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*Lives Beyond Borders. Toward a Social History of Cosmopolitans and Globalization, 1880-1960.* Heidelberg: Madeleine Herren, Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe", University of Heidelberg; Ines Prodöhl, German Historical Institute Washington, 12.02.2010-13.02.2010.

Reviewed by Milena Guthörl

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## **Lives Beyond Borders. Toward a Social History of Cosmopolitans and Globalization, 1880-1960**

Recently, transnational and global historians have focused on several aspects of the history of international networks and organizations, but have failed to address the role of individuals who work in and define these networks. The conference "Lives Beyond Borders" was held to develop a methodological approach to this question in the field of biographical research. In her opening lecture, MADELEINE HERREN (University of Heidelberg) illustrated the need for new methods of biographical research with regards to international individuals, using the example of the recent opening of the personnel files in Geneva's League of Nations Archives. These files do not support the common image of diplomats, but reveal the underlying bureaucratic methods of the administrative organization. Herren presented methodological questions and a preliminary theoretical conceptualization aimed at defining transboundary biographies. She suggested approaching these biographies on three levels: first, transcultural entanglement, representing aspects of boundary-crossing communication and community; second, territoriality, which incorporates the bureaucratic and political organization of the newly invented type of international civil servant; and third, performativity as an ongoing process of creating and transforming boundary-crossing identities. Based on this analytical approach, Herren proposed a typology of boundary-crossing lives. Although limited to the League of Nations' source material, she divided transboundary lives into four sub-categories: elite cosmopolitans, ex-

perts creating global topics, cumulative internationalists, and global illusionists.

The first panel, "Border Crossing Elites," concentrated on journalists, scientists, or aristocrats. Using the example of Michael Polanyi's biography, TIBOR FRANK (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest) pointed out that, as a consequence of Hungarian anti-Semitism, which excluded Jews from higher education, young Hungarian Jews were usually sent abroad to study. The effect was a weakening of Hungarian national science, a theory which is supported by the list of Hungarian Nobel Prize winners – most of whom received the prize well after they had left Hungary. The biography of Polanyi, a chemist, seems to be paradigmatic of Jewish Hungarian scientists, who often did not find a home in a specific language, or a certain country, but in their internationally-desired expertise in science.

Journalists, like William T. Stead, constitute a second classification of internationalists. Although Stead was neither a displaced intellectual like Polanyi, nor a member of the cosmopolitan elite, he was still an actor on the internationalist scene. Motivated by his belief in the "superiority of the English race," and, as a consequence, an "English civilizing duty," he remained strongly connected to his country. He was, as CORNELIA KNAB (University of Heidelberg) argued in her contribution, "an international imperialist." As a journalist, Stead created a public sphere of influence around international events such as

the Hague Conferences (1899; 1907). Knab pointed out that, because of his publicity and controversial character, biographical research on Stead as a “global player” must critically differentiate between his personal statements and the perception and commentaries about him by his contemporaries.

The women on whom RAPHAEL UTZ (University of Jena) focused in his lecture on ruling families as a social group enjoyed a similar degree of public notoriety as Stead. Utz presented the biographies of three very different royals, not all of whom were successful in realizing their aspirations. The comprehensive collections of letters from these royals, especially in the case of Grand Duchesse Maria Pavlovna, reveal an extensive and influential political network. In her commitment to the women’s rights movement, Princess Alice of Battenberg also demonstrated a strong affinity for transcending social borders. Utz pointed out that case studies of such aristocrats — as the social group of ruling dynasties in a global context — have been an understudied subject up until recently. He suggested that the study of royal biographies could provide a window to understanding transnational family networks, and could be extended to the study of the social and ideological border-crossing community of ruling families.

The second panel, on “Fugitives and Patterns of Mobility,” shifted the focus from the social heights of global elites to the field of bureaucratic questions about citizenship and the self-definition of internationalists as so called *Weltbürger*, or cosmopolitans. FRANK GRÄNER (University of Heidelberg) reflected on the different connotations of cosmopolitanism. The idealized cosmopolitan has been linked to the international, liberal minded, and widely travelled individual, whereas more negative connotations were employed by the Nazis and Soviets as part of their anti-Semitic propaganda campaigns.

During the conference, different attributes of cosmopolitans were also presented. These ranged from travelling the world with a comforting sense of nationality and a persistent connection to a home country, to being banished from one’s home country and thus becoming a “world citizen” by necessity. The fate of the latter was often strongly connected to the idea of “statelessness.” Examining the history of statelessness in the twentieth century, there are manifold aspects and agents that need to be considered. MIRIAM RÅRUP (University of Göttingen) defined fundamental terms such as passport, citizenship, and statelessness before providing an overview of landmark incidents in the history of state-

lessness, ranging from the aftermath of World War I to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In her lecture, she addressed the question of how organizations, diplomats, national institutions, and stateless refugees dealt with statelessness. RÅRUP pointed out that it is not only important to examine the biographies and activities of internationalists, but also to look at the circumstances and legal relationships that they were embedded in or excluded from. Referring to Bertolt Brecht’s “*Flüchtlingsgespräche*,” RÅRUP stressed the importance of a passport to any border-crossing individual.

In contrast to humans, bacteria and viruses do not respect national borders, and while epidemics easily overcome geographic boundaries, the fight against epidemics has often been obstructed by them. The struggle to control epidemics has yielded a strong, cooperative international effort. The third panel, “Experts Creating Global Topics,” allowed a closer examination of medical and scientific expert’s careers in international settings. YOSHIYA MAKITA (Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo) presented surgeon Anita Newcomb McGee’s battle for the recognition of nursing as a profession, rather than as a natural role for women. During the Spanish-American War, McGee was successful in establishing a permanent corps of trained female nurses within the US army. The idea of a qualified female nursing service was further strengthened when many US soldiers based in Cuba contracted yellow fever during an epidemic, leading to an urgent need for nursing staff in soldier camps and hospitals.

Another example of disease promoting an international career was presented by EREZ MANELA (Harvard University), who gave insight into the biography of microbiologist-epidemiologist and senior smallpox advisor of the World Health Organization, Nicole Grasset. The aim of Manela’s research is to learn more about the motivations of international activists, who often left high-status careers, families, and personal lives behind to pursue careers as part of international health organizations. Through the example of Grasset’s life, it became clear that technological change and scientific progress must be weighed alongside the personal motivations of internationalists, in order to understand the history and developments in transnational campaigns for disease control and eradication.

TOMOKO AKAMI (Australian National University, Canberra) examined two global health experts, each driven by very different motivations. On the one hand, Akami presented the example of Polish Jew Ludwig Ra-

jchman, whose commitment to the topic of global health as the medical director of the League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO) 1921-1939 was driven by a sense of humanity and social justice. On the other hand, Neville M. Goodman, British representative to several international organizations, acted explicitly out of national interests, such as protecting his fellow countrymen from outside health threats. Tomoko's talk underscored that the professional agenda of health experts could be strongly influenced by the political structure of their times. But while expert's motivations differed, they were united in their goals.

The fourth panel, "The Invisibles: No Place in History," sought to offer further answers to the question: What is a cosmopolitan? Some general observations about cosmopolitans were offered by RUDOLF WAGNER (University of Heidelberg). According to Wagner, most cosmopolitan lives are characterized by certain attributes, such as a high standing in society and government protection, made visible through Western clothing and manners, accompanied by a certain ignorance vis-à-vis foreign cultures. Instead of concentrating on Western cosmopolitans, Wagner chose to present the biography of Zhang Pengchun, who, while being fully integrated into American society, remained strongly connected to his home country of China. He is a prime example of a cosmopolitan who was still rooted in traditions and ideologies of his origins, but used a Western "disguise" to operate more successfully in a foreign culture. Li Shizeng (1881-1973) represented a somewhat similar type of cosmopolitan. His biography was presented by RUDOLPH NG (University of Heidelberg), CHRISTIANE SIBILLE (Universities of Heidelberg and Basel), and INES PRODÄHL (GHIL). Shizeng was one of those international individuals who attempted to use the scopes of international organizations as platforms for his own agenda. Like Zhang Pengchun, Li Shizeng has been overlooked by history thus far, and his international operations only become visible by tracing his paths around the globe. Li's activities are too numerous to be listed here, but the unconventional nature of his biography is typical for an internationalist, and highlights the need for equally unconventional approaches to research methodology.

In contrast to the previous focus on elites, GOPALAN BALACHANDRAN (Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva) spotlighted international subaltern groups such as seafarers and displaced persons in global space. As one of those spaces, he described international harbours and the world which surrounds them as places where a global community of subalterns â seamen, pros-

titutes, dock workers etc. â had been generated. Balachandran eventually pointed out that subaltern global spaces are rarely visible without sources of middle class observers.

The recurring theme of cosmopolitanism can be found in the Jewish Diaspora. Whether it is Michael Polanyi, Ludwig Rajchman, or all the other Jews drifting, fleeing, and moving through the sometimes dangerously anti-Semitic European countries, and often becoming unwillingly part of a cosmopolite community. NICOLAS BERG (Simon Dubnow Institute, Leipzig) questioned the old definition of the *Luftmensch* as a general Jewish way of life. All kinds of negative attributes deriving from an international lifestyle â particularly the attitude of seeing the globe as homeland â were often associated with Jews. And while most cosmopolitans were always connected to their home country, and as Rudolf Wagner indicated, could continue to be identified as British, Chinese, and so on, Jews were seen as dangerously rootless. Nicolas Berg presented a broad insight into the literary reverberation of *Weltbürgertum* (cosmopolitanism) where the *Luftmensch* is characterized as someone who is not rooted to his homeland. This last panel concluded that the necessity either to broaden the definition of cosmopolitanism, or to find a way to categorize and name the very individual and diverse biographies, all of whom share the characteristic element of a border-crossing life, remains controversial.

During the conference's discussion about the socio-historical methodology of cosmopolitanism, it became clear that biographical research must take the aspects of ethnicity, gender, and class of individuals or groups into account. Eventually, a discomfort about terms such as internationalism, globalization, and cosmopolitanism arose, because they implied a Western-centric definition of the professional class of boundary-crossing individuals. The three variants of methodological approaches to transboundary lives â transcultural entanglement, territoriality, and performativity â as presented by Madeleine Herren in her opening lecture, can be applied to most of the biographies presented at this conference. These lenses could become important avenues for the thorough examination of the history of international organizations and networks by enabling new investigations into the biographies of the women and men behind them.

#### Conference Overview:

##### Opening Remarks

Madeleine Herren (University of Heidelberg)

Ines ProdÄhl (German Historical Institute, Wash-

ington, DC)

*Introduction*

Madeleine Herren (University of Heidelberg): *The Paradox of Territoriality and Performativity. Transboundary Lives and International Organizations, 1919â1945*

*Panel I: Border Crossing Elites*

Cornelia Knab (University of Heidelberg): *William T. Stead and Imperialist Cosmopolitanism, or: How to Become a Global Player?*

Raphael Utz (University of Jena): *Rethinking Royalty: Transnationality as Deformation Professionelle in 19th and 20th Century European Monarchy*

Tibor Frank (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest): *A Liberal in a Dictatorial World. The Case of Michael Polanyi*

*Panel II: Fugitives and Patterns of Mobility*

Miriam Rürup (University of Göttingen): *(Re)moving Borders. Statelessness as Tragic Experience and Utopian Vision Alike*

Jing Yuen Tsu (Yale University): *Lin Yutang's Typewriter and his Bilingual Career*

Frank Gruner (University of Heidelberg): *Raging Reporterâ Crossing Borders. Reconsidering the Concepts of "Cosmopolitanism" and "Weltbürgertum" in Regard to Egon Erwin Kisch & Others*

*Panel III: Experts Creating Global Topics*

Tomoko Akami (National University, Canberra): *Imperial/National/Global Experts at the League of Nations. Through a Case of the Eastern Bureau of the Health Organization of the League of Nations, 1925â1941*

Yoshiya Makita (Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo): *Professional Angels at War. Anita Newcomb McGee and the Professionalization of Nursing Service in the Spanish-American War*

Erez Manela (Harvard University): *"A Wild Request Made by a Mad Female." Identity and Purpose in the Eradication of Smallpox*

*Panel IV: The Invisibles: No Place in History*

Rudolph Ng (University of Heidelberg), Ines Prodöhl (German Historical Institute, Washington, DC), Christiane Sibille (Universities of Heidelberg and Basel): *A Forgotten Internationalist. Li Shizeng, 1881â1973*

Rudolf Wagner (University of Heidelberg): *No Place in the Annals of any Nation. The Career of Zhang Pengchun, 1892â1857*

Gopalan Balachandran (Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva): *Subaltern Cosmopolitanism in the Imperial Metropolis. Notes towards a Prehistory of Racism and Multiculturalism*

Nicolas Berg (Simon Dubnow Institute, Leipzig): *Jewish Intellectuals and Other Free Spirits. Cosmopolitanism and Its Critics, circa 1900*

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