministries in the PRM and the GDR. The children at the SdF created a knowledge community, which bound them together long after the SdF had ceased to exist. They had learned and lived a particular form of being in the world and were socialized into a collective, enculturated into the East German education system, and raised to become vanguard workers for an idealistic people's revolution

10 The interviews were conducted mainly in Portuguese, a few in German, in the context of my PhD research on former Mozambican workers in East Germany. All translations into English are my own. The citations have been edited for readability.

11 Hans-Joachim Döring and Uta Rüchel, *Freundschaftsbände und Beziehungskisten: Die Afrikapolitik der DDR und der BRD gegenüber Mosambik* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005); Ulf Dieter Klemm, *Moçambique — Alemanha, Ida e Volta: vivências dos moçambicanos antes, durante e depois de estadia na Alemanha* (Maputo, 2005).

12 Simone Lässig, "The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda," *Bulletin of the GHI* 59 (2016): 56–57. A special issue edited by Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg dedicated to "Knowledge and Young Migrants" recently appeared in *KNOW: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2019).

13 Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden, 2010).

in Mozambique. After their return to Mozambique, all contended with a reality very different from the utopian visions of the educational experiment. They remained tied to the community of thought that had developed at the SdF and established their belonging to it as a life-long identity marker of importance in post-socialist Mozambique.

Small Strangers Arriving at the School of Friendship

Tomás Justino Django, like many others, remembers his arrival at the SdF in 1982 like a dream:

I was so impressed and happy about what I was seeing; it all appeared to be a dream. The dream was interrupted when somebody saw me and took me by the hand. Together we entered one of these buildings and they said: “This is your room.” The dream continued, and I saw beds instead of mats where I slept before. I looked to my front; there was a wardrobe instead of a bag in which I had kept my clothes before. They showed me the classrooms with their lights, windows, chairs, and pencil cases of enviable quality. There was a gym close by with sports equipment. I had no idea what function they might serve. There was an elite dining hall, a clinic, a laundry room, a sports field outside, and a library. There was nothing comparable in the world from which I was seeing or dreaming. I asked myself: For whom are all these things of such high quality?

The day of answers came. At the beginning of the academic year they said: “all this that surrounds us here is due to the effort of two peoples for a single goal: The formation of the New Man. Your goal is to study and always to study.”¹⁴

The nostalgic memories of the Mozambican arrivals depart markedly from the voices of analysts of the SdF standards. The latter point out the clearly existing shortcomings of the program, such as a lack of privacy with two-to-four children to a room, the insufficient attention paid to religious needs in the dining hall, and the lack of a space for all students to come together. The exuberance of memories like Mr. Django’s becomes readable when one takes into account the previous school experiences the majority of the SdF students had had, and the experiences many continued to have with Mozambican schools up to the time they recorded their memories.

¹⁴ Tomás Justino Django, “Moçambique-Alemanha, Ida e Volta,” in *Moçambique — Alemanha*, by Klemm, 223-38, 234.

Why did 900 young Mozambicans have to travel thousands of kilometers northwards to become skilled workers? For the FRELIMO leadership circle, it was out of the question to establish the school in Mozambique due to the ongoing war, a scarcity of internship possibilities, and funding challenges. Under these circumstances, it did not seem possible to maintain an isolated school with elite conditions in the country itself — it was easier to transfer the children. The SdF was to be a vision of Mozambique’s scientific-Marxist future, one in which “tribalism,” “occultism,” and “poor work routine” were to be overcome and Mozambican traditions were to become nothing but folklore.¹⁵ The few hundred meters of an idealized Mozambique that the school’s campus in Staßfurt was meant to represent were entirely dedicated to the socialist venture of educating the New Man.¹⁶ The school was a political project of development cooperation in the education sector. In the language of the time, it was a symbol of international solidarity, but it also played into the political and economic interests of the GDR.¹⁷ The content and concept of the SdF were purposefully left in German hands. Mozambique was explicitly interested in East German, not Mozambican, standards.¹⁸ This produced an in-betweenness, where an idealized Mozambique was to be constructed in Staßfurt; the school remained isolated, foreign visitors were not allowed in, and, initially, the Mozambican students were only allowed to go out in supervised groups. Thus, the young migrants traversed a whole continent only to find themselves practically immobile, at least in the beginning.¹⁹ As the students became older and spoke better German, they were able to leave the premises by themselves, especially to visit their East German host families or friends on the weekends.

As the quotation by Tomás Justino Django demonstrates, many students, upon arriving in the SdF universe, perceived it as a world that was completely foreign to the social contexts from which they came in Mozambique. Minister of Education Graça Machel had the students recruited across provinces to foster the unity of the Mozambican nation-state the government was in the process of creating.²⁰ After students were approached in their local schools, they often had to convince their parents, many of whom were afraid of selling their children into slavery based on their and their forefathers’ experience with Portuguese colonialism, forced labor, and slavery.²¹ Other parents placed their trust in the FRELIMO government and supported their children’s decision to pursue their education abroad unquestioningly.²² What drew many children was a thirst for adventure and a

15 Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982* (Boulder, 1983), 93-99.

16 Tullner, “Das Experiment ‘Schule der Freundschaft,’” 103.

17 Katrin Lohrmann and Daniel Pasch, “Die ‘Schule der Freundschaft’ in Staßfurt,” in *Freundschaftsbande und Beziehungskisten*, ed. Döring and Rüchel, 91-99, here 95-98.

18 Tullner, “Das Experiment ‘Schule der Freundschaft,’” 105.

19 Scheunpflug and Krause, *Die Schule der Freundschaft: Ein Bildungsexperiment*, 82, 128.

20 Tullner, “Das Experiment ‘Schule der Freundschaft,’” 103.

21 Albino Forquilha, interview conducted by the author, Maputo, September 2, 2011; Pedro Munhamasse, interview conducted by the author, Quelimane, June 7, 2014.

22 Forquilha, interview.

desire to further pursue their education.²³ Most went into the unknown: “I didn’t even know where precisely this country was located. All I knew was that it was a country of whites in Europe, and it was called GDR.”²⁴ Luis João Maconha recalls having traveled first with his finger on a map in a classroom in Mozambique: “I was exactly eleven years old, that afternoon when I first heard the name Germany. With a group of kids, we traveled on a geographic map that hung in the classroom. It only took a few moments, and our questions were clarified. There we were with our wide-open eyes, seeing the small and longish country. This consultation of the map was the fastest journey on this planet.”²⁵

Pascoa Rodrigues, on the other hand, already held prior knowledge of the GDR because extended family members worked there. She remembers: “Some jealous people came and told my father that we would be assassinated in Germany and mistreated. But he didn’t believe them because I already had four uncles there who had sent photos and letters, and that is why he was very relaxed.”²⁶ Mr. Maconha, Ms. Rodrigues, and the other children were assembled in various holding camps across the provinces until they reached the capital, Maputo, whence the international flights departed. There was quite a bit of confusion as to the destination of each child. Albino Forquilha, for instance, remembers having been recruited to go to Cuba and learning only upon arrival in Maputo that he was, in fact, destined to go to the GDR. It was too late to tell his mother.²⁷ These stories allow a sense of the enormous demands a state-led migration project like this made on the new state apparatus. From the migrants’ perspective, these experiences underscored how much the children, once removed from their home communities, were dependent on the FRELIMO government.

Who were the students who came to be recruited? As far as the administration of the school was concerned, in the summer of 1982 a collective of 900 Mozambican children between twelve and fourteen years of age, who had completed at least a 4th-grade education at home, arrived in Staßfurt. Contrary to the official documentation, the new students did not constitute a homogeneous group. Rather, 200 girls and 700 boys from all over Mozambique with various levels of education and a de facto age range of nine to sixteen years came.²⁸ The result was a potpourri of religions, languages, customs, and class origins. This diversity was all but ignored, however, as the students were to grow into socialist Mozambican citizens, overcoming ethnic and

23 Pedro Munhamasse, Pascoa Rodrigues, and Narguice Ibrahim Jamal, interview conducted by the author, Quelimane, June 8, 2014.

24 Django, “Moçambique-Alemanha, Ida e Volta,” 233.

25 Luis João Maconha, “Meninos da Minha Era,” in *Moçambique — Alemanha*, by Klemm, 169–78, 169.

26 Rodrigues, interview.

27 Forquilha, interview.

28 Reuter and Scheunpflug, *Eine Fallstudie*, 78.

religious identities, such as that of being Makonde or Makua, Shangaan or Shona, animist, Muslim, or Christian. For the students this meant that by the time they were brought together in holding centers all over Mozambique, even prior to reaching Maputo, their cultural capital had decreased markedly. As they left their home region further behind, the group diversity increased and they gradually had to communicate in Portuguese and concentrate on their shared commonality: being Mozambican citizens.²⁹ The more the children met children with other mother tongues, customs, and lived realities, the more they were encouraged to shed these distinguishing features to merge into a new whole inhabiting a common Mozambican identity. The foundations for the community of knowledge that was to emerge at the SdF were laid in Mozambique.

Students were carriers of linguistic, religious, and cultural forms of knowledge when they arrived at the SdF; however, very little of it was valued in a school that was to educate the socialist New Man (and woman) in the heart of Europe. For centuries, education across Mozambique had referred foremost to a process of socialization regulated through initiation ceremonies and peer group associations, a tradition that had not lost its place in society until the end of colonial rule.³⁰ Not all students would have been old enough to have undergone initiation rituals prior to leaving for the SdF, and their later socialist education ensured that many came to look at such knowledge disparagingly. The cultural and religious knowledge with which the students arrived was not valued under socialism in either the GDR or Mozambique beyond folkloristic performances. In Mozambican Muslim communities, the Koranic schools not only taught literacy in Arabic but also introduced students into the cultural world of the Swahili coast.³¹ The SdF did not make it possible for Muslim students to follow halal eating rules or actively pursue their faith; the same was true for other faiths. In the state village schools or church schools that many future SdF students attended in Mozambique, they were often taught basic literacy and numeric skills. Many did not arrive with an equivalent of the knowledge of East German grade four students at the SdF, which initially posed a challenge for the curriculum. The interviews suggest that students who were recruited from FRELIMO pilot schools in Mozambique were already familiar with the doctrine of scientific socialism as the sure road to progress and less inclined to be steeped in other traditions.³² This FRELIMO doctrine has subsequently become engrained in many SdF student's perceptions of their life story. Former migrants often

29 Munhamasse, interview.

30 Malyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London, 1995), 438.

31 *Ibid.*, 439.

32 Augusto Inácio Manuel Hapala, interview conducted by the author, Nampula, June 13, 2014; Xadrique Cafique, interview conducted by the author, Pemba, June 20, 2014.

refer to their own background and local culture in disparaging terms and thus do not perceive themselves as carriers of relevant knowledge for the SdF universe. Instead, they highlight their meritocratic achievements — they often were recruited as the best students in their class — and underscore their fast adaptation and absorption of both formal and informal knowledge at the SdF. They frame their arrival as small strangers in a foreign land but do not fail to point out how quickly they created a home away from home for themselves.

Adaptation to the doctrines at the SdF — which included reinterpreting the cultural and religious knowledge gained at home through a Marxist-Leninist lens and absorbing the new teachings they encountered unquestioningly — was the key to success. The school was not merely supposed to consist of selected future citizens, but it also aimed to form them into a community of thought and a socialist collective. And yet, the very existence of a group of young people growing up in a hybrid world between a vision of an idealized future Marxist-Leninist Mozambique and an equally idealized East German solidarity — which, in practice, often failed — was in itself an experiment in a socialist education utopia. Independently of the successes and failures of this experiment itself, the political and economic changes from socialism to a market economy that took hold in Mozambique starting in the second half of the 1980s, along with the sixteen-year war that raged from 1977 to 1992, challenged the reintegration of the migrants into their home context.

A Community of Knowledge Creation: The School of Friendship

The SdF became the students' primary community of knowledge. For seven years, their lives centered mainly on their classes, vocational training, and afterschool activities. During that time, in addition to being carriers of knowledge, students became recipients, translators, and producers of knowledge. As typical of schools the world over, both the school staff and the students saw the students as receptacles of knowledge rather than bearers thereof. Unlike schools in other nations, those in East Germany treated formal education and upbringing as equivalent.³³ Accordingly, SdF students were to be taught content knowledge in class, educated in how to behave as model socialists, and brought up as Mozambican citizens; in all these areas the students were expected to learn by absorbing the teachings offered at the SdF and ignoring alternative worldviews and ideas. Despite this holistic approach, many former SdF students remember their school

33 *Bildung* (education) and *Erziehung* (upbringing) were regarded as identical in the GDR and were subordinated to political and societal goals; see, for instance, Jane Schuch, *Mosambik im pädagogischen Raum der DDR: Eine bildanalytische Studie zur "Schule der Freundschaft" in Staßfurt* (Wiesbaden, 2013), 33.

foremost as a place of formal learning. They speak about having received four years of general education, followed by two years of vocational training and a three-month internship.

Although the school was conceptualized purposefully to follow a German curriculum in terms of general, technical, political, and pedagogical knowledge, some concessions were made to facilitate transferability of information to the students' home contexts. For instance, the standard textbooks for polytechnical classes in the East German *Polytechnische Oberschule* were expanded to include examples the authors deemed relevant to the Mozambican students' lives.³⁴ The message was clear: German competency and magnanimity would help lead a poor, rural country to prosperity through industrial development.³⁵ The underlying unidirectional concept of knowledge transfer between knowledge orders had neocolonial undertones as it implied that the global North, including the GDR, had the general and technical knowledge, whereas Mozambique was regarded exclusively as lacking such knowledge.

Upon arrival, students received intense German language training to insure that they would be able to understand their teachers. Tomás Justino Django remembers that, over time, "German became our dominant language."³⁶ Students continued to learn Portuguese from Mozambican teachers, which was a foreign language for most students and teachers alike. As a result, many returnees lament not feeling quite at ease in German, Portuguese, or their mother tongues.³⁷ Moreover, Mozambican teachers taught subjects intended to give students knowledge about their home country context, such as Mozambican geography, history, and organized cultural and political activities.³⁸ The students were, therefore, expected to learn both the dominant teachings of the East German education system but also the subjects of the Mozambican education system that FRELIMO deemed central to the creation of its ideal citizens.

Nevertheless, not everything the students experienced was planned by the comprehensive school and afterschool program; they were also confronted with situations that the authorities sought to shelter them from and denied the existence of, chief among them racism. A formative instance that left an indelible mark on the collective psyche of the SdF students was the death of one of them, Carlos Conceição, who drowned in the River Bode in 1987 in the course of a fight that erupted after he had visited a local discotheque. His manslaughter was recorded by the authorities as the deed of an antisocial youth

34 Rüchel, "...Auf Deutsch sozialistisch zu denken...", 43-44.

35 Lohrmann and Pasch, "Die 'Schule der Freundschaft' in Staßfurt," 99.

36 Django, "Moçambique-Alemanha, Ida e Volta," 234.

37 Tomas Django, interview conducted by the author, Maputo, March 11, 2014.

38 Tullner, "Das Experiment 'Schule der Freundschaft,'" 104.

rather than as racist act, reflecting the official anti-racism policy of the GDR, which maintained that racism existed only in the West.³⁹ Many former students describe the confrontation, as in Emilia Francisco's short story, as exemplifying the fractured relationships with some of the local East German youth.⁴⁰ The death of Carlos Conceição serves as a collective memory that illustrates what racism meant for the Mozambican children in the GDR. Alongside this collective remembering, many of the students recall other racist acts that were committed by those they interacted with, such as one East German family having a problem with a daughter dating an African, host siblings who made cruel remarks based on skin color, or people who had never seen a black person before unsolicitedly touching them.⁴¹

One example of racism is the story of Augusto Inácio Manuel Hapala and his German girlfriend Carmen, whom he met during a school visit to a museum in Magdeburg. When he first came to her house, her father called him the n-word, albeit in jest, but Mr. Hapala clearly felt that he was not welcome.⁴² The two teenagers, however, had nowhere else to meet because Mr. Hapala was also prohibited from bringing his girlfriend to the SdF. In the end, his girlfriend's mother talked to her father, and Mr. Hapala was able to come over. Even so, as he tells it, "The first day, when I came to eat lunch, [her father] didn't eat with us. I sat down with her mother and her, and he entered with a long face and left." Young Augusto persisted and came to spend weekends with Carmen. The relationship with her father slowly changed. Mr. Hapala recalls: "In the end, we became good friends. In the beginning it was really difficult with him because he would say in the middle of a lot of people that he didn't want blacks at his house, but afterwards, when we had become good friends, he even came to pick me up in Staßfurt on the weekends. ... I still exchanged letters with him until [his death in] 1997." Contrary to the violent collective memory of racism centered around what is remembered as Carlos Conceição's murder, many stories like this one that former students tell about their personal experiences deal with overcoming racism. These stories frame racism as a moment of learning, with friendship ultimately prevailing. Yet they also show that encountering racism of all kinds was an integral part of being black, even in a state where racism was declared to be illegal.

In the literature, migrant children are often conceptualized as translators between the host and home country contexts.⁴³ The SdF students had little opportunity for such translations. On the contrary, their

39 Müller, *Legacies of Socialist Solidarity*, 9; Rüchel, "...Auf Deutsch sozialistisch zu denken..." 92-96.

40 Emilia Francisco, "A Presença de Skinheads em Staßfurt?," in *Moçambique — Alemanha*, by Klemm, 81-84.

41 Custodio Tamele, interview conducted by the author, Maputo, March 12, 2014; Hapala, interview.

42 Hapala, interview.

43 Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, "Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43 (2017): 313-46, 343.

immersion in the SdF universe let the home context recede for seven years, just as the East German context, in turn, receded when they reintegrated in Mozambique. School authorities monitored what little contact they maintained with home during their seven-year absence, which was also marked by the difficulty of obtaining information about their families and news about the deteriorating situation in Mozambique. When their families sent amulets and other means of protection deemed “occult” by FRELIMO, these were kept from the students, as was bad news about the health of family members.⁴⁴

Likewise, communication and travel home to Mozambique were very limited for the students, so that they were unable to convey much about their new lives to their families. Many parents were illiterate and/or did not speak Portuguese, the language in which writing was taught. In addition, the transportation situation in Mozambique had deteriorated on account of the war, so that mail was unlikely to be received in the middle and northern parts of the country. Only the best students were able to travel home during the holidays. Due to the raging civil war there, even these lucky students were not always able to reach their families. One student died trying to visit his family despite explicit warnings.⁴⁵

Sometimes, visits home were more successful, and communication could flow more easily. Augusto Hapala was able to meet some of his family in 1985 when he went on holiday to his home province of Cabo Delgado. For security reasons, the governor had arranged for the parents of the students from the countryside to spend a few days with their children in the provincial capital of Pemba. Mr. Hapala’s father, an aunt, two brothers, and a sister were accommodated in a hotel for five days. Mr. Hapala reported, “They always sat down with us and asked whether we were studying and living well. I had time and they were curious, especially my father was very curious. They liked that I came back with three suitcases and brought clothes for them and many photographs that I had taken there with teachers and friends. That is how they discovered that I really was studying.”⁴⁶ He was finally able to tell his family about his life at the SdF and was able to bring items from abroad that would make their lives easier. In return, he received news from his family and better understood the contemporary political and economic context in Mozambique. Yet such visits were the exception: belonging to multiple communities and cultures in Mozambique and East Germany, SdF students generally lacked possibilities for exchange and translation across cultural

44 Reuter and Scheunpflug, *Eine Fallstudie*, 121–22, 44.

45 Hapala, interview; Forquilha, interview.

46 Hapala, interview.

and generational divides; not much knowledge was on the trans-continental move during the school years. Students typically could merely reflect with one another about their experiences and carry on conversations about the new perspectives they came to share.

Despite their relative isolation, students were also producers of knowledge. What students learned and the independent conclusions they drew from the SdF experiment sometimes varied considerably from the script. For instance, some adolescent students attempted increasingly to break out of the strict schedule, monotony, and ideological straitjacket at the SdF, which hints at an underbelly of active and passive dissent. Class president Albino Forquilha remembers:

At the end of the course, there were students who had the worst grades, who were undisciplined, some who became pregnant ... and were sent back. ... Others started to drink; some even took drugs. Others had problems with petty crime because they were in contact with African traffickers who went to West Berlin to buy things and sell them, and some of my colleagues got involved in this type of crimes. ... Some even turned into some kind of political rebels. Their lack of discipline was directed against some forms of political organization that existed in the school. Some even burned the Mozambican flag.⁴⁷

The youth revolts at the SdF are discussed in more detail elsewhere.⁴⁸ Among the reasons that the young people rebelled was the dissonance between their personal aspirations and the collective opportunities available to them at the SdF, such as that Francisca Isidro mentioned at the beginning of this article. The best primary school students had been selected to come to the GDR not to become doctors, engineers, and teachers but to be trained as masons, electricians, and waiters. They felt frustrated by their lack of opportunities to determine their careers themselves. Moreover, they foresaw that their return home would not bring them a stable and prestigious working-class future in Mozambique in its revolutionary circumstances. That is, rather than having insurance and retirement benefits, they would, on the contrary, be greeted by war and political uncertainties. Their deviant behavior can be read as protest and their individual choices to opt out of the SdF universe with its strict discipline and ideology, in the process creating and relying on new forms of knowledge that were not part of the SdF curricula.

47 Forquilha, interview.

48 Reuter and Scheunpflug, *Eine Fallstudie*, 117–20; Rüchel, "...Auf Deutsch sozialistisch zu denken...", 64–67.

Despite these examples of rebellion and knowledge creation, overall, students were neither perceived nor perceived themselves as producers of independent knowledge prior to their return to Mozambique. Yet when they returned home, the knowledge they carried, received, translated, and created became geographically mobile and expanded rapidly.

The Possibilities and Impossibilities of Transferring Knowledge to Mozambique

The East German neighbor of Benedito Augusto Mualinque's host family made a statement that stayed with him. He quotes her as having said: "I think that your government thought about this well because the best help that a nation can give to the other is exactly this kind of help. In this way, you won't have to import technicians; you, as pioneers, will transmit the knowledge to your countrymen, so soak up everything and don't forget anything."⁴⁹ This was the same argument that many young migrants heard throughout their seven years at the SdF. Many had worked hard at school and in the companies, endured separation from their families, and looked forward to returning home. They clung to a vision that already looked questionable from the mid-1980s onwards. The SdF neither adjusted its program to the political changes in Mozambique nor to those in East Germany but anachronistically continued to pursue what the planners in the late 1970s had envisioned as being Mozambique's future. When the adolescents and young adults (now between sixteen and twenty-three years of age) duly returned in November and December of 1988, suitcase and diploma in hand, formal knowledge and varied experiences of living abroad in their heads, they experienced life as anachronistic.⁵⁰ Reintegration was a complex process because socialist model citizens educated abroad had to integrate themselves into a country that most had not seen in seven formative years. Moreover, they encountered it in a state of political transition to free market and multiparty democratic structures. Skilled laborers had to find their bearing in a war economy characterized by militarization and a shortage of formal employment opportunities. Migrants returning from Europe and the comforts at the SdF struggled to adjust to a Mozambican society marked by a shortage of consumer goods and food after eleven years of war. These children, now grown, searched for their families and tried to find ways to bridge the loss of sharing their teenage years with them once they located them.

The translation of knowledge from the SdF universe into a Mozambican war economy was not an easy feat for most returnees. The Mozambique

49 Benedito Augusto Mualinque, "O Meu Primeiro Natal na Alemanha," in *Moçambique — Alemanha*, by Klemm, 45–52, 49.

50 Lohrmann and Pasch, "Die 'Schule Der Freundschaft' in Staßfurt," 91.

they found was a far cry from the Mozambique the politicians and education specialists who had planned the SdF had envisioned. Mozambique was ravaged by a sixteen-year war that saw one million dead, one million temporary squatters, two million refugees and three million internally displaced out of a total population of just 15 million.⁵¹ Food supplies were disrupted, and the formal economy had all but come to a halt. Instead of being assigned to work on GDR-PRM agricultural and mining projects, or even working in the various professions for which they had been trained, the students were collectively conscripted upon arrival. Tomás Justino Django remembers feeling incredulous: “I returned to my birth country full of hope and knowledge that I collected on the other side. How flabbergasted I was, upon awakening from this dream ... [to find] I was a soldier.”⁵² Only those who were considered inept or maintained strong relationships with people in important positions were able to escape the compulsory military service. This was a tremendous shock to many young people who believed that suffering through military training was a waste of their knowledge and education. In Carlos Alberto Maconha’s words: “As we were instructed, suffering made itself felt; the bodies were rolling over on pointed stones that were absorbing our fresh blood from our bodies full of the fertile knowledge that we brought.”⁵³ Even after completing their military service, many students struggled to make ends meet. As Jaime Faque Suldane put it: “Upon completing the military conscription, we ... [were left] as technicians who knew nothing. So we stayed in the streets, unemployed, and dependent on the luck of the draw to do whatever!”⁵⁴ Disillusioned returnees who had been conditioned to believe that the state took care of their life decisions, from recruitment to the SdF to the choice of their training specialization, needed to take their lives into their own hands. The state failed to allocate most of the returnees appropriate job postings due to a mixture of the effects of the sixteen-year war, the resulting limited capacities in Mozambican industries, and the government itself, as a shift was underway towards individual responsibility on an open labor market.

Under these circumstances, a few former SdF students returned to Germany as contract workers in the hope that they could live life there in accordance with their education, values, and social ties.⁵⁵ Augusto Hapala, for instance, remembers: “I was severely unhappy at the time ... I would have never considered working for any ministry that has anything to do with armament because of that culture of peace I brought from Germany.” Therefore, he planned to return

51 K. B. Wilson, “Internally Displaced, Refugees and Returnees from and in Mozambique,” *Studies on Emergencies and Disaster Relief*, No. 1, ed. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1–62 (Uppsala, 1994), 1.

52 Django, “Moçambique-Alemanha, Ida e Volta,” 237.

53 Maconha, “Meninos da Minha Era,” in *Moçambique — Alemanha*, by Klemm, 169–79, 173.

54 Jaime Faque Suldane, “Nas Terras do Tio Honecker,” in *Moçambique — Alemanha*, by Klemm, 101–104, 103.

55 Forquilha, interview; Marcia C. Schenck, “From Luanda and Maputo to Berlin: Uncovering Angolan and Mozambican Migrants’ Motives to Move to the German Democratic Republic (1979–1990),” *African Economic History* 44 (2016): 203–34.

to East Germany. A friend, an army major, provided him with the necessary documentation.⁵⁶ While a return to East Germany offered a road out of a country engaged in civil war and sometimes a return to loved ones, it rarely meant employment as skilled laborers, as East Germany began its own tumultuous transition to joining the Federal Republic on October 3, 1990.

After realizing how their skills failed to fit the market, many former SdF students who stayed in Mozambique wanted to create a better future by investing in higher education. Yet, the Mozambican Ministry of Education did not recognize the SdF diplomas as either enabling access to schooling in the preparatory level for university, or directly to university. Many former SdF students felt discriminated against and punished for having served the socialist system. Albino Forquilha remembers: “This situation created great problems and frustrations. First, because we left knowing that we would work in a company upon return, but none was available to receive us. Second, because the level of training we concluded there was not accepted for working or going to study at the universities. ... I, because I was the president of the association of students, proposed that we organize to interact with the government, and we wrote several letters. We were received by the minister, and the decision was made that our education was not comparable to *nível médio*.”⁵⁷ Katrin Lohrmann and Daniel Pasch have compared the German and Mozambican school systems and their changes in the 1980s and concluded that the state’s refusal to accept the SdF certificate and skilled labor diplomas for access to grade 10 and higher, or directly to university education, contradicted the agreements signed between the two governments.⁵⁸ In the end, each student found an individual solution, and some continued their formal education and attended universities.

Despite the difficulties most SdF graduates faced, a few were able to draw upon their education and training to establish a successful career in Mozambique. Elsa Vurenda and Bacar Madane are among the SdF returnees who began working for the Mozambican Railway Company (CFM) upon their return and still work there today.⁵⁹ Ms. Vurenda, for instance, was trained as mechanical designer and was found unsuitable for military service upon her return. She presented herself at the Ministry of Education in Maputo and then returned to her home province of Zambezia. The directorate of education there recommended, among others, a job placement as a mechanical designer with CFM. CFM accepted her application, and she began to

56 Hapala, interview.

57 Forquilha, interview. At the time, *nível médio* referred to tenth- and eleventh-grade vocational training and should have been sufficient for university access; see Lohrmann and Pasch, “Die ‘Schule der Freundschaft’ in Staßfurt,” 93.

58 Lohrmann and Pasch, “Die ‘Schule der Freundschaft’ in Staßfurt,” 93–94; see also Tullner, “Das Experiment ‘Schule der Freundschaft,’” 105.

59 During my visit to the Beira headquarters of the CFM with Bacar Madane on June 4, 2014, I met several former SdF students who worked at the CFM at the time.

work in the area for which she had been trained. Later, she qualified further to work in civil design. Today, she is able to support her extended family, and she also brought several of her family members to work for CFM. For her parents it paid off to send a daughter abroad who now forms the financial backbone of the family.⁶⁰ For his part, Bacar Madane himself owed his career in PR with the CFM to a fortuitous circumstance. A film crew from the Netherlands had left its equipment in Mozambique, but the only instruction manual was in German, and he was called in to translate. Since then, he has provided jobs for several other former SdF students at CFM.⁶¹ These stories illustrate both that some career paths worked out according to the scheme devised by the GDR and PRM, and that other SdF graduates had acquired some skills that gave them a competitive advantage for working within the formal sector.

Other returnees also successfully applied the technical knowledge they had gained in East Germany to work as entrepreneurs in the formal and informal economy. Domingos Dali, for example, began working as an electrician at various construction sites around the country. He then established his own company called “Elektroblitz” based on the East German company where he had trained, and still works in this sector today.⁶² Pedro Munhamasse, in turn, still works in construction and applies the technical knowledge he received in East Germany to building projects. He frames his work as serving the mission of the SdF to contribute to the development of Mozambique.⁶³ Finally, Xadrique Cafique works as locksmith and employs three people. He also invests in training new people, but since he is not formally able to provide diplomas, people leave after having acquired the necessary skills.⁶⁴ Some of the former students I met struggle to make ends meet, and all of them know of friends and classmates who depend on help as they fight to wrench an income from the informal economy, juggling multiple odd jobs or taking on temporary work as drivers and security guards whenever available.

The experience of having lived abroad made a lasting impact on the returnees, regardless of whether their training benefited them professionally. Most, like Pascoa Rodrigues, concluded that they had changed on a personal level: “From a cultural point of view, I learned many things, like to respect and value people, punctuality, to value friendships, and much more, but in terms of vocational training I can say that it wasn’t a great success. ... I had no benefit from that vocational training there.”⁶⁵

60 Elsa Vurenda, interview conducted by the author, Quelimane, June 9, 2014.

61 Bacar Madane, personal conversation, Beira, June 4, 2014.

62 Domingos Dali, interview conducted by the author, Nacala, June 18, 2014.

63 Munhamasse, interview.

64 Cafique, interview.

65 Rodrigues, interview.

Moreover, many of the young Mozambicans that returned had become estranged from the country they had been asked to leave behind seven years before. After being inundated with East German pedagogy and cultural values all this time, they had become East Germanized. In the words of Luís João Maconha: “We shouldn’t obscure the fact that these people [East Germans] already had transmitted their way of being, they had already implanted their rich and vast history and culture in us.”⁶⁶ Additionally, some students were no longer able to find their families, others had almost forgotten their mother tongues, and all of them had to bridge the years they were gone as well as the end of childhood and adolescence in their relationships. Many struggled to adjust to Mozambican society, where they often encountered envy and bitterness from those who alleged they had left the country when life became difficult during the war and were therefore not deserving of special treatment.

The legacies of this education migration continue to reverberate in the lives of the returned migrants even today. As adults, they reminisce together about their adolescence in East Germany. The time they spent in the SdF community generated a group identity that continues to mark them out as a collective, a group with shared social capital and migrant knowledge. They maintain an active group identity as a “big family.”⁶⁷ “I not only was, I am a Staßfurter,” maintains Sérgio Clemente Taero nearly thirty years after he returned to Mozambique; he argues that the only thing he can vouch for that worked in the SdF pedagogy is that the students overcame tribalism and grew into a unit: the notorious “Staßfurters.”⁶⁸ Domingos Dali founded mutual aid systems in Tete and Nacala among the local SdF returnees to materially support those who are struggling.⁶⁹ Custodio Temele acknowledges that the collective marks him even now: “The collective, the discipline to always have to watch out for the others, I don’t think these are bad characteristics of your average socialist.”⁷⁰ Moreover, international networks continue to exist, but contrary to the expectations of those who planned the SdF, these are solely of a private nature. Some maintain contact with their host families up to the present, including the occasional transnational visit of both former host families and former students.⁷¹ Others who live in Maputo maintain contact with German institutions like the embassy. But most lost all contact to Germany over the years.

Conclusion

The SdF school program was intended to transmit formal knowledge, both general and technical, to the students. Further, it was supposed to instill political values through the students’ socialization in the

66 Maconha, “Meninos da Minha Era,” 173.

67 Narguice Ibrahim Jamal, interview conducted by the author, Quelimane, June 8, 2014.

68 Sérgio Clemente Taero, “Ich bin ein Staßfurter,” in *Freundschaftsbande und Beziehungskisten: Die Afrikapolitik der DDR und der BRD gegenüber Mosambik*, ed. Döring and Rüchel, 110–14 (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 110.

69 Dali, interview.

70 Temele, interview.

71 Vurenda, interview; Custodio, interview; Madane, personal conversation.

socialist collective. Students were to absorb these different bodies of knowledge and transport them to Mozambique, where they were to implement what they had learned in their professions, in training others, and in embodying the ideal of the socialist New Man. At least that was the theory.

This education migration was characterized by the encounter of unequal knowledge systems wherein the FRELIMO leadership circle had identified the German approach to vocational training as an example to follow in the development of socialist skilled workers for Mozambique. At the heart of this education migration thus lay an uncritical knowledge transfer from North to South. Age-related hierarchies compounded the geographic knowledge hierarchy. In many autobiographical accounts, the former child migrants speak of themselves as learners more so than as bearers of knowledge. Yet, students did not arrive as empty vessels; they were carriers of certain kinds of ideas and customs that were partly forgotten and partly integrated into their new everyday lives. They also translated the ideas they encountered abroad into their own worldview, in the process building the community of knowledge they continue to share with the other SdF students; through their collective everyday experiences at the SdF, their friendships, the ideology and teachings received and discussed, they formed a knowledge-sharing community, to which they continue to belong almost thirty years after their return, utilizing it as an identity marker still. In the process they made and remade their worlds several times over.

Their opportunities to translate the new worldview and technical expertise formed at the SdF into their former lives in Mozambique were limited as these worlds remained separate: their East German families stayed in Germany; their Mozambican ones were in Mozambique. Over the seven years of their stay, they became more and more Germanized and were able to experience life outside of the SdF universe more independently. Yet, the transnational migration experience created a group of Mozambicans that would always stand apart as Other, both in the East German context and in their home contexts across Mozambique.

Upon returning to Mozambique, the young adults had to negotiate a new knowledge landscape; they had to translate between the old (socialist) and brave new (post-socialist) world and between their experiences abroad and the exigencies back home. In this process, it becomes apparent that the value of knowledge remains tied to the system in which it is created. The children were selected in Machel's

socialist People's Republic and returned to what became the Republic of Mozambique based on market and democratic principles under Joaquim Chissano. Their socialist personalities were of limited use in an economy that shifted to market structures; they were rarely placed in formal employment as skilled workers in the area of their training; to make matters worse, their SdF diplomas were not recognized according to the agreements established between the two governments, which restricted their access to higher education. While some former SdF students managed to fend for themselves and continue their studies to attain a Mozambican middle-class life, others joined the sixty percent of the Mozambican population who live in poverty.

This then is a case study about the mobility and immobility of knowledge, which, on the basis of former migrants' memories, sheds light on the difference between the planned and actual movement of different bodies of knowledge. It has addressed how and why general and technical knowledge was supposed to be transferred, which borders and barriers it overcame and which it did not, what roles the migrants and state policies but also language, age, and the kind of knowledge produced played. Some knowledge remained intact and was transferred, other ideas were changed and adapted in the process of circulation, yet others were forgotten; what remained was the community of knowledge that continues to bind the former students together. The young Mozambicans who went to East Germany were not only at the mercy of the SED and FRELIMO education ministries and their educators, but as they grew up, they increasingly navigated the shifting ideological terrains they came to inhabit both actively and critically. The socialist education experiment groomed a socialist vanguard prepared for a future that was never to be. The returnees were disappointed by what the transformed Mozambique had to offer, in which there seemed to be no special place for the socialist New Men and Women.

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Internal Migration and the Left

THE SOUTH AND THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN OTHER: FOLK MUSIC, INTERNAL MIGRATION, AND THE CULTURAL LEFT

Risto Lenz

In 1940, actor and activist Will Geer organized the “Grapes of Wrath Evening,” a benefit concert for the John Steinbeck Committee for Agricultural Workers at Forrest Theater in New York City. The program served as a blueprint for what would later define the American folk music revival: Urban Northerners sharing the stage with “authentic” rural Southerners, together celebrating America’s musical heritage in a politically charged framework (here: helping migrant farmworkers). Among the “real” folk were Aunt Molly Jackson, an organizer for the Kentucky coal mines and a singer of union songs, Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter, an African American songster from Louisiana, and Woody Guthrie, a singer from Oklahoma. The three musicians, who would all spend their subsequent lives in New York as well as in California, represent the three main migration flows of Southerners moving out of farms and towns of the American South in great numbers and into cities and suburbs of the North and the West: The Great Migration of black Southerners (Lead Belly¹), the dust bowl migration (Guthrie), and the Appalachian migration (Jackson).² The three singers had different backgrounds, came from different regions, and differed in terms of class, race and sex. Yet, for many Northern leftists — from communist and socialist radicals to more moderate New Deal liberals — these Southerners served not only as bearers of dying rural traditions but also as symbols of Southern tensions and conflicts that the singers’ native homes stood for: The blatant racism in the Deep South, the poverty of Central Appalachia, and the plight of small “Okie” farmers during the Great Depression. All of these subjects moved urban Northerners and were addressed in the migrants’ songs as well as their public personas.

Against this backdrop, I argue, the South became a site for projections in the face of a national crisis for the cultural Left. Southern regions that were culturally distinct became merged into an abstract entity onto which notions oscillating between hope and disillusionment, fear and perspective were projected. As a result, the South became America’s Other. Folk music, I believe, played an important part in this development since it served as a symbolic reminder of an America endangered by social and political change. However, folk

1 He is sometimes also referred to as “Leadbelly.” Both spellings are possible. I will hereafter use “Lead Belly” since it was the preferred spelling of the singer himself as well as of the Lead Belly Foundation.

2 While historians have paid a lot of attention to the African-American migration out of the South in the last decades, they have been more hesitant to explore what we might call the Great White Migration. James N. Gregory provides a comprehensive picture of both migrations in his monograph *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill, 2005). The book brings together the three migrations and explores their connections as well as their differences. I am indebted to Gregory’s discussion of “Re-figuring Conservatism” (*ibid.*, 283–321), in particular, for much of what I argue in this article.

3 Alan Lomax, especially, was a main representative of his field and was also referred to as “The Father of the American Folk Revival.” See “The Lomax Legacy: Folklore in a Globalizing Century,” LOC.gov, <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/lomax/lomaxlegacy.html>. Concerning John Lomax, some readers might argue that he was more of a conservative than a progressive, yet I will nonetheless treat his work as belonging to the cultural Left because he was a New Deal supporter and was involved in the government’s cultural work as Folklore Editor of the Federal Writers Project.

4 I will additionally draw on important research on the role of folk music during the Great Depression. In *Depression Folk: Grassroots Music and Left-Wing Politics in 1930s America* (Chapel Hill, 2015), Ronald D. Cohen argues that the use of traditional music in union strikes during the financial crisis contributed greatly to the notion of folk becoming synonymous with protest. In “My Song Is My Weapon”: *People’s Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930–50* (Chicago, 1989), Robbie Lieberman explores the ways in which the construction of folk music is related to the work of the Communist Party. In *Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West* (Chicago, 2012), Peter Gough focuses on the government’s role in the revival and explores how its activities shaped a new national appreciation for the diversity of American musical expression. And finally, Stephen Petrus’s and Ronald D. Cohen’s *Folk City: New York and the American Folk Music Revival* (New York, 2015), explores the urban milieu that served as the revival’s epicenter. What all these works have in common is an emphasis on the close intertwining of the folk revival with liberal and leftist thought. Following this approach, I want to contribute a discussion about the role of the South and internal migration in the history of the American folk revival.

singers like Guthrie, Jackson, and Lead Belly themselves became actors in these power struggles, their migrant status as Southern expatriates rendering them experts and authorities on these issues.

This essay has two parts: The first part explores representations of the South made by the “cultural Left” — a term I use in a broad sense to refer to individuals or institutions that produced and conveyed meaning associated with the left-wing or liberal camp, including writers and journalists, curators and archivists, musicologists and folklorists, federal cultural workers and radio and film professionals. I focus particularly on the cultural production of folklorists John and Alan Lomax, who had a major impact on American folk music scholarship. Furthermore, their work laid the foundations for the intertwining of folk music and political ideas in the protest song movement of the American folk music revival.³ I rely for my analysis on newspaper articles from both radical and liberal papers, essays, letters, and book publications, and most crucially John and Alan Lomax’s *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934) and *Our Singing Country* (1941), John Lomax’s *Sinful Songs of the Southern Negro* (1934), Theodore Dreiser’s *Harlan Miners Speak* (1932), as well as Pete Seeger and Alan Lomax’s *To Hear Your Banjo Play* (1947). The second part deals with representations of the South that the singers made themselves, which I discern from their song lyrics, interview material, and their own publications, such as Woody Guthrie’s *Woody Sez* (1939). For biographical data, I rely on Shelly Romalis’s excellent Aunt Molly Jackson biography *Pistol Packin’ Mama* (1999), as well as Charles Wolfe’s and Kip Lornell’s definitive biography of Lead Belly, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly* (1994). In the case of Woody Guthrie, I refer to Joe Klein’s early biography *Woody Guthrie: A Life* (1981), as well as Ed Cray’s *Ramblin’ Man* (2004), which serves as an important complement to Klein’s work.⁴

The Folk and the Nation

Defining a specific folk culture also means redefining the collective identity of which the given culture is a part. Whatever the outsider’s stance toward his object of study may be, it is inevitable that he will undergo the process of *Othering*. The very intention of going to a specific place and collecting the songs and tales of a specific people demands selection criteria. That is, one must decide from whom to collect, and to determine which songs, tales, customs, manners are actually representative of “them.” Blues musician Big Bill Broonzy was quoted in *Time* magazine as having famously said at the height

of the folk revival, “I guess all songs is folk songs. I never heard no horse sing ‘em.”⁵ Broonzy, too, had moved to the North from his rural Southern home. As funny as his remark may sound, the point is that in order for something to be regarded as “folk,” it has had to be self-consciously identified as such by an outsider. But to which group does the attribute “folk” actually refer? This decision is a question of sovereignty over interpretation. And so, curiously, the story of folk music is never really about the folk. It is about an outsider’s belief that certain people or regions embody a sort of national essence and express this essence through songs and tales. Following these beliefs, cultural expressions that make up the other part of the whole — the nation — become crucial in order to understand the whole.

From the beginning of folk song collecting, it was the outsider who defined what folk music was and where it had to be found. Historian Peter Burke showed in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (2009) how an urban elite began to define and celebrate the character of folk cultures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Following Burke, the “discovery of the people” paved the way for various individuals and movements to collect songs and poems by the “common people” — usually the peasantry.⁶ The collecting, at that time in the form of written transcriptions, was predominantly carried out by urban writers, philosophers, poets, and musicians. Among the most influential were Johann Gottfried Herder as well as Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, all of whom influenced the idea that folk music reflected the national character of a nation. Hence, folk music, as a communally created, non-classical art, belonged to everyone and thus had the ability to evoke a national consciousness.

The problem with this definition is that the entity of “the folk” is interchangeable and can be defined more or less arbitrarily, which makes every definition of folk music imprecise. Whatever the definition, though, remoteness is a key characteristic. The folk are typically thought to be found in the peripheries. The return to folk traditions has much to do with a response to social change. Actual and perceived change were the reasons outsiders turned to regions that might possess something that could be preserved, a cultural artifact that would otherwise get lost. Herder, who is attributed with having coined the term “folk music” (*Volkslied*), assumed that the folk could be found beyond the city walls: “‘Volk’ does not mean the rabble in the alley: they never sing or compose but only scream and mutilate.”⁷ This distinction between the urban (the rabble in the streets) and the

5 *Time*, November 23, 1962, 60.

6 Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Farnham, 2009), 24.

7 Herder, quoted in Regina Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison, 1997), 47.

rural (the folk) is important when we want to understand the ideological power behind folk-song collecting. Whether such collecting was driven by an aesthetic purpose to highlight low-class over high-class culture, naturalness over artificiality, simplicity over complexity, or a nationalistic purpose to include the seemingly isolated people — folk music became political precisely because it was defined from the outside from the beginning.

Some hundred and fifty years after Herder thus defined folk music, Harvard graduate John A. Lomax wrote in the *Journal of American Folklore*, “You and I, living in the heyday of civilization under the conventions of cultured people, are yet, after all, not so far removed from a time and from a folk that spoke out their emotions simply and directly.”⁸ Lomax’s words echo Herder’s urban-rural dichotomy by arguing that folk music is found beyond the borders of “civilization.” In a later article, Lomax clarified that he believed the folk could be found “in field and forest, on mountain and plain, by the roadside, and in the cabin, on big cane or cotton plantations ... A life of isolation, without books or newspapers or telephone or radio, breeds songs and ballads. The gamut of human experience has been portrayed through this unrecorded (at least until recently) literature of the people.”⁹ And like the Grimms, who argued that folk poetry was written by the people (“Das Volk dichtet”), Lomax believed in the spirit of communal creation. He even cited the Grimms, though he referred to them as a singular entity: “Grimm has said that the folk song composes itself. Its music comes straight from the heart of the people, and its idioms reveal their daily habits of speech.”¹⁰ Lomax’s definition of folk music followed the same patterns as that of his German predecessors: In his view, unlike mass culture, folk culture reflected national character, and it was regarded as being cut off from the center and thus voiceless. Hence, folk music needed to be “saved.”

Similar ideas were at play at the “Grapes of Wrath Evening” that took place in 1941 in New York City. The two young folklorists Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger participated in the event. Both worked for the Library of Congress’s Archive of Folk Culture, and both were the sons of two prominent folklorists: John Lomax and Charles Seeger. While the Seegers had Northern backgrounds, the Lomaxes themselves were Southern expatriates from Texas. Being educated at Northern institutions (Harvard and Columbia University), the two folklorists acted as middlemen between Southern folk singers and Northern intellectuals. As Alan Lomax explained in his 1967 published

8 John A. Lomax, “Types of American Folk-Song,” *Journal of American Folklore* 28, no. 107 (Jan.-Mar., 1915): 2.

9 John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York, 1994 [1934]), xxvii-xxviii.

10 Ibid.

songbook *Hard-hitting Songs for Hard-hit People*, he regarded the work of folklorists, above all, as a form of advocacy for America's oppressed people: "We treasured these songs, because to us they were symbols of the fighting, democratic spirit of a whole sector of the population that is too often viewed as faceless, voiceless, supine and afraid."¹¹ Alan Lomax's statement suggests why folk music corresponded well with the ideas of the American Left. There was a need for Americans to embrace cultural diversity, to bond together in community, and to highlight the nation's marginalized people: Ideas about folk music spoke to leftists and liberals equally, whether they were proponents of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal or radical members of the Communist Party. Historian Robbie Lieberman argues that folk music "more than any other cultural form" embodied the (Communist Party's) Popular Front spirit: "It was simple and direct; it invited mass participation ... it expressed the concerns of the common persons."¹² Although I agree with Lieberman's statement, I would qualify it by adding that it was primarily the *Southern* folk song that played a central role in the political struggle of the American Left.

Internal Migration and the South

When the Depression hit, the South was America's poorest region; its per capita income was scarcely 50 percent of the nation's average.¹³ Although the number of internal migrants from the South to the North decreased during the crisis, the perception of such internal migration increased with a rise in media coverage, resulting in indigent Southern migrants becoming more visible. There were various reasons for this. For one thing, internal migration grew more important after the mid-1920s when restrictions on immigration shifted the media focus from immigrants to indigent migrants. This change in focus applied primarily to perceptions of white migrants. The media had already perceived the Great Migration of black Southerners with distrust after African Americans had begun moving North in great numbers in the First World War. The *New York Times* had warned the public of a black exodus from 1916 on, and then debated what the South could do to fight the push factors of this migration.¹⁴ When one analyzes these debates, it becomes apparent that black and white migrants from the South were perceived differently. While the census shows that more than twice as many white Americans left the South during the 1910s, none of these articles mentions any other indigent migrant group, nor do they portray them as a problem requiring a response.¹⁵ White Southern migrants were also less visible than

11 Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger, and Woody Guthrie, *Hard-hitting Songs for Hard-hit People* (Lincoln, 2012 [1967]), 366.

12 Robbie Lieberman, "My Song Is My Weapon" — *People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930–50* (Chicago, 1995), 49.

13 Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal: New Perspectives on the South* (Lexington, 2006), 75.

14 The following *New York Times* articles deal with African-American migration from the South: "Negro Migration," Sep. 8, 1916; "Negroes Deserting South for North," Nov. 12, 1916; "Tillman Warns of Race Clashes," July 17, 1917. A second wave of articles was published during the debates about immigration restriction: "Negro Migration North" (March 10, 1925); "Laws against Negro Migration" (July 21, 1923); "Negro Exodus Cuts Planting in South" (April 23, 1923).

15 According to the Census Bureau, 893,000 white Americans left the South between 1910 and 1920, compared to an estimated 437,154 black Americans; quoted in Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora*, 330.

blacks because they were not perceived as intruders. According to James Gregory, “white Americans were not thought to be harmful to the cities or other places they might settle. A xenophobic substream of journalism had argued just the opposite, hoping that wholesome rural newcomers would improve the cities.”¹⁶ However, when the decreasing numbers of immigrants in the mid-1920s caused a labor shortage in Northern cities, newcomers from the South came to fill the gap. The tide turned, and labor migration led indigent migrants to often be perceived as the new intruders. The Great Depression increased this sense of intrusion. Southerners, both whites and blacks, became a special subject of concern that prompted national debates. Whether they were portrayed as intruders or as victims, indigent migrants became a political issue during the depression. Alternately referred to as *transients*, *hoboes*, or *migrants*, the newcomers generated a lot of discussion, with the media’s failure to settle on an appropriate name also reflecting the uncertainty of how they should be dealt with. Among the questions the phenomenon provoked was what actually defined a migrant. The *New York Times* articulated concern that the “hobo problem” would not be a transient one: “If these men were simply a problem of the depression, they might be dismissed as something that would pass, but this does not seem to be entirely the case.”¹⁷ The paper also reflected on the polarizing effect migrants had on society. Three years later, the *New York Times* had settled on a decidedly negative view of the migrants: “We no longer call these migrants pioneers, the correct term is ‘transient unemployed.’”¹⁸ Such derogatory terms were also the result of a new approach to writing about America. Among the performing and the visual arts, literature had turned towards a reliance on the “document” and the “fact.” Many writers began to blur the lines between fiction and journalism in such a way that the 1930s have often been referred to as the “documentary decade.” As will be shown below, this new approach also shaped the ways in which migrants were portrayed to the American public.

In the midst of this migrant crisis, many intellectuals and writers began to travel to the South to report on conditions that were prompting this migration and encourage public debates. Among the interacting forces contributing to the crisis were economic decline, natural disasters, social discrimination, and the transformation to modernity. This reporting provoked national outrage. Often these accounts were written in a documentary style meant to portray the realities of the respective areas: the social injustice of the Deep South, the plight of

16 Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora*, 60.

17 “Colorado Finding Hoboes a Problem,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1935.

18 “Transient Unemployed,” *New York Times*, July 17, 1938.

small farmers in the Great Plains, and the miserable situation of coal miners in Central Appalachia, for example. In addition to journalists, fiction writers mingled with Southerners to be able to write about the South with more authenticity. Among the most well-known and acclaimed works that depict the life of poor white sharecroppers was John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). Both books embodied the two poles of the era's popular approach of combining radical journalism with novelistic writing. Steinbeck had visited a government migrant worker camp in Arvin, California, and included his reality-based observations in a novel portraying the fate of a migrant family from Oklahoma. Agee and Evans documented the lives of three impoverished tenant farmers in Alabama in a mixture of documentary pictures and fictionalized text. The two books are prominent examples of an approach pervading the literature and journalism of the cultural Left as well as the ethnographic accounts of Depression-era folklorists. Such documentary realism and its various forms in journalism, art, photography, and literature have been extensively discussed in literary scholarship. However, what is often overlooked, I believe, is that many of these works implicitly or explicitly deal with "Southern issues." Like Steinbeck and Agee and Evans in their books on Southern farmers, the cultural Left was obsessed with writing about the South. And also like them, many took on an investigative approach, actually traveling to the distinctive places they wrote about, as will be shown later.

Constructing Southern Myths

A new 'Americanism' was in the air. The interest in American folk roots, black and white, generated by the Roosevelt administration acted as a powerful stimulus ... The presence of Aunt Molly [Jackson], ... Lead Belly [and] Woody Guthrie gave immediacy to this trend [and] brought into sharp focus an unknown American hinterland.¹⁹

In her essay "Trouble in the Mines" (1991), Henrietta Yurchenco, a folklorist and radio host in 1930s New York, recalled her relationship to the three abovementioned folk singers: "We learned their country songs and used them as models for new songs on contemporary themes. We also aquired from them knowledge about injustice and hardship suffered by miners, migrant workers, and Dust Bowl

¹⁹ Henrietta Yurchenco, "Trouble in the Mines: A History in Song and Story by Women of Appalachia," *American Music* 9, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 209-24.

refugees, and about chain gangs and lynchings in the South.”²⁰ Yurchenco’s remarks reflect the kind of projections that permeate cultural representations of the Left of the Depression era: The idea that the South simultaneously served as a cautionary example of wrongdoings as well as a symbol of a “new America.” The migrant singers’ presence in New York evoked two opposite myths about the South: those of the “integrated South” and those of the “benighted South.”

Although seemingly opposed to each other, these myths, I believe, often served a similar purpose. The term “benighted South” was coined by historian George B. Tindall.²¹ In his famous essay, Tindall argued that Northern journalists and sociologists in the 1920s overemphasized Southern ills and focused on a number of horrifying occurrences — from the restrengthening of Ku Klux Klan chapters and diseases like hookworm and pellegra to the fundamentalist implications of the Scopes Trial²² — all of which stigmatized the South as the dark side of the nation. The myth of the “integrated South” flourished especially in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and represented the idea that the American South had the potential to become a truly integrated society. While the myth of “benighted South” depicted the region as irredeemably evil, the myth of the “integrated South” was positive, aiming to overcome the former notion and stressing the racial interaction of black and white Southerners. The cultural Left can be seen as one of the roots of the later Civil Rights Movement, having helped this movement become inseparably linked with American folk music. In this respect, the cultural Left anticipated the myth of the integrated South. Both of these representations, I believe, served the cultural Left in promoting its vision of a “new America.” The plot of a sixteen-minute documentary film illustrates how they did so.

Written by Alan Lomax and narrated by Pete Seeger, the documentary *To Hear Your Banjo Play* (1947), illustrates this point. The film juxtaposes images of urban New York with images of the rural South.²³ It contains footage of the hard-working but simple life of Appalachian mountain people “down in old Virginia,” where the people “can’t read music” but “play by ear.” In New York, by contrast, it presents an urban setting: skyscrapers, busy traffic, and crowds of people, some of them facing the camera. There is a scene with Pete Seeger sitting in his New York apartment playing the banjo. “American folk music got lost in the traffic, but now people are listening again,” he says, “I guess my old tunes remind them of home of their roots in the land.”

20 Ibid.

21 George B. Tindall, “The Benighted South: Origins of a Modern Image,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 40, no. 2 (Spring 1964): 281-94.

22 In this nationally known court trial, also known as the “Monkey Trial,” high school teacher John T. Scopes was charged with violating Tennessee state law by teaching Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution.

23 *To Hear Your Banjo Play*, dir. Irving Lerner and Willard Van Dyke, written by Alan Lomax (New York, 1947).

The film then cuts to another setting: an open road with huge cotton fields on every side. Black and white people can be seen working in the fields as well as playing music in a barn. Seeger then continues his narration: “When you come down into the flat, hot country of the South, down into the rich cotton land, you hear ... the music of the sharecroppers, the migratory workers, music that’s jangling and mournful.” Close ups of three African American men are shown, and Seeger goes on: “Their work is seasonal. It’s hard ... You can see poverty written all over their faces and the poverty in their songs.” Seeger talks about how black and white Southerners worked together in the fields and on the railroad tracks: “There is strength in that music, too. Strength that made millions of bales of Southern cotton. Two races met here in the South. Together they built the South.” At this point, the music changes to an uplifting folk song accompanying images of locomotives leaving the scene before the film cuts back to Seeger’s apartment in New York. Meanwhile, a group of square dancers has gathered the room and an older gentleman, talking in a broad Southern accent, explains the rules of a traditional dance to a group of (white) young people. While the young people are enjoying the dance, the film fades out.

To Hear Your Banjo Play utilizes both myths of the South. In terms of the “integrated South,” the film promotes a vision of a pluralistic culture founded on a shared history while, in the sense of the “benighted South,” it depicts the South as a place where poverty and misery are pervasive. Having a racially integrated cast was still rather uncommon in the 1940s; television series and movies were mostly segregated at that time. The fact that the final dance scene is played by an all-white cast was probably due to possible sexual connotations that a racially mixed dance scene would evoke. What is most striking about *To Hear Your Banjo Play*, however, is how the South becomes an image not only of the polarized rural connotations of the “country” but also of the country itself. Although the film celebrates the renaissance of *American* folk music, it focuses solely on representations of *Southern* culture and music. This restriction, I believe, had to do, among other things, with the effect that Southern expatriate folk singers had on the urban Left. For good or bad, these Southerners embodied the converse of the images of the American North. Whether they represented a naïve agrarian idyll, an economically and socially troubled backwoods scenario, or a land ruled by white supremacy, the singers and their songs were framed here into an imaginary South and thus made the American Other.

Similar to the way the South was depicted in *To Hear Your Banjo Play*, the lives of Guthrie, Jackson, and Lead Belly as rural Southerners were also absorbed by the cultural Left. I will first give three very brief accounts of the circumstances that led the three singers to come to New York and will afterwards examine the ways in which their stories became intertwined with an urban leftist ideology.

The Making of the Other

Woody Guthrie, originally from Okemah, Oklahoma, came to New York via California, where he had moved as part of the so-called dust bowl migration.²⁴ From 1930 to 1940, 2.5 million people had left the plain states in search of new homes. Two-hundred-fifty-thousand “Okies” and “Arkies” migrated to California.²⁵ Guthrie went to Los Angeles. He first worked as a sign painter, then got a job on KFVD radio, where he hosted an “old-time” radio show that was particularly popular among dust bowl migrants, many of whom were located in one of the numerous government camps across California. As a radio host, Guthrie discovered his talent for entertaining and simultaneously drawing in an audience with controversial social commentaries. He got involved with California’s cultural Left. Through actor and activist Will Geer, Guthrie met John Steinbeck, whose book *The Grapes of Wrath* — about the Okie family “the Joads” — had just won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. The novel put the migrant problem into the national spotlight in such a way that “the Joads” became a metonym for migrant families. The book was just about to be turned into a film by John Ford, and Guthrie became an “uncredited ‘musical advisor’” for the movie.²⁶ Soon after, in 1940, Will Geer asked Guthrie to come to New York.

24 During the Great Depression, farm foreclosures were at an all-time high, with one-third of all American farmers losing their farms (and homes) between 1929 and 1933, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. In addition to the financial crisis, midwestern states were also hit by severe dust storms, known as the Dust Bowl.

25 For migrant figures, I have relied on James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: The Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (New York, 1989), 9–10.

26 Ed Cray, *Ramblin’ Man: The Life and Times of Woody Guthrie* (New York, 2004), 154.

Five years earlier, Huddie Ledbetter, who called himself Lead Belly, had arrived in New York. Born in 1888 on Jeter Plantation near Mooringsport, Louisiana, Lead Belly worked most of his young adult life on a small farm owned by his sharecropping parents. By the age of twenty, he left his home to pursue his musical career. Lead Belly played on Shreveport’s notorious Fanin Street — a red-light district with a competitive music scene. He met Blind Lemon Jefferson — later one of the first Country Blues recording stars — who became his mentor. However, Lead Belly’s troubled life got him imprisoned several times, and he spent nearly twenty years in prison before being released in 1934. At the Angola State Penitentiary in Louisiana, Lead Belly met John Lomax and his son Alan. The two folklorists were surveying the South to record traditional music for the Library

of Congress's newly established Archive of Folk Song. Among other music styles, they were interested in unadulterated African-American music. In the isolated prisons, "where the population was almost entirely black," they hoped to find songs that were cut off from the influences of mass culture.²⁷ With a reference letter from Washington, DC, the Lomaxes were allowed to enter most state prisons in four Southern states: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. After Lead Belly's release in 1934, the singer contacted John Lomax to ask for a job. Lead Belly began to work for Lomax as a driver on his recording trips as well as an assistant who helped to mediate between Lomax and the singers. At folklore lectures, Lead Belly also played "musical examples" to complement the folklorists' remarks. He performed, among other places, at the Library of Congress, at an MLA conference in Philadelphia, and later also at Yale and Harvard universities. Together with the Lomaxes, Lead Belly arrived in New York on New Year's Eve, 1934.

Aunt Molly Jackson came to New York in 1931. She was a singer of folk and union songs and was deeply rooted in the miners' community. She took up old ballads, hymns, and spirituals and composed her own songs about her life in coal-mining country, a practice common in Central Appalachian culture. Jackson had spent nearly all her life in Harlan County, Kentucky. Born in 1880, she had witnessed the region's transformation from an agrarian to an industrial region. In 1931, a group of Northern writers, led by Theodore Dreiser — also known as the Dreiser Committee — traveled to Harlan County to report on the coal-mining strikes that had led to several deaths on both sides among both mine guards and miners. Many of their observations were recorded in the compilation, *Harlan Miners Speak*.²⁸ Edited by Theodore Dreiser, the book contains written reports by committee members John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, Lester Cohen, and Dreiser himself.²⁹ The writers were part of New York's radical Left and wanted to report on the court hearings.³⁰ In one of the hearings, they encountered Jackson, who was being questioned on the situation in Harlan. The group eventually invited her to come to New York to raise funds for the cause.³¹ After this, Jackson never returned to her Kentucky home except for short visits.

When we integrate these individual stories into the histories of the related migrations, it is striking that all of the singers' lives were in some way affected by the agricultural plight of the Depression era. No sector of the American economy had suffered more

27 John A. Lomax, "'Sinful Songs of the Southern Negro,'" *The Musical Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (April 1934): 177-87, here 181. Apart from prisons, the Lomaxes also recorded on plantations, "where in number the Negroes exceeded the whites," as well as in "lumber camps that employed only Negro foremen and Negro laborers" (*ibid.*).

28 Theodore Dreiser, ed., *Harlan Miners Speak* (New York, 1932).

29 Other committee members contributing to the book project were Melvin P. Levy, Charles R. Walker, Adelaide Walker, Jessie Wakefield, Anna Rochester, Arnold Johnson, Bruce Crawford, and Boris Israel.

30 In addition to the Dreiser Committee, other journalists and writers made their way to Harlan County to write about the situation. Among them was novelist Waldo Frank, who reported to the *New York Times*: "We were informed that the miners in Kentucky were suffering, were starving, were in a condition of peonage." Qtd. in Rosk C. Field, "Conditions in the Kentucky Coal Fields," *New York Times*, April, 10, 1932.

31 Shelly Romalis, *Pistol Packin' Mama* (Urbana, 1999), 88.

from the Great Depression than agriculture. Farm foreclosures, dropping prices for crops, labor replacement due to mechanization and modernization — all these factors had made farmers “a social problem calling for an economic solution.”³² Particularly hard hit were “southern sharecroppers, migrant farmworkers, the ‘Okies’ driven out of the Plains in the Depression ... [and] farmers in Appalachia.”³³ In “A Report on Economic Conditions in the South,” President Roosevelt had called the South “the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem.”

According to historian Chad Berry, more white Southerners left Kentucky than any other state during the Southern exodus. What began as “trickle” during the first decades of the twentieth century became a “flood” when the war effort lured many Kentuckians north- or westward. The state “lost 372,988 people through migration between 1940 and 1950 ... Harlan County alone lost ... 30 percent of its population.”³⁴ After soldiers had entered Harlan County to end the strike violence, the media covered the story nationwide, and the American public found out about the living conditions of miners and their families. The media coverage likewise prompted many Northerners to learn about the fate of Central Appalachian mountain people. Settled in the late eighteenth century principally by people of British and northern European heritage, the area had been transformed from a primarily agrarian region to an industrial coal-mining one within fifty years. Whereas this had initially been prosperous for the local people, it had turned into exploitation by the end of the nineteenth century when non-Appalachians owned most of the lands in Kentucky coal counties. “No food, no clothing, no medicine,” Theodore Dreiser wrote in the introduction to *Harlan Miners Speak* (1932), “the coal operators’ association ... created a kind of slavery ... The great change that came upon them did not come through war or the law. It came through modern industrialism ... A free, primitive people had become the vassals of modern industrialism.”³⁵ In *Appalachia on our Mind* (2014), Henry Shapiro explores the history of the idea of Appalachia as “a strange land of peculiar people.”³⁶ The image, Shapiro argues, was developed between the 1870s and 1920s, when intellectuals began to give “explanations about Appalachian otherness.”³⁷ The region’s perceived closed system invited Northerners to write about the mountain people. Although these texts often had a goodwill purpose of bringing Appalachians into general American awareness, they often portrayed Appalachians as remnants of a bygone era.

32 Bruce L. Gardner. *American Agriculture in the Twentieth Century: How It Flourished and What It Cost* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 103.

33 *Ibid.*, 104.

34 Chad Berry, “The Great ‘White’ Migration, Alcohol, and the Transplantation of Southern Protestant Churches,” *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 94, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 265–96.

35 Theodore Dreiser, ed., *Harlan Miners Speak* (New York, 1932), 12, 18.

36 Henry D. Shapiro. *Appalachia on our Mind. The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870–1920* (Chapel Hill, 2014), 18.

37 *Ibid.*, 82.

Many of the observations and depictions in *Harlan Miners Speak* recall these old stereotypes about Appalachia. John Dos Passos, for instance, linked his impression of the mountain people to an imaginary pre-modern America: “The low frame hall was packed with miners and their wives; all the faces were out of early American history ... These were the gaunt faces ... of the frontiersmen who voted for Jefferson and Jackson.”³⁸ Lester Cohen, another member of the Dreiser Committee, agreed. For him, Appalachians “remained a primitive people past the turn of the twentieth century.”³⁹ The Dreiser Committee encountered Aunt Molly Jackson on their second day at a public hearing in Straight Creek, where she had been called to bear witness to the region’s high child mortality due to lack of food relief: In the chapter “The Free Speech Speakin’s,” John Dos Passos describes the scene as evoking incredulity: “The AP [Associated Press] man and the gentleman from the *Courier-Journal* ... refuse to believe that people can be so badly off as that. They crowd into the door of one shack to hear what Aunt Molly Jackson, the local midwife, has to say, but you can see them getting ready not to believe what she says, what their own eyes see.”⁴⁰ In the report of the hearing quoted in the text, Jackson talked about the “destitute” conditions in Harlan County — of infant deaths due to undernourishment, diseases, and the lack of relief.⁴¹ Dos Passos added that Jackson’s testimony was complemented by a song she sang in front of the committee. Titled “Ragged Hungry Blues,” the song again addressed the severity of her situation. It later became her best known song and also her only commercial release: “I woke up this morning with the saddest blues I ever had in my life / Not a bite to cook for breakfast, Poor coal miner’s wife.”⁴² It is likely that for the Dreiser Committee, Aunt Molly Jackson was the prototype of the Appalachian Other: Not only was she part of an agrarian people that, from the point of view of the radical Left, was exploited by Northern industries. Apparently, she also expressed those injustices through music. In its struggle to secure workers’ rights, the radical Left repeatedly made use of populist dichotomies. As Lester Cohen wrote in *Harlan Miners Speak*, “Until 1910 no railway ran into Harlan County ... With the entry of the great companies into the field, the character of the country changed.”⁴³ For Cohen, Appalachia marked the place where tradition was corrupted by modernity, where Southern honesty was betrayed by Northern greed: “The tiny farm holdings were merged into great properties ... Railroads were pushed into the hills, the tracks laid by men who might never have seen a locomotive in their lives ... Great machines were lugged into places where, a year before, horses could hardly travel, and set to digging coal to be shipped north and to Europe.”⁴⁴

38 John Dos Passos, “The Free Speech Speakin’s,” in *Harlan Miners Speak*, ed. Dreiser, 277–97, 288.

39 Lester Cohen, “A Bloody Ground,” in *Harlan Miners Speak*, ed. Dreiser, 17–19, 18.

40 Dos Passos, “The Free Speech Speakin’s,” *Harlan Miners Speak*, 279.

41 *Ibid.*, 279–81.

42 John C. Hennen, “Introduction,” in *Harlan Miners Speak*, edited by Dreiser, i–x, v.

43 Cohen, “A Bloody Ground,” *Harlan Miners Speak*, 21–22.

44 *Ibid.*

After she had arrived in New York, Jackson attended marches, rallies, and meetings organized by the radical Left. One of the events was the “Harlan (Ky.) Terror Mass Meeting” convened by the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners. According to a *New York Times* article reporting on this event, “Anderson Decries Our ‘Speakeasy’ Era,” it took place at Star Casino in front of an audience of 3,000 people.⁴⁵ The article introduced Jackson as a “Kentucky miner’s wife” who “sang her now famous song, composed by herself, ‘The Kentucky miners’ wives’ Ragged Hungry Blues,’ and another song composed by her for the occasion.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, the article mentioned the “brutality and terror” in the Kentucky area and bemoaned the plight of “starving miners and their children.” It then quoted the evening’s keynote speaker, the writer Sherwood Anderson named in the article’s title:

Theodore Dreiser ... and these other people have had the nerve and the manhood to go down there into Kentucky, when there is apparently a reign of terror ... We writers ought to quit thinking so much of money ... and safety and line up with the underdogs ... Who is served by it? I mean by this modern crushing organization of modern society. Has it been built up to serve an aristocracy ... served by all the rest of us, by the common man or woman ... This beautiful, new majestic thing in the world, the machine, now crushing millions of people under its iron heels ... Is that what our people came to America for? Was it for this we built all of our railroads, cut down the forests, opened up the land ... We are in a time of transition now, men and women passing out of one world into another ... Fear is now ruling in Harlan County, Ky.⁴⁷

Anderson’s speech evokes the symbolic meaning that Aunt Molly Jackson embodied with her presence. Although he does not mention Jackson explicitly, Anderson paints a bleak picture of the singer’s native home “passing out of one world into another.” In bringing Jackson to New York, and to this very event, the Dreiser Committee had “lined up with the underdogs” whose voices were otherwise unheard in the peripheries of the rural South. Jackson’s mountain people were the pioneers who once “came to America” and were now suffering under the “crushing organization of modernity.” Again, Kentucky, once a place of stability and

45 *New York Times*, December 7, 1931.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*



continuity, now became a symbol of instability and discontinuity, a “reign of terror” that was increasingly ruled by “fear.” At the same time, Jackson became a symbol of folk resistance, a reminder that “the common man or woman” had some agency, and that marginalized regions could use their traditions to make themselves visible.

A similar pattern can be observed in the “discovery” of Lead Belly. For folk music enthusiasts, Lead Belly was a treasure. Smithsonian archivist Jeff Place called him a songster. Lead Belly could memorize music instantly and created his own mental archive, which made him “a walking and singing collector of American folk songs.”⁴⁸ Thus, Lead Belly himself was a chronicler of the South, an oral historian of music who had acquired the legacy of Southern culture. For the radical Left, however, Lead Belly was a victim of the “benighted South.” The Communist Party’s main press organ, the *Daily Worker*, condemned the mainstream press for exploiting Lead Belly’s criminal past.⁴⁹ At the same time, the paper depicted Lead Belly as an outlaw who symbolized African Americans suffering under the conditions of the post-slavery South: “Shaped and molded by some of the harshest social forces in American life ... he makes his songs out of the day

Lead Belly at a night club, probably in New York in the late 1940s (photo courtesy of the Lead Belly Archives).

48 Jeff Place, “The Life and Legacy of Lead Belly,” in *Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Folkways Collection*, by Jeff Place and Robert Santelli, 16–28 (Washington, DC, Smithsonian Folkways Recording), 23.

49 After Lead Belly’s arrival in New York, the *Herald Tribune* published an article under the headline: “Sweet Singer of the Swamplands Here to Do a Few Tunes Between Homicides.” *Time* magazine called Lead Belly “a black buck” who “murdered a man,” while *Life* magazine ran a story entitled “Bad Nigger Makes Good Minstrel.” See *New York Herald Tribune*, January 5, 1935; *Time*, January 14, 1935; *Life*, April 19, 1937.

to day life of his people.”⁵⁰ In the article, which was titled “Huddie Ledbetter, Famous Negro Folk Artist, Sings the Songs of Scottsboro and His People,” the *Daily Worker* portrayed Lead Belly as a people’s artist, an admonisher against Southern injustice who, although famous, was being “turned loose on the streets of northern cities to starve”:⁵¹ “This folksinger tells of dodging white mobs, of wandering at night to save his life ... Down South the white landlords called him a ‘bad nigger’ and they were afraid of his fists, his bitter biting songs ... and his ability to take injustice and like it.”⁵² What the *Daily Worker* called “bitter biting songs,” folklorist John Lomax called “sinful songs,” prison and work songs that had “a tone of sadness” due to “the presence of black and sinister iron bars.” In “Sinful Songs of the Southern Negro,” Lomax wrote: “It is my belief that few persons in the United States, other than Southerners, have ever heard songs of Negro origin, words and music, sung with the artless simplicity that gives them what is to me their chief charm ... Because they still sing in unison with their work, because of his almost complete isolation and loneliness, because of the absence of ‘free world’ conventions in prison life, the Negro continues to create what we may rightly call folk-songs. They are not written out, they are orally handed down.”⁵³ The Lomaxes’ decision to search Southern state prisons for potential folk singers is understandable from a musicological point of view. Many of the inmates have been isolated from society for a long time and had probably less contact to other cultures and to mass culture than non-prisoners.⁵⁴ From an ethical point of view, however, these recording trips were questionable. For instance, from John Lomax’s writings we learn that not all singers contributed their songs voluntarily as in the example of convict Black Sampson, who “would not sing an innocently worded levee camp-song into our microphone until ordered to do so by the Warden.”⁵⁵ Alan Lomax recounted similar incidents, with inmates being “shoved in front of the microphone by guards.”⁵⁶ These exploitative methods were subject to criticism not only in later historiography⁵⁷ but also among contemporary African American writers. Poet Langston Hughes, for instance, likened the endeavors of white collectors like Folkways Records owner Moses Ash and Alan Lomax to a “safari.”⁵⁸ Novelist Richard Wright accused John Lomax of having exploited Lead Belly, claiming that the mention of Lead Belly’s name under song titles of *American Ballads and Folk Songs* was the singer’s only “honor.”⁵⁹

However, the Southern prison recordings can also be seen in a different light. The Lomaxes, I believe, saw themselves as reporters from

50 “Huddie Ledbetter, Famous Negro Folk Artist, Sings the Songs of Scottsboro and His People,” *Daily Worker*, August 12, 1937.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 John Lomax, “Sinful Songs of the Southern Negro,” 184–85.

54 However, as will be shown later, Lead Belly’s use of popular song material challenges this point.

55 Ibid., 183.

56 See, for example, Ronald D. Cohen, ed., *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934–1997* (New York, 2003), 29.

57 See Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, 2010).

58 Langston Hughes, *Ask Your Mama: 12 Moods for Jazz* (New York, 1961), 507.

59 Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly* (New York, 1994), 201.

a different America — an America that many contemporaries did not know existed. The cruel Southern prison system was essential to what made these recordings so valuable for the Lomaxes because they showcased the suffering caused by Southern cruelties. As John Lomax put it: “[Henry] Krehbiel said, ‘The truest, the most intimate folk music, is that produced by suffering.’ The songs of the Negro prisoners in convict camps furnished confirmation of this theory.”⁶⁰ In the form of field recordings, essays, and photographs, the Lomaxes brought the convicts’ suffering to the outside world. Even if their intention was benevolent, they sensationalized what they encountered. In their eagerness to communicate the brutal realities of these places, the two folklorists seemed to be incapable of understanding that they, too, were part of the exploitation. Pointing towards Southern wrongs, however, implied thinking about the nation’s future. The Lomax reports provided insight to outsiders into an otherwise restricted area. In particular, many Northerners were beginning to see chain-gang labor as a Southern problem.⁶¹ Chain gangs were groups of prisoners who were forced to construct roads or do farm work while chained together. Reformers, like adherents of the Good Roads Movement, had propagated the idea that inmates who were forced to work at highway road building would eventually become better people. Following historian Tammy Ingram, these reformers believed “that county chain gangs could rehabilitate bad men and bad roads alike.”⁶² In “Songs from Southern Chain Gangs,” a chapter in *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, the Lomaxes also introduced the readers to their own transcribed songbook versions of chain gang songs. Each tune had a brief preface to provide a background. “Black Betty,” for instance, was introduced as a song with a “marked rhythm” whose title referred to “the whip that was and is used in some Southern prisons.”⁶³ Given this information, some readers might have read the phrase “Bam-Ba-Lam” in the song’s first line “Oh Lord, Black Betty, Bam-Ba-Lam” as an onomatopoeic expression of a whip. The information that the song was collected by “a convict on the Darrington State Farm in Texas” further evoked the harsh realities of Southern prison life — even though the Lomaxes also noted that whipping had been “practically discontinued” in Darrington, Texas.⁶⁴ In the chapter’s introduction, however, the readers could perceive the circumstances in which the tunes had originally been sung: “Thirty men in stripes are ‘flat-weeding’ a ditch; every hoe strikes the ground at the same instant. The driver walks his horse behind them, shotgun across the pommel of his saddle. Guards, black trusties, ready and eager to shoot down any man who makes a

60 Lomax and Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, xxxix.

61 In 1932, Hollywood released a version of Robert Elliot Burns’s *I am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang!* (1932). The film eventually drew the attention of mainstream media to the issue.

62 Tammy Ingram, *Dixie Highway: Road Building and the Modern South, 1900-1930* (Chapel Hill, 2014), 131. See also Julie Weise, *Corazon de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South since 1910* (Chapel Hill, 2015).

63 Lomax and Lomax, “Songs from Southern Chain Gangs,” in *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, 56-87, 60.

64 Ibid.

break for freedom ... The sun stands hot and burning overhead and the bodies of the men sway easily to the swing of their arms and the rhythm of the work. Presently some big buck with a warm powerful voice throws back his head and begins ... At the chorus the gang joins in with a full-throated response.”⁶⁵ Following this description was an appeal to the reader to sing the songs impulsively as they were “the work-songs of driven, despairing men, who sing about their troubles to be rid of them.”⁶⁶ Encouraging their readers to sing Southern prison songs was part of an educational mission to give marginalized Americans a voice. By singing these songs, American readers would presumably experience the dark underbelly of the nation through folksong. The Lomaxes’ approach was contradictory in the way they fixated on the most isolated groups of society. Their non-consideration of the black middle and upper classes gave an incomplete picture of what African American song culture looked like during the Depression. As they wrote in the foreword of the successor volume, *Our Singing Country*, “Most of these singers are poor people.” On the same page, however, the Lomaxes announced that the work represented a survey with which they hoped to “teach the next generation of Americans what their country is.”⁶⁷ The songbook’s credibility draws much from its investigative character “on location” and the insight that gave them, which lent this account its authenticity.

In a similar way, other intellectuals warned the public about chain gang work. Although forced labor was not restricted to the South, the problem was often perceived as such. It was a reminder that racist conditions still existed in the U.S. Northern radicals addressed the issue increasingly in papers like the *Daily Worker*, *The New Republic*, or *The Communist*.⁶⁸ Books like Walter Wilson’s *Forced Labor in the United States* (1933), as well as articles like Arthur Raper’s “After Slavery” (1932), and M. Rubinstein’s “The Industrialization of the South and the Negro Problem” (1930) debated the chain gang problem in detail. According to Alex Lichtenstein, chain gangs “embodied the brutality of southern race relations ... and the moral and economic backwardness of the region in general.”⁶⁹ One *Daily Worker* journalist, John L. Spivak, wrote the book *Georgia Nigger* (1932) after he had gained access into Southern state prisons. Written in the above-mentioned mixed style between fiction and journalism, the book received public acclaim even beyond left-wing circles:⁷⁰ “To have cheap labor available, the South turned the freed slave into a chattel slave ... Slowly I formed a picture of the conditions millions of Negroes lived under in the Deep South,” Spivak wrote in the preface. A native of Connecticut,

65 Ibid., 57.

66 Ibid.

67 John Lomax and Alan Lomax, *Our Singing Country* (New York, 1941), viii.

68 Alex Lichtenstein, “Good Roads and Chain Gangs in the Progressive South,” *Journal of Southern History* 59, no. 1 (Feb. 1993): 85–110.

69 Ibid.

70 Alex Lichtenstein, “Chain Gangs, Communism, and the ‘Negro Question’: John L. Spivak’s *Georgia Nigger*,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 633–58, 634.

he added: “I was discovering an America about which I knew nothing.”⁷¹ That the chain gang problem was ongoing during Lead Belly’s time of arrival in New York helps us to understand why the singer was often equated with this aspect of his life. His niece Tiny Robinson wrote that Lead Belly “felt he had much more to sing about beside chain gang songs.”⁷² In fact, Lead Belly did not write any personal songs about his time in the chain gang nor about his time in prison. But, as will be shown later, Lead Belly did write personal songs about the discrimination he had faced after moving to the North.

By the time Woody Guthrie came to New York, the film adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* had premiered, significantly impacting the general perception of the migrant problem. As Joan Crouge put it: “The nation’s conscience had been touched and Congress wanted answers.”⁷³ A few months later, the House of Representatives’ Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens, also known as the Tolan Committee, interviewed over three hundred witnesses of transient relief, including First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to better understand internal migration. Included in the hearing were discussions of books and articles that had been written by WPA researchers. The WPA, or Works Progress Administration, was a federal agency which employed millions of Americans to carry out public work programs. Funded by the government, these journalists, writers, and also folklorists had been documenting migrant camps for various New Deal agencies, among other activities.⁷⁴ Migrants often faced hostility and were generally “accused of being worthless.”⁷⁵ In these debates, WPA writers served as mediators, smoothing out tensions between migrants and the public. Reporting from within Okie migrant camps, WPA employee Charles Todd called upon the public to support the Southern migrants: “Native Californians are fearful for their jobs in the face of these work hungry hordes from ‘foreign’ States. And inside the camps there is a growing hopelessness ... ‘We don’t want to eat off the government — we want work!’ [the migrants] say.”⁷⁶ However, in their enthusiasm to support the migrants, I believe these mediators tended to portray Okies as noble but simple, backward people. In a New York Times article called “Ballads of the Okies” (1940), Charles Todd and Robert Sonkin also described the camps and their inhabitants as a world within another world — a Southern diaspora in California that was “fascinating” yet “forgotten”: “Geographically, it is still California, but for the collector of songs it is another and far more fascinating world. Strolling in the evenings through one of the big Farm Security Administration camps,

71 *Ibid.*, 638.

72 Tiny Robinson, “Why He Sang Certain Songs,” in *Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Folkways Collection*, by Place and Santelli, 118–19, 119.

73 See Joan Crouge, *The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression, New York State 1929–1941* (Albany, 1986), 258.

74 See Risto Lenz, “Mediators of Knowledge: WPA Folklorists and 1930s Migrant Culture,” *History of Knowledge*, April 11, 2018, <https://historyofknowledge.net/2018/04/11/mediators-of-knowledge-wpa-folklorists-and-1930s-migrant-culture/>.

75 Joan Crouge, *The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression*, 103.

76 Charles Todd, “The ‘Okies’ Search for a Lost Frontier,” *New York Times*, August 27, 1939.

past long rows of tents and metal ‘units,’ one hears fragments of tunes that a more prosperous America has forgotten in the process of growing up and getting rich.”⁷⁷ In such descriptions, the migrants’ world seems like a mirror, contrasting with the surrounding world –the transformed and corrupted American West — and thus shaking it up: “They are the people from isolated farms of the Ozarks, the panhandle, and mountains farther east ... They are the people who were ‘dusted out,’ ‘blowed out,’ or ‘tractored out’ of their ancestral homes, and to whom singing is one of the few things that remain constant in a strange new land where prosperity is measured by the amount of gasoline in a battered tank.”⁷⁸

Despite the various ways in which Guthrie, Jackson, and Lead Belly were taken up and sometimes exploited by folklorists and others of the cultural Left for their own purposes, these folk artists were not reduced to passivity. They did play an active part in the construction of their own personas.

Migrant Perspectives

Like many African Americans moving out of the South, Lead Belly might have been drawn not only by the economic landscape, but also by the social opportunities. And like some fellow migrants, he soon realized that discrimination due to his race was not something restricted to the South. In many cities on his way North, the singer experienced the segregated realities of Jim Crow laws, whether it was in Philadelphia, where he was given a separate room on Pine Street because he was denied access to the Benjamin Franklin Hotel,⁷⁹ or in Albany, where even liberal friends, fearing consequences, had him stay at a befriended black doctor’s house.⁸⁰ When Lead Belly was in Washington, DC, to record for the Library of Congress, he did not find an apartment in the segregated capital, which prompted him to write his song “Bourgeois Blues” (1944): “Me and my wife went all over town / And everywhere we go, people turned us down / Lord ... It’s a bourgeois town ... Gonna spread the news all around.” The refrain calls the alleged equality in the American Constitution into question: “Home of the brave, land of the free / I don’t wanna be mistreated by no bourgeoisie.”⁸¹ Lead Belly’s song “Jim Crow Blues” (1953) has a spoken introduction in which the singer recounts an experience he had had in the West: “When I come in a train, I stop in Las Vegas. This white fellow was with me. He sat down and I thought it was all right. Man taps me on the shoulder and says, ‘I’m sorry, we don’t serve colored.’ And I says ‘Oh, no you don’t?’ and he says, ‘No.’ And

77 Charles Todd and Robert Sonkin, “Ballads of the Okies,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1940.

78 Ibid.

79 Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly*, 133.

80 Ibid., 174.

81 Lead Belly, “The Bourgeois Blues,” *Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Collection 2015* (Washington, DC, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SFW40201, 2015).

that white fellow got up too. We ain't got to eat in Las Vegas. So many places like that. I just feel sorry for them people."⁸² Even though Lead Belly was struggling to make a living from music, he was able to travel on concert tours throughout the U.S. These experiences gave him special knowledge about the country, which he expressed in his songs: "I been traveling, I been traveling from toe to toe / Everywhere I have been I find some old Jim Crow ... You're gonna find some Jim Crow, every place you go."⁸³ Lead Belly also wrote several topical songs about different people and events, such as the war effort ("National Defense Blues"), Adolf Hitler ("Mr. Hitler"), and Franklin D. Roosevelt ("Dear Mr. President"). Folklorist Fred Ramsey suggested he was pushed in this direction by his political friends.⁸⁴ However, Lead Belly had written topical songs as early as 1912, when he performed an unrecorded song about the Titanic together with Blind Lemon Jefferson. Lead Belly finally recorded the song in 1946 for Folkways Records under the name "Titanic." The song includes a fictional story about how Jack Johnson, an African American boxer, was denied entry to the ship and thus survived — ironically because of the act of discrimination. In the spoken introduction of the song, Lead Belly explains that he would not sing this part of the song in front of white audiences. This remark shows that the singer intentionally navigated between different audience expectations.

Unlike Lead Belly, of course, Guthrie did not have to deal with Jim Crow laws as they did not apply to Okie migrants. However, the treatment Okies faced in California sometimes shifted them towards the periphery of what is generally regarded as whiteness. In Bakersfield, for instance, a movie theater had a sign posted in front which read "Negroes and Okies Upstairs."⁸⁵ In 1936, the Los Angeles police established a "'bum blockade'" at the California border to keep out Okie migrants.⁸⁶ It may have been incidents like these that led Woody Guthrie to write the song "I Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore" (1944): "I ain't got no home, I'm just a-roamin' 'round / Just a wandrin' worker, I go from town to town / The police make it hard wherever I may go / And I ain't got no home in this world anymore." Although Guthrie never lived in the government camps, he was associated with the troubled life of an authentic Okie. Alan Lomax, for instance, called him the "dust-bowl ballad maker" who was "familiar ... with jails and freight trains," who slept "under every railroad bridge in California."⁸⁷ Being close to both liberals and radicals, Lomax was an authority whose support may have helped make Guthrie interesting to both poles of the Left. In 1941, the Bonneville

82 Lead Belly, "Jim Crow Blues," *Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Collection* 2015.

83 Ibid.

84 Place, "The Life and Legacy of Lead Belly," 21.

85 Peter LaChapelle, *Proud to Be an Okie: Cultural Politics, Country Music, and Migration to Southern California* (Berkeley, 2007), 29.

86 Cecilia Rasmussen, "LAPD Blocked Dust Bowl Migrants at State Borders," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 2003.

87 Lomax and Lomax, *Our Singing Country: Folk Songs and Ballads*, 12.

Power Administration (BPA), a federal agency in Portland, Oregon, asked Guthrie to participate in the documentary film *The Columbia* (1949). The BPA produced the film in order to persuade people in the Northwest to support the completion of the Grand Coulee Dam, a New Deal project that also involved the labor of many migrant workers. The dam was built between 1933 and 1942. Although the film was not finished until 1949, Guthrie's songs and his appearance in the film show how his status as a migrant voice was of value to liberal New Deal circles. The Southern migrant who had traveled west and north seemed the perfect fit to act as a negotiator between "the land" and "the city," as shown in the song "Grand Coulee Dam" (1941): "Uncle Sam took up the challenge in the year of Thirty-three / For the farmer and the factory and all of you and me / He said, 'Roll along, Columbia, you can ramble to the sea / But river, while you're rambling, you can do some work for me.'" In creating a collective identity that included the rural (the farmer) and the urban (the factory), this song exemplifies how the ideological power of folk music was appreciated even by federal authorities.

Aunt Molly Jackson, by contrast, was not so highly valued in her encounters with liberal New Deal circles, even though her song-writing skills were highly praised, and she knew how to actively promote an image of herself as a symbol of Appalachian protest. Still, unlike Guthrie, she found it impossible to make a living from music alone and experienced discrimination in her life in New York. For instance, when she tried to apply for a composer's job at the WPA office in New York — the New Deal Works Progress Administration's headquarters — Jackson was rejected due to a missing birth certificate.⁸⁸ Referring to the incident, she once told folklorist John Greenway: "You see, we [Kentuckians] did not have any births registered till 1912 — a man just came around taking names."⁸⁹ For the WPA, the lack of a birth certificate was an exclusion criterion. For Jackson, though, the missing document was indicative of her long lineage in the history of the United States. In her song "Disgusted Blues," Jackson processed the incident: "I come from one of the oldest families / That's in the U.S. today / But after all they refused / To give me a job / On a government project today."⁹⁰ In a different song recorded by Alan Lomax, Jackson sang about a similar experience, this time stating that the WPA only offered her a cleaning job, which she refused to accept: "'If you can scrub and wash clothing I have a job for you' / I said I am a poet I can sing and entertain / I can not do hard labor, sir / But I sure can use my brain."⁹¹ Both songs give us

88 Romalis, *Pistol Packin' Mama*, 97.

89 Aunt Molly Jackson, quoted in Romalis, *Pistol Packin' Mama*, 98.

90 Aunt Molly Jackson, "Disgusted Blues," quoted in Romalis, *Pistol Packin' Mama*, 98.

91 Aunt Molly Jackson, "Hungry Disgusted Blues," American Folklife Center, Archive.org, <https://archive.org/details/AFC19390122538A>.

a hint that Jackson might have felt discriminated against after coming to New York. In a prose text called “By Aunt Molly,” she added: “I was born and raised in the hills of old Kentucky. ... I was a married woman and a trained nurse. I must say that I am tired of being treated this way, because I am an American by birth, if there ever has been one on the face of the earth.”⁹²

Jackson settled on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, a neighborhood known for its high immigrant population that became a symbol for the urban melting pot, a complex mixture of different values and traditions. It must have been a difficult step for Jackson to shift from the relatively homogeneous population in Eastern Kentucky to the cultural mix of the Lower East Side. Woody Guthrie, who knew Jackson, wrote about Jackson’s life in the Lower East Side in “Hell Busts Loose in Kentucky”: “Molly grew up to be the herb doctor, midwife, and best ballad singer in the country ... She lives in New York now. Over on the east side. In the slums and tenements. Where filth and starvation is just as bad, only thicker, than anywhere in Kentucky. She’s still one of the best ballad singers.”⁹³ Despite such praises, Jackson’s musical career failed to flourish. Apart from being invited to fundraisers and social parties, Jackson had little success in her efforts to be acknowledged as a musician. Together with her husband, she opened up a restaurant in Brooklyn. Business went badly, and in letters to Alan Lomax, Jackson expressed her desperation: “The Brooklyn truckmen are going out on strike ... and my restaurant will be the headquarters, that is if I can ... pay my rent for August in the next ten days so please help me out. ... Leadbelly [and] Woody [Guthrie] had lots of bookings. ... I have not been able to make one cent from singing or entertaining this whole summer.”⁹⁴ Jackson finally left New York and joined her half-brother Jim Garland in California. Garland had followed Jackson from Kentucky to New York, but he had found work in California’s war effort. Little is known about Jackson’s life in California. According to Shelly Romalis, Jackson settled in Sacramento where she spent her last years “wrestling with physical infirmity, poverty, and obscurity.”⁹⁵ In “Disgusted Blues,” the constant struggle of Jackson’s migrant life becomes visible: “Since I left my home / In the mountains in 1931 / I believe I’ve had more trouble / Than any woman under the sun.”⁹⁶

Jackson, Lead Belly, and Guthrie all claimed a special version of history that they legitimized and authenticated by having represented the oral traditions of their respective Southern folk cultures. As will be shown below, all of them carefully constructed their own personas around notions of ruralness and Southernness.

92 Aunt Molly Jackson, “By Aunt Molly,” quoted in Romalis, *Pistol Packin’ Mama*, 97.

93 Woody Guthrie, “Hell Busts Loose in Kentucky,” in *Hard-hitting Songs for Hard-hit People*, by A. Lomax, Seeger, and Guthrie, 139–40, 139.

94 Letter to Alan Lomax, August, 1940, quoted in Romalis, *Pistol Packin’ Mama*, 116.

95 Romalis, *Pistol Packin’ Mama*, 127.

96 “Disgusted Blues,” quoted in Romalis, *Pistol Packin’ Mama*, 98.

Staging Public Personas

When searching the Library of Congress catalog list of Aunt Molly Jackson field recordings, it is striking how diverse the variety of song material is. Apart from union songs, Jackson was a singer of traditional ballads, hymns, railroad songs, children songs, Baptist songs, as well as a teller of tall tales, and witch and ghost stories.⁹⁷ This material was not in demand, though, when Jackson sang at marches, rallies, fundraiser parties and workers' meetings. As she was introduced to New York radicals by the Dreiser Committee, her role was predetermined. She sang the songs that were believed to serve "a definite purpose in strike-bound Harlan County," and those were union songs.⁹⁸ Curiously, Jim Garland accused his sister of having exaggerated her role in the Harlan Strike: "The Dreiser people were so impressed by her that they thought she was just about the whole Kentucky strike. In fact, she had done very little in the strike aside from going down into Knox County a time or two to solicit vegetables for the community kitchen."⁹⁹ Jackson herself stated that before she left Kentucky and came to New York City, she had not heard the term "folksong" before.¹⁰⁰ For Jackson, these were just her own songs. Of course, this does not mean that Jackson did not have her own ideas about herself as an active part of an oral tradition. Apparently, Jackson, to a certain degree, staged her union-singer persona herself. The transformation of Aunt Molly Jackson from a woman embedded in a particular Southern culture to a publicly active folk singer in New York was a process that Charles Seeger also regarded as crafted by the singer herself: "It took Molly Jackson only a few months to convert herself, when expedient, from a traditional singer, who seemed never to have given any particular thought to whether anyone liked or disliked her singing, into a shrewd observer of audience reaction."¹⁰¹

Lead Belly, for his part, altered his songs for Northern audiences in the process of migrating North. During his presence in New York, his style became smoother. If one compares different versions Lead Belly recorded of his song "Midnight Special," it appears that the song shifted from a rough-sounding recording (recorded at John Lomax's home in Wilton, Connecticut) to an acoustically cleaner solo performance (recorded at Folkways Records), and then to a version backed by a gospel group called the Golden Gate Quartet (recorded at Victor Records). Even if the gospel backing was the idea of label executives — recording labels often wanted folk singers to smooth out the rough edges of traditional music in order to reach a wider

97 See a collection of Aunt Molly Jackson's sound recordings in the "Traditional Music and Spoken Word Catalog" at memory.loc.gov. See also a collection of Jackson's tales and stories in Carl Lindahl, ed., *American Folktales: From the Collections of the Library of Congress* (New York, 2004), 384-98.

98 Henrietta Yurchenco, "Trouble in the Mines," 214.

99 Jim Garland, *Welcome the Traveler Home: Jim Garland's Story of the Kentucky Mountains* (Lexington, 1983), 149-50.

100 Romalis, *Pistol Packin' Mama*, 13.

101 Charles Seeger, "The Folkness of the Nonfolk and the Nonfolkness of the Folk," *Studies in Musicology 1935-1975* (Berkeley, 1975), 339.

audience — Lead Belly’s own idea of authenticity might have been a different one than those of (white) folklorists. Hence, Alan Lomax reviewed the Victor version as rather dry and inauthentic: “The Golden Gate Quartet ... learned these songs from Lead Belly. The result is not complete authenticity.”¹⁰²

But Lead Belly not only altered his songs; he apparently also changed his stage appearance. This sometimes led to criticism, particularly among the African American community. Josh White, for instance, criticized Lead Belly for playing on audience’s expectations of a primitive Southern archetype: “He was a fine artist, but ... he played up to the Uncle Tom image of the Negro.”¹⁰³ White was a Harlem-based musician and fellow Southern migrant. His statement reflects the new consciousness of young black Harlemites who did not want to make compromises for white audiences. At the famous Apollo Theater in Harlem, black audiences stayed away from a Lead Belly concert that had been advertised with his prison story. In addition, Lead Belly got a bad review in the *New York Age*, a black newspaper.¹⁰⁴ Maybe progressive Harlemites perceived that his show would reproduce images of the Old South. According to Smithsonian historian Jeff Place, Lead Belly even adopted the *Herald Tribune*’s phrase “Sweet Singer of the Swamplands” as a sort of personal catchphrase. Lead Belly’s intention in using the originally racist phrase (“Sweet Singer of the Swamplands Here to Do a Few Tunes Between Homicides”) for himself remains unknown. Did he want to stress his Deep South origins? Did he want to reverse a negative connotation and turn it into something positive? Did he just like the sound of the phrase? Or did he cozy up to an audience he knew to be predominantly white? However it came about, Lead Belly may have seen his “Southernness” as a key feature to making a living out of music.¹⁰⁵ Comparing his commercial records to his rich repertoire recorded for Folkways, one can see how narrow a part of his repertoire was actually published on commercial records in the end. In retrospect, his diverse folk canon laid bare many contemporaries’ simplistic understandings of black folk music. His rich repertoire questioned the musical color line that reduced Southern folk music into “race” and “hillbilly” records — a line that still applied in the 1930s and 1940s when record labels wanted African Americans to sing “bluesy” songs.

A good example of such a reduction can be found in Lead Belly’s cowboy songs. Lead Belly understood that cowboy songs were traditionally racially diverse, but his promoters, and Lomax, in particular,

102 Alan Lomax, “The Midnight Special: Notes by Alan Lomax,” *Victor Record Review*, March 1941, 13–14.

103 Tony Fletcher, *All Hopped Up and Ready to Go: Music from the Streets of New York 1927–77* (New York, 2009), 74.

104 Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Leadbelly*, 188.

105 *Ibid.*, 158.

largely reduced the cowboy genre to whites and did not encourage Lead Belly to include cowboy songs in his sets. Born in 1888 in rural Louisiana, at a time when the American frontier was still open, Lead Belly experienced historical cowboy culture firsthand and understood that it was racially diverse. For Lead Belly, it was natural to sing cowboy songs. Some of them were traditional songs, like “The Old Chisholm Trail” (1938), and some were his own compositions, like “Out on the Western Plains” (1943). Still others were Lead Belly’s own versions of popular Singing Cowboy songs, like Gene Autry’s “Springtime in the Rockies” (1937). Interestingly, the Singing Cowboy genre became crucial in introducing a popular image of cowboy culture to mainstream America. Although folklorists had collected traditional cowboy songs before — John Lomax’s *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (1910) is a prominent example of such a collection — it was Hollywood’s Singing Cowboys that really had an impact on how the public perceived the “culture of the cowboy.” According to Peter Stanfield, the popular genre helped to foster an image of a white American frontier: “Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy, the importance of pursuing a ‘strenuous life’ for the development of strong moral character, and an appreciation of the primitive frontier.”¹⁰⁶ Although Lomax had collected cowboy songs also from African Americans, he presented blacks more as passive informants than as active participants in the shaping of cowboy song culture. Due to Lomax, Lead Belly always wanted to integrate Gene Autry’s Singing Cowboy tune “That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine” into his sets. But Lomax, as he himself stated, “did not care for them,” which Lead Belly “could never understand.” “We held him to the singing of music that first attracted us to him in Louisiana.”¹⁰⁷ Dreaming of becoming the first African American cowboy star, Lead Belly moved to Hollywood in 1944 to become an actor. Although one of the most prominent cowboy actors, Tex Ritter, tried to promote Lead Belly in Hollywood, he did not succeed. The same year Lead Belly moved back to New York.

Woody Guthrie was already known to many New York radicals when he arrived in New York. From 1939 to 1940, Guthrie had written a column in the *People’s Daily World*, the San Francisco equivalent of New York’s *Daily Worker*. The column was called “Woody Sez” and was arranged through Will Geer. The paper introduced the singer as a true Okie migrant who “came from the dustbowl ... [and] lived in shanty camps”: “Woody came with a guitar on his back and with an eye and an ear sensitive to the suffering of his own people.”¹⁰⁸

106 Peter Stanfield, *Horse Opera, The Strange History of the 1930s Singing Cowboy* (Chicago, 2002), 13.

107 Lomax, quoted in Miller, *Segregating Sound*, 246.

108 Both quotes are from Woody Guthrie, “Woody Sez,” quoted in *Woody Sez*, edited by Marjorie Guthrie (New York, 1975).

Guthrie himself called it “a Hillbilly’s Eye-view of the hole Migratious Labor movement from the South to the Pacific-Coast.”¹⁰⁹ Written in a “hill country style,” which included intentional misspellings and non-standard usage of words, the column dealt with “commentaries about current events” and about Guthrie’s own life.¹¹⁰ In “Woody Sez,” Guthrie staged himself as the traveling singer who used his migrant knowledge to critically deal with the country’s condition, as in the following description of Northern and Western “hoboe slums”: “Los Angeles Skid Row is gray as an overseas army tent, and ... too stinking a subject for a writer to tackle, but I can’t make no worse fizzle than the W.P.A. ... But the skiddiest road I ever seen is the Bowery in New York City. I didn’t know human beings could get so broke, hungry, and so dirty and ragged, and still remain alive. ... If you happen to have the notion in your head that there ain’t no work to be done except to spend all of your money on bombs — I suggest you ... invest your money in making men out of bums.”¹¹¹ Guthrie also utilized the opportunity his column afforded to recommend John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*: “John’s book is out to show you exactly what th Arkies and th Oakies, the Kansies, an th Texies an-all of the farmers an workers has to go through.”¹¹² Steinbeck returned the favor later by stating that Guthrie’s songs represented “the will of the people to endure and fight against oppression. I think we call this the American spirit.”¹¹³ It seems like Steinbeck and Guthrie assigned each other the authority to both become legitimate spokesmen of the Okie plight.

Woody Guthrie’s first commercial album “Dust Bowl Ballads,” for instance, shows how Steinbeck’s fiction impacted his work. Alan Lomax, who had recorded Guthrie the first time he sang at the Library of Congress, recommended the singer to RCA to produce a studio album. Lomax introduced Guthrie as an authentic chronicler of the dust bowl, someone who “wrote and spoke the folk idiom of the Southwest with natural perfection.”¹¹⁴ The resulting album dealt loosely with Guthrie’s own experiences with the dust bowl and his subsequent travels through the country. However, the album’s centerpiece was comprised of two songs titled “Tom Joad Part 1” and “Tom Joad Part 2.” Named after the protagonist in Steinbeck’s “*Grapes of Wrath*,” the song summed up the novel’s plot. Whatever the reasons for the two songs, they are interesting in respect to Guthrie’s authenticity as a folk singer. Although he embedded fictionalized notions of “his people” into his work as an “authentic” Okie, it did not harm his reputation. Shortly after the release, the *New York Times* for the

109 Ibid., 9.

110 Ed Cray, *Ramblin’ Man*, 153.

111 Guthrie, “Woody Sez,” 50–55.

112 Ibid., 36.

113 Woody Guthrie, quoted in Joe Klein, *Woody Guthrie: A Life* (London, 1981), 160.

114 Alan Lomax, Pete Seeger, and Woody Guthrie, *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-hit People*, 366.

first time mentioned Guthrie in an article: “Woody calls himself the ‘Dustiest of the Dust Bowlers.’ The people and the social forces that he represents are more familiar to most Americans today than they were several years ago, thanks to the books of John Steinbeck and Carey Williams ... But familiar as the problems may be, they remain disturbing and poignant, the more so when we hear of them from the lips of one of the dust bowlers.”¹¹⁵

According to Joe Klein, “The Dustiest of the Dust Bowlers” was a phrase Guthrie himself came up with in an interview with the *Daily Worker*, shortly after he had moved to New York.¹¹⁶ Even though Guthrie may have used the phrase ironically, it still functioned as a signifier of his migrant credibility. To some of his fellow Okies, though, Guthrie’s identification with migrant workers prompted different reactions than those in the Northern media.¹¹⁷ Ed Cray quoted singers Agnes Cunningham and Gordon Friesen, who had come to New York from Oklahoma like Guthrie, calling Guthrie’s authenticity into question: “He pretended to be something else ... He loved to have people think of him as a real working-class person and not as an intellectual ... Gordon told Woody once ‘You never picked a grape in your life. You’re an intellectual. You’re a poet.’”¹¹⁸ In other words, Guthrie essentially invented his “authentic” folk persona.

To conclude, Southern folk music and its interpreters played a significant role during the political era of the Great Depression — a time of an emerging interest in both American folk traditions in general and Southern idiosyncrasies in particular. The perception of a national crisis — in the form of economic decline, jobless farmers, increasing homogenization through industrial production and mass culture — all increased the desire for self-definition and national liberation. The imaginary South seemed to be the perfect arena for negotiating the future of the nation. It offered a variety of heterotopic spaces onto which others could project either a dystopian or utopian future of American society as through a distorting mirror: Lomax’s accounts of Southern prisons, the Dreiser Committee’s investigations of Harlan County hearings, Todd and Steinbeck’s observations of Okie migrant camps, Seeger’s descriptions of an integrated South. All these accounts emphasized the strangeness and peculiarities of rural Southerners. By exoticizing the folk, these representations reduced rural Southerners to a cultural “type,” thus turning the South into America’s Other. As I have shown, one important aspect in this was movement both out of and into the South. Collecting songs on

115 “Woody Guthrie Sings of Migratory Workers — Other Recent Releases,” *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1940.

116 Klein, *Woody Guthrie*, 159.

117 In another *New York Times* article, journalist Horace Reynolds wrote: “[The dust bowl songs] reflect the life of the migratory workers, their wanderings, their aching search for a job, their illnesses, their enemies. Woody does not romanticize. He tells the facts of existence as he knows them, straight out.” See “A Guitar-Busker’s Singing Road,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1943.

118 Cray, *Ramblin’ Man*, 231.

location, or reporting from conflict areas, became crucial in the shaping of authenticity. In a similar way, movement out of the South gave Southern singers agency. Being part of New York's emerging folk revival provided an opportunity for them to increase their visibility. As Southern expatriates trying to make a living from folk music, their Southern origins were socially and economically valuable as part of their cultural capital. In the process of migrating North, the singers' own folk cultures took on new forms. Consciously and unconsciously, the singers altered their own ideas of authenticity. In this process, their migrant knowledge became expert knowledge. Woody Guthrie, Aunt Molly Jackson, and Lead Belly all embodied certain ideas about the South that became part of a larger political vision about a "new America." Their "Southernness" became a social and political force — for themselves and others. Folk music is both embodied knowledge and a construct that is constantly reshaped by several forces. In the same way that Guthrie, Jackson, and Lead Belly owned these embodied parts of their Southern cultures, they were also capable of transforming their imported practices when they left their native homes.

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FROM “ETHNIC COMMUNITY” TO “BLACK COMMUNITY”: THE CULTURAL BELONGING OF MIGRANTS BETWEEN RACE-RELATIONS RESEARCH AND THE POLITICS OF BLACKNESS IN 1970S AND 1980S BRITAIN

Almuth Ebke

From the moment immigration became a contested topic in British political debate in the late 1950s, cultural belonging represented a formidable problem for politicians, journalists, and police, but also for colonial and postcolonial immigrants alike. Due to the country’s colonial past, many immigrants were eligible for or already possessed British citizenship but were considered culturally alien.¹ It was not even entirely straightforward determining who was considered a migrant: up until the 1990s, migration into the United Kingdom was often understood as immigration from the so-called New Commonwealth, that is to say, the predominantly black countries in the British Commonwealth that became independent after World War II, if one ignored the influx of (white) migrants from Ireland, Europe, or the former dominions of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.² In the contemporary political and cultural discourse, whether people were regarded as immigrants often depended on the color of their skin, and this, in turn, frequently predetermined whether they were viewed as belonging to British society.³

The sociology of race relations was fundamental in setting the parameters for the public discussion of cultural belonging for colonial and postcolonial immigration into the United Kingdom from the 1950s onwards. This relatively new field sat awkwardly between its aim to provide policy advice for the government and the expectations of academic sociology. However, while the sociology of race relations was established as a branch of mainstream sociology in the 1970s, its main tenets were challenged by both first- and second-generation immigrants themselves. Academics-cum-activists reinterpreted some of the main and widely used categories of the traditional sociology of race relations from the margins of academic sociology. Their perspective was inherently political, honed by the many debates following confrontations between the second-generation of colonial immigrants and the police in the heightened political atmosphere of the 1970s and early 1980s.

1 See Dieter Gosewinkel, *Schutz und Freiheit? Staatsbürgerschaft in Europa im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2016), 416; Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford, 2000), 102–20; Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar era* (Ithaca, 1997), 131–35.

2 See Andrew S. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (London, 2005), 218.

3 See Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, xii.

Taking the political predispositions of these two different proponents of migrant belonging as a starting point, this article uses the debate following the confrontations between predominately black youths and police of the spring and summer of 1981 as a case study for the shifting sociological debate about the cultural belonging of postcolonial migrants to British society: While race relations experts solicited policy advice, black intellectuals and activists defied attributions by police, media, and experts alike. These experts, academics, and activists expressed different conceptions of migrant belonging — conceptions that became apparent in the terms they used to describe the relationship of urban immigrant settlements to the wider British society: “ethnic community” and “black community.” By focusing on the terms “ethnic community” and “black community,” this article approaches the issue of colonial and postcolonial immigration into the United Kingdom from the perspective of knowledge. While historians have frequently examined the history of immigration into the United Kingdom from the angle of citizenship and migration control,⁴ this intersection of the history of knowledge and migration history understands immigrants both as objects of practices of classification and framing and as well as “producers, conveyors, and translators of knowledge.”⁵ Colonial and postcolonial immigrants are thus not only understood as objects and victims but as protagonists on a par with more familiar players, such as the British government, journalists, and academics: While the conception of “ethnic communities” by race relations experts had proved decisive in setting the vocabulary for the wider political discourse on immigration into the United Kingdom and the place of colonial and postcolonial immigrants in British society, black activists challenged these interpretations both on academic and political grounds by using the adjective “black.”

By analyzing the debate following the riots as a gateway into a larger academic argument, this paper contributes to a wider scholarly endeavor that both aims to chart the influence of postcolonial thinking on the wider political debate about cultural belonging of colonial and postcolonial immigrants in the late 1970s and early 1980s and to examine the early roots of postcolonial theory in the United Kingdom.⁶ Earlier works have tended to analyze the research, institutes, and protagonists of race-relations sociology and black sociologists individually, without placing the interaction between the field and their wider political and cultural significance in the

4 See, for example, David Cesarani and Mary Fullbrook, eds., *Citizenship, Nationality and Migration in Europe* (London, 1996); Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*; Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*; D. Feldman, “Nationality and Ethnicity,” in *Twentieth-century Britain*, ed. Paul Johnson, 127–48 (London, 2006); Ian R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy since 1939: The Making of Multi-racial Britain* (London, 1997); Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration. Immigration, ‘Race’ and ‘Race’ Relations in Post-war Britain* (Oxford, 1992); Christian Joppke, *Citizenship and Immigration* (Cambridge, 2010); Imke Sturm-Martin, *Zuwanderungspolitik in Großbritannien und Frankreich: Ein historischer Vergleich 1945–1962*, Campus Forschung 825 (Frankfurt a. M., 2001).

5 Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, “Knowledge on the Move,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43 (2017): 313–46, 313. See also Maren Möhring, “Jenseits des Integrationsparadigmas? Aktuelle Konzepte und Ansätze in der Migrationsforschung,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 58 (2018): 305–30.

6 While Julian Go has recently charted the place of post-colonial thinking in North American sociology, British post-colonial thought occupies a marginal position in his work that belies the transatlantic, personal, and intellectual exchange that happened in the 1970s and 1980s. See Julian Go, *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory* (Oxford, 2016).

center of the analysis.⁷ In contrast, taking the debate following the riots as the starting point allows for an investigation into the inter-relationship between established ideas about migrant belonging and the reinterpretation of “black” activists and intellectuals, as well as the struggle to shape the discourse on cultural belonging.

With this in mind, the first section gives an overview of the riots, and the second analyzes both how the category of “ethnic community” was first developed in “traditional” race-relations research and how it gained currency in the wider political discourse. The analysis of the debate following the disturbances also shows how the “immigrant communities” affected had appropriated these categories and filled them with new meaning, which reflected their understanding of themselves less as immigrants but as politically aware activists approaching this subject from the perspective of political blackness. The third section examines how these terms referred back to discussions within a wider black radical sphere, in which the traditional sociology of race relations was criticized, the term “black community” was redefined, and notions of immigrant belonging were discussed.⁸

This analysis is based on the interpretation of articles published both in tabloid and broadsheet dailies, weekly newspapers, specialist journals, as well as archival resources on the riots. One note on terminology: in the context of this article, the terms “colonial” and “postcolonial” are strictly used in a temporal sense. Quotation marks are used to underline the contemporary use of the terms in question.

7 Les Back and John Solomos, “Introduction: Theorising Race and Racism,” in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*, edited by Les Back and John Solomos, 1–28 (London, New York, 2000); John Solomos, “Sociology of Race, Racism and Ethnicity: Trends, Debates and Research Agendas,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sociology in Britain*, edited by John Holmwood, 396–412 (London, 2014); Reet Tamme, “‘Promoting Racial Harmony’:

Race Relations-Forschung und soziale Ungleichheit in Großbritannien in den 1950er bis 1960er Jahren,” in *Das Soziale ordnen: Sozialwissenschaften und gesellschaftliche Ungleichheit im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Christiane Reinecke and Thomas Mergel, 183–218 (Frankfurt a. M., 2012); “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat’: Wissenschaftliche Deutungen der multiethnischen Gesellschaft in Großbritannien von den 1950ern bis

Anfang der 1970er Jahre,” in *Das Andere denken: Repräsentationen von Migration in Westeuropa und den USA im 20. Jahrhundert*, edited by Gabriele Metzler, 119–53 (Frankfurt a. M., 2013). However, in recent years there have been attempts to further historicize the CCCS; see, for example, Kieran Connell and Matthew Hilton, “The Working Practices of Birmingham’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies,” *Social History* 40 (2015): 287–311.

8 On debates about blackness in the UK from the 1960s to 1980s, see Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964–1985* (Oakland, 2019).

The Riots of 1981

By the 1970s, conflicts between the police and young people from “ethnic communities” had become the focal point for debates about the place of colonial and postcolonial immigrants from the “New Commonwealth” in British society. The second generation of immigrants had been at the center of this public dispute: Fear of “mugging” was prevalent at the time, a decade during which street robberies had increased.⁹ From a highly gendered and racialized perspective, male adolescents, predominantly from the former “West Indies,” were linked to this particular offense — a perception that media coverage and criminal statistics supported, but which sociologists contested.¹⁰ Police tactics such as frequent stop-and-search practices greatly impaired relations between migrant communities and the police, eliciting accusations of malpractice and institutional racism.¹¹

Public disorder, in particular, ignited debate, acutely in 1981, when serious tumults occurred across many major cities in England in the spring and summer. The unrest had started with confrontations between predominately black youths and the police in Brixton in South London in April 1981.¹² In July of the same year, rioting occurred again in Brixton and the London district of Southall but spread as far as Birmingham (Handsworth), Leeds (Chapelton), Liverpool (Toxteth), Manchester (Moss Side), as well as a number of smaller riots in other towns and cities. Between July 11 and 12, street violence was reported in thirty places across England.¹³ A contentious public debate followed, both about the short-term causes and long-term origins of these riots, as well as about measures that should be taken to prevent future disturbances. Journalists, politicians, representatives of the Metropolitan Police, and — to a lesser extent — representatives of the ethnic communities tried to make sense of the riots.¹⁴ Race became one of the defining issues of the discussions: Even though violence was not confined to the black population in the unrest in Manchester, Liverpool, or Leeds in July, but also involved members of the South Asian community as well as white working-class youths, the involvement

9 On the contemporary sociological critique of “mugging,” see Tony Jefferson and John Clarke, “‘Down These Mean Streets’: The Meaning of Mugging,” in *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, Vol. 2, edited by Ann Gray, Jan Campbell, Mark Erikson, Stuart Hanson and Helen Wood, 571–84 (London, 2007); Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis. Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London, 1978), 323–28; Melanie Phillips, “Brixton and Crime,” *New Society*, July 8, 1976.

10 Cf., for example, Edward Pearce, “Copping Out, in Malign Neglect: The Policeman’s Lot,” *Encounter* 57 (1981): 45–48. The West Indies comprised the islands and mainland colonies in and around the Caribbean that were part of the British Empire, namely, the Bahamas, Barbados, British Guiana, British Honduras, Jamaica with its dependencies, Trinidad and Tobago, the Windward Islands, and the Leeward Islands. On the eventful history of the term “West Indian,” see Catherine Hall, “What Is a West Indian?,” in *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*, edited by Bill Schwarz, 31–50 (Manchester, 2003), 33–34.

11 See Ferdinand Mount, “From Swing to Scarman,” *Spectator*, Nov. 28, 1981; Irene Brennan, “By the Waters of Babylon: Scarman in Retrospect,” *Month* 15 (1982): 77–80; Nathan Glazer, “The Scarman Report: An American View,” *Political Quarterly* 53 (1982): 111–19, 113; Leslie G. Scarman, *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders 10–12 April 1981* (Harmondsworth, 1986), 110.

12 For the official version of events, see Scarman, *Scarman Report*, 14.

13 See David P. Waddington and Mike King, “Identifying Common Causes of UK and French Riots

Occurring since the 1980s,” *Howard Journal* 48 (2009): 245–56, 247.

14 See Robert Mark, “Police Are Easy Scapegoats,” *Observer*, July 12, 1981;

“Brixton. ‘Our System of Policing and Justice Is Simply not Geared to this Kind of Thing,’” *Sunday Times*, Apr. 19, 1981; “Scarman’s Britain: Pigs in the Middle,” *Observer*, Nov. 29, 1981.

of black youths in most of them touched upon the sensitive issue of race relations and the question of institutional racism.¹⁵

In the course of the debate, conflicting opinions on the place of (post)colonial immigrants in British society became apparent. The relationship of immigrants and their descendants to British society was negotiated by means of two interrelated groups of actors that had been at the center of attention for a sizable part of the riot coverage: the police and black youths of predominantly Caribbean descent. The positions attributed to the two groups in the imagined societal order varied considerably according to the respective journalist's or politician's general assessment of the riots. Commentators who stressed the importance of law and order against juvenile, particularly immigrant, crime, invested police and migrants with symbolic power: the police became the proverbial "thin blue line"¹⁶ separating the lawless chaos in the inner cities from "orderly" British society, where the rule of law was still upheld. In this interpretation, migrants were often presented as a disturbing factor, undermining the traditional cultural fabric of society. The submissions of the different police bodies to the official inquiry into the Brixton disturbances is a case in point. Even though representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland took pains to stress that "communities" were generally policed irrespective of skin color, they admitted problems in policing areas where the community was multi-racial.¹⁷ The confrontations in Brixton in April, in particular, were considered part of a longer-standing tradition of conflict between young men from predominantly Caribbean heritage and the police. Most recently, this conflict had flared a year earlier in the inner suburb of St. Pauls in Bristol, where a raid on an illegal drinking establishment had led to a night of rioting in a predominantly black area of the city.¹⁸

In contrast, Lord Leslie Scarman, who presided over the official inquiry into the Brixton disturbances of April 1981, considered colonial immigrants to be part of British society. In his influential report, he placed the unrest in Brixton in the spring of 1981 firmly within an

15 On the issue of "race relations," see, for example, headlines such as "Black War on Police," *Daily Mail*, July 6, 1981. On the issue of institutional racism, see "What Next in Britain's Inner

Cities?," *Economist*, May 22, 1982; "The Devil's Work," *Economist*, June 27, 1981; Amrit Wilson, "City on Fire: Coventry, Where Racist Violence Is Now a Fact of Life," *New Statesman*, June 12,

1981; "Editorial," *Race & Class* 23 (1981): i-ii.

16 See, for instance, "To Think This Is England," *The Sun*, July 6, 1981.

17 See, for example, Wales and Northern Ireland Association of Chief Police Officers of England, "Evidence to Lord Scarman's Inquiry," The National Archives, London, HO 266/29.

18 See, for example, *Hansard*, "Brixton (Disturbances)," HC Deb 13 April 1981 vol. 3 cc29; David P. Waddington and Mike King, "Theoretical Orientations: Lessons of the UK Riots of the 1980s and 1990s," in *Rioting in the UK and France*, edited by David P. Waddington, Fabien Jobard, and Mike King, 13-26 (Cullompton, 2009), 14; John Benyon and John Solomos, "British Urban Unrest in the 1980s," in *The Roots of Urban Unrest*, edited by John Benyon and John Solomos, 3-15 (Oxford, 1987), 4; Michael Rowe, *The Racialisation of Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain* (Aldershot, 1998), 7. Interestingly, altercations between black immigrants and the police in the 1970s did not feature in the debate. On the history of police confrontations, see "Brixton Burns," *Economist*, Apr. 18, 1981; Amrit Wilson, "Immigration Policy and the Police State," *New Statesman*, July 11, 1980; Francis Wheen, "Living in a State of Siege: Police Harrassment in London," *New Statesman*, Jan. 30, 1981; Bob Forde, "Routine Racism of the Met," *New Statesman*, Mar. 27, 1981; Rob Rohrer and David Massey, "The Toxteth Family Who Would Take No More," *New Statesman*, July 10, 1981; Mike Phillips and Crispin Aubrey, "Riots: Rage That Shattered Thatcher," *New Statesman*, July 17, 1981; Rob Rohrer, "'You Black Bastard, You Jungle Bunny': Growing Evidence of Brutal 'Reprisal Policing' on Merseyside," *New Statesman*, July 24, 1981.

escalating cycle of insufficient living conditions, dire economic prospects, a sense of alienation, and the experience of everyday racism.¹⁹ In his perspective, concealed discrimination shared the blame for the unrest, as “[s]ome young blacks [were] driven by their despair into feeling that they are rejected by the society of which they rightly believe they are members.”²⁰ Ethnic minority groups were understood as an integral part of Brixton’s “multi-racial society,” in particular, and British society, in general. Nevertheless, he did not go so far as to say that *British* society was multi-racial.

The publication of his report, however, did not signal closure of the debate about the place of the first and second generation of colonial and postcolonial immigrants in British society. The divisiveness of the debate becomes obvious when one looks at the language used: While the terms “ethnic” or “black community” at first glance appeared to have been utilized by commentators, politicians, representatives of the Metropolitan Police, black residents, and activists alike, the meanings and political intentions behind these terms differed. A closer look at the submissions of representatives of immigrant neighborhoods to the official inquiry will show how these terms were appropriated and called into question by activists and intellectuals motivated by ideas of political blackness. While such language was decisively shaped by the sociology of race relations from the 1960s on, in the early 1980s, it masked different conceptions of belonging that were connected to a wider sociological critique of race-relations sociology by first- and second-generation immigrants. The use of the term “community” in the debate following the riots, particularly in the submissions to the Scarman inquiry, will serve as a point of departure for a deeper examination of the history of race-relations sociology and its black critique.

“Ethnic Community” and the Sociology of Race Relations

In the public debate following the riots, commentators and politicians on both the Left and the Right, but also police representatives, essentially reduced complexity by using the term “community.” By framing the debate as one affecting “ethnic” or “black communities,” the public discussion helped to both popularize the social and political problems associated with ethnic minorities while at the same time locating them in a geographically limited urban setting. Yet by using these terms, commentators, politicians, and police representatives circumnavigated questions of immigration and immigrant belonging:

19 Scarman’s position was supported by a number of magazines; see, for example, “Scarman: For Action Now,” *Economist*, Nov. 28, 1981.

20 Scarman, *Scarman Report*, 35.

the term “community” provided a way to frame immigrants who often held British citizenship in relation to, but not necessarily as part of, British society. The inhabitants of the “ethnic” or “black communities” were thus imagined as both culturally homogeneous and essentially culturally different.

One such example for this mechanism was the discussion about “community policing,” which gained traction in the context of the debate following the unrest of 1981. Building ties with members of the “communities” and thus preventing crime represented the cornerstone of this policing strategy. These ideas had been developed in the United States in the late 1960s and were adopted by parts of the British police force in the 1970s. Longer-running debates about police accountability and the relationship between the police force and the population lay at the heart of these efforts to change the relationship between the police and society.²¹ In the debate about the riots, this debate came to a head: now voices from *within* the force openly demanded a change in the *style* of policing, notably John Alderson, Chief Constable of Devon und Cornwall.²² Alderson envisioned a system in which local “communities” essentially regulated themselves “through neighbourhood participation and inter-agency co-operation.”²³ In practice, however, this concept of policing was shaped by the understanding of the special needs of different “communities,” with areas of high immigration rates at the forefront. Officers trained in “community relations,” patrolling local “communities” on foot, were considered a panacea for strained relations between immigrants and the local police force.²⁴ However, the concept of “community” that this eponymous policing style rested on was relatively vague: it presupposed both a relatively homogeneous group of people who were defined by their location within an urban district, and served as shorthand to describe membership in an ethnic group. The submission of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, an early adopter of community policing, to the official inquiry into the Brixton disturbances provides a telling example. Even though the Constabulary stated that “a number of serious social problems ... affect both black and white members of the community alike,” albeit in different proportions, the representatives classified “ethnic communities” as a problem. Afro-Caribbeans were understood as particularly conspicuous compared to the “normally passive Asians.”²⁵ This form of cultural stereotyping not only shaped the debate about the police response but also cemented the use of the term “ethnic community” in the context of relations particularly between the police and Afro-Caribbeans.

21 On debates about the reform of the Metropolitan Police in the 1980s, see Timothy Brain, *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A Turbulent Journey* (Oxford, 2010), 82-83; Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 2010), 83, 212-14.

22 Association of Chief Police Officers of England, “Evidence to Lord Scarman’s Inquiry.”

23 John C. Alderson, *Communal Policing* (Middlemoor, Exeter, 1980), iii.

24 See John Brown, “Shades of Grey: A Report on Police-West Indian Relations in Handsworth,” The National Archives, HO 266/29.

25 Avon and Somerset Constabulary, “Report to the Local Inquiry Conducted by Lord Scarman Arising from the Brixton Disturbances,” The National Archives, London, HO 266/29. See also Richard West, “The Seeds of Hatred,” *Spectator*, Apr. 18, 1981.

The term “ethnic community” as it was used by commentators, politicians, and police representatives can be traced back to writings in the sociology of race relations. This branch of sociology had been fundamental in setting the parameters for the public discussion of postwar colonial and postcolonial immigration into the United Kingdom. This relatively new field — established in the 1940s and 1950s — produced knowledge about immigrants from the perspective of the “host” community.²⁶ The sociology of race relations sat uncomfortably between the demands of academic sociology and the aim of many of its experts to provide policy advice for the government. This quandary was symbolized by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), which was formed as an independent body in 1958 in order to publish research on race relations worldwide: established with the help of funding from the American Ford Foundation and the British Nuffield Foundation, the IRR meant to produce academic studies that could be used in a policy context. This seemed particularly pertinent because political debates about migration and race relations had been reaching a wider political audience since race riots had shaken the London suburb of Notting Hill in 1958.²⁷ While providing background briefings, the social scientists researching race relations both responded to political needs and also shaped the political discourse about migration.

26 See, for example, Michael Banton, *Promoting Racial Harmony* (Cambridge, 1985), 100.

27 See Tamme, “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat,’” 132–33. On the Notting Hill riots, see Sebastian Klöß, *Notting Hill Carnival: Die Aushandlung des Eigenen im multiethnischen Großbritannien seit 1958* (Frankfurt a. M., 2014).

28 John Rex was a notable — if slightly later — exception, having been born and politicized in South Africa.

29 See Tamme, “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat,’” 123–25.

30 See, for example, Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain*, revised edition with a new introduction by Leonard Bloom, 2nd ed. (London and Boston, 1972), 68.

31 See Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?*, 218.

The early researchers of race relations were born and raised in the United Kingdom,²⁸ used American research as their academic reference points, and were influenced by anthropological perspectives — factors which shaped their outlook on migration.²⁹ Knowledge about immigration and immigrants was thus produced from a position from within the receiving country. This perspective both influenced and validated who was considered an immigrant: After early research into longer-standing “coloured communities” in port cities such as Cardiff,³⁰ race-relations researchers focused on migration from the “New Commonwealth” and disregarded the equally significant number of immigrants from Ireland and the countries of the “Old Commonwealth,” such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. While immigrants from the “New Commonwealth” made up 2 percent, or 1,157,170 persons, of British society in 1971, Irish passport holders represented the biggest group of immigrants comprising roughly 1 percent of the British population (720,985 persons) (compared to 0.3 percent, or 145,250 persons, from the “Old Commonwealth” countries of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and parts of South Africa).³¹

This early racialized perspective on immigration helps to explain the popularity of the assimilation theory in early race-relations research in the 1950s, which painted a rather ambiguous picture of immigrant belonging. This theory assumed that the minority group or culture would come to resemble the dominant group. The prime example was the first generation of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, who spoke English and followed norms considered quintessentially English in both sartorial terms and in the raising of their children.³² Studies consequently presented colonial migration as having an impact that was the reverse of the impact of the periphery on the metropole, although they did this rather uncritically and by using empiricist and localized bottom-up methodology. The paradigm of the “dark stranger,” which shaped race-relations research in the 1950s, ideally matched this perspective: the image acted as a heuristic tool which imagined immigrants and British society as essentially culturally different and thus separated people into groups before the analysis had even started, as Reet Tamme and Chris Waters have argued convincingly.³³ So even though researchers such as Sheila Patterson forecast the complete assimilation of second-generation Afro-Caribbeans into British Society while using the language of the “dark stranger,” the underlying epistemological principle remained essentialist.³⁴

To combat the analytical essentialism of this early research into race relations, researchers employed the term “ethnic community” from the late 1950s on.³⁵ Building on earlier works by researchers such as Kenneth Little, Michael Banton, and Anthony Richmond, who had analyzed the relationship between *minority* and *majority* communities, the qualifier “ethnic” denoted a broader cultural understanding of difference that encompassed race, but also religion, language, and different customs and traditions — an understanding that harked back to the writings of American sociologist Robert E. Park, among others.³⁶ At first glance, this signaled a departure from the more biological conceptions of race that had informed some of the earliest examples of race-relations research in the 1940s and early 1950s.³⁷ The basic premise of race-relations research now was the idea that “race” constituted a social problem that resulted from cultural differences understood as ethnic distinctions. These distinctions, however, were understood, in turn, as just as divisive from the “host” community; immigrants from “white” backgrounds were not considered potential objects of study. In the categories used by race-relations research, cultural belonging thus remained ambiguous.

32 See Tamme, “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat,’” 125–26.

33 See *ibid.*, 127; Chris Waters, “‘Dark Strangers’ in our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947–1963,” *Journal of British Studies* 36 (1997): 207–38.

34 Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers: A Sociological Study of the Absorption of a Recent West Indian Migrant Group in Brixton, South London* (London, 1963).

35 Tamme, “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat,’” 133.

36 On the ethnic group focus in US-race-relations sociology, see Wolf-Dietrich Bukow, “Die Entdeckung der ‘ethnischen Gruppe’: Gesellschaftlicher Kontext und migrations-theoretische Kontextualisierung von Milton M. Gordon’s ‘Assimilation in American Life,’” in *Schlüsselwerke der Migrationsforschung: Pionierstudien und Referenztheorien*, edited by Julia Reuter and Paul Mecheril (Wiesbaden, 2015), 79.

37 For a prominent example, see Little, *Negroes in Britain*, ix–x.

While the term “ethnic community” gained traction in British sociological and political discourse,³⁸ politicians and commentators increasingly acknowledged the multiethnicity of British society: They now challenged the oft-held conception of a homogeneous British society, which had underpinned the “dark stranger” hypothesis. “Integration” rather than “assimilation” was the political demand of the day in the 1960s, and the idea of colonial immigrants as “ethnic communities” became their equivalent in social-science theory.³⁹ For instance, Home Secretary Roy Jenkins from the Labour Party opined in 1966 that he regarded integration not as “the loss, by immigrants, of their own national characteristics and culture,” nor as a “melting pot.” Instead, he defined integration “not a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.”⁴⁰

However, immigration and race relations increasingly became hotly contested topics in British political discourse, with the question of immigrant belonging now standing in the center of the argument. This was clearly reflected in the contradictory immigration and race-relations legislation, which was overhauled during the 1960s: In response to a perceived heavy influx of migrants from countries such as Pakistan or the “West Indies,” the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 introduced a government-issued employment voucher system. The related regulations were effectively biased towards white migrants from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, while limiting the number of migrants from the New Commonwealth countries.⁴¹ Roy Jenkins’s oft-quoted speech thus stood in contrast to the attempts to limit immigration from the New Commonwealth countries since the 1960s, even though these immigrants were supposed to have equal rights to migrate into the United Kingdom according to the 1948 nationality law. Subsequent acts in 1968 and 1971 further restricted the number of (post)colonial migrants into the UK. To prevent discrimination on the grounds of race in the fields of employment, the provision of goods and services, education, and public functions, a series of Race Relations Acts were introduced as accompanying measures in 1965, 1968, and 1976.⁴² Nevertheless, these laws to secure good “race relations” became the focus of debate in a political discourse that soured dramatically.⁴³

While questions of race relations and the cultural belonging of colonial and postcolonial immigrants were discussed ever more contentiously, research into race relations thrived, not least because the work was

38 Ironically, at a time when the concept of community lost traction in theory of mainstream sociological. See Graham Crow, “The Sociology of Community,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Sociology in Britain*, ed. John Holmwood and John Scott, 374–95 (Houndmills, 2014), 374.

39 See Tamme, “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat,’” 135–36.

40 Cited in Paul Wetherly, *Political Ideologies* (Oxford, 2017), 330.

41 Lord Chancellor, “Memorandum: Commonwealth Migrants,” *The National Archives*, London, TNA/CAB/129/105/c67, 26. 5. 1961.

42 For a critical assessment see Erik Bleich, *Race politics in Britain and France. Ideas and policymaking since the 1960’s* (Cambridge, 2003), 61.

43 See, for example, Enoch Powell’s “rivers of blood” speech and its political aftermath. See Peter Brooke, “India, Post-imperialism and the Origins of Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ Speech,” *Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 669–87; Amy Whipple, “Revisiting the ‘Rivers of Blood’ Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell,” *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 717–35; Bill Schwarz, *Memoirs of Empire: The White Man’s World* (Oxford, 2011), 33–52. On white working-class racism, see, for example, Jodi Burkett, *Constructing Post-imperial Britain: Britishness, ‘Race’ and the Radical Left in the 1960s* (Houndmills, 2013), 174–75.

once again considered politically important. In 1969, the British Sociological Association (BSA) even organized its annual conference on the topic of race relations.⁴⁴ The 1970s marked a turning point in the history of race-relations research: the sub-field firmly arrived in mainstream sociology, engaged more critically with sociological theory, and was further institutionalized. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) established the SSRC Research Unit on Race Relations at the University of Bristol in 1970. Initially headed by Michael Banton, the unit changed its name shortly after its inauguration to SSRC Research Unit on Ethnic Relations (RUEr) and was located at the University of Aston from 1978, under the stewardship of John Rex. Scholars who were to shape the field of British race-relations research from the 1980s onwards, such as Robert Miles, Annie Phizacklea, John Solomos, and Harry Goulbourne, worked at the unit during various phases in their careers. The 1970s were also shaped by sometimes bitter debate about the sociological orientation of race-relations sociology. Most notably, Michael Banton and John Rex disagreed on the theoretical foundation of race relation sociology, or, in the eyes of Rex, the lack thereof, and these debates mirrored broader questions about methodology and scholarly standards within British sociology.⁴⁵

These methodological debates did not go so far as to abandon previously used analytical categories: even though the concept of “ethnic community” had increasingly prompted discussion within the field of race-relations sociology, it still represented an attempt to understand colonial and postcolonial immigrants as an essentially external group of people migrating into British society in the early 1980s. Given the racial bias of public and academic discourse, knowledge about colonial immigrants was still mainly restricted to an outside view on “ethnic communities” — despite the clear sympathy of many race-relations sociologists for the cause of the immigrants. The analytical tools used alone pointed to the underlying assumption, namely, that culturally, if not politically, these immigrants were still considered alien. The second generation, that is to say, children of immigrants born and raised in the United Kingdom, thus represented one of the issues race-relations researchers had to confront in their analyses. On the political level, the researchers also encountered the critique of intellectuals and activists within the black radical sphere.

Political Blackness and the Sociology of Race Relations

Representatives of the immigrant communities also used the terms “ethnic” and “black community” in the debate following the riots of

⁴⁴ See Solomos, “Sociology of Race,” 396–97.

⁴⁵ Sally Tomlinson, “Michael Banton’s Critique of John Rex’s ‘Mistakes,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 (2015): 1389–94; Peter Ratcliffe, “The Debate between Michael Banton and John Rex: A Re-evaluation,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 (2015): 1395–400.

1981. By using the vocabulary shaped within traditional race-relations sociology, such representatives who participated in the official inquiry did not openly contradict the conventional framing of immigrant belonging as essentially culturally different. Indeed, in their submission to the official inquiry of Lord Scarman, they themselves often used the term “community” to emphasize their separate cultural customs and needs. While thus accepting the ethnic categorization placed upon them by mainstream media, the representatives of these various civic organizations made their political grievances known by referring to themselves as “black”: ethnic difference now became the justification for political demands voiced in the language of political blackness. The submission of the Brixton Domino and Social Club to the official inquiry is a case in point. West Indian culture, understood as “black,” was presented as distinct from British culture. The representatives blamed British society for the breakdown of parental authority, as its lax morals prevented parents from bringing up their children so that they would behave in a respectful manner. Ashton Gibson, who represented the Mission to Westindians in Britain, the Carmel Tabernacle Christian Church, Westindian Concern Limited, and Caribbean House Group in the Scarman inquiry, made a similar point in relation to parenting. He claimed that “the far stronger and larger indigenous section of the population is bludgeoning the smaller, weaker Westindian ethnic group into conforming with its own standards and norms.”⁴⁶ The adjective “black” was used here as an expression of political agency rather than as a signifier of skin color, as understood in “traditional” research into race relations. The representatives of the immigrant communities thus situated themselves — to various degrees — in the discourse of political blackness that had been prominent in black intellectual circles since the late 1960s and 1970s.

This shifting ground in the discourse of migrant and “black” belonging was mirrored in the sociological field of race relations: black intellectuals and activists increasingly challenged traditional race-relations research and developed their own political understanding of cultural belonging from the perspective of debates about political blackness. Instead of being objects of research, the first and second generations now actively produced knowledge with a political reading of the term “black.” The term “community” was similarly reinterpreted: Whereas in traditional race-relations research, the idea of the “ethnic community” essentially prefigured and illustrated the existing cultural fault lines between “black” and “white,” black intellectuals

46 The Carmel Tabernacle Christian Church Mission to Westindians in Britain, Westindian Concern Limited, and Caribbean House Group, “Written Submission of Evidence to the Inquiry,” The National Archives, London, HO 266/30.

understood community and the culturally and geographically limited space it entailed as a means of political mobilization: While the idea of an “ethnic community” had originally helped to reduce complexity in race-relations research, “black” intellectuals recast the concept as a source of strength.⁴⁷

Ideas of political blackness had been discussed in the United Kingdom in the context of black intellectual discourse since the 1960s. When race relations had become a contentious topic of political debate, disaffection with the official politics of immigration and race relations and frustration with parliamentary parties gave rise to a wave of black activism.⁴⁸ One of the most notable campaigns was the “Campaign Against Racial Discrimination” (CARD), an offshoot of the American civil rights movement that was active between 1964 and 1967. The ideas and politics of Black Power also provided an inspiration and were expressed in criticism of “white” institutions and values.⁴⁹ These Black Power organizations were often short-lived but vocal: The political zenith of the Black Power movement in the UK had been a confrontation with police at the Mangrove Restaurant in All Saints Road, London, involving some two hundred demonstrators in 1970, and the trial of the “Mangrove Nine” that followed the next year.⁵⁰

Feeling misrepresented, researchers identifying as black with a background as first- or second-generation migrants increasingly weighed into the debates about race relations and confidently asserted differing opinions. Arguments about basic political principles, particularly in relation to Marxism, the American civil rights movement, and the impact of colonial practices on the former imperial metropole were interwoven with questions of good practice within sociological research. Perhaps the most public dispute happened directly at the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), which had been the home of “traditional” research into race relations with a strong policy orientation until the late 1960s. Within the IRR, a conflict had unfolded between the “moderate” race-relations researchers and black activists. Young radical academics were questioning the line of research represented by the IRR, which they regarded as misleading at best and manipulative at worst. One of the researchers at the IRR, Robin Jenkins, pointedly criticized his institute in 1971 as a home to a “manipulative model of social research,” as well as a “watchdog for the ruling elite,” which “makes sure that they [the elites] receive ample information in the sub-proletariat and ample warning of impending revolts.”⁵¹

47 See, for example, Paul Gilroy, “Steppin’ Out of Babylon: Race, Class, and Autonomy,” in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 286–95 (London, 1986).

48 See Waters, *Thinking Black*, 92.

49 See Tamme, “Promoting Racial Harmony,” 144.

50 See Howard L. Malchow, *Special Relations: The Americanization of Britain?* (Stanford, 2011), 188.

51 Cited in Tamme, “Von den dark strangers zum ‘Subproletariat,’” 145.

He particularly disapproved of the methodology behind *Colour and Citizenship*, the IRR's most prominent publication co-written by Jim Rose and Nicholas Deacon, which he described as "spying on black people."⁵² The institute's magazine *Race Today* stood in the center of this conflict; its more militant editorial collective had not only reported on the Black Power movement in the US and the UK but was influenced by it.⁵³ In 1972, the conflict came to a head: the IRR was reoriented to service community organizations and victims of racism, while the majority of board members was forced to resign. The institute's librarian, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, who had emigrated from the then-British dominion of Ceylon to the United Kingdom in 1958, assumed control of the institute, its magazine *Race Today*, and its journal *Race* (renamed *Race & Class* in 1974). As a consequence, the Ford Foundation withdrew its funding.

The main point of criticism was the conception of "ethnicity" prominent in race-relations research of the 1970s, which essentially signified a cultural difference between black and white. Ambalavaner Sivanandan and Jenny Bourne denounced this understanding of difference, noting that while it had changed the conception of British society into one that was not homogeneous but "multi-ethnic" and "multi-cultural," ethnicity alone was not sufficient for analyzing the main problem within British society: racism.⁵⁴ Sivanandan, inspired by Black Power to conduct a Marxist analysis of the black experience in the UK, sought to better understand racism through class.⁵⁵ He and Bourne stated their principle thesis as follows in 1980: "it was not black people who should be examined, but white society; it was not a question of educating blacks and whites for integration, but of fighting institutional racism; it was not race relations that was the field for study, but racism."⁵⁶ Sivanandan's focus on class was hardly new: The relationship between class and race had informed race-relations research since the beginning.⁵⁷ His focus on racism, however, was part of the new mainstream of Black Power-inspired thinking within the UK. In this respect, these intellectuals held a fundamentally different view from John Rex, who had also criticized the traditional policy-led, anti-theoretical and culturalist race-relations research embodied by the IRR and, to a certain extent, Michael Banton, from within the field of academic sociology.⁵⁸ The central point of contention had been the questions of theory and politics. While Rex disapproved of the "black power sociology" that he observed, for example, in the Race Relation's Group of the British Sociological Association's study group, Sivanandan and his colleagues were

52 Cited in *ibid.* See also Eliot Joseph Benn Rose et al., *Colour, Citizenship and British Society* (London, 1969).

53 On the influence of the Black Power movement in the UK, see Malchow, *Special Relations*, 181-88.

54 Jennifer Bourne and Ambalavaner Sivanandan, "Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen: The Sociology of Race Relations in Great Britain," *Race & Class* 21 (1980): 331-52, 343. See also Gilroy, "Steppin' Out of Babylon," 284.

55 See, for example, Ambalavaner Sivanandan, "Race, Class and the State: The Black Experience in Britain," *Race & Class* 17 (2016): 347-68.

56 Bourne and Sivanandan, "Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen," 339.

57 In the preface to the 1972 edition of *Negroes in Britain*, Kenneth Little explained how the idea of class consciousness had informed his work. However, the fundamental conceptual premise of his work remained race as a biological category. See Little, *Negroes in Britain*, ix-x.

58 For contemporary criticism, see, for example, Paul Gilroy, "Managing the 'Underclass': A Further Note on the Sociology of Race Relations in Britain," *Race & Class* 22 (1980): 49-50.

inspired by precisely the idea of black political consciousness.⁵⁹ In 1980, Jenny Bourne and Ambalavaner Sivanandan thus incorporated the reformed, politically aware race-relations sociology into their criticism: “There is a dangerous sociology abroad — a sociology of race relations, that is — and dangerous to the black cause that it seeks to espouse.”⁶⁰

The questions of race and class generated ample grounds for debate not only within traditional race-relations sociology but also among black neo-Marxist researchers themselves. The controversy about the direction the magazine *Race Today* took between 1973 and 1974 exemplifies this fundamental conflict: Darcus Howe, who had been part of the British Black Panther movement, most notably in the Mangrove Nine trial, was appointed to be editor of *Race Today* in 1973. He soon clashed with Sivanandan over the significance of white racism in relation to the analysis of class. Howe believed that black people had to take the lead not only against white racism, but also in engaging in the struggles of the British working class, whereas Sivanandan argued for the analysis of white racism as the defining principle of the IRR and *Race Today*.⁶¹

This debate about the significance of class in relation to race refers to a conceptual shift in the way “black” people’s belonging within the United Kingdom was debated. While “traditional” race-relations sociology saw this group of people predominantly as immigrants, black intellectuals and activists both appropriated and reinterpreted the outside perspective they were accorded. Not migrant belonging, but “black” belonging was considered the topic that needed to be addressed. Researchers at the IRR, at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), a research center at the University of Birmingham known for radical thought, and for *Race Today* thus discussed how black people in the United Kingdom stood in relation to British society — and whether they wanted to belong to a society many of them considered racist.⁶² This question which was bound to be contested. While many theorists and activists such as Ambalavaner Sivanandan often held a dismissive attitude, others took a more positive stance towards British society. Robin Bunce and Paul Field argue that Darcus Howe, who had immigrated to the UK from Trinidad in the early 1960s, and other “[m]embers of the Collective made an important transition from seeing themselves as immigrants or children of immigrants to identifying themselves as British”⁶³ and thus explicitly wanted to belong to British society.

59 See Bourne and Sivanandan, “Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen,” 350. On Rex’s critique of “black power sociology,” see John Rex, *Race, Colonialism and the City* (New York, 1973), xvii–xviii.

60 Bourne and Sivanandan, “Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen,” 321.

61 See Robin Bunce, “Race Today Cannot Fail: Darcus Howe and the Race Today Collective in the long 1980s,” in *Labour and the Left in the 1980s*, ed. Jonathan Davis and Rohan McWilliam (Manchester, 2018), 193.

62 See, for example, Gilroy, “Steppin’ Out of Babylon,” 279.

63 Robin Bunce and Paul Field, *Darcus Howe: A Political Biography* (London, 2014), 153.

In the debates of black intellectuals and activists, questions of political blackness thus took precedence over the notion that many of the persons affected — or their parents — had entered the United Kingdom in the recent past as immigrants. This shift in attitude corresponded to a generational shift. While some of the black intellectuals identified as migrants, notions of political blackness, although prevalent in all generations, were assumed to be greater in the younger generation. This hope was borne out by a generational conflict within the CCCS about the centrality of race and the experience of migration: Stuart Hall, the center’s director from 1968 to 1979, who had immigrated into the United Kingdom from Jamaica in 1951, maintained that while his experience as a colonial migrant had shaped his personal identity, this very experience distinguished him from his students.⁶⁴ Many of these, particularly in the CCCS’s race and politics sub-group, were either first- or second-generation immigrants to the United Kingdom, such as Paul Gilroy, who had been born in London to Guyanese and English parents. However, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the intellectual debate at the Centre and current events less in terms of migratory identification and more in terms of the cultural category of “being black,” demanding that the center’s analyses place greater emphasis on race.⁶⁵

This perspective of political blackness, despite having been developed at the interdisciplinary margins of academic British sociology, provided an increasingly influential counterpoint in the political sphere. A closer look at the Scarman inquiry is a case in point: both in terms of sheer numbers and media coverage, intellectuals of the black radical sphere and representatives of the immigrant neighborhoods were clearly in the minority in the debate following the unrest of 1981, yet the attention they got from Lord Leslie Scarman and the official inquiry into the causes of the riots offset this fact.⁶⁶ Members of the ethnic communities and grassroots campaigners effectively influenced the debate about the place of migrants in British society, generating a greater awareness of black politics wherein their background as migrants was less prominent than their self-identification as “black.”⁶⁷ By contrast, prominent race-relations researchers like John Rex and Michael Banton were often cited in publications collected by Lord Scarman and his team, but their understanding of ethnic communities as groups of people with *immigrant* origin came to be more marginalized within the wider public debate. Instead, an understanding of postcolonial immigrants and their descendants as culturally “black” gained ground in this context.⁶⁸

64 Cited in Claire Alexander, “Introduction: Stuart Hall and ‘Race,’” *Cultural Studies* 23 (2009): 463–64. See also Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands* (London, 2017), 11.

65 See, for example, Hazel Carby, “Introduction to Section 5,” in *CCCS Selected Working Papers*, ed. Ann Gray, Jan Campbell, Mark Erickson, Stuart Hanson, and Helen Wood, 563–70 (London, 2007), 563.

66 On the media coverage, see Graham Murdock, “Reporting the Riots: Images and Impacts,” in *Scarman and After: Essays Reflecting on Lord Scarman’s Report, the Riots, and Their Aftermath*, ed. John Benyon, 73–95 (Oxford, 1984), 78.

67 See, for example, J. A. Hunte, “West Indian Standing Conference. Re: Phase II — Lord Scarman Brixton Enquiry,” The National Archives, London, HO 266/38.

68 On Rex’s submission, see John Rex, “Racial Conflict in the Inner City,” National Archives, London, HO 266/36. On the Scarman report and immigration, see, for instance, Scarman, *Scarman Report*, 24.

Conclusion

This article has traced the contentious debate about the cultural belonging of colonial and postcolonial immigrants in the United Kingdom surrounding the riots of 1981. Its focal point was the idea of the “ethnic community,” which originated in debates within race-relations sociology about the correct way to address migrant groups. While the public discussion following the unrest of 1981 showed how colonial and postcolonial immigrants were excluded from British society by representatives of the police, politics and media, the categories utilized to describe these social groups were more ambivalent in their connotations of cultural belonging. The term “ethnic community,” which was widely used to describe the location of migrant groups from the New Commonwealth within British society, represents a case in point: even though this concept was designed by researchers of race relations to overcome a racial bias in sociological research, the notion of “ethnic” still implied that these communities were fundamental different from British culture.

Nevertheless, immigrants themselves came to contest this knowledge about about themselves and their communities. The public debate following the riots illustrated how representatives of the immigrant population appropriated the concept of “ethnic community” and researchers, motivated by ideas of political blackness, questioned it. Representatives of immigrant and black neighborhoods confronted this understanding of cultural belonging of colonial and postcolonial immigrants with a transformed understanding of the adjective black, in which it was less a signifier of skin color than a sign for political activism — up to the point where all immigrants and their descendants from the “New Commonwealth” were subsumed under this marker.⁶⁹ In this way, they appropriated the idea of an “ethnic community” and filled it with new political meaning while drawing upon black liberationist thought and neo-Marxist debates. Among black radicals, this process signaled a wider debate about belonging to British society, wherein migrant identification, anti-racist critique, and their identification as Britons provided ample ground for debate — not least due to their cultural heritage as imperial Britons, which the majority of immigrants within this debate shared. This change in perspective was reflected in the way knowledge was constructed: while in traditional race-relations sociology, knowledge about immigration and immigrants was produced from a position from within the country people were migrating into, black intellectuals and activists, instead of being an object of research, now actively produced

⁶⁹ See Tariq Modood, “Political Blackness and British Asians,” *Sociology* 28 (1994): 859–76; “Black’, Racial Equality and Asian Identity,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 14 (1988): 397–404.

knowledge with a political reading of the term “black.” The gaze of race-relations researchers thus no longer went from the “host society” to the “ethnic community” of immigrants without question: the “black community” gazed back.

The debate following the riots thus shows both how race-relations sociology developed from a remote, more policy-oriented branch of British sociology into the mainstream of the field, as well as how it provided the vocabulary and set the tone for the political discussion of the cultural belonging of colonial and postcolonial immigrants. The scholarly critique of black intellectuals and activists, though stinging, remained at the margins of British academic sociology, even though it grew more influential in the political sphere. It is one of the great ironies that, in the end, these black critics did not transform mainstream British sociology as much as they influenced the emerging transatlantic field of cultural studies.

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Place-Specific Material Resources

DISPLACED KNOWLEDGE AND ITS SPONSORS: HOW AMERICAN FOUNDATIONS AND AID ORGANIZATIONS SHAPED ÉMIGRÉ SOCIAL RESEARCH, 1933-1945

Joseph Malherek

The global refugee crisis precipitated by Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933 was viewed by university presidents, foundation administrators, and idealistic liberal internationalists in the United States as a serious humanitarian disaster in need of immediate attention. It was also, in their view, a historic opportunity to salvage — or, in a more cynical interpretation, exploit — the great minds of Central Europe being forced into exile. Alvin Johnson, director of New York's New School and founder of its famed "University in Exile," which became the institutional home for many prominent émigré scholars, later referred to the intellectual refugees as "Hitler's gift to American culture."¹ For the officers of the Rockefeller Foundation, who had long supported European scholars, the refugee crisis coincided with their increasing interest in the social value of sponsoring scientific studies on radio and mass communications, public opinion, and the vulnerabilities of all Western democracies to the totalitarian threat. The Nazis' purges first targeted Jewish and socialist professors at the universities, whom they forcibly transformed into intellectual refugees. The émigré scholars were thus both victims of national exclusion and agents of scholarly analysis in a time of disintegrating liberal democracy, rising fascism, and the global specter of authoritarianism.

With their background in humanistic inquiry and empirical research, the émigrés among European social scientists were ideally suited to study these problems. The sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld, for example, chose to remain in the U.S. as a traveling Rockefeller fellow when fascism took hold in his native Austria in 1934, and he went on to become the head of a major research institute, the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University. Lazarsfeld's émigré associates from Max Horkheimer's Institute of Social Research, who were also exiled at Columbia, had the unique experience and scholarly training to produce trenchant studies of American, capitalistic society and the motivations of its citizen-consumers. Their method of "Critical Theory" was a kind of philosophically oriented social analysis that incorporated empirical methods with Marxian theories, Freudian psychoanalysis, and the dialectical approach of

1 Quoted in Mitchell G. Ash and Alfons Söllner, "Introduction: Forced Migration and Scientific Change after 1933," in *Forced Migration and Scientific Change: Emigre German-Speaking Scientists and Scholars after 1933*, ed. Mitchell G. Ash and Alfons Söllner, 1-19 (Cambridge, 1996), 3.

the “Left Hegelians.” As Horkheimer’s group of exiled scholars would demonstrate, Critical Theory, with its emphasis on *reason* as a means of imagining a rational alternative to actually-existing social conditions, could produce profound insight into cultural tendencies in the United States that made its politics susceptible to the irrationality of authoritarianism and demagoguery — despite its democratic traditions. Though they espoused a Marxian desire for revolutionary socioeconomic transformation, the members of the Horkheimer circle often disguised their radicalism with terms like “dialectical materialism,” which stood in opposition to the behaviorism and positivism then prevalent in America.²

The dialectical character of Critical Theory was present not only in the architecture of its method but also in the material conditions of its production by displaced scholars in the United States, where the working relationship between its practitioners (the Horkheimer circle), their colleagues (social scientists, including other émigrés from the Lazarsfeld circle), and their sponsors (philanthropists, sympathetic university administrators and professors, and the officers of emergency aid organizations), was synthesized into a unique research style. The sponsors’ understanding of the nature of the émigrés’ research was always slightly askew, colored by their own prejudices, vague impressions, idealistic longings, and professional aspirations. This was true in many fields, but especially in the social sciences, which at the universities of Central Europe were still coming into being as disciplines distinct from the traditions of law, philosophy, and economics. Indeed, sociology did not properly exist as a separate discipline in Austria in the 1920s and 1930s, and Lazarsfeld had carved out his scholarly identity by combining psychology and mathematics with his political commitment to socialism.³ The boundaries between fields of knowledge, and between the university and the practical world of business, were in a state of flux for the émigré scholars and their sponsors, but that very disciplinary liminality provided the crucial context in which Critical Theory could flourish as a new form of social research. By looking at this history of the migration and adaptation of knowledge — including its distinctions, styles, and modes of acquisition — one can more clearly understand the origins of Critical Theory and its adjacent modes of social and communications research. In this way, knowledge as a category of inquiry may act like a “chemical reagent” through which a history steeped in mythology may become legible as a product of displacement, migration, exile, and integration.⁴ I argue that the

2 For a discussion of the origins of Critical Theory, see Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research* (Boston, 1973), 41–76.

3 Christian Fleck, “Austrian Refugee Social Scientists,” in *In Defence of Learning: The Plight, Persecution, and Placement of Academic Refugees, 1933–1980s*, ed. Shula Marks, Paul Weindling, and Laura Wintour, 193–210 (New York, 2011), 195; Paul Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, November 29, 1961, Columbia Oral History, Rote Mappen, Paul F. Lazarsfeld Archiv, Institut für Soziologie, Universität Wien (hereafter, “PFL Vienna”).

4 Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, “Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43, no. 3 (July–September 2017): 313–46, 320.

specific form of the institute's Critical Theory and Lazarsfeld's contrasting, but related, "administrative" social and communications research⁵ — which was later denigrated by his disgruntled colleague C. Wright Mills as "abstracted empiricism"⁶ — were deeply affected by the social conditions, personal relationships and animosities, and financial arrangements that defined their experience as exiled intellectuals.

Scholars of immigration and intellectual history have taken various approaches to the study of the Central European émigré scholars, a relatively small but highly influential group of refugees from the Nazi terror. The classic, early studies were sometimes conducted by the émigrés themselves or with their cooperation as they neared the end of their productive careers in the mid- and late-twentieth century. These works often included first-hand accounts and attempted a comprehensive, in some cases encyclopedic, documentation of the émigrés' contributions to their respective fields, as well as their broader contributions to the culture and intellectual life of their adopted countries.⁷ Later, edited collections and Festschriften — which often anticipated monographs by their contributors — took a closer look at German and other Central European trends and traditions in the social sciences and other fields and the extent to which they challenged or were incorporated into the methods of scientific inquiry in host countries.⁸ A persistent source of fascination for scholars has been the intellectual communities created by and for exiled scholars, and the University in Exile at the New School and the Institute of Social Research, better known as the "Frankfurt School," have attracted particular attention.⁹ More recently, intellectual historians have used the study of German-speaking intellectual immigrant communities to make broader arguments about their influence on democratic institutions and the course of American economic and foreign policymaking over the course of the twentieth century.¹⁰

This essay advances this scholarship by focusing on the work of one of the most important American agencies aiding the refugee scholars, the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, and the Rockefeller Foundation, which did more than any

5 Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, "Remarks on Administrative and Critical Communications Research," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 4 (1941): 2-16, 8.

6 C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York, 1959), 55.

7 Major works in this vein include Laura Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants:*

The Intellectual Migration from Europe, 1930-41 (Chicago, 1968); Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960* »

» (Cambridge, MA, 1969); H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930-1965* (New York, 1975); and Jean-Michel Palmer, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America*, trans. David Fernbach (New York, 2006 [original 1987]).

8 See, for example, Ash and Söllner, *Forced Migration*; David Kettler and Gerhard Lauer, eds., *Exile, Science, and Bildung: The Contested Legacies of German Emigre Intellectuals* (New York, 2005); Claus-Dieter Krohn, Patrik von zur Mühlen, Gerhard Paul, and Lutz Winckler, eds., *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration, 1933-1945* (Darmstadt, 1998); and Christian Fleck, *A Transatlantic History of the Social Sciences: Robber Barons, the Third Reich and the Invention of Empirical Social Research*, trans. Hella Beister (London, 2011).

9 The most essential works on the Frankfurt School are Jay, *Dialectical Imagination*; and Rolf Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. Michael Robertson (Cambridge, MA, 1994 [original 1986]).

10 See, for example, Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (Cambridge, 2012); and Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton, 2014).

other philanthropy to support the intellectual émigrés, placing hundreds of them at universities and other academic institutions, often working in concert with the Emergency Committee. The refugee aid work of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Emergency Committee is considered, at least in its general outlines, in the aforementioned studies, and some more recent scholarship has examined this work in greater detail.¹¹ The history of the work of the Emergency Committee, furthermore, was published in an account by its own director and secretary, just as the Rockefeller Foundation's early work was enshrined in print by its president.¹²

In contrast to these approaches, this essay draws on archival sources to examine the motives and values, both broadly humanistic and intensely personal, that drove the émigrés' American sponsors as well as the officers of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Emergency Committee, especially in their relationship with two of their most prominent beneficiaries: Max Horkheimer and his Institute of Social Research, and Paul Lazarsfeld and his Office of Radio Research (later the Bureau of Applied Social Research), which coexisted for a time at Columbia University. As Thomas Wheatland has shown, Horkheimer's institute and Lazarsfeld's bureau did not only exist for themselves and for the social value of the scholarship they produced, but also to boost egos, satisfy professional aspirations, settle intradepartmental disputes, and elevate the particular social and political values of their American sponsors.¹³ As a consequence, the shape of the scholarship the émigrés produced in their research institutes was often determined by the interests of their sponsors, the needs of university administrators, and, importantly, the desire among aid officers to avoid provoking resentment and antisemitism among native American professors and researchers, especially in the context of the Depression, when academic jobs became scarce. However, the émigrés' sponsors, such as the sociologist Robert Lynd, did not always get what they wanted: in his view, Lazarsfeld's commitment to socialism was tainted by his willingness to take commercial contracts, and the institute's dedication to the abstractions of Critical Theory removed it from the urgency of empirical social research.

Formation of the Emergency Committee

The Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums (Law to Restore the Professional Civil Service), which went into effect in April of 1933, began the forced exodus of university faculty members

11 See, for example, Tibor Frank, "Organized Rescue Operations in Europe and the United States, 1933-1945," in *In Defence of Learning*, ed. Marks, et al., 143-60; Marjorie Lamberti, "The Reception of Refugee Scholars from Nazi Germany in America: Philanthropy and Social Change in Higher Education," *Jewish Social Studies* 12 (Spring 2006): 157-92; and Simone Lässig, "Strategies and Mechanisms of Scholar Rescue: The Intellectual Migration of the 1930s Reconsidered," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 769-807.

12 Stephen Duggan and Betty Drury, *The Rescue of Science and Learning: The Story of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars* (New York, 1948); Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation* (New York, 1989 [original 1952]).

13 Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis, 2009), 86-94.

and *Privatdozenten* who were deemed inimical to the German state, and thus unsuitable for their positions, either by virtue of their “race” as Jews or “non-Aryans,” or for their political identity as social democrats, communists, or liberals. They did not only lose their positions, but they were also denied any possibility at all of earning a living in Germany. The National Socialists’ political aim, which was supported by many students, was to restore the “fundamental German character” of the universities. Yet they instantly destroyed the German tradition of *Lern- und Lehrfreiheit*, which had protected the freedom of academic inquiry, in their determination to refashion German universities as centers of antisemitic, pro-Nazi indoctrination.¹⁴ More than a thousand academics would lose their jobs by the end of the year, and more than two thousand would be dismissed by the end of the 1930s, a trend that was intensified by the 1935 Nuremberg Laws and the 1938 pogroms. About one-third of all faculty positions were terminated altogether. Another ten thousand may be added to the number of dismissals when artists, writers, and professionals are included in the total. Jewish centers such as the University of Frankfurt — which had been founded by Jewish merchants before the First World War as a center of the new social sciences — were particularly hard hit. Relative to the half-million German refugees created by Nazi expulsions and terror before the ultimate collapse of the Reich, the number of intellectual émigrés may seem small, yet entire schools of thought were eliminated, especially in the social sciences. About sixty percent of the dismissed academics emigrated, which immediately produced about 650 refugees in the first wave of 1933.¹⁵

In the May of 1933, as the scope of the refugee crisis from Nazi Germany was becoming apparent, Edward R. Murrow, then the assistant director of the Institute of International Education (IIE) in New York, notified Walter Kotschnig, General Secretary of the International Student Service (ISS) in Geneva, that he had compiled a list of the names of about sixty German professors who were looking for teaching positions in the United States. Murrow, who was also nervous about the IIE’s ability to continue its student exchanges with Germany, did not expect that American universities in the midst of the Depression would be able to marshal the resources necessary to accept such scholars, however eminent they might have been.¹⁶ News of the IIE’s list spread among the elite of the philanthropic Jewish society in New York, and a physician and clinical researcher at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, Alfred E. Cohn, contacted

14 Duggan, *Rescue*, 3–4.

15 Ash and Söllner, “Introduction,” in *Forced Migration*, 1–7; Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (Amherst, 1993 [original 1987]), 11–15; “University Disturbances, Dismissal of Professors by the Minister of Education” (translation from the German), *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 12, 1933, Folder 4, Box 172, Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars Records (hereafter, “EC”), Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

16 Edward R. Murrow to Walter Kotschnig, May 9, 1933, Reel 9-HF (9.1.25), Series 3, RG 1, FA1289, Institute of International Education Records, Alumni and Historical Files (hereafter, “IIE”), Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter, “RAC”). This is the same Edward R. Murrow who went on to become a well-known broadcast journalist for CBS.

the director of the IIE, Stephen Duggan, who was an acquaintance of his, to inquire about getting a copy of this list.¹⁷ Along with New York philanthropists Fred M. Stein and Bernard Flexner, Cohn soon arranged a meeting with Duggan, and the group quickly formed an “Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars” to address the deteriorating situation in Europe by seeking temporary university appointments for the refugees. Duggan, who had aided émigré scholars from the Russian Revolution and had been the head of the Carnegie Corporation-supported IIE since its founding in 1919, was ideally suited to lead the new committee.¹⁸

In Europe, citizens came to the assistance of the exiled German scholars via organizations such as the Academic Assistance Council (which later became the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning) in England and the Association Universelle pour les Exilés Allemands in France. In Zurich, a group of German exiles led by Philipp Schwartz formed the Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland, which very quickly found placements for thirty scholars in Turkey and maintained a register of refugee scholars’ dossiers that was consulted by the other aid organizations.¹⁹ In the United States, the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars became the central refugee assistance agency. “Emergency” implied that the situation would, its founders expected, soon pass, and “Displaced” was chosen over “Exiled” in the vain hope that the positions that the refugee scholars had left, or at least their pensions, might again become available once the political situation in Germany had improved.²⁰

The Emergency Committee announced its intentions on May 27th in a letter to university presidents authored by Duggan. The committee acknowledged that, given the financial straits of American universities and the difficulty that young, native scholars were enduring in securing positions, the universities themselves were in no position to sponsor appointments for the refugee scholars for fear of generating homegrown resentment or antisemitic feelings. Instead, the committee suggested, funds to assist the refugee scholars would be raised from sources outside the universities, such as from wealthy individuals and foundations, funneled through the committee. University presidents would invite individual, well-regarded scholars for limited-term appointments of one or two years, designated as honorary chairs. In cases where universities had no specific scholar in mind, the committee would be prepared to submit a list of qualified refugee scholars.²¹

17 Alfred E. Cohn to Stephen Duggan, May 19, 1933, Folder 21, Box 4, FA802, Alfred E. Cohn Papers (hereafter, “AEC”), RAC.

18 Duggan, *Rescue*, 6–7; “Fourteenth Annual Report of the Director,” Institute of International Education, Fourteenth Series, Bulletin No. 4, New York, October 1, 1933, Folder 12, Box 5, FA802, AEC, RAC.

19 Like the Emergency Committee, the most urgent mission of both the AAC and the Notgemeinschaft was not solely humanitarian; rather, the preservation of science and the German scholarly tradition through the placement of the refugees was the pressing concern. See Isabella Löhr, “Solidarity and the Academic Community: The Support Networks for Refugee Scholars in the 1930s,” *Journal of Modern European History* 12, no. 2 (2014): 231–46.

20 Duggan, *Rescue*, 5, 179; Krohn, *Intellectuals*, 21; Edward R. Murrow to Alfred E. Cohn, June 12, 1933, Folder 4, Box 4, FA802, AEC, RAC.

21 Duggan, *Rescue*, 173–76.

The committee itself would be composed of an Executive Committee to administer its daily affairs as well as a General Committee of university presidents and representatives of academic associations such as the Association of American Universities and the American Council of Learned Societies. Livingston Farrand, the president of Cornell University, was appointed as chairman of the Emergency Committee, with Stein as treasurer, Murrow as assistant secretary, and Duggan serving as secretary — the real leader of the committee. The Rockefeller Foundation, which would ultimately match about half of the Emergency Committee's grants in the sum of nearly one-and-a-half million dollars over twelve years, was represented in early meetings of the Executive Committee by its vice president, Thomas B. Applegate, and Alan Gregg, the director of Medical Sciences at the foundation. Committee officers began regular correspondence with foundation officers, with whom they shared lists of displaced scholars, ranked according to their distinction in their respective field.²²

The Emergency Committee made its plans public in July, inviting contributions and stating its mission:

It is everywhere incumbent upon university faculties ... to be alive to the dangers which threaten them and by a declaration of faith to range themselves on the side of freedom of speech and freedom of teaching. It behooves them to make known ... that they intend to maintain their historic duty of welcoming scholars, irrespective of race, religion and political opinion, into academic society, of protecting them in the interest of learning and human understanding, and of conserving for the world the ability and scholarship that might otherwise disappear.²³

By August the committee had raised about \$60,000, a sum that would be nearly matched by the Rockefeller Foundation, which generally provided \$2,000 of the \$4,000 annual salary for each placed refugee scholar. By the end of November, the committee had succeeded in filling twenty honorary chairs for German refugee scholars at prominent American universities. The committee also began to establish working relationships with its European counterparts, such as Britain's Academic Assistance Council, which had been established by William Beveridge, president of the London School of Economics.²⁴

22 Duggan, *Rescue*, 77-78; 175-77; Edward R. Murrow to Max Mason, June 30, 1933; and Flora M. Rhind to Edward R. Murrow, August 22, 1933, Folder 4, Box 172, EC; Krohn, *Intellectuals*, 49.

23 "German Scholars to Be Aided Here," *New York Times*, July 13, 1933.

24 Edward R. Murrow to Walter Kotschnig, August 2, 1933, Reel 9-HF (9.1.25), Series 3, RG 1, FA1289, IIE, RAC; "20 Reich Scholars Fill Chairs Here," *New York Times*, November 26, 1933; Edward R. Murrow to J. P. Chamberlain, July 12, 1933, Folder 23, Box 138, EC; Stephen Duggan to Prof. Felix Frankfurter, July 18, 1933, Folder 4, Box 172, EC. Many refugee scholars passed through Britain on temporary appointments, later moving to the U.S. or elsewhere. According to Walter Adams, by the end of the war, 624 of the refugee scholars were in the U.S., 612 in Britain, 74 in Commonwealth countries, 80 in Central and South America, 66 in Palestine, and 62 in other parts of the Middle East, as well as smaller numbers in other European countries. Walter Adams, "The Refugee Scholars of the 1930s," *Political Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1968): 7-14, 10.

The committee also coordinated with American allies such as Alvin Johnson, the director of the New School of Social Research in New York, who was organizing the University in Exile, a new faculty in the political and social sciences specifically for displaced German scholars. The committee would sponsor professorships across the U.S., and also at Hebrew University in what was then Palestine, but the New School was unique as a venue for a large number of refugee scholars aided by the committee.²⁵ Johnson had already gathered fourteen émigré scholars to begin teaching at the New School in the fall of 1933.

Founded in 1919 by a group of progressive, internationalist intellectuals that included John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, Charles Beard, and Franz Boas, the New School was modeled on the German *Volkshochschulen* for adult and worker education. Johnson became director of the school in 1922, and he grew familiar with the German academic community through his work on the fifteen-volume *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, funded by the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations. When the refugee crisis hit in 1933, Johnson felt that, by establishing a “University in Exile,” he could salvage the German university tradition — which he had admired for its academic freedom and rigorous methodology — from total destruction by the Nazis. At the same time, he believed he could bolster the social sciences in the U.S. and the reputation of the New School as a cosmopolitan center of research. At the dawn of the New Deal, he also saw an opportunity to promote new, activist modes of scholarly thinking on depression economics — specifically the German “reform” economists of the Kiel School, whose unorthodox structural analysis presented a stark contrast to the individualistic, marginal-utility theories of Austrian neoclassicists like Ludwig von Mises. Johnson quickly raised money for the school in the summer of 1933, and he received pledges of support for scholars from the Emergency Committee and the Rockefeller Foundation, which would go on to provide more than a half-million dollars to support the salaries of refugee scholars at the New School over the next decade. Johnson used his academic contacts in Germany, notably the sociologist Hans Speier, to arrange contracts for the exiled faculty members, several of whom had authored articles for the *Encyclopaedia*. By August, Johnson had assembled the first core group for the University in Exile, made up largely of economists, including Gerhard Colm and Emil Lederer, but also including sociologists such as Speier and the Gestalt psychologist Max Wertheimer. Wertheimer, Lederer, and Colm also became the American representatives of the *Notgemeinschaft*. Overseen by Johnson and a provisional advisory

25 “Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars,” August 30, 1933, Folder 19, Box 6, FA802, AEC, RAC; Duggan, *Rescue*, 78–80.

committee that included Dewey and Robert M. Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, the school officially opened on October 1st as the “Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science” at the New School.²⁶

The Graduate Faculty was unique in its conception and concentration of German émigré scholars. With successive waves of immigration after Germany’s *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938 and the invasion of France in 1940, the school would come to host a greater variety of scholars. Although, in its earlier years, the political composition of the émigrés was almost uniformly on the left end of the political spectrum, émigrés of other political backgrounds would also join the faculty, including the conservative antimodernist Leo Strauss, who arrived in 1938. The school became a magnet for émigré scholars — especially prominent ones who had preexisting ties to American colleagues who came to the aid of their friends — and it was inundated with some five thousand requests for assistance annually by the late 1930s. An Emergency Visitor’s Visa Program was established by President Roosevelt in 1940 to assist political refugees on a non-quota basis, though Johnson quickly encountered bureaucratic resistance to the smooth processing of visa applications for refugee intellectuals. Along with other émigré intellectuals in New York, including Friedrich Pollock of the Institute of Social Research, a number of New School faculty members also formed a “self-help” group, imposing a tax on themselves to aid other refugees.²⁷

But the centralization of émigré scholars at the University in Exile at the New School was an exception. Typically, the aid organizations sought to avoid such clusters for fear of stoking antisemitism at existing institutions. Placements by the Emergency Committee, which insisted that it considered refugee scholars without regard to their religion, were typically limited to two-year appointments for distinguished scholars, entirely funded by outside sources. In addition to the Rockefeller Foundation’s matching grants, the committee received regular financial contributions from several prominent foundations such as the American Friends Service Committee. The support of Jewish individuals and foundations — particularly the New York Foundation, the Nathan Hofheimer Foundation, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee — long sustained the work of the Emergency Committee. Given that the preponderance of refugee scholars was Jewish, this is not surprising, and the committee made reference to its own Jewish members in funding requests to

26 Krohn, *Intellectuals*, 21, 59–72, 77; Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual* (Ithaca, 2018), 48–52.

27 Krohn, *Intellectuals*, 74–89.

Jewish foundations and wealthy individuals. Yet among the Emergency Committee's most durable supporters was the Oberlaender Trust of Philadelphia, which had been established in 1931 to promote the contributions to American society made by German immigrants and native Americans of German descent. The Oberlaender Trust supported the work of the committee, but it also provided its own form of direct financial assistance, often in the form of smaller sums or loans, to German refugee scholars, professionals, and artists in order to help them "get a start."²⁸

The Emergency Committee issued its first report in January of 1934, distributing 15,000 copies to university professors, administrators, and journalists. The committee had up to that point sponsored the university positions of thirty-six refugee scholars and assisted in negotiations resulting in appointments for another ten. Meanwhile, the European refugee problem was only growing more acute, with some 60,000 Germans already living in exile from the Nazi regime, desperately seeking to establish themselves in a foreign land. About a fifth of those were intellectuals of some kind, and about 1,200 were from the academic professions, many among the most distinguished in their respective field.²⁹ About 300 managed to get appointments outside of the U.S., and at that early stage only about seventeen had found positions at the New School.³⁰

The Rockefeller Foundation, Radio, and Paul Lazarsfeld

The synergies of émigré social research on the American scene were anticipated by the work of the Rockefeller Foundation, which, before it became a major funder of the New School and the Emergency Committee, had already developed an interest in the social sciences and mass communications research in the 1920s, and was instrumental in the founding of the Social Science Research Council. It was also a major supporter of the social sciences in Germany, where it allocated hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships in the years before 1933. Throughout the 1920s, the foundation, through its Paris office, had supported traveling fellowships to the U.S. for many German-speaking social scientists. When the crisis hit, the Rockefeller officers and German alumni fellows became important contacts for the re-establishment of exiled scholars.³¹ The study of critical social problems, such as unemployment, was an urgent concern in the context of the Depression, and foundation officers were looking for opportunities for a "scientific attack" on the problem.³² The situation was made even more urgent in 1933, when the Hitler regime

28 Duggan, *Rescue*, 85-88; 188; Fred Stein to Rabbi William G. Braude, Folder 23, Box 138, EC.

29 "Report of The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars," January 1, 1934, Folder 13, Box 5, FA802, AEC, RAC; "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars," Feb. 2, 1934, Folder 19, Box 6, FA802, AEC, RAC; "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars," January 4, 1934, Folder 19, Box 6, FA802, AEC, RAC; Betty Drury to Alfred E. Cohn, June 6, 1934, Folder 3, Box 4, FA802, AEC, RAC.

30 Diana Rice, "Exiles Aid Study Here; German Scholars Placed on American Campuses through Two Plans," *New York Times*, May 27, 1934.

31 Krohn, *Intellectuals*, 32-34.

32 "Social Sciences — Program and Policy: Past Program and Proposed Future Program," extract from Agenda for Special Trustees Meeting, April 11, 1933, Folder 12, Box 2, Series 910, RG 3, Subgroup 1, Administration, Program and Policy (hereafter, "APP"), FA112, Rockefeller Foundation Records [hereafter, "RF"], RAC.

threatened the practice of the social sciences and the “independence of inquiry” in Germany and across the Continent. Fellowships to foreign social scientists were viewed as a means of preserving social science, improving international relations, and tackling critical social problems like unemployment.³³

Paul Lazarsfeld was one of the most important fellowship recipients in the social sciences, although his grant in fact came from the foundation’s humanities program. Lazarsfeld was a Viennese sociologist who had become well known for his study of the unemployed in the depressed Austrian village of Marienthal. The study was first published in 1933, but it was known before then from Lazarsfeld’s presentations of the findings at academic conferences.³⁴ Lazarsfeld was highly recommended for the Rockefeller fellowship by his mentor, the social psychologist Charlotte Bühler, who directed the Psychological Institute, along with her husband Karl, at the University of Vienna. Bühler, who specialized in child psychology, had herself been the recipient of a Rockefeller fellowship in 1924–25 and would receive one again in 1934–35.³⁵

At the time he was awarded the Rockefeller fellowship, Lazarsfeld was the director of the *Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle* (“Economic Psychology Research Center”) in Vienna. This research center, which was formally distinct from but loosely linked to the university, conducted studies on consumer behaviors and motivations for private companies, among other projects. The *Forschungsstelle* also served as an organization for the development of large-scale, cooperative empirical research and as a means of employment for many of Lazarsfeld’s friends and associates from the Social Democratic Party. Lazarsfeld and many of his fellow researchers at the *Forschungsstelle* were Jewish, and for that reason they could only work as *Privatdozenten* or adjunct instructors at the university. Lazarsfeld and a colleague of his at the Bühlers’ Psychological Institute had been technically eligible for a permanent *Dozent* position around the same time in 1931, but because of rising antisemitism it had already become “impossible” for a Jew to acquire a permanent university post. “Never for a second could he think of a university position,” recalled Lazarsfeld’s close friend and colleague Hans Zeisel, a co-author of the Marienthal study. At the same time that the extremist Right was barring Jews from the university, the conservative Austrian government had introduced a new austerity policy that further limited professional opportunities for academics. The *Dozent* position ended

33 “Interim Report of Activities during 1933 in Fields of Concentration Proposed at April Meeting,” trustees meeting, December 13, 1933, Folder 13, Box 2, Series 910, RG 3, Subgroup 1, APP, FA112, RF, RAC.

34 Österreichische Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle, ed., *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal: Ein soziographischer Versuch über die Wirkungen langdauernder Arbeitslosigkeit mit einem Anhang zur Geschichte der Soziographie* (Leipzig, 1933).

35 “BUHLER, Charlotte (Mme),” Box 3, RG 10.2, Fellowship Recorder Cards (hereafter, “FRC”), Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC; “BÜHLER, Prof. Charlotte,” Box 3, RG 10.2, FRC, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC.

up going to Lazarsfeld's Gentile colleague instead, but the Böhlers, who were in Lazarsfeld's view "very decent" and embarrassed about the injustice, instead put Lazarsfeld's name forward for a Rockefeller traveling fellowship to the United States. On the basis of the Böhlers' endorsement and the buzz around the Marienthal study, Lazarsfeld's application was approved by the Paris office of the Rockefeller Foundation on April 4, 1933. Lazarsfeld later appreciated the dark irony that antisemitic discrimination had been his salvation: "I would now be dead in a gas chamber of course if I could have become a dozent [laugh] at the University of Vienna."³⁶

Lazarsfeld began his fellowship in the United States in September of 1933, traveling from place to place across the country to meet his peers and mentors in the fields of social science, psychology, and market research. He was already known from the Marienthal study, and he was greatly helped by the sociologist Robert Lynd, who became his chief sponsor and ultimately his colleague in the sociology department at Columbia. Lazarsfeld worked on a study of the unemployed in Millville, New Jersey, for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and he also spoke before audiences of corporate executives and market researchers about his innovative techniques of studying human decisions and motivations. As Lazarsfeld toured the U.S., the political situation in Austria deteriorated with the rise to power of Engelbert Dollfuss, who effectively ended the first Austrian republic and outlawed the Social Democratic Party in February of 1934, which greatly endangered Lazarsfeld's teaching prospects as well as the work of his Forschungsstelle. Indeed, many of his friends, colleagues, and family members — including his wife, Marie Jahoda, and his parents — were imprisoned, along with anyone "who was in any way connected to the Socialist Party." In the course of his fellowship, Lazarsfeld essentially became a refugee. Fortunately, he was able to get a year-long renewal of the Rockefeller grant in June. He continued his travels in the U.S., though at the time he believed he would finish the fellowship somewhere in Europe. He worked on research projects for Professor David R. Craig, director of the Research Bureau for Retail Training at the University of Pittsburgh, and he also worked with prominent researchers and sociologists at the Psychological Corporation in New York, the University of Rochester, and the University of Chicago. Lazarsfeld also made a name for himself as a groundbreaking market researcher who mixed quantitative and qualitative methods. He was profiled in an important marketing trade journal, and he published an influential article, "The Art of Asking

36 Christian Fleck, "Introduction to the Transaction Edition," in *Marienthal*, xxi-xxii; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann K. Pasanella, Biography Tapes, Feb. 21, 1975, PFL Vienna; Hans Zeisel to John Haag, Jan. 29, 1979, Folder H [1/3], 1950-1992, Box 3, Hans Zeisel Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library; "LAZARSFELD, Dr. Paul Felix (Jewish)," Box 3, RG 10.2, FRC, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC; Fleck, "Austrian Refugee Social Scientists," 194-98.

WHY in Marketing Research,” in the Summer 1935 issue of *National Marketing Review*.³⁷

In the summer of 1935, Lazarsfeld returned to Vienna, but by then the situation there had become so hopeless that he resolved that he would continue his career in the United States, where he had a position lined up working for Craig that earned him a visa. Although that position ultimately fell through, Lazarsfeld still returned to the U.S. that fall and, through Lynd, secured a position as the supervisor of work-relief students at the University of Newark, where he quickly set up another research institute.³⁸

In May of 1937, the Rockefeller Foundation awarded \$67,000 to the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University for the first two years of a proposed four-year study on the “value of radio to listeners” in the interest of “broadening radio’s range of public service.” The study was proposed by Professor Hadley Cantril of Princeton and Dr. Frank Stanton, a market-research director at CBS who would go on to become the company’s president. Cantril and Stanton would serve as associate directors for the study, which would use the school as its headquarters. There would also be an Executive Committee composed of educators as well as representatives of major commercial broadcasters. Beyond basic questions of who listens to what and when, the proposed study aimed to discover the role of radio in the lives of listeners and the social effects of radio-listening. The research on radio-listening that had been done up to that point had been almost exclusively of a commercial nature and in the interest of increasing the mass appeal of radio for the industry and its advertising sponsors. To some extent, the industry even had an interest in remaining ignorant about some aspects of radio-listening: studies might show that there were not as many listeners as they claimed, or that certain programs lacked the mass appeal that advertisers desired.³⁹ The foundation’s efforts finally coalesced as the “Princeton Radio Research Project,” which aimed to discover those “public needs which radio can satisfy.”⁴⁰

Cantril and Stanton had encountered Lazarsfeld during his travels as a Rockefeller fellow, and they were impressed with his research skills, novel methods, and his ability to manage large research bureaus, which he had done in Vienna with the Forschungsstelle and had continued at his Research Center at the University of Newark since resettling in America. They offered him the directorship in August of 1937, sweetening the deal by also offering an assistantship to his

37 “Doctor in America,” *Tide*, November 1934, 58-62; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, “The Art of Asking WHY in Marketing Research: Three Principles Underlying the Formulation of Questionnaires,” *National Marketing Review* 1, no. 1 (Summer 1935): 26-38; Paul F. Lazarsfeld, interview by Ann K. Pasanella, Biography Tapes, Feb. 21, 1975, PFL Vienna.

38 “LAZARSELD, Dr. Paul Felix (Jewish),” Box 3, RG 10.2, FRC, Discipline 5: Humanities Fellows, FA426, RF, RAC.

39 “Princeton University — School of Public and International Affairs — Study of Radio,” RF 37072, May 21, 1937, in “Humanities Appropriations, 1936 — 1940,” Folder 8, Box 2, RG IV2A34, David H. Stevens Papers (hereafter, “DHS”), RAC.

40 John Marshall, “Next Jobs in Radio and Film,” memorandum, Sept. 13, 1938, Folder 50, Box 5, Series 911, RG 3.1, APP, FA112, RF, RAC.

second wife, Herta Herzog, herself an innovative social researcher from the Forschungsstelle in need of employment in the U.S. They also permitted a hesitant Lazarsfeld to base his operations out of his Newark Research Center, so the “Princeton Radio Research Project” never actually operated out of Princeton. Lazarsfeld’s project — also called the “Office of Radio Research” — would eventually move to Columbia University, where Lazarsfeld would join the sociology department.⁴¹ The early work of Lazarsfeld’s radio research group impressed officers at the Rockefeller Foundation, and in August of 1938 John Marshall, assistant director of the humanities, reported that the “resources of social psychology” were proving effective in approaching the problem of propaganda and the pathologies of influence and ignorance. Knowing more about how propaganda operated, Marshall suggested, could be beneficial in developing uses for it with positive, democratic ends.⁴²

Denied a university career because of antisemitism in Austria, Lazarsfeld eagerly embraced the opportunities presented to him during his traveling Rockefeller fellowship in the U.S., where he encountered academics such as Lynd, foundation officers such as Marshall, and businesspeople such as Stanton, all eager to nurture his unique talents and experience. Lazarsfeld would deliver as an exiled scholar-entrepreneur, though not always in ways that his sponsors had imagined. Meanwhile, his research institutes would provide much-needed employment for many other refugee scholars streaming in from Central Europe.

41 For a more detailed discussion of Cantril and Stanton’s courting of Lazarsfeld, see my dissertation, “Émigré Scientists of the Quotidian: Market Research and the American Consumer Unconscious, 1933-1976” (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2015).

42 John Marshall, “Next Jobs in Radio and Film,” Aug. 31, 1938, Folder 50, Box 5, Series 911, RG 3.1, APP, FA112, RF, RAC.

43 Jay, *Dialectical*, 24-7; Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York, 2004), 234-35; “International Institute of Social Research: A Report on Its History, Aims and Activities, 1933-1938,” n.d., Folder 19, Box 1, AEC, RAC.

The Institute of Social Research in America

Among Lazarsfeld’s most important colleagues in social research while he was in Vienna were members of Max Horkheimer’s Institut für Sozialforschung, which was based in Frankfurt. The Institut was founded in 1923 by Felix Weil, a millionaire Marxist who supported the work of the social theorist Horkheimer, the musicologist Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno, the philosopher Herbert Marcuse, the literary analyst Leo Lowenthal, and the psychologist Erich Fromm, among others. It was associated with the University of Frankfurt, and although it was primarily a research institute, it did offer seminars and courses on topics of interest to social researchers that were often neglected at German universities. It was indeed a center for Marxist “Critical Theory” and cultural analysis, but the Institut also sponsored empirical studies from the time Horkheimer assumed the directorship in 1930.⁴³ Lazarsfeld’s research center in Vienna assisted

the Institut with empirical studies such as the *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, which would conclude that the German working class was vulnerable to Hitler and Nazism because the patriarchal German family structure fostered submission to authority.⁴⁴

But that study would not be published until 1936, by which time the members of the Institut had reorganized as a community of exiles in New York. The Institut, whose director and members were mostly Jewish socialists, had been shut down by the Nazis in March of 1933. In anticipation of the closure, the staff had shipped most of its library out of Germany, and its financial holdings had already been taken out of German banks. The Institut first moved to Geneva and became the Société Internationale de Recherches Sociales, and it also established branches in Paris and London. It also transferred the publication of its predominantly German journal, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, from C. L. Hirschfeld in Leipzig to the Librairie Félix Alcan in Paris. The precise manner by which the Institut received an invitation to move to Columbia University is a matter of some speculation, and historian Thomas Wheatland offers several theories. But it seems likely that Robert Lynd, who had a close relationship with Lazarsfeld — who, in turn, was intimately familiar with the work and personalities of the Institut — was an instrumental figure in this transatlantic relocation. Wheatland suggests that the interpersonal politics of the sociology department at Columbia would have given Lynd a strong incentive to endorse the incorporation of the Institut, the members of which he would have viewed as intellectual allies. Indeed, the Institut specifically thanked Lynd, along with Robert MacIver, chair of the sociology department, and especially Nicholas Murray Butler, president of the university, for his “expression of scientific solidarity” in offering a building on Morningside Heights to house the group in May of 1934. When the Institut moved into 429 West 117th Street, it was rechristened as the “International Institute of Social Research.”⁴⁵

Thanks to some foresight, the institute was on fairly sound financial footing when it was relocated to the U.S., having a capital of between four and five million Swiss francs. The funds were held as an investment trust based in Holland, which, in addition to holding some amount of gold bullion in London, managed securities in several European countries and in the U.S.⁴⁶ The institute’s initial financial security ensured that its scholars had some independence to pursue research as they saw fit, and its journal continued to be published in German. For this

44 P. F. Lazarsfeld, “Sociology,” in *The Human Sciences*, n.d., PFL Vienna, Rote Mappe, Papers Va, Mappe 2/2; Michael Pollak, “Paul F. Lazarsfeld: A Socio-Intellectual Biography,” Program on Science, Technology and Society, Cornell University, n.d., p. 7, PFL Vienna, Blaue Mappen 3 (about PFL-1), Mappe 2/2; Paul Lazarsfeld and Käthe Leichter, “Erhebung bei Jugendlichen über Autorität und Familie,” in *Studien über Autorität und Familie: Forschungsberichte aus dem Institut für Sozialforschung*, ed. Max Horkheimer (Paris, 1936).

45 Wheatland, *Frankfurt*, 29–30, 39–60; Jay, *Dialectical*, 39; “International Institute of Social Research: A Report on Its History, Aims and Activities, 1933–1938,” n.d., Folder 19, Box 1, AEC, RAC; “International Institute of Social Research: A Short Description of Its History and Aims,” 1935, Folder 35, Box 142, EC.

46 Frederick V. Field to Edward R. Murrow, October 11, 1935, Folder 35, Box 142, EC.

47 Bessner, *Democracy in Exile*, 60–72; Hans Speier, “The Social Conditions of the Intellectual Exile,” *Social Research* 4 (September 1937): 316–26.

48 Robert Lynd, postcard to Paul Lazarsfeld, May 6, 1935, Folder, 10, Box 2B, Paul Felix Lazarsfeld Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York (hereafter, “PFL”).

49 Philip Eisenberg and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, “The Psychological Effects of Unemployment,” *Psychological Bulletin* 35, no. 6 (June 1938): 358–90; Max Horkheimer, “Preface,” in Mirra Komarovsky, *The Unemployed Man and His Family: The Effect of Unemployment upon the Status of the Man in Fifty-Nine Families*, vii–viii (New York, 1971 [original 1940]). The project began as Komarovsky’s dissertation, which was financed by the institute. Paul Lazarsfeld, interview by Joan Gordon, Nov. 29, 1961, Columbia Oral History, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.

50 The fascinating story of Adorno’s difficult experience working on “administrative” research is already well covered. See Theodor W. Adorno, “Scientific Experiences of a European Scholar in America,” in *Intellectual Migration*, ed. Fleming and Bailyn, 338–70; David E. Morrison, “Kultur and Culture: The Case of Theodor W. Adorno and Paul Lazarsfeld,” *Social Research* 45 (Summer 1978): 331–55; and David Jenemann, *Adorno in America* (Minneapolis, 2007), 50–93.

51 Wheatland, *Frankfurt*, 77; “International Institute of Social Research: A Report on Its History, Aims and Activities, 1933–1938,” n.d., Folder 19, Box 1, AEC, RAC.

the institute drew some criticism from other émigrés, notably the sociologist Hans Speier, a non-Jewish German sociologist at the New School, who wrote a negative review of the institute’s *Studien über Autorität und Familie* when it was published in 1936. Speier, who was deeply skeptical of psychoanalysis, was harshly critical of Horkheimer’s peculiar research methods and the institute’s aloofness from practical affairs. In a time of crisis, Speier felt, it was the duty of the intellectual in exile to be politically engaged in the present society of his host country. Horkheimer, for his part, viewed the institute’s Critical Theory as a method of exposing the fundamental structures of society as a way of opening up possibilities for future action, and in that way it was politically engaged, albeit indirectly. Yet Speier felt that Horkheimer’s institute was abdicating its intellectual duties, and his passion for the issue was articulated in a 1937 speech that was later published in the New School’s journal *Social Research* as “The Social Conditions of the Intellectual Exile.” Speier advocated an engaged cosmopolitanism, as opposed to a cloistered provinciality, which is how he characterized the Institute of Social Research — but only by implication, not by name.⁴⁷

While the Horkheimer circle may not have carried out the kind of engaged scholarship that Speier idealized, it was not quite fair to characterize the institute as being isolated. In fact, members of the institute, including Horkheimer and Erich Fromm, had already established friendly relations at Columbia with Lazarsfeld’s American benefactor Lynd, who encouraged their further collaboration.⁴⁸ While Lazarsfeld was still at Newark, Lynd and members of the exiled institute assisted him with a study on the psychological effects of unemployment, particularly as it related to parental authority.⁴⁹ Lazarsfeld’s collaboration with the institute also resulted in Theodor W. Adorno’s somewhat rocky tenure working on the Rockefeller Foundation-funded radio research project.⁵⁰ In addition to its scholarship, the institute offered courses and seminars through the Extension Division at Columbia, which included a seminar on social-science research taught by Lazarsfeld, a seminar on psychoanalysis and social psychology taught by Fromm, and a seminar on the music of Richard Wagner taught by Adorno. The institute also hosted public lectures by its members, including a series of talks on authoritarianism given by Horkheimer.⁵¹

But by the mid-1930s, the institute began to suffer financial difficulties due to poor investments and misguided real-estate deals. Because

institute bylaws forbade drawing off the principal of the endowment, Horkheimer was forced to cut salaries, and he even had to let some members go, including, most prominently, Fromm.⁵² Although its offices were provided by Columbia, the institute was not, according to assistant director Friedrich (often anglicized as “Frederick”) Pollock, an institution “in the legal sense.” For years it had channeled its finances through the Social Studies Association, which was formed merely as a membership association with Lynd, MacIver, and other Columbia colleagues.⁵³ The institute had to secure salaries for its members from outside the university, and it began to seek funding from sources including the Emergency Committee. Horkheimer applied for partial funding of the salary of political scientist Franz Neumann for the 1936–37 academic year, which was initially turned down but later approved on the condition that Neumann be made a permanent member in the institute at the close of the year, a common condition of committee support. Neumann was indeed made a permanent member, and he contributed to the institute’s project on German workers as he prepared the manuscript for what would become his monumental work on the origins of National Socialism, *Behemoth*, a project for which he received a grant from the Emergency Committee.⁵⁴

When the war broke out, about \$200,000 of the institute’s capital became blocked in Europe, and it was forced to step up its fundraising efforts.⁵⁵ The institute’s funding situation was serious enough, Horkheimer and Pollock warned, that even prominent scholars such as Neumann and Herbert Marcuse, who were essential for maintaining the institute as an “integrated scientific organization,” could not be kept on staff without outside support.⁵⁶ Between 1939 and 1943, the Emergency Committee approved grants for many institute scholars, including sociologist Albert Lauterbach, philosopher Maximilian Beck, political scientist Otto Kirchheimer, philologist Franco Bruno Averadi, legal scholar Karl Strupp, literary theorist Kurt Pinthus, as well as Edgar Zilsel, Hans Fried, Ossip Flechtheim, Paul Massing, and Fritz Karsen.⁵⁷ Horkheimer and

52 Wheatland, *Frankfurt*, 82.

53 Frederick Pollock to Fred Stein, July 7, 1941, Folder 37, Box 142, EC.

54 Max Horkheimer to Stephen Duggan, May 20, 1936, Folder 35, Box

142, EC; Stephen Duggan to Max Horkheimer, June 8, 1936; John Whyte to Max Horkheimer, Sept. 24, 1936; Betty Drury to Stephen Duggan, Nov. 10, 1939, in Folder 35, Box 142, EC; Max Horkheimer

to Betty Drury, Apr. 24, 1940; Betty Drury to Max Horkheimer, May 23, 1940, in Folder 36, Box 142, EC; Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (London, 1942).

55 TBK, memorandum, Apr. 2, 1941, Folder 313, Box 14, Cox and Reece Investigations (FA418), RF, RAC.

56 Max Horkheimer to Betty Drury, Apr. 24, 1940, Folder 36, Box 142, EC; Frederick Pollock to Stephen Duggan, May 6, 1940, Folder 36, Box 142, EC.

57 Betty Drury to Frederick Pollock, January 13, 1939; Betty Drury to Frederick Pollock, Mar. 2, 1939; Betty Drury to Frederick Pollock, May 13, 1939; Betty Drury to Frederick Pollock, Oct. 11, 1939; “Emergency Committee Grantees at the International Institute of Social Research,” n.d.; Betty Drury to Frederick Pollock, December 1, 1939; in Folder 35, Box 142, EC; Betty Drury to Max Horkheimer, January 19, 1940, Folder 36, Box 142; Betty Drury, “Minutes of Luncheon Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars,” Sept. 26, 1940, Folder 25, Box 6, AEC, RAC; “Minutes of Meeting of the Subcommittee on Applications of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars,” Dec. 8, 1942, Folder 2, Box 5, AEC, RAC; “Emergency Committee Fellowships: Franco Bruno Averadi, Philologist,” Apr. 6, 1943, Folder 24, Box 6, AEC, RAC.

Pollock made regular appeals, which included vigorous letters of recommendation, to the committee to fund institute scholars such as film theorist Siegfried Kracauer and philosopher Ernst Bloch.⁵⁸ The committee usually (but not always) obliged, often on the condition that an equal sum be granted from another source (often the Rockefeller Foundation or the Oberlaender Trust), and that the total salary of the scholar not exceed \$4,000.⁵⁹ Committee member Alfred Cohn became so interested in the institute's work that he joined its advisory committee.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the network of scholarly relationships among émigrés and the intangible quality of reputation probably had more to do with the Emergency Committee's support for the institute than the substance of its work because the non-specialist committee members relied so heavily on letters of recommendation in making their funding decisions. They hardly could have anticipated the course that Critical Theory would take.

The Columbia Expedition

When Hitler annexed Austria in March of 1938, the German crisis became a Continental crisis, and the committee expected a flood of new applications.⁶¹ Accordingly, the name was changed to the "Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced *Foreign* Scholars" on November 9th, and, indeed, applications began to appear from Czechoslovakia and elsewhere as Nazi Germany encroached on its neighbors.⁶² The committee had reduced its contribution per scholar to between \$1,200 and \$1,500 by the late 1930s as it faced this influx of new applications. Members of the committee also became increasingly worried about reaching a "saturation point" for placing refugee scholars, as well as the possibility, occasionally supported by anecdotal evidence, of feelings of resentment and antisemitic attitudes at American universities. Committee members even became territorial about their mission, and they sometimes resented the efforts to address the refugee scholar problem carried out by their allies, who did not always follow their strict protocols, such as only placing scholars in the prime of their careers while excluding the very old and the very young.⁶³

Yet those allies, such as the Oberlaender Trust, were often quite successful in their efforts, often at a much lesser expense than the Rockefeller Foundation or the committee. Groups concentrating on scholars in specific fields were also successful in placing refugees. The Committee on Displaced Foreign Psychologists, for example,

58 Max Horkheimer to Betty Drury, Nov. 5, 1938, Folder 11, Box 6, AEC, RAC; "Application for New Scholar: Ernst Bloch," May 23, 1940, Folder 14, Box 6, AEC, RAC.

59 Betty Drury, "Minutes of the Luncheon Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars," May 23, 1940, Folder 25, Box 6, AEC, RAC.

60 Max Horkheimer to Dr. Alfred E. Cohn, June 12, 1940, Folder 8, Box 1, AEC, RAC.

61 Betty Drury, "Minutes of the Luncheon Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars," June 6, 1938, Folder 21, Box 6, FA802, AEC, RAC.

62 Betty Drury to Alfred E. Cohn, November 22, 1938, Folder 15, Box 4, FA802, AEC, RAC; "The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars: Annual Report," Dec. 1, 1938, Folder 13, Box 5, FA802, AEC, RAC.

63 Stephen Duggan to Frederick P. Keppel, Apr. 15, 1939, Folder 29, Box 4, FA802, AEC, RAC; Ralph E. Himstead to Stephen Duggan, Apr. 28, 1939, Folder 29, Box 4, FA802, AEC, RAC.

secured a position for Karl Bühler, who had presided over Lazarsfeld's Forschungsstelle, which had been shut down in the wake of the *Anschluss*.⁶⁴ Indeed, nearly all of Lazarsfeld's colleagues from the Forschungsstelle were forced to flee in 1938, including Zeisel, his coauthor with Jahoda on the Marienthal study, and Dr. Hermann M. Spitzer, who had served as its director and sought the Emergency Committee's support for a position at the Bureau for Retail Training at the University of Pittsburgh, where Lazarsfeld had worked with David Craig on his Rockefeller fellowship.⁶⁵ Zeisel and others, including Leo Lowenthal, took jobs at Lazarsfeld's radio research project as they tried to establish themselves in the U.S. In addition to being at the forefront of communications research, the radio research project was a refuge for émigré social scientists who had fled the short-lived democratic republics of interwar Central Europe.

This exodus of Austrian social psychologists coincided with Rockefeller Foundation officers' increasing interest in mass psychology and the modern means of propaganda, especially radio. The project's early studies, such as a famous study on the mass hysteria caused by Orson Welles's radio adaptation of H. G. Wells's novel *War of the Worlds*, were focused on the role of radio in the lives of listeners and the effects of listening on different types of listeners.⁶⁶ These studies, eventually published in special issues of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and in several bound volumes,⁶⁷ were distinct from the strictly commercial studies, which were only interested in listeners insofar as they were consumers.⁶⁸ The research techniques that Lazarsfeld developed at the radio research project, such as the "panel" technique of interviewing the same set of respondents over a period of time, were applicable in the commercial context, but their impetus came from a desire to understand the effects of mass media on ordinary people as democracy as an institution became threatened.⁶⁹

By the fall of 1939, due partly to the conflict between Lazarsfeld and his co-director, Hadley Cantril, the project moved to Columbia University — once again with the help of Robert Lynd. Since Fromm's departure, Lynd had become disillusioned with Horkheimer's institute because, according to Thomas Wheatland, it "signaled an elimination of empirical research for the sociology department." In his capacity on the advisory board to the Rockefeller Foundation, Lynd had vigorously supported Lazarsfeld's move to Columbia to fill this "empiricism gap" emerging in his own department, whose chair, Robert MacIver, had come to champion the direction of the

64 Barbara S. Burks to Dean George D. Stoddard, Apr. 27, 1939, enclosed in Betty Drury, memorandum to Members of the Executive Committee, April 28, 1939, Folder 17, Box 4, FA802, AEC, RAC.

65 Betty Drury, "Minutes of the Luncheon Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars," Oct. 6, 1939, Folder 23, Box 6, FA802, AEC, RAC.

66 Hadley Cantril, Hazel Gaudet, and Herta Herzog, *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic* (Princeton, 1940).

67 Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Radio and the Printed Page: An Introduction to the Study of Radio and Its Role in the Communication of Ideas* (New York, 1940); Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, *Radio Research, 1941* (New York, 1941); Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton, eds., *Radio Research, 1942-1943* (New York, 1944).

68 "Princeton University — Radio Research," June 9, 1939, in "Humanities Appropriations, 1936-1940," Folder 8, Box 2, RG IV2A34, DHS, RAC.

69 "Conference of Motion Picture and Radio Project Directors," Oct. 16, 1939, Folder 3696, Series 1.2, FA058, GEB, RAC.

institute. But Lynd would later view Lazarsfeld's tendency to privilege the development of research methods through commercial contracts as a betrayal of his commitment to social democracy.⁷⁰

Lazarsfeld's cohort of researchers became part of the university's Council for Research in the Social Sciences. His bureau was attached to the sociology department as a "research laboratory" with the aim of developing research methods and providing apprentice training and access to empirical data for graduate students. Lazarsfeld joined the Columbia sociology faculty at this time along with Robert Merton, who was to be the theoretical sociologist to balance Lazarsfeld's empirical approach, thus resolving a dispute over the methodological direction of the department. Merton worked closely with Lazarsfeld on the radio project, and he became its associate director when it was later rechristened the "Bureau of Applied Social Research" in 1944. At Columbia, Lazarsfeld's group continued to collaborate with Horkheimer's institute, and Lazarsfeld was instrumental in helping the institute secure a major research grant from the American Jewish Committee for a project on antisemitism that led to the Studies on Prejudice series.⁷¹ In 1941, the scholars produced a special joint volume of the institute's new English-language journal, *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, which attempted to bridge the methodological and epistemological divide between the institute's humanistic, dialectical Critical Theory and Lazarsfeld's brand of empirical social research.⁷²

Lazarsfeld's skill at organizing and leading research bureaus, along with his empiricism and inclination towards applied research, would make him a peculiar sort of émigré and a "doyen of American sociology," according to historian Anthony Heilbut.⁷³ Lazarsfeld's champion Lynd had initially been attracted to the Frankfurt School members' espousal of social reform and to Lazarsfeld's demonstrated commitment to social democracy, but he was also impressed by Lazarsfeld's devotion to empirical methods, which was partly inspired by Lynd's own approach to social research.⁷⁴ But Lynd may not have anticipated the degree to which Lazarsfeld would employ sociology in the service of commercial interests, and he would later ask Lazarsfeld where his *conscience* had gone. "He felt again that I am a kind of a traitor," Lazarsfeld remembered. "He always said that someone who is concerned with big social issues shouldn't do this kind of stupid research." Lynd thought that the commercial studies amounted to "selling out to the capitalists," as Lazarsfeld put it, whereas

70 Wheatland, *Frankfurt*, 84–90.

71 Thomas Wheatland, "Not-Such-Odd Couples: Paul Lazarsfeld and the Horkheimer Circle on Morningside Heights," in *Exile, Science, and Bildung*, ed. Kettler and Lauer, 180; Wheatland, *Frankfurt*, 91.

72 *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* 4 (1941).

73 Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, from the 1930s to the Present* (New York, 1983), 77, 95.

74 Wheatland, "Not-Such-Odd Couples," 172, 181.

Lazarsfeld merely saw them as a way to practice methods, train graduate students, and fund the bureau's operations.⁷⁵ "Lynd expected that once settled as a tenured professor of Columbia Paul would be free to return to politically relevant topics," wrote Seymour Martin Lipset, who was a graduate student under Lazarsfeld, Lynd, and Merton. "Lynd was doomed to disappointment, a fact he did not keep hidden from graduate students and others."⁷⁶

During the war years, many of the most prominent institute scholars, including Marcuse and Neumann, had left to work for the Office of Strategic Services, and Adorno and Horkheimer had gone to the West Coast, where they wrote *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* and began the work that led to *The Authoritarian Personality*. Despite the disintegration of the intellectual community, an internal investigation into the work of the institute, conducted in 1945–46, produced a positive assessment based in large part on the strong endorsement of Lazarsfeld, who had recommended splitting it into "empirical" and "theoretical" branches. In the end, the investigators recommended the institute's continued affiliation with the university on the condition that it orient itself toward empirical and quantitative methods. This was something Horkheimer could not abide, and he turned down the offer. It was the official end of the institute's affiliation with Columbia, though some of its members occasionally taught classes there through the late 1940s, and Neumann was brought on to the faculty. After the war, in 1949, Horkheimer repatriated the institute to Frankfurt.⁷⁷ For their sponsor Robert Lynd, it seems, Lazarsfeld had the method but had lost the progressive commitment in America, while the Frankfurt School scholars were committed socialists who had lost the method.

While Lazarsfeld's bureau had a major impact on communications and market research in the United States, and Horkheimer's institute introduced the methods of Critical Theory to an American audience, the varied and numerous social scientists of the Graduate Faculty at the New School may have had a more immediately recognizable influence in the United States relative to the other émigrés. Hans Speier and Ernst Kris, for example, conducted important studies on Goebbels's propaganda. Wertheimer helped to establish the New School as a center of Gestalt psychology, and his émigré students also became important social scientists: Rudolf Arnheim produced innovative analyses of daytime radio serials for Lazarsfeld, among other projects, and George Katona helped to establish behavioral

75 Nico Stehr, "A Conversation with Paul F. Lazarsfeld," *American Sociologist* 17 (1982): 150–55, 152; Paul Lazarsfeld interview by Joan Gordon, Columbia Oral History, Aug. 16, 1962, Rote Mappen, PFL Vienna.

76 Seymour Martin Lipset, "Paul F. Lazarsfeld at Columbia: A Great Methodologist and Teacher," in *Paul Lazarsfeld (1901–1976: La sociologie de Vienne à New York)*, 225–70 (Paris, 1998), 264.

77 Wheatland, *Frankfurt*, 91–94.

economics in the U.S. Especially through the Graduate Faculty's publication *Social Research*, the German reform economists of the New School provided an alternative to the laissez-faire approach of the Austrian school, and also to Keynesianism, which, in their view, could effectively *respond* to adverse economic conditions through measures like deficit spending but still relied on neoclassicist presumptions about the rationality of individual economic actors. The reform economists believed that Keynesianism did not do enough to provide for the effective *planning* of a national economy under capitalistic conditions. Their structural approach became an important conceptual ally for New Dealers, who were eager to engage the powers of the state to attack unemployment in the depression economy. A number of émigrés from the Graduate Faculty were called to Washington to act as consultants for the Roosevelt administration. The economist Gerhard Colm, for example, recognized the unique economic function of the state and argued against the necessity of balancing national budgets; he later became instrumental in shaping the economically forward-looking Employment Act of 1946.⁷⁸

The Emergency Committee, for its part, had assisted 288 refugee scholars in securing university appointments and grants (not including dozens more stipendiaries whom it helped indirectly) over its twelve years of existence, but the flow of refugee scholars tapered during the war, and the committee was formally dissolved on June 1, 1945.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The subjects of this study were victims of Nazi purges of Jews and socialists from the universities and civil society. As social scientists, they were, at the same time, intellectual agents equipped to analyze the social, historical, economic, and technological factors that contributed to the crisis of capitalism and the rise of fascism. Their experience of displacement itself contributed to their special capacity for social analysis, which generated new forms of knowledge. Lazarsfeld, the accidental émigré, was thrust into a new environment through his Rockefeller fellowship in the United States. In this new context, he used his capacities as a director of research to establish new institutes with staffs significantly composed of refugee scholars, who brought with them an organized practice of social research that could produce new understandings of the effects of communication technologies and the behaviors of consumers. For Max Horkheimer's exiled Institute of Social Research, a dialectical engagement with

78 Krohn, *Intellectuals*, 93–175.

79 Duggan, *Rescue*, 64, 66, 76.

modern social history — including émigrés' own experience of exile — coalesced into what was called Critical Theory. Though it was a radical analysis performed in the interest of transforming actually-existing social conditions, it complemented related forms of émigré social research that had practical applicability in contemporary American commercial and academic life.

In the view of the sponsors of émigré social researchers in the 1930s and 1940s, who sought to salvage a unique form of social and economic research — and at the same time bolster their own institutions and reputations — the distinction between Critical Theory and what Paul Lazarsfeld called “administrative” research was not always clear. Philanthropic and aid organizations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Emergency Committee, as well as unique centers like Alvin Johnson’s University in Exile, sought to salvage the innovative work of European social scientists. They sometimes had a limited or mistaken understanding of the work of those whom they were supporting, often relying on reputation and recommendations to make their decisions. Foundation officers like John Marshall and academic sociologists like Robert Lynd supported the careers of émigrés like Paul Lazarsfeld, who was a brilliant communications theorist in Marshall’s view and a committed socialist in Lynd’s view. Lynd had a similar view of the scholars of Horkheimer’s institute, and he was instrumental in bringing both the Lazarsfeld and Horkheimer circles to Columbia University. But while Lazarsfeld increasingly took commercial contracts that seemed to betray what Lynd had viewed as his socialist commitment, the Frankfurt School scholars would not violate their commitment to their *own* method of Critical Theory to accommodate the interests of their university sponsors. The interests of the refugee scholars’ American sponsors were at once altruistic and selfish, and though the product of the émigrés’ research rarely matched the expectations of sponsors, it inevitably produced new insights into American society and culture. Such critiques might have a latent potential for revolutionary socioeconomic transformation, but perhaps more often they provided practical, methodological tools for finding solutions to problems of government, business, and the evolving markets of a consumer-capitalist society.

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MASS DISPLACEMENT IN POST-CATASTROPHIC SOCIETIES: VULNERABILITY, LEARNING, AND ADAPTATION IN GERMANY AND INDIA, 1945-1952

Avi Sharma

The summer of 1945 in Germany was exceptional. Displaced persons (UN DPs), refugees, returnees, ethnic German expellees (*Vertriebene*)¹ and soldiers arrived in desperate need of care, including food, shelter, medical attention, clothing, bedding, shoes, cooking utensils, and cooking fuel. An estimated 7.3 million people transited to or through Berlin between July 1945 and March 1946.² In part because of its geographical location, Berlin was an extreme case, with observers estimating as many as 30,000 new arrivals per day. However, cities across Germany were swollen with displaced persons, starved of essential supplies, and faced with catastrophic housing shortages. During that time, ethnic, religious, and linguistic “others” were frequently conferred legal privileges, while ethnic German expellees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were disadvantaged by the occupying forces. How did refugees, returnees, DPs, IDPs and other migrants navigate the fractured governmentality and allocated scarcity of the postwar regime? How did survivors survive the postwar?

The summer of 1947 in South Asia was extraordinary in different ways.³ Faced with a hastily organized division of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan (known as the Partition), between 10 and 14 million Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus crossed borders in a period of only a few months. Estimates put the one-day totals for cross-border movement as high as 400,000, and data on mortality range between 200,000 and 2 million people killed.⁴ On both sides

1 The language of postwar displacement is extremely complicated, was used in different ways, and changed in a relatively short period of time. The term DP, for example, was formally used during the UNRRA period (1943–1946) to indicate those whose displacement was caused by Nazi aggression, and, during the IRO era (1947–1951), it referred also to those who faced a serious threat

of persecution in their place of origin. Neither of these definitions included the millions of ethnic Germans who fled or were displaced in the last year of the war and in the aftermath of the Potsdam Agreement of August 1945. The terminologies used by UNRRA and the IRO correspond to, but do not map exactly with, the definition of “refugee” that would be accepted after the 1951 Refugee

Convention and the formation of the UNHCR. For the present purposes, the key point is that DPs (UN DPs) were entitled to preferred rations while expellees were formally excluded from rationing regimes. For more on this very important distinction, see Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (New York, 2012), 31–33. See also below.

2 Angelika Königseder, *Flucht nach Berlin: Jüdische Displaced Persons 1945–1948* (Berlin, 1998), 30.

3 Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *After Partition* (Delhi, 1948); Mohinda Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes: An Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab* (Chandigarh, 1954).

4 Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford, 2013), 149, 151; Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *The Partition of India* (Cambridge, 2009), 62, 95.

of the newly formed border, military and administrative agencies were reconstituted to manage not just the population flows but the everyday work of governing hundreds of millions of new citizens. In the capital cities, administrative personnel worked in courtyards and slept in tents and railway depots. Calcutta, Delhi, and Amritsar were just some of the cities that were points of first contact in the population transfer between the newly formed nation-states of India and Pakistan.⁵

The German and Indian cases around the mid-twentieth century may seem to have little to do with one another, but there are a number of reasons to pair them. In Germany and India, displaced persons overwhelmed state and non-state actors with their needs. In Germany and India, DPs were forced to rely on informal strategies to survive. Historical entanglements generated by the war, comparable scales of displacement and the attendant disruptions, as well as the transformed material and political geographies are just some of the reasons that the German and Indian cases are worth considering side by side. Perhaps the best reason to explore these cases together is the many ways in which postwar Germany and post-Partition India mass displacements and their aftermaths have shaped the subsequent logics of migration discourse in the second half of the twentieth century.⁶ This article is an effort to better understand the work of surviving in postwar Berlin and post-Partition India. Mass displacement and irregular migration play an important role in both of these stories.

Some of the best research on migration, particularly research done in the last ten years and informed by urban studies literature on “urban informalities,” focuses on the ways that migrants use information-sharing, kinship, and legal gray spaces to negotiate dangerous geographies.⁷ In the absence of well-defined legal frameworks, adequately resourced humanitarian infrastructures, and basic economic opportunities, many migrants — both forcibly displaced persons and “voluntary” economic migrants — turn to “informal” strategies to survive.⁸ They use unsanctioned transportation, engage

5 Md. M. Rahman and Willem van Schendel, “‘I Am Not a Refugee’: Rethinking Partition Migration,” *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 3 (2003): 551–84; Joya Chatterji, “‘Dispersion’ and the Failure of Rehabilitation: Refugee Camp-Dwellers and Squatters in West Bengal,” *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 5 (2007): 995–1032; Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*; Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (London, 2007).

6 Peter Gatrell, “Putting Refugees in Their Place: Rewriting the History of the International Legal Refugee Regime, 1945–1960,” *New Global Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 1–24; Matthew Frank and Jessica Reinisch, “Refugees and the Nation State in Europe, 1919–1959,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 49, no. 3 (2014): 477–90.

7 On gray space, see, most famously, Oren Yiftachel, “Theoretical Notes on ‘Gray Cities’: The Coming of Urban Apartheid?,” *Planning Theory* 8, no. 1 (2009): 88–100; Ruben Andersson, “Europe’s Failed ‘Fight’ against Irregular Migration: Ethnographic Notes on a Counterproductive Industry,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 7 (2016): 1055–75; Noa Ha, *Straßenhandel in Berlin: Öffentlicher Raum, Informalität und Rassismus in der neoliberalen Stadt* (Bielefeld, 2016); »

» Loren Landau, “A Chronotope of Containment Development: Europe’s Migrant Crisis and Africa’s Reterritorialisation,” *Antipode* (2018): 1–18; Julia Schulze Wessel, *Grenzfiguren: Zur politischen*

Theorie des Flüchtlings (Bielefeld, 2017); Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail* (Oakland, 2015). For a different perspective, strongly influenced by Foucault,

see Baris Ülker, *Enterprising Migrants in Berlin* (Bielefeld, 2016).

8 Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, 2006).

in unregulated labor, live (or squat) in irregular housing, and find food, medicine, and other everyday necessities through non-traditional channels.⁹ Migration is work that mobilizes material resources (like money, for example) and virtual ones (such as knowledge of international law, connections to a smuggler, skills that qualify for special visa categories).¹⁰ The work of migration is not, though, just about deploying existing resources. It is also about learning to navigate the material and virtual infrastructures of everyday life, including the formal and informal rules that govern social practice.¹¹ For migrants, the learning curve is always present. For vulnerable migrants, it can be very steep indeed. This was the case both in postwar Germany and post-Partition South Asia.

In post-catastrophic situations, though, it is not just migrants who must learn new ways to navigate everyday life, and in recent years urban studies researchers like Stephen Graham have shown, for example, what happens to cities and their residents when basic but often invisible infrastructures — sewage, water, energy — fail.¹² Cities without waste disposal, transportation, light, food, and water do not work in the ways that they are expected to work, leaving city residents to find new ways to accomplish their everyday tasks. This can relate to relatively low-stakes concerns, or it can be a matter of life and death. When, for example, the New York City subway system closed due to flooding in 2012, this represented a costly disruption to the infrastructure of everyday life that impacted residents in small and not so small ways. Disruptions to infrastructure in Port au Prince after the 2010 earthquake or Aleppo after its repeated bombing in 2016, however, were of a different order of magnitude, and the changes that residents in those cities were forced to make were vastly larger.

Infrastructures — both virtual and material — are key parts of the urban assemblage, and when they fail, it can be a serious challenge to accomplish tasks that should be relatively predictable — for example, finding food, shelter, security, or even navigating the city. When urban infrastructures break down, as they do in post-catastrophic societies, both the mechanics and the norms of everyday living change, and they can change quite dramatically. The key point for the present

9 For an older, yet still excellent, introduction to the field of urban informality, see Ananya Roy and Nezar AlSayyad, eds., *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives*

from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia (Lanham, 2004). The field has grown dramatically in the last decade, but Roy in particular has continued

to publish some of the most incisive analyses on the topic.

10 Andersson, "Europe's Failed 'Fight' against Irregular Migration."

11 Material infrastructures are relatively obvious and might include recycling bins in Berlin or security checkpoints in Jerusalem. Virtual infrastructures are less obvious but no less important. Generally speaking, they refer to the epistemologies that structure everyday life. Examples of virtual infrastructures include kinship networks or the social knowledge that tells us where we are or are not welcome. On this broad — non-technological — understanding of the "virtual," see William H. Sewell, "A Theory of Structure," in *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*, chap. 4, 124–52 (Chicago, 2005), 131–34. On the sociological importance of these rules, see the seminal work by Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago, 1990); or, more recently, Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets* (New York, 2008).

12 Stephen Graham, ed., *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails* (Abingdon, 2009).

purposes is that catastrophe can make people into strangers in their own homes and change the rules and routines of everyday life in both small and tremendous ways. The work of surviving troubled times is different for migrants and locals. It is also similar.¹³ This was true in both postwar Germany and post-Partition India.

The cases cited above raise a number of challenging questions. In what ways was life in postwar Germany and post-Partition India “unprecedented”? If it was so radically new, how did migrants know how to achieve basic but extremely challenging goals like finding food, shelter, or security? Do we gain new understanding of the geographies of migration by including the host and transit countries that are, themselves, experiencing structural upheavals, as was the case in Germany in 1945 or India/Pakistan in 1947? And how does the migrant experience relate to the experiences of locals who are themselves navigating radically changed material and normative realities? After all, in post-catastrophic societies locals also often experience home as a foreign place, whether because the built environment has changed, basic infrastructures have been disrupted, social hierarchies have been upended, or because some combination of all of these elements is at work.

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and capital is very helpful here.¹⁴ Bourdieu argues that social organisms are powerfully structured by formal and informal rules, and that these rules are essential components of what individuals consciously and unconsciously know. Knowledge is, in Bourdieu’s sense, expansive: it includes not just those things learned in the classroom (the Pythagorean theorem, for example) or everyday life (what a yellow light means) but also the knowledge of how to comport ourselves, when it is appropriate (or safe) to argue, and so on.¹⁵ For Bourdieu, knowledge is a core part of the individual habitus, and this kind of knowledge structures everyday interactions in ways that make society (relatively) predictable. Bourdieu also understands, though, that societies are hierarchical, and to help better explain these hierarchies, Bourdieu develops a theory of capital which, he argues, entails social, cultural, and economic dimensions.¹⁶ Bourdieu’s theory of habitus and of capital are fairly well known, but they become particularly interesting in the context of migration, because social, cultural, and even economic capital are often intimately connected to place. Status in a village, for example, does not necessarily translate into its equivalent in a city, just as a degree from a top university in one country does not

13 Indeed, more than 80 percent of displaced persons migrate to poor or developing countries that are themselves politically, socially, or economically unstable. Major receivers of DPs include South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, and Lebanon; see UNHCR, “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018” (Geneva, 2019).

14 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA, 1984).

15 *Ibid.*, 411.

16 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of the Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. E. Richardson, 241–58 (Westport, 1986), 242.

automatically register in a different one.¹⁷ If knowledge and capital are so important for habitus, how do individuals function when the currencies of capital are no longer valued in the predictable ways they were in their place of origin *or in a home where the rules have become strange*? Bourdieu's theory is useful not because it resolves the question, but rather because it addresses it: How do people — migrants or locals — survive when capital no longer functions as it should, and experience fails to offer a template for the future?

Historian William Sewell Jr. offers some clues. In his revision of Bourdieu's theory, Sewell suggests that acts of learning, repurposing existing knowledge, and using resources in new ways are some of the ways that individuals and groups can navigate situations where the currencies of capital have changed.¹⁸ Wealth or status in the place of origin or a multilingual upbringing; training as a carpenter, construction worker, or experience as a political activist may not mean the same thing under radically changed circumstances — in a new place or a new political-economic configuration, for example. They are, nevertheless, tools that can be useful in different ways in new environments. In this view, Bourdieu's "capital" is best understood as a set of "schemas" and "resources" that can be repurposed to address new circumstances — a function that Sewell describes as "transposability."¹⁹ Sewell is particularly concerned with understanding how *change* occurs in history despite deep and durable structures.²⁰ But his analysis can *also* be used to understand how historical actors navigate new and unfamiliar environments. And this is particularly useful for both migration histories and the histories of post-catastrophic societies. This process of refiguring resources is, in many cases, precisely what happened in postwar Germany and post-Partition India, with some forms of capital finding new value, and others losing currency.

This article argues that adaptation and learning are critical elements of the work that goes into surviving situations where material and normative orders have been radically disrupted. While it does not resolve all of the issues it raises, by comparing the cases of German and Indian cities around the mid-century, it does help us to disentangle some of the variables that constitute historical and contemporary migration regimes, and to hone in on some features that are common to diverse kinds of (forced) migration experiences. In the ways that state actors distinguish between deserving guests and undeserving aliens, that rural and poor migrants are treated differently than

17 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 124.

18 Sewell, "A Theory of Structure," 131–33.

19 *Ibid.*, 141.

20 *Ibid.*, 125.

urban and middle-class migrants, and that identity markers like ethnicity, religion, and language function in unpredictable ways, the cases explored in this piece suggest that we should focus not just on the differences between migrant and local populations but also on their shared vulnerabilities.²¹ This research brings together insights from migration, forced migration, and urban studies to show how resources and knowledge were adapted to navigate vulnerability in postwar Germany and post-Partition India.

In the first part of this article, I explore formal and informal survival strategies in postwar Berlin, emphasizing the ways that extreme scarcity *forced* acts of learning, *transformed* social norms, and *normalized* practices that just a decade earlier would have been exceptional. In some cases, these changes were enduring, while in others they lasted for just a few months or years. This article draws attention to learning and adaptation by revisiting postwar German cases that are familiar to many of the readers of the present volume, in particular, the different kinds of transactional solidarities that surround housing, trading, and sex. The second part moves from the familiar to the less well known by looking at a number of different cities in India — Amritsar, Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay — to illuminate the ways that historical experience created adaptable templates for surviving radically disruptive times. Here, the article focuses on the issues of (illegal) land occupation and political mobilization, in particular, in Calcutta and its outlying areas. While the article does not strongly distinguish between “adaptation” and “learning,” it could loosely be said that the first part is more concerned with how people learn new behaviors in the context of extreme scarcity while the second explores how they adapt collective action and national narratives for individual ends. The article concludes by suggesting some reasons why studying learning and adaptation helps us better understand post-catastrophic societies in an historical perspective, as well as the role formal and informal survival strategies play within contemporary regimes of mass displacement.

Migration, Informality, and Exchange: The Work of Surviving in Postwar Berlin

Berlin in 1945 was a city in ruins. More than 500,000 of a total 1.5 million housing units had been destroyed during the war. Allied and German administrators estimated that the city contained 75 million cubic meters of rubble — nearly 20 percent of the estimated total of 400 million cubic meters of rubble in all of Germany.²² Migrant flows

21 Loren Landau, “Urban Refugees and IDPs,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh et al., 140–53 (Oxford, 2014); Stephan Scheel and Vicki Squire, “Forced Migrants as ‘Illegal’ Migrants,” in *Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, 188–99.

22 Dept. of Building and Housing, “Rubble Survey,” Berlin, 1949, LaB, F-Rep 280 No. 2208.

made already chaotic urban environments even more challenging to navigate and administer. Hundreds of thousands of evacuees — primarily women and children — returned in search of their former homes. Thousands of Jewish survivors made their way to Berlin, many of them seeking a way to Palestine or the United States. Political prisoners and enemies of the Nazi regime arrived by the tens of thousands. Probably the largest number of those moving to or through Berlin were ethnic German expellees from across Eastern Europe. Falling outside of the UNRRA/IRO mandate established in Article 12 of the Potsdam Agreement,²³ this population was, for the most part, not included in Allied rationing schemes.²⁴ More than seven million people moved to or through Berlin between Summer 1945 and Winter 1946. Across Germany, similar scenes were playing out, with cities and towns in the south and east experiencing the population flows with particular intensity. Shelter was a critical issue.

Food supply and distribution were also extremely compromised. For years, Germany had stolen resources from occupied territories, feeding citizens and soldiers by starving France, Poland, and Belgium, among others. As the Nazi “empire” collapsed inwards, food transfers from occupied territories stopped, causing immediate food shortages and more extreme rationing. By Summer 1945, wheat, potato, and rye production was roughly 60 percent of prewar levels. More than 80 percent of calories came from bread and potatoes, with an average allotment of just 200 grams of protein per week.²⁵ Even when food was available — through local production, imports, or food aid — the roads, bridges, and railways essential for transport were badly damaged, making distribution extremely difficult. In the summer the Allies issued millions of ration cards across Germany — 1.5 million in Berlin alone.²⁶ This remains one of the largest food assistance programs in the twentieth century. Despite these extraordinary efforts, rations fell far below internationally established subsistence baselines, and as shortages intensified, rations were repeatedly reduced. A baseline ration initially set at an average 1,550 calories per person per day sank continually during the first months of occupation, dropping to just 1,000 calories across all zones by the autumn of 1945.²⁷

Rations provided a baseline for survival, but a five-tier system ensured that this baseline was extremely uneven. Those at the top of the system in Tier I included men engaged in heavy labor, as well

23 Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 31.

24 It goes without saying that this piece is not intended to create a morally repugnant and analytically unproductive equivalence between Nazi extermination camps and the work of postwar survival, or to privilege the experiences of German national or ethnic German expellees relative to Jews, Sinti, Roma, or other victims of Nazis. The present piece is not an *armes Deutschland* apologia but an attempt to understand some of the strategies that individuals used — regardless of their identity — to survive in extremely challenging times. There are, at the time of this writing, more than 70 million displaced persons around the globe today who are trying to do just that — survive. Historians have much to contribute to our understanding of survival in troubled times, and this piece is motivated by that political and ethical imperative.

25 District Office Tempelhof, “Report on Rebuilding Efforts in the Tempelhof District,” 1945, LaB, F-Rep 280 No. 2754.

26 Allied Kommandatura, “Food Requirements for 15 August–14 September 1945,” LaB, F-Rep 280 No. 3673.

27 Alexander Häusser and Gordian Maugg, *Hungerwinter: Deutschlands Humanitäre Katastrophe 1946/47* (Berlin, 2009), 50.

28 Ibid., 47.

29 Sven Reichardt and Malte Zierenberg, *Damals nach dem Krieg: Eine Geschichte Deutschlands 1945 bis 1949* (Munich, 2008), 70–71.

30 This is, of course, not the place to explore the intricacies of rationing across the four occupation zones. For more on this, see, for example, Rainer Gries, *Die Rationen-Gesellschaft: Versorgungskampf und Vergleichsmentalität: Leipzig, München und Köln nach dem Kriege* (Münster, 1991).

31 Häusser and Maugg, *Hungerwinter*, 41–47.

32 Joanna Simonow, “Understanding Humanitarian Action in South Asia: Responses to Famine and Displacement in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India” (HPG Working Paper, published by the Overseas Development Institute, London, May 2015, 4), available online at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9634.pdf>

33 Anna Holian, “The Ambivalent Exception: American Occupation Policy in Postwar Germany and the Formation of Jewish Refugee Space,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 3 (2012): 452–73, 456.

34 Ibid.

35 Malte Zierenberg, *Stadt Der Schieber: Der Berliner Schwarzmarkt, 1939–1950* (Göttingen, 2008); Leonie Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines Deutschen Erinnerungsortes* (Essen, 2015); Jürgen Schmidt, *Rote Rüben auf dem Olivaer Platz: Quellen zur Ernährungskrise in der Nachkriegszeit Berlins, 1945–1949* (Berlin, 2008).

as a broad range of political, cultural, and academic elites. At the bottom end of scale, the Tier V card was assigned to “other groups,” which included those working in non-essential professions, the unemployed, retirees, the disabled, and members of the Nazi Party.²⁸ The Tier V ration card entitled recipients to half the bread ration, one-fifth the meat allotment, and slightly more than one-fourth of the butter and lard entitlement allocated to those in Tier I.²⁹ Women — particularly those who were unable to work because of age, disability, or care-giving responsibilities — made up the majority of Tier V ration-card holders.³⁰ This ration card was widely referred to as a “ticket to heaven” (*Himmelfahrtskarte*) because on its own, it amounted to a death sentence: It was impossible to survive on the *Himmelfahrtskarte*, which provided just 500 to 800 calories per day.³¹ In times of economic hardship or material scarcity, migrants tend to be the population least likely to receive state subsidies — residency and even citizenship requirements are just two of the most obvious mechanisms for reducing migrant access to food aid.³² In the postwar case, though, the situation was rather different. At least for registered DPs and political persecutees, rationing was supplemented by the UN.³³

The Tier V card was widely despised, but it was nevertheless evidence of a privileged status. For all its inadequacy, Tier V cardholders could count on a caloric baseline, unlike more than ten million postwar arrivals across Germany who did not qualify for ration cards on the grounds that their displacement was not caused by the National Socialists.³⁴ For the present purposes, this formal rationing system is important because of the ways that it was entangled with a range of informal survival strategies. There is excellent research on the things that people did to survive, and in the best cases, this research also excavates the mechanics of survival — how, for example, bribery functioned in black markets, rubble clearance was remunerated, or plots were distributed to urban gardeners.³⁵ The goal here is not to reproduce this literature by explaining what the survival strategies were or even how they functioned. I want to focus, instead, on the processes that are logically prior to action. How did migrants (and locals) adapt to their new environments, and what kinds of things did they have to learn to do so? While it is far beyond the scope of the present study to offer a comprehensive treatment of these strategies — indeed, each one could fill monographs — the following analysis tries to show how individuals and groups *learned* to survive in exceptional and extremely trying circumstances, taking up housing, black

markets, and transactional sex. This work of surviving was different for migrants and locals, but it was also similar.

Housing was, naturally, one of the most pressing issues for many Germans, and between 1945 and 1955, living with three walls or a collapsed ceiling was unremarkable. With Berlin adding a net 100,000 people per week, resource-strapped administrators were understandably overwhelmed.³⁶ Temporary housing arrangements such as the Nissen huts, tents, and other makeshift shelters were common throughout the city,³⁷ tens of thousands were housed in emergency intake centers like Marienfelde, and nearly 1,000 military barracks, as well as labor and prison camps, provided life-saving shelters for roughly 400,000 people in the immediate postwar period.³⁸ “Billeting” housing-seekers in underutilized apartments was another important solution. Between May and December 1945, nearly 390,000 people were billeted in apartments across Berlin. In many cases, this kind of cohabitation went on for years.³⁹

Even under the best circumstances — when, for example, tenants took in members of their extended family or friendship network — cohabitation could be challenging. In the context of extreme overcrowding and material scarcity, though, billeting heightened the potential for conflicts in a variety of ways. Bathrooms and kitchens became particularly contested sites, as expellees, evacuees, refugees, DPs, and others who had lost all their possessions attempted to carve out space for themselves. In overcrowded homes shared with strangers, these were the rooms where the loss of privacy was felt with particular intensity.⁴⁰ Billeting and other emergency housing situations had the potential to unsettle social relations by creating unfamiliar constellations of persons within the household — different class, religious, linguistic, and generational units were forced together.⁴¹ Under these circumstances, the challenges of basic communication, as well as understanding different norms and customs, could lead to misunderstanding and conflict.⁴² Learning to live together and adapting to fluid normative orders was, in many ways, critical for survival — for finding and keeping a home — and in many cases, cohabitants failed to adapt to this new ordering. In

36 Thomas Berger and Karl-Heinz Müller, *Lebenssituationen 1945–1948: Materialien zum Alltagsleben in den westlichen*

Besatzungszonen 1945–1948 (Hanover, 1983).

37 Uwe Carstens, “Zur Geschichte der Notunter-

künfte nach dem 2. Weltkrieg am Beispiel eines Nissenhüttenlagers,” *Jahrbuch für ostdeutsche Volkskunde* 35 (1992): 375–95.

38 Dept. of Building and Housing, “Directives on the Use of Residential and Commercial Space,” Berlin, 1945, LaB, F-Rep 280 No. 2201; Stephen Lanz, *Berlin Aufgemischt: Abendländisch, multikulturell, kosmopolitisch? Die politische Konstruktion einer Einwanderungsstadt* (Bielefeld, 2007); Dept. of Building and Housing, “Massive Barracks in Borsigswalde,” Berlin, 1951, LaB, B-Rep 09 Nos. 126, 51, 56.

39 Berger and Müller, *Lebenssituationen 1945–1948*; Häusser and Mugg, *Hungerwinter*; Dept. of Building and Housing, “Directives on the Use of Residential and Commercial Space.”

40 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 2010).

41 Klaus J. Bade, *Homo Migrants: Wanderungen aus und nach Deutschland* (Essen, 1994), 45.

42 Jan-Hinnerk Antons, “Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany: Parallel Societies in a Hostile Environment,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 49, no. 1 (2014): 92–114; Michael Prosser-Schell, “Ankunft und Einsiedlung von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen in Nordbaden 1945–1949,” in *Mobilität: Europa in Bewegung als Herausforderung kulturanalytischer Forschung*, ed. Richard Jöhler, 491–99 (Münster, 2011).

thousands of cases, conflicts became so severe that legal, administrative, or police action was required.⁴³

If there was often suspicion within the home space, there were also powerful incentives to maintain relationships. In the case of DPs, for example, migrant individuals and families that had relatively generous access to food and other basic provisions but lacked space and daily essentials sometimes found shelter with individuals and families who had homes but were faced with persistent hunger. Whatever tensions existed within the home, natives and foreigners transacted with one another based on complementary vulnerabilities and not just shared identity markers. Interestingly, the only group with nothing to offer — no food, household goods, or space — were the expellees who had, at least initially, thought of themselves as Germans.⁴⁴ Literature on migration tends to focus on the important role of kinship and other networks in stabilizing precarious diasporic communities, but in the context of extreme scarcity, the claim to a shared identity consistently proved to be less important than the material advantages offered by transactional relationships with “others.” As historians Sven Reichardt and Malte Zierenberg have shown, scarcity transformed identity in fundamental ways.⁴⁵ The Berlin case suggests that collaboration between antagonists — and antagonism within identity communities — was a vital part of postwar survival strategies in the context of extreme scarcity. And shelter was a commodity that could be traded against other goods and services, within the household, or in the marketplace.

Black-market trading was by far the most visible survival strategy used to circumvent shortages or supplement ration cards.⁴⁶ Men and women sold porcelain and jewelry, Persian rugs, paintings, cameras, money clips, utensils, bedding, and whatever else they owned. Black markets often saw luxury goods for sale, but in the context of postwar scarcity, other commodities commanded the highest prices. Bread, butter, meat, sugar, and shoes were always in demand. Cigarettes became a kind of universal currency, easily transported and exchanged.⁴⁷ Allied soldiers were rich in this currency, and often traded to great advantage. In October 1946, for example, Soviet soldiers received a shipment of 180,000,000 cigarettes — more than enough to smoke and to trade.⁴⁸ At the time, a packet of 20 cigarettes was trading for 70–100 Reichsmarks on the black market — enough to buy one kilogram of meat.⁴⁹

43 “Enttrümmerung von städtischen Grundstücken,” 1946, LaB, B-Rep 09 No. 4; Dept. of Building and Housing, “Directives on the Use of Residential and Commercial Space.”

44 Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat: Die Geschichte der Deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945* (Munich, 2009), 47–53.

45 Reichardt and Zierenberg, *Damals nach dem Krieg*, 77, 86.

46 Zierenberg, *Stadt der Schieber*.

47 Jörg Echternkamp, *Nach dem Krieg: Alltagsnot, Neuorientierung und die Last der Vergangenheit 1945–1949* (Zurich, 2003).

48 Allied Kommandatura, “Supplying Berlin, 27 October 1946,” LaB, F-Rep 280, No. 3435.

49 Rolf Steininger, *Deutsche Geschichte <1>: 1945–1947* (Frankfurt am Main, 2002).

It may seem self-evident that individuals who desperately need food might sell goods on the black market, but being a buyer or a seller in the marketplace is also learned behavior, and it is certainly very different from shopping or selling in a conventional retail space.⁵⁰ The value of goods, the danger of unscrupulous partners or the military police, the location of particular markets — all of these are things that must be learned. For those who were unfamiliar with urban environments, who did not know the language, who were isolated from social and family networks, or who felt unable to adapt to these particular market conditions, failure to learn the transactional rules could lead to ruin.⁵¹ And capital — particularly social and cultural capital — were no guarantee of success in the irregular marketplace. Educated elites accustomed to deference, for example, could not rely on status to make effective trades, while a soldier or DP was able to set the terms regardless of class, status, or German-language skills. When it came to elites and subalterns who were equally challenged by scarcity, subalterns might indeed be better prepared than those from privileged backgrounds to trade labor or other services, or recognize opportunities in the informal marketplace. Those persons trading luxury goods may have been privileged in the years before 1945, but at least in the immediate aftermath of the war, capital that could not be traded was not necessarily an advantage. The point is not that the rich became poor and the poor prospered — indeed, those who were privileged before the war often remained privileged afterwards. The point is rather that extreme scarcity created possibilities for status mobility by changing the value of goods and services.⁵²

Scarcity was obviously the backdrop to the vibrant black-market scene in cities across Germany and Europe, but migration also played an important role. Some recent arrivals — DPs and foreign soldiers, for example — commanded the dominant position in black-market exchanges because of their access to food, cigarettes, and other staples. As Reichardt and Zierenberg argue, black markets were often points of first contact between Germans and former (*Volks*)*feinde*, including Jewish and other survivors, and Allied military and civilian personnel.⁵³ Moreover, Anna Holian has shown that, in Munich, black markets created a new kind of urban cartography. Möhlstraße, for example, was largely occupied by German and Eastern European Jews who traded relatively generous DP rations with the tacit acceptance of the American authorities. In the case described by Holian, Jewish survivors built a small commercial center by mobilizing

50 Zierenberg, *Stadt der Schieber*, 23–24.

51 Zeitgeschichtliche Sammlung, LaB, F Rep. Acc 2651 Nos. 1–6.

52 As Mike Davis and others have shown in writing on a wide geographical range of areas across various time periods, vulnerable populations are particularly disadvantaged by extreme disruptions, from war to natural disasters: Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York, 1999). On disaster anthropology, see Pinaki D. Mullick, “Disaster and Anthropology: An Overview on the Shifts of Theorizing Disaster in Interdisciplinary Spectrum,” *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences* 4, no. 4 (2014): 385–95. If climate change has anything to teach historians, though, it is that the privileged, too, are at risk from multiscalar disruptions, and that wealth does not necessarily translate into security or stability.

53 Reichardt and Zierenberg, *Damals nach dem Krieg*, 68.

social and kinship networks, as well as relationships with Allied personnel and locals.⁵⁴

Other migrants, in particular the expellees who fell outside of the UN mandate, were in an extremely precarious position. In this context, the differential access to resources available to DPs, refugees, expellees, and other migrants was one element of a more general unevenness in the Allied rationing regime. All of this meant that some “foreigners” who were poor in social or cultural capital (for example, social networks, accepted credentials, “native” language proficiency) were resource-rich, while many “locals” were resource poor but commanded other kinds of capital. These relationships between Germans, DPs, ethnic German expellees, and others were, in many cases, marked by open antipathy, but they nevertheless fulfilled an important function for all parties.⁵⁵ Those who had little or nothing to trade, though, had to find other strategies, whether they were migrants or locals. Stealing, hustling, scavenging for food and fuel, selling labor, foraging in the countryside, or cultivating a small garden plot were all ways — both novel and not — that migrants and locals survived in postwar Berlin. These shared vulnerabilities and fluid material and normative hierarchies created spaces of exchange that also forced people into new kinds of social roles and relationships.

In the immediate postwar period, women and girls bore the burden of finding food and other staples, and as in so many other post-conflict situations, transactional sex was one way of supplementing rations.⁵⁶ Prostitution was one kind of transactional encounter that is well represented in the most famous cinematic representations of postwar Germany.⁵⁷ German women and girls also, in some cases, developed romantic relationships with Allied soldiers and other personnel that were transactional in other ways. Extreme scarcity was a backdrop for all of these relationships, and in many cases, the individual characteristics of the partner mattered less than whether the relationship could improve one’s chances for a better life. For example, Edeline Müller, who lived in Charlottenburg, recalls that, in the beginning of May (i.e., before the British and Americans arrived in Berlin), her neighbor “was happy to go with the Russians because she could get a meal...”⁵⁸ Whether or not sex was paid for, transactional relationships between women and men were characterized by extreme power differentials between, for example, occupying soldiers who were well-fed and flush

54 Holian, “The Ambivalent Exception.”

55 Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton, 2009); Tilman Harlander and Gerd Kuhn, eds., *Soziale Mischung in der Stadt: Case Studies — Wohnungspolitik in Europa — Historische Analyse* (Stuttgart, 2012), 79; Prosser-Schell, “Ankunft und Einsiedlung,” 492–93.

56 Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies*; Jennifer V. Evans, *Life among the Ruins: Cityscape and Sexuality in Cold War Berlin* (Basingstoke, 2011); Constance Formson and Dorothea Hilhorst, “The Many Faces of Transactional Sex: Women’s Agency, Livelihoods and Risk Factors in Humanitarian Contexts: A Literature Review” (Working Paper 41, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, published by the Overseas Development Institute, London, 2016, available online at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0896440f0b649-74000060/WP41-transactionalsex.pdf>).

57 *The Sinner* (dir. Willi Forst, Germany, 1951) is one dazzling example of a film depicting the theme of transactional sex. This is also a key element of *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1979).

58 Edeline Müller, LaB, F Rep. 240 Acc 2651 No. 1. This is a rather surprising statement, given the mass sexual violence that occurred in Berlin in late April and into May, perpetrated, in large part, by Soviet soldiers.

with cash and cigarettes, on the one hand, and the women who struggled to feed loved ones and themselves, on the other. A range of evidence suggests that there were also intimate relationships between German women and recent victims of the Nazi regime, including displaced persons (many of them former forced laborers), who typically received rations double those of Tier V ration-card holders.⁵⁹ While these relationships generated anger, particularly among returning soldiers, many contemporaries seemed to understand that, in the face of starvation, the category of one's ration card was more important than one's nationality, religion, politics, or class.⁶⁰

Transactional sex, while a painful topic, helps to illuminate the ways that knowing and learning can occur in situations that are extremely unstable. First of all, it is worth pointing out that transactional sex is, in itself, nothing new. While the range of relationships that can be described in this way can be contested — many argue that marriage is extremely transactional while others vehemently disagree — it is clear that men and women in postwar European cities understood that sex *could* be traded for money, food, or other supplies. It is also worth noting, however, that knowing that sex can function as a commodity does not necessarily mean that an individual *knows how* to transact sex. In some cases, this could involve a straightforward proposition, with one person asking for or demanding sex in exchange for money, food, cigarettes, or security. The exchange partners could be male or female, German or foreign, civilian or military, and each kind of transaction carried risks, from violence, disease, or incarceration to non-payment, reputational harm, or even frustrated and embarrassing communication.⁶¹

Lea Bonenkamp Kaminski, who was 41 when the war ended, remembers that American soldiers, who were not allowed to fraternize with German women, would often throw partially smoked cigarette butts into the street. Bonenkamp Kaminski thought the soldiers were trying, informally, to communicate with the women — to “get us to come over to them,” presumably with romantic intentions, and she may have read the interaction correctly.⁶² It is equally possible, though, that American soldiers simply did not experience cigarettes as a luxury good to be savored, or knew that hungry people could use largely unsmoked cigarettes as objects of exchange.

Bonenkamp Kaminski was not interested in fraternizing with the soldiers, but even if she had been, interpreting cigarettes thrown in

59 Alex D'Erizans, “Securing the Garden and Longings for Heimat in Post-War Hanover, 1945–1948,” *Historical Journal* 58, no. 1 (2015): 183–215, 196; Antons, “Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany,” 99–101.

60 Reichardt and Zierenberg, *Damals nach dem Krieg*, 86.

61 Erving Goffman, “The Arrangement Between the Sexes,” *Theory and Society* 4, no. 3 (1977): 301–31. Reputational harm or embarrassment may seem like relatively trivial things, but Goffmann argues that these social-emotional responses are fundamental elements of the social fabric as such.

62 Edeline Müller, F Rep. 240 Acc 2651 No. 1.

the street as an invitation would not have been a very reliable way of engaging in this activity. In other words, knowing that one could engage in transactional relationships is different than knowing where to go, find partners, make transactions, or protect oneself. For most of those living in postwar German cities, transactional sex could only become a survival strategy through information-sharing between women, the actions of an extractive intermediary, or implicit or explicit signals from soldiers or other potential partners.⁶³ This last point is not incidental. In part because victorious soldiers stood outside of a traditional social order in an anthropological sense, they had extreme latitude in their ability to approach women who would otherwise have been considered taboo. The large numbers of young men from faraway homes where they spoke other languages had a great deal to do with the effectiveness of transactional sex as a survival strategy. Troubling though it is, occupying soldiers and other “outsiders” provided cues both on the transactional *value* of sex but also on how and where to effectively find partners.⁶⁴ Whether it was transactional sex, black-market trading, exchanging space for food and other essentials, repairing damaged housing, using legal instruments to gain access to housing, or “hamstering,” theft, and urban gardening, surviving in the context of extreme scarcity required adaptation and learning that put existing knowledge and resources to work in novel ways.

The preceding section aimed to highlight some of the ways that people — migrants and locals — deployed informal strategies on the basis of shared vulnerabilities that were not necessarily tied to mobility, identity, or status categories. Postwar scarcity forced migrants *and* locals out of their habitual social positions, making them strangers, whether in their own homes or in a foreign land. The cases of post-Partition Indian cities, for all their differences from the Berlin case, share striking similarities as well. In the ways that individuals and groups negotiated extreme scarcity; in the way that social, cultural, and economic capital changed in value, and in the way gaps in formal support systems forced learning and adaptation, the Indian cases are not so very different from the German ones. In what follows, though, the focus is on the ways that shared historical experiences were adapted to provide templates for individual and group survival in troubled times. Because the Partition case is less well known to the present audience than the postwar German case, I begin by detailing some of the experiences of migration and survival in the post-Partition moment.

63 Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (New York, 1989).

64 Most of those who engaged in transactional sex in the postwar period never had before and never did again, and this meant both learning and forgetting. This is useful for understanding the historical cases but also for thinking about ensuring the safety and emotional health of the millions of women and girls who live in conflict and post-conflict zones in the present; see Evans, *Life among the Ruins*.

Learning, Resources, History: Organized Protest and Land Occupation in Post-Partition India

The Partition of British India on August 15, 1947, set off one of the largest population transfers in modern history. In a few short months, millions of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus crossed newly forged borders in the East and West, with particularly intense flows in the Punjab region in the Northwest. Slower, smaller-scaled, and less violent population transfers began between West Bengal and East Pakistan in 1947, but this was just the first wave in a serial migration lasting roughly twenty-five years — one that achieved scales similar to the massive population transfers in the West. Official and unofficial reports agree on the exceptional nature of the migrations.⁶⁵ The *New York Times* and *Times of India* reported on multiple foot convoys ranging between ten and forty thousand people. The largest convoy stretched for sixty miles with as many as 100,000 people on the move.⁶⁶ Those traveling east towards Amritsar, or west towards Lahore — on foot, on bicycle, oxcart or train — contended with temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius in August and torrential rains in September. Attacks by armed bands were widespread. Knives, clubs, spears, and axes were the most common instruments of violence, but guns and even mortars were used.⁶⁷ Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were all participants in the massacres, with many citing earlier violence — in Rawalpindi, Calcutta, Delhi, Noakhali — as the reasons for their own actions. Forced conversion of Hindus and the abduction of women and girls were common during the high points of communal violence.⁶⁸ Refugee trains were attacked between origin points in India or Pakistan and their destinations. Trains would arrive in Amritsar or Lahore filled with dead and mutilated bodies. These attacks on refugee trains, in particular, evidenced a high level of sophistication, and it was widely agreed that former soldiers played a role in organizing them.⁶⁹ The journey was particularly difficult for the old, the young, and the infirm. Director General of Rural Rehabilitation in East Punjab M.S. Randhawa reports that in some cases, these most vulnerable travelers were abandoned on the roads connecting Lyallpur (now Faisalbad), Montgomery, and Rawalpindi in Pakistan, and Ludhiana, Ferozepur (Firozpur), and Amritsar in India.⁷⁰

The living conditions of both those awaiting evacuation and newly arrived refugees were “appalling.” At the Purana Qila (Old Fort) in Delhi, fifty thousand Muslims were “huddled together for protection” as they waited for evacuation to Pakistan. Some reported waiting

65 Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *After Partition*, 52–53; Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, 25–27.

66 *Times of India*, September 4, 1947.

67 *Times (London)*, August 24, 1947; I.G. Police East Punjab, “West Punjab as Reported: SitReps, 15–31 August 1947,” in *Select Documents on Partition of Punjab — 1947: Indian and Pakistan: Punjab, Haryana and Himachal — India and Punjab — Pakistan*, ed. Kirpal Singh, 515–18 (Delhi, 2006).

68 Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham, 2000).

69 Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven, 2017), 156.

70 Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, 28–29.

three days for their first rations. The *New York Times* correspondent in Delhi reported that camps for Muslims awaiting evacuation grew dramatically after city-wide rioting began on September 7 and had become “jammed to capacity.”⁷¹ Delhi High-Commissioner Terence Shone wrote to a colleague that “one hundred kinds of improvised shelters had been made by the refugees. There were a few tents and lots of shacks with tin plate roofing.”⁷² This was not a case of punitive treatment of evacuating religious minorities. Conditions for Hindu and Sikh refugees in East Punjab and around Delhi were equally bad. The *Times* (London) correspondent waxed lyrical in describing Kurukshetra, the largest camp in India, located some 90 kilometers East of Delhi.

There are 300,000 survivors of the most recent fratricidal war in this camp designed for 200,000. The first arrived by train with no possessions other than the stained rags in which they were dressed. None had received food from official sources in five days. They rode on the rooftops of trains, underneath the carriages, and even on the engines.⁷³

In December 1947, there were roughly 1.2 million refugees spread across 160 camps throughout India.⁷⁴ Many more were housed in temporary or emergency shelters. As is true in the German case, millions of displaced persons spent years in temporary housing. Some of this housing was “pukka,” that is, it met building, zoning, and other regulatory codes. Much of it was alarmingly inadequate.

Ruined cities, evacuee trains filled with dead and mutilated bodies, refugee camps filled with starving inmates — these were some of the striking images associated with Partition. In official accounts, Partition is typically narrated as an “atavistic” but short-lived “orgy” of violence followed by a relatively rapid return to “normalcy.” And with mortality estimates ranging as high as two million, extraordinary violence and precipitous evacuations were indeed a central part of the Partition experience, reverberating through family histories and national narratives.⁷⁵ Images of explosive violence and rapid resettlement are only part of the story, though, and recent historiography brings together rich archival and oral materials to recover the plurality of refugee experiences. Millions of Muslim and non-Muslim refugees fled from ancestral homes, villages, and towns, leaving everything behind, but the majority managed to take along possessions that were valuable for monetary, sentimental, or subsistence

71 *New York Times*, September 19, 1947.

72 The National Archives (TNA): DO 142/417; Lionel Carter, ed., *Partition Observed: British Official Reports from South Asia — 14 August to 31 December 1947* (New Delhi, 2011).

73 *Times* (London), December 6, 1947.

74 Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, 30–31.

75 Ibid.; Udit Sen, “The Myths Refugees Live By: Memory and History in the Making of Bengali Refugee Identity,” *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 37–76; D. A. Low and Howard Brasted, eds., *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence* (New Delhi, 1998).

purposes. Low and high caste, rich and poor, men and women, literate and illiterate, tenant farmers and Zamindar,⁷⁶ married and widowed women, young and old, Bengali and Punjabi — these are just some of the factors that shaped the shared Partition experience of dislocation.⁷⁷

In trying to understand Partition-era displacement and resettlement, some historians stress continuities between colonial India and the time “since 1947.” Ravinder Kaur, for example, argues that social and cultural capital were critical factors in shaping the refugee experience and that, when combined with economic capital, could create transitions to new livelihoods that are hard to reconcile with the widely accepted picture of the Partition-era refugee.⁷⁸ In this view, one’s virtual and material resources before Partition were key factors in determining one’s life-course afterward. This is, to some extent, true. We know, for example, that refugees arriving at Kingsway in Delhi, Kurukshetra ninety kilometers away, or indeed dozens of other camps across India were sorted based on their ability to pay for their own rations. Those who could pay were housed in “privileged” sections of camps that typically provided basic infrastructure, while everyone else occupied the “ordinary” section.⁷⁹ In the aftermath of Partition, where formal shelter was only available for 15 percent of all camp inmates, the ability to buy privilege was no small matter but could mean the difference between life or death. In September, for example, more than one thousand people were killed when the River Beas swelled over its banks and swept away a refugee camp in East Punjab,⁸⁰ and by December, more than 500,000 were in danger of pneumonia and related illnesses.⁸¹ The ability to buy space in a privileged section of a refugee camp, to use networks to find private accommodations with family or colleagues, or to rent or buy a new home was obviously an extraordinary advantage to those able to afford it.⁸² In these cases, having wealth and privilege in one’s place of origin translated into relative security in one’s place of arrival.

Capital is a very helpful interpretive frame for understanding sociological continuities across the Partition-era rupture, but it is possible to overemphasize the socially reproductive logics of this heuristic in ways that make it difficult to explain historical change. After all, while Partition may not have been “unprecedented” in the ways that contemporaries regularly suggested — mass migrations, communal violence, extreme overcrowding and housing shortages, exploitation and sexual violence, drought and famine were familiar

76 “Zamindar” is the term used to refer to a class of large-scale landowners, often conferred with aristocratic privileges in both the Mughal and British colonial empires. The Zamindari system was abolished after Partition, though the stores of social, cultural, and economic capital frequently remained for generations afterwards.

77 Haimanti Roy, *Partitioned Lives: Migrants, Refugees, Citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947–65* (New Delhi, 2012).

78 Kaur, *Since 1947*, 13.

79 *Ibid.*, 10, 19.

80 *New York Times*, September 30, 1947.

81 *New York Times*, December 21, 1947.

82 Ian Talbot notes that these differences had long-lasting effects. In 1957, for example, the Haripura Refugee Colony for Dalits in Haryana was swept away by monsoon flooding, leading to prolonged protests against the Central Government; Ian Talbot, “Punjabi Refugees’ Rehabilitation and the Indian State: Discourses, Denials, and Dissonances,” in *From Subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan, 1947–1970*, ed. Taylor C. Sherman, William Gould, and Sarah F. D. Ansari, 119–42 (Cambridge, 2014).

if not typical experiences⁸³ — Partition was a profound rupture in the everyday lives of tens of millions who were both directly and indirectly impacted.⁸⁴ Millions of Partition-era refugees did indeed mobilize their social, economic, and cultural capital in order to survive. But how did they navigate situations where their claims to status went unrecognized, where wealth had become penury, where education was no asset, or where assets that conferred privilege were no longer available? The currencies of capital only function when they are recognized by exchange partners, and for many families across colonial India, this “capital” was profoundly *local*, tied to land that could not be moved, hierarchies that were embedded in community life, and symbolic structures that were tied to place.⁸⁵ In many cases, Partition changed individual life circumstances enough that claims to status and privilege could no longer be asserted.⁸⁶ Put simply, Partition changed not just borders but the currencies of capital.

Contemporary observers widely remarked upon these transformations of capital, noting that upper-caste Hindus and prosperous Sikhs appeared bewildered by their new circumstances, while sweepers and laborers were adapting much more successfully. Lady Edwina Mountbatten, who took an active role in refugee relief and rehabilitation work after Partition, is reported to have commented that the “mostly working class refugees at Humayun’s tomb” in Delhi appeared “readier to help themselves” than upper-class and upper-caste refugees, who seemed to have lost their moorings.⁸⁷ The British claimed to be puzzled by this reaction to adversity, but Indians were much more sensitive to the ways that Partition had radically transformed individuals’ place in society. Describing the loss of immovable property that was a central part of leaving home for many of the more prosperous refugees, M. S. Randhawa remarked how Partition left many “disoriented” and “unmoored.” Many families rich in immovable property became (relatively) poor. The status that conferred privilege and identity in an agricultural setting might be meaningless in urban environments that value certification, training, or the ability to perform labor. For many of these families, Partition represented a fundamental rupture — a loss of capital across multiple axes.⁸⁸

However sympathetic Indian observers may have been to the plight of the refugees, many also expected new arrivals to recognize that their historical entitlements, status, and privileges were not enough to rebuild their lives. Anthropologist B. S. Guha wrote in 1954, for example, that

83 Kaur, *Since 1947*, 88.

84 Khan, *The Great Partition*.

85 Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, 100.

86 Goffman, *Interaction Ritual*.

87 TNA: DO 142/146. Terrence Shone, Delhi Sept 21, 1947; Carter, *Partition Observed*, 276.

88 Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, 76-91.

... the refugees will have to realise that they themselves are the primary actors in the scene and without their own efforts no power can put them on their feet again. Old habits of easy going life and dependence entirely on the so-called liberal professions can no longer operate. Hard life, with sweat and toil, and use of two hands will alone reestablish them as has been done in war-devastated countries like Germany and Japan.⁸⁹

Guha and others thought that middle-class and landed refugees should take their cues from day laborers rather than seek to recreate their lost status. This was, unfortunately, difficult to do. In the case of refugees living in a government camp in the Hugli (Hooghly) district, just one of a total of 240 Brahmin families took up cultivation. Not a single Brahmin family entered into the trades, despite available re-training schemes.⁹⁰ Those who had lost social, cultural, and economic capital were, at least in the cases described here, ill prepared to adapt to a dramatically changed social-anthropological configuration.⁹¹

For the so-called untouchable castes, or Dalits, Partition also represented, in some cases, a moment when their stores of capital were recalculated.⁹² In colonial South Asia, the work of sweepers, gutter cleaners, and those who disposed of waste and animal carcasses was invisible. Dalits, and the work they did, were part of the “infrastructure” of the everyday — and as Stephen Graham has argued, infrastructure typically becomes visible only when it no longer functions as expected.⁹³ During Partition, in overcrowded transit and refugee camps, though, everyone began to notice the importance of the so-called untouchables, who made up a fundamental part of the invisible urban infrastructure. Confronted with camps filled with waste and debris that upper-caste/class Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims were unwilling or unable to remove, sweepers were singled out as essential workers. Indeed, the governor of the Muslim majority Sind province in Pakistan ordered that the untouchables, themselves Hindu, be supplied with green armbands adorned with a white star and crescent. Police were ordered to go “immediately to the aid of anyone in difficulty who is wearing such a badge” to provide them safe passage, even in the case of violent attacks.⁹⁴

Although this directive by Sind’s governor may have been a small matter — just one decision in one province affecting one population — and the reconfigured status and identity of the Dalit

89 B. S. Guha, *Studies in Social Tensions among the Refugees from Eastern Pakistan* (Delhi, 1959), xiii.

90 *Ibid.*, 11.

91 Mullick, “Disaster and Anthropology”; Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith, eds., *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster* (Santa Fe, 2002).

92 “Dalit” was a term popularized by B. R. Ambedkar, the first Minister of Justice of independent India, and a key proponent of political, social, and economic justice for low-caste Indians. Dalit can be variously translated as “broken,” “scattered,” or “oppressed.”

93 Graham, *Disrupted Cities*.

94 *New York Times*, October 12, 1947. None of this is to suggest that the lives of Dalits were, in a post-Partition context, freed from the historical burdens placed on them. The point here is simply that the value of the resources individuals and groups across the subcontinent were utilizing was changing.

may also have been temporary, without long-term administrative or legal implications, it highlights the instability of social and material systems in the aftermath of Partition in its transgression of deeply ingrained communal, social, cultural, and religious boundaries.⁹⁵ Partition, migration, and new sociocultural and political configurations were changing how capital was valued. How did individuals and groups, then, learn to use a “currency” that was in flux? How, for example, did they find new homes in an extremely competitive environment?

Yasmin Khan’s brilliant work offers some clues, showing how tactics and strategies learned during the Quit India movement, labor protests, and wartime mobilization all became resources in the post-Partition fight to create new homes. The Quit India movement had brought millions onto the streets to protest British colonial rule in India. Many of these people, particularly women and lower-caste people, became politically active for the first time. Experiences with wartime mobilization, food scarcity, and rationing *also* became resources for vulnerable populations in the post-Partition context. During the war, total mobilization had drawn tens of millions of rural laborers to cities for work in war-related industries, and until 1943, this provided a range of economic opportunities to some of the poorest Indians. As the war came to an end, the majority of workers who had moved to cities for the wartime industries became part of the urban poor.⁹⁶

The years immediately preceding Partition, then, already saw urban populations organizing to survive, and in actions ranging from the Quit India movement to labor protests, these individuals were exposed to the mechanics of large-scale organizing, including learning the spatial discipline required to deflect police brutality, as well as publicity and public relations work.⁹⁷ In 1946 alone, there were twenty-nine industrial disputes involving nearly two million workers and a loss of over 120 million man hours. In Hyderabad, three thousand to four thousand villages were in revolt, with peasants arming themselves and seizing land; in Delhi, refugees clashed with police who tried to prevent them from occupying Muslim evacuee property;⁹⁸ and in Bombay, hundreds of Sind refugees occupied the municipal hospital in Dharavi demanding the “right to stay put.”⁹⁹ Organizing, political protest, as well as violent and non-violent resistance became parts of a broadly applied repertoire of social practice. This repertoire was repurposed during post-Partition conflicts. The politics of

95 This instability echoed far beyond the “migrant” populations, and has shaped popular and parliamentary political culture up to the present day. Ian Talbot notes, for example, that Partition saw an increased focus on initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of Dalits. Ultimately, these have resulted in a highly developed system of reservations and other “affirmative-action” strategies for the “scheduled castes,” which are constitutionally designated castes targeted for economic and social uplift.

96 Khan, *The Great Partition*, 16-17.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid., 26-27.

99 *Times of India*, October 24, 1947.

vulnerability may have been amplified by the displacement of millions of refugees, but it transcended the boundaries between “local” and “stranger.” As sociologist Liza Weinstein has shown, these kinds of political actions — learned in the prelude to Partition and repurposed by refugees after 1947 — became central to the evolution of social movements in South Asia more generally.¹⁰⁰ This was particularly true in the case of West Bengal, where the “long Partition” blurred the boundaries between locals and migrants even as the national boundaries became increasingly solid.

In West Bengal, the logics of migration may have been amplified by Partition, but they were rooted in longer histories of migration between what became East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and urban centers in West Bengal. Calcutta, after all, had been the capital of British India until 1911 and continued to be the largest regional center for decades thereafter. In the preceding decades, it and other cities in West Bengal had drawn hundreds of thousands of agriculturalists, artisans, shopkeepers, professionals, and laborers from smaller cities, towns, and villages from the East. Many of these migrants moved to cities because they could mobilize kinship, social, and professional networks in them, and could justifiably expect to find greater economic opportunities than in the countryside.¹⁰¹ Refugees from East Pakistan in the period from 1947 to 1952 were following the routes and mobilizing the knowledge and networks that economic migrants had used for generations. In most cases, there was little to distinguish them from generations of vulnerable locals who had migrated to West Bengal in the time preceding Partition. Indeed, many of them did not consider themselves to be refugees at all: the fact that Hindu anticolonial activists ended up on the “wrong” side of the border in East Pakistan did not in itself change their identification as Indian.¹⁰²

This is not to say that path dependencies in migration patterns and policy simply reproduced pre-Partition logics: the intensification of population flows collided with shortages in housing, labor, and food markets to amplify and ultimately change the nature of political mobilization. The Azadgahr (Refugee) Colony, founded in the Tollygunge district on the urban perimeter of Calcutta, is a case in point, and helps us to understand how displaced populations navigated environments where they lacked many of the basic elements needed to survive. Azadgahr may have been founded to give a home to refugees, but the larger dynamics of land occupation in the area

100 Liza Weinstein, *The Durable Slum: Dharavi and the Right to Stay Put in Globalizing Mumbai* (Minneapolis, 2014).

101 Joya Chatterji, “Dispositions and Destinations: Refugee Agency and ‘Mobility Capital’ in the Bengal Diaspora, 1947–2007,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 2 (2013): 273–304, 278.

102 Rahman and van Schendel, “‘I Am Not a Refugee’”; Roy, *Partitioned Lives*, 4; Udit Sen, *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation after Partition* (Cambridge, 2018). Partition did, of course, dramatically affect the experiences of displacement, which were clearly different for refugees than they were for earlier generations of migrants.

show that migrants and locals engaged in many of the same learning and adaptive practices.¹⁰³

Anthropologist B. S. Guha described the formation of the Azadgahr Colony for refugees in a now famous study for the Anthropological Survey of India, completed in 1954. “[F]ounded by the efforts of the refugees themselves on the initiative of a small group headed by Messrs. Indu Ganguli and Sadanada Banerjee,”¹⁰⁴ Azadgahr was a local initiative that took shape in a series of community meetings in Tollygunge over the course of 1949. Ganguli, Banerjee, and others were looking for ways to assist a growing population of vulnerable migrants that the provincial government seemed both unable *and unwilling* to help. In the eyes of the Congress Party, homeless and economically vulnerable migrants were easy recruiting targets for the Communist Party of Bengal, which had spent years cultivating relationships with landless migrants in Calcutta and other urban centers in West Bengal. Here, shared histories and common vulnerabilities between migrants and locals, who were themselves often first- or second-generation migrants, helps to explain the Congress Party’s reluctance to admit Hindu minorities from East Pakistan, or the tendency to “disperse” these new arrivals away from the cities where they might become politically active.¹⁰⁵

Shared histories and common vulnerabilities were also some of the reasons that locals organized in order to find homes for the new arrivals. Ganguli proposed the large uncultivated plot adjacent to his own home as a potential target for development, and organizers calculated that leasing costs would be covered by subscription fees paid by future residents of the colony. The idea was a good one, at least from the point of view of homeless refugees, but the landowner rebuffed initial requests. At that point, Ganguli and others resorted “in desperation ... to forcible occupation.”¹⁰⁶ Guha glossed over this leap, from scouting potential properties to desperation and land seizure, but he might have mentioned that Calcutta, with a 1947 population of just over two million people, housed an estimated three million refugees in 1951.¹⁰⁷ Ganguli, Banerjee, and their small community were desperate to lease the property because development-ready land was extremely difficult to find.

In late 1949 or early 1950, Ganguli and a small group of men seized 30 acres. In subsequent months, they surveyed the land, divided it into 390 plots, and distributed plots to “bonafide” refugees for a small fee. Then the work of the refugees — now informal settlers — began.

103 Joya Chatterji has written the most important study of the Azadgahr Colony. See, for example, Chatterji, “‘Dispersal’ and the Failure of Rehabilitation.” See also Sutaparani Dasgupta, “The Self-Settled Refugees: Squatters’ Colonies in West Bengal,” in *The Aftermath of Partition in Bengal*, 121–60 (chapter 3). For a general, but still excellent, work on the topic, see Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford, 2015).

104 Guha, *Studies in Social Tensions*, x–xi.

105 Chatterji, “‘Dispersal’ and the Failure of Rehabilitation”; Roy, *Partitioned Lives*.

106 Guha, *Studies in Social Tensions*, xi.

107 This figure is based on the 1941/1951 census data. See Khan, *The Great Partition*, 189.

The new residents cleared scrub and trees, prepared plots, built roads, huts, and houses, dug wells, cleared snakes, and fought off jackals. They did more than simply create a physical infrastructure, though. They elected a central council to resolve disputes, elected ward officials responsible for tax collection and the maintenance of public spaces, and they started educational, community, and training groups. All of this was done, as Guha described it, “in the teeth of opposition and oppression of the landlords and police. As a reaction to it, the colonists organized themselves into fighting corps and raised a fighting fund. The Muslim inhabitants feeling insecurity of their life retired from the place.”¹⁰⁸ In the course of 1950-51, Azadgahr grew.

The search for a home in a competitive environment forged linkages between “strangers” and “locals,” but the refugees were not without their own stores of capital. First of all, the residents of Azadgahr were, relatively speaking, better off than many Partition-era migrants because they were registered refugees who were entitled to certain legal protections. Refugee status was granted only to those migrants who had left East Pakistan before June 1948, and, as Guha implied and historians confirm, this earlier wave of displaced persons was both more prosperous and more likely to have taken assets along than later waves of refugees. Residence in Azadgahr was possible only for those who were able to pay the (admittedly nominal) fee for land, subscription, and taxes, and to supply their own building materials: while members of the new colony were not rich, they were not destitute either. At least in relative terms, Azadgahr residents were privileged refugees. This does not change the fact that the Azadgahr residents were forced into remarkably novel situations that required them to learn new ways of acting collectively.¹⁰⁹

Among other things, future residents were all more or less involved in land occupation. This practice is, in its initial phase, typically relatively passive work, because landlords — particularly non-resident ones — often have no idea that their land has been occupied until well after the fact. To begin with, new residents stake a claim simply by being present. In later phases, though, the work becomes much more active, as was true in Azadgahr as well: colonists actively seized additional property, and this land had to be defended against the “rowdies” and “police” who were sent to evict members of the fledgling community. Violence, of course, was nothing new — indeed, it was a common feature of urban life in the years bookending partition. But learning to fight as part of an organized “fighting force” would,

108 Guha, *Studies in Social Tensions*, 52.

109 *Ibid.*, 52-60.

at the very least, have been a novel adaptation of experiences during the Quit India movement and during Partition.¹¹⁰

Setting up, building, securing, governing, and providing for a colony: certainly for most of the residents, these were utterly new experiences. But in the following years, land occupation and informal settlement became increasingly common elements in the vernacular political culture. Between 1947 and 1960, the numbers of similar self-settling refugee colonies expanded dramatically. By the late 1950s, there were more than 400 in and around Calcutta, and 63 in Tollygunge alone.¹¹¹ In mass demonstrations and organized land seizures, refugees and vulnerable locals drew on a repertoire created over decades of organized protests that began with the Quit India movement. Demonstrations and organized land seizure were widespread not just in Calcutta, but also in Delhi, Bombay, and other cities receiving large numbers of refugees during the long Partition. Partition was the proximate cause of a new kind of political culture that was very much tied to the right to homes. But the strategies used by refugees and the locals with whom they sometimes made common cause were adaptations of existing political cultures to new circumstances. In some cases, this process could stir admiration. In Azadgahr, for example, it was remarkable that members created alternative administrative, legal, and educational facilities.

Azadgahr was, in many ways, a success story, but not everyone was able to change when faced with the fluctuating currencies of capital, as can be seen from the case of the Brahmin families detailed in the Anthropological Survey cited above.¹¹² Nor should this obscure the fact that some learning and some adaptation are extremely troubling from an ethical point of view. In Azadgahr, for example, Muslim landlords were threatened and harassed in an effort to create space for refugees and vulnerable locals. Across India and Pakistan, intimidation and violence against religious minority populations was widespread, and both historical and contemporary observers noted that mob terror designed to drive out religious minorities often amounted to ethnic cleansing.¹¹³ This was also behavior learned and adapted for the post-Partition context.

This does not mean that the post-Partition era entailed just slight modifications of colonial-era social, cultural, political, and governance practices. Mass displacement inserted migrants into new environments on a massive scale, and whether or not their transition to new

110 Ibid., 51-52.

111 Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee*, 160.

112 Guha, *Studies in Social Tensions*, 11.

113 In a September 23, 1947, letter to Mohammed Ali Jinnah (the first Governor General of Pakistan), Sir Francis Mudie (Governor of West Punjab) baldly asked: "How then can we accommodate 54 lakh (5.4 million) Muslims unless we get rid of the Hindus?" Singh, ed., *Select Documents on the Partition of Punjab*.

lives was smooth, they disturbed existing political ecologies in important ways. Cityscapes were transformed by the creation of refugee neighborhoods; urban demographics were dramatically changed by population transfers; social and economic relationships were altered by the presence of new residents in search of homes and livelihoods. Migrants and locals were changed not just by what they witnessed or experienced during Partition-era violence. They were changed also because their social positions and relations to one another changed as the currencies of capital fluctuated. These were sometimes dramatic shifts, and, in other cases, relatively minor ones.

As the two examples delineated here demonstrate, learning and adaptation were foundational for many of the formal and informal strategies that individuals used to survive in postwar Germany and post-Partition Berlin. Such an analysis of learning and adaptation can also teach us a great deal about the mass displacements that remain so common in the present day.

Conclusion

In 1997, star architect Rem Koolhaas led a group of researchers from Harvard to Lagos, Nigeria, to try to understand how a modern megacity worked, and whether it held lessons for urbanists researching cities in the Global North. In a documentary on this and subsequent trips to Lagos, Koolhaas recounted his first impressions — awe, astonishment, and something akin to disgust.¹¹⁴ As a city, Lagos appeared to fail on every level. Traffic did not move: buses, cars, motorbikes, and lorries would sit idle for hours waiting to traverse the city (Koolhaas and his team initially traveled by helicopter). In most districts, public services like water, electricity, sewage, and waste removal were inadequate or worse. Inequalities were extreme. To the world-renowned Dutch architect, all of this was difficult to accept — Lagos and cities like it constitute the antithesis of contemporary norms that celebrate mobility, equal access to public space and services, and inclusiveness across all categories.¹¹⁵ In spite of the challenges, Koolhaas and his team continued to explore, and he began to see the city and its inhabitants in new ways.

Appearances to the contrary, Koolhaas decided that Lagos did somehow function — after all, more than 7.3 million people were living there at the time he was reflecting upon it. Water and transportation infrastructure were a mess, but water was distributed with great

114 Rem Koolhaas, *Lagos Wide and Close: An Interactive Journey into an Exploding City*, with Bregtje van der Haak, filmmaker (2004), available online at <http://lagos.submarinechannel.com/>.

115 Gyan Prakash, "Mumbai: The Modern City in Ruins," in *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*, ed. Andreas Huyssen, 181-204 (Durham, 2009).

entrepreneurial imagination; and residents used different internal clocks and timeframes to move through the city. Koolhaas was particularly struck by the garbage pickers who had developed a complex choreography to navigate risk, vulnerability, and precarity. Trash pickers and water carriers were not, Koolhaas decided, simply victims of the system, but critical actors in a complex urban ecology. Koolhaas wondered whether this entrepreneurial informality, these bottom-up epistemologies, and the self-regulating governmentalities were a glimpse into a more chaotic but freer future in the Global North.

There is something admirable in Koolhaas's effort to valorize the life worlds of extremely vulnerable people, but as urban geographer Matthew Gandy reminds us, the problems of a Nigerian megacity have multiple histories — colonial geographies of systemic underinvestment, resource-driven boom-bust cycles, punitive monetary policy — that together explain why the garbage picker works in a toxic landfill rather than sitting in a school room.¹¹⁶ State failure and, in particular, failures of the international system explain why Lagosians need to be so creative, why informality is so important, why local knowledge and networks are so critical to everyday lives. Koolhaas's fascination with urban informality, creativity, resourcefulness, and entrepreneurial ethos is part of a trend within development, design, and architectural studies that has been building for decades,¹¹⁷ and it is indeed important to better understand how migrants and migrant communities create and mobilize knowledge in order to navigate new spaces. It is also critically important to recognize that the need for this kind of creativity and knowledge-building arises because of profound gaps in our welfare provision and migration regimes. These are issues worth thinking about in the context of the present cases.

The terms “learning” and “adaptation” generally carry positive connotations in everyday usage, and indeed many migration and urban scholars continue to celebrate the creativity of migrants fleeing violence and of locals surviving in exceptional circumstances. The cases in this article remind us, though, why vulnerable people are forced to adapt and the kinds of things they must often learn. Examples of adaptation, creativity, and learning might include sharing knowledge about legal gray zones or cross-cultural exchanges. They also include self-circumcision and beard-shaving to avoid detection, learning religious or national hymns to avoid communal violence, trading sex for life-saving food, or using a weapon to defend oneself against real or perceived threats. The cases of post-Partition India and postwar

116 Matthew Gandy, “Learning from Lagos,” *New Left Review* 33 (2005): 37–52.

117 Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York, 1989).

Germany appear, at first glance, to be extremely different and indeed, in many ways, they are. They also share some striking similarities, and these similarities teach us a great deal about the ways that mass displacement, prolonged homelessness, extreme scarcity, and fluid sociopolitical dynamics force learning and adaptation, often in extremely traumatic ways. This has the potential to generate new perspectives on the work of migrating across dangerous geographies and surviving in troubled urban spaces. This is, unfortunately, extremely relevant to contemporary global migration regimes.

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HUMANS, NOT FILES: DEPORTATION AND KNOWLEDGE IN SWITZERLAND

Barbara Lüthi

One Stateless Refugee's Story of Swiss Asylum and Deportation

In 1985, the stateless refugee Ahmed Mahal sought asylum in Switzerland. Shortly before this, he had had a falling out with his employer, the head of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Yasser Arafat, due to his role as one of the members and founders of the “Palestinian Peace Front” since 1983. Since the organization rejected military action against Israel and civilians and cooperated with Jewish people, he was declared a *persona non grata* within the PLO. According to Ahmed Mahal's accounts and letters, the following years were taken up with a veritable odyssey, with prison sentences in Tunisia and Syria, torture, his undocumented entry into Switzerland via Yugoslavia and Italy, a “voluntary” departure under the pressure of the Swiss government, and a renewed asylum application in Ticino, Switzerland, in 1987. Pointing to his three-year entrance ban and his categorization as a “security risk” on account of his former activities for the PLO, the Ticino police again pressured him to leave the country for Syria. Ahmed Mahal refused to follow this request on the grounds that deportation to Syria would be tantamount to a death sentence because he had delivered important information on PLO-affiliated groups to the Swiss secret police. Insufficient medical care and imprisonment in unheated prison cells in Mendrisio (Ticino) and Zurich then provoked health problems in him. Furthermore, he was restricted from contacting his lawyer. Afterwards, he wrote the following about this episode: “They didn't even listen to me, incessantly talked at me to make me sign my consent to a voluntary departure flight to Damascus. Constantly I had to hear that I am a security risk for Switzerland, and an undesirable person.” Finally, he was forced to board a flight to Damascus. During a stopover in Cyprus, he went into hiding, destroyed his Palestinian refugee passport, and contacted the Swiss newspaper *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and the news service Reuters, who made his case public. In Ahmed Mahal's view, the media exposure and the burning of his passport forced the Cypriot police to return him to Switzerland. Following the advice of an acquaintance of his, he contacted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva, which issued him a

document that recognized him as a refugee. All the same, the Swiss government threatened him with renewed deportation. In the spring of 1987, he contacted the Zürcher Beratungsstelle für Asylsuchende (Zurich Helpline for Asylum Seekers), a Zurich-based pro-migrant group, which kept him in hiding until he was allowed to reapply for asylum in the summer. What followed was a tedious and lengthy conflict with various government agencies entailing several interviews, as well as the involvement of lawyers, doctors, and other actors concerning his refugee and residence status. Not accepted as an official refugee, he initially only received “tolerance status” (*Duldungsstatus*). In 1992 he married his former legal counselor from the Zürcher Beratungsstelle für Asylsuchende, through which he was finally granted a permanent residence status. Until his death in January 2019, he lived in the suburbs of Zurich, although he suffered from recurring bouts of depression according to his wife Jacqueline Hauri.¹

In what follows, I want to reflect on the “migratory knowledge” of both the Swiss migration administration and Ahmed Mahal. Anthropologist Maybritt Jill Alpes suggests that one conceive of these procedures of meaning-making as an economy, i. e., as “a system of symbolic transactions within which information is handled, created, devaluated, exchanged, transformed, and dismissed.”² The notion of an economy of migratory knowledge refers to cultural and societal factors that structure flows of information and influence constructions of meaning. Solidarity networks form one important aspect of this economy, based not on “liberal mutual tolerance” but, as Slavoj Žižek argues, on “the possibility for joining *intolerances* in emancipatory struggle.” In this context, non-migrant and migrant groups come together in a common alliance by sharing and transferring information and using it in a specific emancipatory manner for their own ends.³ In this sense, the solidarity networks, with their own economy of meaning-making, challenged the “moral economy” of Swiss society during the 1980s to a certain degree. According to Didier Fassin, this comprises the sense of values and norms by which immigration and asylum are thought about and acted on, also by administrations.⁴ The specific form of migrant knowledge that evolved in this context often countered and challenged administrative knowledge and practice in the face of a growing intolerance towards refugees and asylum seekers.

However, there are clear limitations to accessing the economy of migratory knowledge within the histories of deportation in Switzerland.

1 The name of the migrant and his wife were both changed. The summary of his (forced) mobile trajectory presented here is incomplete and severely shortened compared to the details given by him in the diverse administrative documents. I received Ahmed Mahal’s comprehensive administrative file from his wife, Jacqueline Hauri, at the beginning of 2018. The file contains administrative letters and decisions made between 1985–1989, as well as newspaper articles, letters by NGOs, IGOs, writings by Ahmed Mahal, and more. Interviews with his wife complemented this information. The material is part of my ongoing project on deportations in Switzerland since World War II, which deals with the infrastructure, administrative processes, as well as the effects on and reactions of some of the migrants affected by deportations. The project includes additional case studies and will entail further interviews.

2 Maybritt Jill Alpes, “Bushfalling at All Cost: The Economy of Migratory Knowledge in Anglophone Cameroon,” *African Diaspora* 5, no. 1 (2012): 90–115.

3 Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London, 2008), 129.

4 Didier Fassin, “Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France,” *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 3 (2005): 362–87, here 365. More broadly speaking, “moral economy” defines the scope of contemporary biopolitics as the politics that deals with the lives of human beings (e.g., undocumented immigrants or the undeserving poor).

Research is limited by strict restriction periods for relevant sources in archives, on the one hand, and by restricted access to contemporary witnesses, on the other hand. Receiving Ahmed Mahal's extensive administrative file from his wife, therefore, presented a rare occasion for a close reading of the work of the migration administration during the 1980s. At the same time, it gives an idea of Ahmed Mahal's migrant trajectory, his radius of action and contestation. The administrative files, including correspondence between Ahmed Mahal and several administrators and NGOs, together with the interview I conducted with his wife,⁵ Jacqueline Hauri, bear witness to the turbulence of migration practices, the often contingent "existence strategies" migrants mobilize in specific contexts, the varied social geographies of migrant experiences, and the process of becoming a migrant and/or being labeled as such.⁶

I will address two interrelated aspects of migration in this article: *First*, against the backdrop of sweeping historical national and global shifts during the 1970s and 1980s, migration governance in Switzerland (and Western Europe in general) was marked by far-reaching reforms in the administrative field. The administrative making of migrants experienced a palpable transformation during this time. Administrations perform a wide range of migration-related activities. In the case of deportations, administrations are not the only decision makers but rather part of a dynamic field often involving numerous actors such as politicians, administrative officials, doctors, lawyers, NGOs, private persons, solidarity networks, media, and others. As scholars have shown in recent years, administrations can play an influential role, for example, by producing or applying knowledge deemed relevant to better managing migration, or by providing "scientific," "technical," or "managerial" expertise to states. *Second*, in understanding the responses of migrants to these changes, it is important to understand how they struggled with uncertainties, contingencies, imponderables, and chances during their multiple moves across continents and in the face of active deportation policies in Europe. A careful look at Ahmed Mahal's time in Switzerland makes it clear that these strategies were never completely self-contained and depended to a large degree on the "migrant solidarity" of NGOs, private persons, and others. In this context, emotions are also crucial for understanding what knowledge is produced in a particular context.⁷ It is precisely the question of bringing *administrative knowledge* into conversation with *migrant knowledge* that bears closer scrutiny. How did migrants deal with the often complex administrative

5 Interview with Jacqueline Hauri, Wallisellen, April 11, 2019.

6 Maribel Casas-Cortes, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Nicholas De Genova, Glenda Garelli, Giorgio Grappi, and Charles Heller, eds., "New Keywords: Migration and Borders" *Cultural Studies* 29, no. 1 (2015): 55-87.

7 Simone Lässig, "The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda," *Bulletin of the GHI* 59 (2016): 29-58.

- 8 For a critical assessment of the concept of *Eigensinn* in the context of migration, see Ulrike Jureit, "Hoffnung auf Erfolg: Akteurszentrierte Handlungskonzept in der Migrations- und Fluchtfor- schung," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 15, no. 3 (2018): 509–22.
- 9 Nicholas De Genova and Natalie Peutz, eds., *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Move- ment* (Durham, 2010); Daniel Kanstroom and M. Brinton Lykes, eds., *The New Deportation Delirium: Interdisciplinary Responses* (New York, 2015).
- 10 There is still very little litera- ture in the field of deportation studies in Switzerland. For a historical perspective, see Matthias Fässler, "Mit oder ohne Federlesens: Die Konsti- tuierung des schweizerischen Ausschaffungsregimes in den 1980er Jahren," Master's thesis, University of Zurich, 2017. For a contemporary analysis, see Sieglinde Rosen- berger, Verena Stern, and Nina Merhaut, eds., *Protest Move- ments in Asylum and Deportation* (New York, 2018); Hans- Rudolf Wicker, "Deportation at the Limits of 'Tolerance': The Juridical, Institutional, and Social Construction of 'Illegality' in Switzerland," in *The Deportation Regime*, ed. De Genova and Peutz, 224–44.
- 11 Uriel Gast, *Von der Kontrolle zur Abwehr: Die eidgenössische Fremdenpolizei im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Wirtschaft 1915–1933* (Zurich, 1997); Hans Mahnig and Etienne Piguët, "Die Immigrations- politik der Schweiz von 1948 bis 1998: Entwicklungen und Auswirkungen," in *Migration und die Schweiz: Ergebnisse des Nationalen Forschungspro- gramms 'Migration und inter- kulturelle Beziehungen'*, 2nd ed., ed. Hans-Rudolf Wicker, Rosita Fibbi, and Werner Haug, 65–108 (Zurich, 2004).

requirements? Is there anything specific that differentiates "migrant knowledge" from "administrative knowledge" and sheds light on their relationship to one another?

Migrants develop survival skills based on their own and other people's knowledge reservoir. This article seeks to show that migra- tion choices and strategies, especially in the cramped situation of deportation procedures, are developed under circumstances more complex than can be grasped by the simplistic alternative between being informed or not about migratory chances and risks — or, be- tween administrative requirements and migrants' *Eigensinn*.⁸ I argue that what matters is whether or not migrants can retrieve and act upon necessary information, and whether they find support through institutions and/or other individuals. But as revealed in manifold stories on deportation and internment, the agency of (prospective) deportees with a precarious status is most often severely limited.⁹

The Changing Moral Economy of Swiss Asylum since World War II

The development of a deportation regime in Switzerland can only be understood against the backdrop of changes on the legal and discurs- ive level in the immigration and asylum policies during the first half of the twentieth century and the asylum politics in the second half thereof.¹⁰ Whereas Switzerland had a relatively liberal immigration system before World War I, the state became the key actor in shap- ing the migration regime and determining the political, legal, and institutional settings that regulated the arrival, settlement, and accom- modation of migrants during and after the war. Several state agencies were created, establishing a powerful administrative apparatus that coordinated and enforced public policies and institutional practices in order to control and limit migration. Most notably, the "Federal Foreigners' Police" founded in 1917 became a centralized institutional facility through which to register, monitor, and select migrants. The federal authorities were able to rely on a legal framework that was sig- nificantly expanded throughout the twentieth century. In Switzerland, as elsewhere, migration laws developed into a refined, regulatory system with increasingly restrictive classifications, wherein distinct groups of migrants were categorized and specific rights, constraints, and obligations were imposed on them.¹¹ The most prominent results of such work were the Federal Act on the Residence and Permanent Settlement of Foreign Nationals (ANAG) of 1931, which remained largely in force in that form until it was completely revised in 2006,

and the first Asylum Law, which came into force in 1981 and has been repeatedly revised in a very restrictive manner ever since. Among other things, the Asylum Law included the consistent enforcement of removal, faster processing of asylum applications, the deterrent of potential asylum seekers in order to prevent “asylum abuse,” the introduction of the safe country doctrine (1990), which prohibits people from applying for asylum if they are from countries where there is supposedly no risk of persecution, and the so-called coercive measures (*Zwangsmassnahmen*), which included the tightening of coercive detention. The rapid legal changes that began in the 1980s have not only given the federal authorities and its administrative apparatus enormous powers but have also systematized and radicalized deportation logistics and practice in Switzerland up to the present.

These changes took place against the backdrop of several interdependent economic and sociopolitical changes in Switzerland:¹² First, following the global economic crisis in 1973, Switzerland’s liberal laissez-faire policies shifted towards more restrictive quota policies. Second, this process was fostered mainly by xenophobic movements, to which most parties reacted proactively by introducing restrictive asylum laws. Third, these changes were linked to an increase in asylum seekers and their increasingly diversified national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The arrival of asylum seekers from the Global South led to a change in the “moral economy” — that is, the ways in which something is regarded, construed, and circulated as a social “problem” at a certain moment in time — in this case, asylum and immigration policy. Before the 1970s, Switzerland had received and regarded communist refugees who had been arriving since World War II (e.g., Hungarians and Czechoslovakians) with “respect.” Their arrival correlated with Switzerland’s ideological commitment to the democratic West during the Cold War and coincided with the country’s demand for labor. The climate rapidly changed when refugees from the Global South arrived, fleeing poverty, drought, and war. The change in moral politics was fueled by a narrative of racial and cultural “incompatibility,” or, as one of the politicians of the “Nationale Aktion” and a member of the Swiss National Council, Valentin Oehen, bluntly put it: “We are of the opinion that only refugees coming from the Occidental cultural region should receive definitive admission. This implies the notion that this can only include people with white skin color. One does not have to be a racist in order to understand that all racially mixed societies up to the present have not been capable of organizing a peaceful co-existence.

12 Barbara Lüthi and Damir Skenderovic, eds., *Switzerland and Migration: Historical and Current Landscapes on a Changing Field* (Cham, 2019).

Why should we impose such a problem on ourselves voluntarily? Why should we also take on the problems that are preoccupying the USA, South Africa and England?”¹³ The arrival of asylum seekers from the Global South was thus rendered synonymous with the Swiss nation-state’s purported “loss of control” of its borders and administrative capacity.

Taken together, these factors led to rapidly more restrictive asylum policies, based on a discursive distinction between “true” and “false” refugees, and replaced the former distinction of “guest workers” versus “citizens.” Furthermore, some asylum seekers were regarded as a “security risk” — a narrative foreshadowing present-day discursive strategies. Among other things, Switzerland’s slow transformation into a migration society during the twentieth century was characterized by the fact that migration and migrants represented a political and discursive field in which different political actors and interest groups mobilized their constituencies by presenting migration mainly as a conflict-ridden and problematic issue, thereby using a variety of stereotypes, negative arguments, and imaginaries. In this context, “migration” was recognized as a field of its own, and such a discourse also created categories of thought and action. With time, it not only separated “true” from “false” refugees but also led to a myriad of distinctions regarding status and permits for asylum seekers.¹⁴ In this sense, the migration discourse in Switzerland was also performative. It described and analyzed reality, yet it also aimed to shape the way migration should be perceived by some of the actors in charge of managing it.¹⁵

Navigating Deportation Worlds

In a letter from November 1987 addressed to Peter Arbenz, Commissioner for Refugees (*Delegierter für das Flüchtlingswesen*) in Switzerland between 1986–1990 and later director of the newly founded Federal Office for Migration, Ahmed Mahal made the following vehement argument: “Mr. Arbenz, you know perfectly well that I am a refugee. Refugee since birth, refugee as a victim of history, as a member of a people that has to pay for the consequences of Europe’s guilty conscience. ... You know quite well that I am a political refugee.”¹⁶ Two days later Peter Arbenz offered him this reply: “I would just like to specify that you do not have a right to asylum but only a *right to apply* for asylum and the right that this will be handled in accordance with the rule of law.”¹⁷ Over several years, the correspondence swayed between Ahmed Mahal’s insistence on his right to be treated as a

13 “Asylpolitik — wohin? Podiumsdiskussion,” in *Asylpolitik in der Bewährungsprobe. SAD-Arbeitstagung, Samstag 4. Mai 1985 im Hotel “Zürich,”* ed. Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Demokratie (Zurich, 1985), 30–70; 25. Translation by the author.

14 For an overview of these categories, see Dina Bader, “Who Ought to Stay? Asylum Policy and Protest Culture in Switzerland,” in *Protest Movements*, ed. Rosenberger et al., 69–86, 72.

15 Martin Geiger and Antoine Pécout, eds., *The Politics of International Migration Management* (Basingstoke, 2010).

16 Here he refers to the founding of the State of Israel, which, from his perspective, the League of Nations created over the heads of the Palestinians, who thereby became refugees just like the Jews before them.

17 Letter Ahmed Mahal to Peter Arbenz, *Delegierter für das Flüchtlingswesen*, Nov. 23, 1987. Emphasis by the author.

“true” refugee and Arbenz’s reference to the “rule of law” and Swiss administrative integrity. But Mahal’s militancy did not recede over time. Over a year and many files later, he wrote Arbenz again with a reproach: “Dear Mr. Arbenz, I will not indicate the number of my file; maybe then you will finally realize that we are humans and not files. Your office increasingly lacks this insight.”¹⁸

On the one hand, these brief excerpts from the correspondence between Ahmed Mahal and the Swiss migration administration during the 1980s point to the powerful institutional contexts involved and the discourses through which the category of “refugee” was construed and public policy was shaped.¹⁹ On the other hand, it reveals subtle forms of contestation on the part of Ahmed Mahal. The powerful labels differentiating “true” from “false” asylum seekers, or classifying migrants as “security risks,” affected nearly all asylum cases during the 1980s.²⁰ Such labels allowed the migration administration to make a clear distinction between “eligible” and “bogus” asylum seekers and manage the single applications accordingly.

But recent scholarly research has shown that several factors could impact the final outcome of deportations cases during the asylum procedure and lead to what Matthew Gibney describes as a “deportation gap” — that is, the gap between mandated deportations and their actual implementation. First, scholars like James Hollifield have pointed to the “liberal paradox” of states, in which they shift between openness in the face of economic forces and new legal spaces of rights (e.g., the Geneva Convention of 1951) since World War II and security concerns and powerful political forces demanding closure and deportation of bogus asylum seekers. Second, concerning the implementation of deportations, the scope and power of “street-level bureaucrats,” in Antje Ellermann’s words, has been mentioned as impacting the effectiveness of deportation policies.²¹ As Switzerland was a signatory of the Geneva Convention and a division of labor between the federal state and the cantons ensued, both the liberal paradox and the street-level bureaucrats were able to play important roles in changing the course of the country’s deportation cases.²²

18 Letter Ahmed Mahal to Peter Arbenz, Delegierter für das Flüchtlingswesen, Feb. 20, 1989.

19 See Roger Zetter, “More Labels, Fewer Refugees:

Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 172–92; Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, “Refugees, Migrants, Nei-

ther, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe’s ‘Migration Crisis,’” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 1 (2018): 48–64.

20 A second extensive file from the National Archive in Bern with the administrative name “Action Black Autumn” (Aktion Schwarzer Herbst) concerning the deportation of 59 Zaireans testifies to the power of these categories. See National Archives, Bern: E4280A#1998/296#338*: Aktion “Schwarzer Herbst” (1985–1988). See also Fässler, “Mit oder ohne Federlesens,” 78–86.

21 Matthew J. Gibney, “Asylum and the Expansion of Deportation in the United Kingdom,” *Government and Opposition* 43, no. 2 (2008): 146–67; James F. Hollifield, “The Emerging Migration State,” *International Migration Review* 3, no. 38 (2004): 885–912; Antje Ellerman, *State against Migrants: Deportation in Germany and the United States* (New York, 2009). For an overview, see Carla Küffner, “Aus-einander-setzungen über Abschiebungen: Handlungsoptionen in einem umkämpften Feld,” in *Asyl verwalten: zur bürokratischen Bearbeitung eines gesellschaftlichen Problems*, ed. Christian Lahusen and Stephanie Schneider, 223–52 (Bielefeld, 2017).

But in the field of migration and deportation studies, there has also been an increasing tendency to pay tribute to the resistances and resilience of migrants themselves. The debates concerning the concept of the autonomy of migration, as well as approaches coming out of Critical Border Studies and Critical Citizenship Studies, have heralded the migrant as a new political subject, often critically. These approaches also have helped de-center the idea of migration control and management within the scholarship so that it has moved away from examining national borders and frameworks towards analyzing a plurality of actors and contentious spaces, including the migrants themselves.²³ Nevertheless, the migrants' perspective so far has found too little attention, especially in a micro-historical view.²⁴ Furthermore, the role of knowledge in these specific migration contexts often has not been addressed. To understand deportation history from a migrant's perspective, one must take the following factors into account: First, the social and cultural capital of migrants, which allows them to access important information and knowledge and, secondly and related to this, their ties to solidarity and support networks. Both were decisive in determining what knowledge migrants were able to draw and act upon to evade (or not) the lingering deportation practice and laws.

In this context, it is helpful to draw on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the social capital of human beings. Among other things, it emphasizes the function of power — that is, social relations that increase an actor's ability to advance her or his interest.²⁵ Concerning deportations, Bourdieu's concept raises the question of how potential deportees were connected to other people and were able to build up networks to gain information and further their cause (of being accepted as "real" refugees, of not being deported, and so on). As a highly qualified journalist, Ahmed Mahal not only had extensive personal networks but also was able to use these networks to his own advantage in manifold ways that were closed to many other asylum seekers. One important factor was his contact to newspapers and media. While in hiding in Cyprus, he contacted Victor Kocher, a longtime acquaintance and Middle Eastern correspondent for the largest Swiss newspaper, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Furthermore, he reached out to the news agency Reuters and the *Middle East Times*. Victor Kocher wrote a short article in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on his case titled "Odyssey of a Palestinian," in which he outlined Mahal's trials and tribulations and asked under which circumstances his deportation was reasonable. At the same time, Reuters went public

22 Even though the national state and the cantons are still the main actors and decision makers concerning deportations, their transnational dimensions increased when Switzerland signed the Dublin Regulations in 2008 despite not being official member of the European Union. Increasingly, literature on the present applies a transnational perspective to the "deportation corridor," covering different places, actors, and institutions. See Heike Drotbohm and Ines Hasselberg, "Deportation, Anxiety, Justice: New Ethnographic Perspectives," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 4 (2015): 551-62.

23 See, for example, Maurice Stierl, *Migrant Resistance in Contemporary Europe* (Oxon, 2019); Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen, eds., *Acts of Citizenship* (New York, 2008); Ilker Atac, Kim Rygiel, and Maurice Stierl, "The Contentious Politics of Refugee and Migrant Protest and Solidarity Movements: Remaking Citizenship from the Margins," *Citizenship Studies* 20, no. 5 (2016): 527-44; Chiara Bramilla, Jussi Laine, James Scott, and Gianluca Bocchi, eds., *Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making* (Aldershot, 2015).

24 One of the early exceptions is Natalie Peutz, "Embarking on an Anthropology of Removal," *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 2 (2006): 217-41.

25 Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, 241-58 (New York, 1986).

with a story titled “Dissident PLO Man Jumps Flight, Deported From Cyprus,” which described Mahal’s ordeal and his manifold attempts to receive asylum in Switzerland as well as his successive deportations from the country.²⁶ After Mahal’s return to Switzerland, these newspaper articles also came to the notice of the Commissioner for Refugees, who obviously was informed about Ahmed Mahal’s attempt to make a case for asylum based on his precarious situation. In other instances, as well, Mahal tried to reach a more global public by sending his letters and complaints not only to the Swiss migration administration but also to media outlets such as Reuters and the Swiss TV or international organizations such as Amnesty International, the UNHCR, and the International Red Cross. In what can be described as “strategic knowledge” to further his case, he used his writing skills and networks to disseminate information about his situation and find legal support. Moreover, his insistence on being a “real refugee” reflects his rejection of the Swiss administration’s skepticism towards his refugee status. By insisting on being accepted as a human being and a “true” refugee, he was aware of the important distinction between rejected and accepted refugees: Potential deportees did not receive any support from the state and lost all protection. They were, so to speak, “remnants” for whom the state was not accountable. In other words, Ahmed Mahal repeatedly appealed to human rights in his letters — namely, to a right to state protection and physical integrity in the face of past tortures in Syria by PLO forces and maltreatment in prisons by the Swiss police. In this sense, he directly addressed the fact of the vulnerability of his body and being as constituting a “precarious life” — that is, a life reduced to the minimal sustenance of existence — and he showed how “the inclusion and exclusion of some lives from the domain of humanity play a part in a normative — many times oppressive — construction of lives.”²⁷ Several times in his letters, he threatened to commit suicide if deported. Even if these strategies may only have represented small disruptions of the administrative procedures, his persistent demands and threats clearly challenged the notion of who was entitled to a political voice with the authorities and who was not. Understood as “acts of citizenship,” to borrow Engin Isin’s phrase, both subtle and open acts of resistance could take different shapes in the context of deportations: Ranging from bodily self-harm and destroying personal documents to going into hiding or openly revolting in deportation camps, these acts are all ways of at least deferring or interrupting a pending deportation.

26 Victor Kocher, “Odyssey eines Palästinensers: Misslungene Abschiebung von Zürich nach Damaskus,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Mar. 31, 1987; Thomas O’Dwyer, “Dissident PLO Man Jumps Flight, Deported From Cyprus,” Reuters, date not specified.

27 Hagar Kotef and Merav Amir, “(En)Gendering Checkpoints: Checkpoint Watch and the Repercussions of Intervention,” *Signs* 32, no. 4 (2007): 973–96, here 979n10; Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London, 2004); Didier Fassin, *Life: A Critical User’s Manual* (Cambridge, 2018).



Protest against asylum policies, University of Bern, Switzerland, Feb. 13, 1987, Gertrud Vogler. Demonstration with slogan “Xenophobia and deportations — without the Bernese students” (Sozialarchiv Zürich, Schweiz; Bestand: F_5107, Vogler, Gertrud).

In addition to the social and cultural capital of migrants allowing for individual resilience and resistance to the state’s attempts to exclude them from their territory, solidarity networks were often just as important. Though this aspect still needs further investigation in the scholarship, we can already discern that different forms of political resistance in the 1980s were often based on close-knit solidarity groups between Swiss citizens, potential deportees, and at times also international supporters. These acts of resistance entailed demonstrations, sit-ins, and the well-known church asylums, with their origins in the US asylum movement of the 1980s. Among the Swiss citizens in such groups was a whole range of actors, including housewives, politicians, priests, artists, writers, and lawyers. The breadth of actors engaged in acts of solidarity also points to the fact that the “moral economy,” even in times of restrictive measures against asylum seekers, was not homogeneous. The pictures reproduced here exemplify the publicity that such radical actions could garner.

Alongside the public acts of resistance, networks of anti-deportation activists reaching beyond the Swiss borders into safe third countries helped individual potential deportees go into hiding.²⁸ Various organizations, such as the “Freiplatz Aktion,” “Aktion for

28 Jonathan Pärli, “Ungehorsam im Namen des Rechtsstaats. Wie die Asylbewegung der 1980er-Jahre zur Renaissance des Kirchenasyls beitrug,” *Neue Wege: Beiträge zu Sozialismus und Religion* 110, no. 11 (2016): 33-35; Anni Lanz and Manfred Züfle, *Die Fremdmacher: Widerstand gegen die schweizerische Asyl- und Migrationspolitik* (Zurich, 2006).



Asylum camp demonstration, Bern, Switzerland, September 30, 1989, Gertrud Vogler. Slogans “Stop the deportations / away with detentions and bunkers / fight against racism and sexism / solidarity is a weapon (Sozialarchiv Zürich, Schweiz; Bestand: F_5107, Vogler, Gertrud).

abgewiesene Asylbewerber,” and church organizations, engaged in such purposeful civil disobedience by hiding and protecting the potential deportees.²⁹

These solidarity networks were clearly pivotal for Ahmed Mahal, as well. In his reports to the administration, it becomes apparent that advice from strangers and acquaintances frequently changed the course of his migratory life. For example, he stated in his letters that he “ended up in the hands of good people” who brought him in touch with the UNHCR or the “Zurich Helpline for Asylum Seekers,” thus emphasizing the contingencies of his support but also the importance of these structures.³⁰ In Ahmed Mahal’s case, the “Zurich Helpline for Asylum Seekers” presumably played a decisive role in preventing him from being deported from Switzerland a second time. The encounter with Jacqueline Hauri, the woman who would become his wife, especially, was a turning point in his asylum case. Active for the “Zurich Helpline for Asylum Seekers” during the 1980s and 1990s, Hauri was one of the people who kept him in hiding during the months following his final asylum petition. She also acted as his legal counsel, which entailed drafting letters to the administration, organizing judicial support, and

29 On hiding as part of asylum-seeking, see the movie *Asyl – die Schweiz das Nadelöhr*, directed by Hans Stürm (Zurich, Filmkollektiv Zürich, 1987).

30 Account by Ahmed Mahal, “Sicherheitsrisiko und unerwünscht,” written down by historian Stefan Mächler, Mar. 1, 1989.

carrying out many other tasks. Gender clearly played a salient role in this instance.

In the field of migration studies, gender has long been acknowledged as a relevant and structuring aspect of migration policies, public representations, as well as migrants' experiences.³¹ In Ahmed Mahal's case, gender factored in in divergent ways. One must consider the gendered experiences and motivations within the solidarity movements that supported him.³² In his wife's case, according to her own account during the interview, she claims that she slowly slipped into political activism through her involvement in various organizations, whereby her feminist activism had a strong intersection with her engagement in the asylum movement. She gained experience and accumulated knowledge during the 1970s and 1980s in several organizations such as Amnesty International, was co-founder of the "Bewegung für eine Offene und Demokratische Schweiz" (BODS) and the "Asylkoordination Schweiz," as well as being engaged in different feminist contexts without being an active member of the women's movement.³³ These activities, as she stated, originated from her experience of feeling discriminated against as a young woman:

In the mid 1980s, I began to become interested in refugee work. During that time, asylum decisions became politicized for the first time. The way that refugees were treated, this being excluded, I knew from my own experience. I was convinced that, as a woman, I would never have the same possibilities that were open to men. Inside of me I have a deep feeling that I constantly have to fight in order to achieve my goals and to gain recognition. I already felt this discrimination as a girl.³⁴

Also in the interview I conducted with her, she stated that she clearly understood the degradation reflecting in the hatred of foreigners in Switzerland because she had lived through similar feelings of degradation as a woman, already as a girl.³⁵ Biographical elements obviously spurred her motivation to oppose discrimination in other fields such as the asylum movement. From the interview, it also becomes apparent that some activist women transferred their knowledge, particularly the notions of solidarity and strategies of civil disobedience they had developed and experienced within the feminist movement, to their activities in the asylum movement. Therefore, these women

31 Patricia R. Pessar and Sarah J. Mahler, "Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 812-46; Nancy L. Green, "Changing Paradigms in Migration Studies: From Men to Women to Gender," *Gender and History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 782-98; Sabine Hess, Johanna Neuhauser, and Tanja Thomas, "Einleitung: Gender und Politiken der Migration," *Feministische Studien* 34, no. 2 (2016): 177-88.

32 Another important gender aspect touches on the question of marginalized masculinities as "the other" of hegemonic masculinity, according to Raewyn W. Connell. See R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829-59. This makes it possible to identify and render visible male-specific vulnerabilities, so as to avoid disregarding the heterogeneity of experiences among men. In studies on migrants with precarious legal status, this has rarely been applied. According to his wife, Ahmed Mahal often struggled with his role as a man in Swiss society.

33 Interview with Jacqueline Hauri, Wallisellen, Apr. 11, 2019. For example, in 1984 she co-authored the pamphlet "Die Sprache ist kein Mann, Madame: Anregungen für einen nicht-sexistischen Sprachgebrauch," published by the Schweizerische Journalisten Union (SJU). She was also a one-time candidate for the party "Frauen macht Politik!" (FraP), although she was never an official party member.

34 Cristina Karrer, *Liebesgeschichten? Schweizerinnen und Asylbewerber* (Zurich, 1992), 21-34.

35 Interview with Jacqueline Hauri, 25:00-25:50.

positioned themselves within a tradition of social struggles. Hauri's solidarity apparently grew from experiences of discrimination against women and refugees that she and others regarded as similar.

Beyond Hauri's and other Swiss women's experience of discrimination fostering their solidarity with refugees, there was also gender bias between Swiss men and women within the movement. Swiss women were mainly active at the grassroots level, whereas men focused on public policy. As Hauri noted in her interview, it was mostly women who kept the refugees in hiding or did individual case work, whereas "men were those — this is how it always is — who appeared in public, who gave great speeches and so on, but they never really bothered about the single cases."³⁶ Asymmetrical power relations that obtained not only between the migrants and the state or administrations but also between these solidarity groups and the potential deportees were just as important as these manifold expressions of solidarity, however. As Jacqueline Hauri put it in another interview: The relationship between the helpers and the helped constituted a "positive paternalism." This entailed, among other things, as Hauri stated, a knowledge gap of cultural and institutional specificities in Switzerland, as well as the command of language and other important information to navigate the administrative requirements and regulations.³⁷

Conclusion

There is plenty of evidence corroborating the idea that the frequency or intensity of protest about refugees is not always associated with the number of enforced deportations, although more extensive research beyond the present situation of "deportation nations" evolving in many parts of the world is needed to confirm this.³⁸ In the context of Switzerland against the backdrop of rapid legal changes and more radicalized deportation logistics during the 1980s, knowledge about migrants and potential deportees, as well as knowledge from them, varied and often revealed the interdependencies of the multiple actors and producers of forms of "migratory knowledge," who ranged from administrations and media to solidarity movements and the migrants themselves. Deportations were a vital instrument of state control and migration management, yet thinking about them outside of an exclusively top-down state perspective and incorporating the less acknowledged perspective of the migrants and solidarity movements shows that "migratory knowledge" was social and was often shared and circulated among several actors, despite their unequal legal and

³⁶ Ibid.; 30:30-31:25.

³⁷ Interview with Jacqueline Hauri.

³⁸ Daniel Kanstroom, *Deportation Nation: Outsiders in American History* (Cambridge, MA, 2007); De Genova and Peutz, eds., *The Deportation Regime*.

social status. Even so, access to knowledge about how to straddle the administration's handling of migrants and the lingering deportation practice and laws was dependent on the social and cultural capital of the individual migrants. Yet, the above-mentioned example of Ahmed Mahal shows another important dimension: To the extent that it is possible to make generalizations, such a bottom-up perspective unveils that one emphasis lay on emotions as a motivational force for challenging the deportation regime, both on the part of the migrants as well as of those who supported them. As scholarship on contemporary anti-deportation protest has shown, strong relations between refugees and supporters (through friendships and/or romantic relationships) sometimes trigger mobilization.³⁹ When emotions such as anger, indignation, or love are directed against discrimination and inequality, they can be understood as a mobilizing force for challenging pending deportations. Ahmed Mahal and Jacqueline Hauri were a living example of this, not only through their anger and indignation, propelled by the perceived injustice of the Swiss migration regime. Their affectionate relationship also guaranteed a certain degree of safety for Ahmed Mahal, not least because he achieved citizenship through marriage, thereby preventing his deportation.

When analyzing migration, one should also focus attention on different forms of capital. Instead of understanding them as static entities, we need to acknowledge how one form of capital can be converted into another or can compensate for the others.⁴⁰ For migrants, who often lack economic means and support, social and cultural capital in the form of education, social networks, and so on could possibly be life-saving strategies. However, the "migratory knowledge" that circulates among migrants and solidarity movements, which is transformed and used to prevent deportations, is hardly ever symmetrical. Most migrants have access to certain information and knowledge reservoirs (law, medicine, administration, language, etc.) *via* these groups or individuals. Still, we should acknowledge the small and subtle "acts of citizenship" of the mostly precariously situated migrants as potential deportees, when those who are regarded as not counting make a claim to be counted.⁴¹

Furthermore, in the field of migration studies, scholars should also shed light on different forms of solidarity that exist between social groups and individuals. Solidarity networks make it possible for individuals to think beyond national sovereignty and bound up states and, instead, think of relationality and difference together.⁴²

39 Gianni D'Amato and Helen Schwenken, "Protests Revisited: Political Configurations, Political Culture and Protest Impact," in *Protest Movements*, ed. Rosenberger et al., 273-91.

40 Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, "Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches Toward a History of Migrant Knowledge," *Geschichte & Gesellschaft* 43 (2017): 313-46, here 338-40.

41 Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis, 1999); Peter Nyers, "No One Is Illegal: Between City and Nation," *Studies in Social Justice* 4, no. 2 (2010): 127-43.

42 Rosine Kelz, "Political Theory and Migration: Concepts of Non-Sovereignty and Solidarity," *movements. Journal für kritische Migrations- und Grenzregimeforschung* 1, no. 2 (2015): 1-17, here 15.

This also applies to the knowledge and information that is shared among solidarity groups. Such solidarities and claims may seem to be momentary acts, short interruptions of the established order of how to speak and act, as was true in the case of Ahmed Mahal, who refused to allow himself to be labeled a “file” but rather struggled to be regarded as human in the face of dehumanizing deportations.

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