

Berlin Program Summer Workshop  
June 23-25, 2016

# Becoming TransGerman: Transnational, Transdisciplinary, Transgender, Transhuman

## Report



5th Berlin Program Summer Workshop  
June 23-25, 2016  
Freie Universität Berlin  
Report

## Becoming TransGerman:

### Transnational, Transdisciplinary, Transgender, Transhuman

The aim of this workshop was to explore the ways in which "trans" describes contemporary Germans and German society. The transcendence of national, corporeal, disciplinary, and institutional limits is embodied by the use of the prefix "trans." The workshop sought to engage this multifaceted transcendence to explore how Germans and Germany are increasingly situated "beyond" prescribed limits: Beyond the nation, the discipline, the human, the gendered subject, and more. Scholars and artists are encouraged to explore the ways in which "trans" is deployed in a wide variety of academic and cultural areas, from political and social institutions to cultural discourses and aesthetic forms.

Thursday, June 23, 2016

**Opening Plenary: What Can Trans Do?**  
**Tirza Latimer, California College of the Arts**  
**Moderator: Tom Haakenson, California College of the Arts**

Tirza Latimer opened the 5th Berlin Program Summer Workshop with a lecture entitled "What can 'trans' do?" She argued that scholarly inquiries concerned with 'trans' broke boundaries by forcing us to rethink traditional categories.

Latimer delineated 'trans' by looking at the relationship with its false twin 'inter'. As opposed to the prefix 'inter,' 'trans' does not signify separate identities or spaces divided by gaps. 'Trans' – Latin for 'across,' 'beyond,' and 'through' - signifies a break with these distinctive categories.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, 'inter' was the word du jour in English language publications, before it was eclipsed in 1990 by 'trans.' According to Latimer, the timing of this eclipse was not coincidental. The global social and political turnover that ended in the collapse of the bipolar order as well as the AIDS pandemic ushered in an era of reevaluation of traditional binary categories such as public/private, East/West, Third World/First World, male/female, hetero/homo, human/non-human. 'Trans' emerged as the primary mode of inquiry during this "anti-binary turn" in the late 1980s and 1990s. Transgender studies, along with queer studies, emerged precisely at this historical juncture as well.

Latimer concluded her opening remarks by posing the question what effect global capitalism, resource disparity, climate change, mass migration, terrorism, and the rise of religious fundamentalism and neo-nationalism will have on our patterns of expression and elements of speech. Do they herald a different prefix as the signifier of the moment? And what will it do

differently than 'trans'? In retrospective, Latimer's question to the audience, delivered on the same day of the 'Brexit' vote, almost seems to assume a prophetic meaning.

René Staedtler, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

## **Panel II: Transidentities: Immigrants and Refugees**

**Moderator: Jeremy DeWaal, Freie Universität Berlin**

Peter Polak-Springer & Aya Settawi, Qatar University

***Willkommenskultur* in Arab Eyes: Perspectives from the News and Social Media**

Jennifer Miller, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

**Lessons from the Guest Worker Past for Germany's New Future**

Michelle Kahn, Stanford University

***Almancilar*: The Historical Construction of the Turkish-German Transmigrant**

Panel II focused on the multi-faceted phenomenon of transnationalism and sparked debates about how to establish and accept transnational identities and transnational cultures. The first paper, *Willkommenskultur in Arab Eyes: Perspectives from the News and Social Media*, by Peter Polak-Springer & Aya Settawi of Qatar University, took an innovative approach to analyzing the refugee crisis. By documenting how media outlets in the Arab world are portraying the refugee crisis, Polak-Springer and Settawi shifted the focus from Western public opinion to Arab public opinion. In the process, their paper inspired conversation about how refugee flows can be just as controversial in the sending culture as in the receiving culture. Stanford PhD Candidate Michelle Kahn's paper *Almancilar: The Historical Construction of the Turkish-German Transmigrant* raised similar themes on how the act of choosing to migrate across national borders, even temporarily, causes permanent shifts not just in the migrant's life, but also in the cultures of the sending and receiving countries. In response, conference attendees engaged in a lively debate about the linguistic, cultural, and societal shifts that Germany's guest worker program caused in both Germany and Turkey. Jennifer Miller, of Southern Illinois University, also examined the transnational effects of Germany's guest worker program in her paper *Lessons from the Guest Worker Past for Germany's New Future*. Miller's analysis of German texts and images directed at the first wave of Turkish guest workers in the 1960s provided a nice complement to Polak-Springer and Settawi's paper by revealing another new angle on the refugee crisis. The audience responded by discussing how German politicians could use the example of the 1960s to help ease refugees' transition into German society and to help German society transition into its developing identity as the home of an increasingly transnational community.

Claire Greenstein, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

## **Panel III: TransGerman**

**Moderator: Carol Hager, Bryn Mawr College**

Ute Ritz-Deutch, State University of New York, Cortland

**German Colonist in Southern Brazil: Navigating Multiple Identities on the Brazilian Frontier**

Kira Thurman, University of Michigan

**Singing Like Germans: Black Concert Musicians and the Art of Racial Transformation in Interwar Europe**

Julie Ault, University of Utah

**TransGerman to TransEuropean: Environmental Protest in the (former) GDR, 1985-1995**

In keeping with the theme of this year's Summer Workshop, the papers comprising Panel III shed light on how German actors and audiences transcended the German nation in a variety of ways. Ute Ritz-Deutsch (SUNY Cortland) opened the panel with her presentation on German colonialists in Southern Brazil around the turn of the 20th century. These Protestant settlers were caught between cultures, and ultimately, often also between national and ethnic identities. While they strove to preserve their German language and culture in Brazil, many who returned to Germany also retained elements of a German-Brazilian ethnic identity. The second paper presented by Kira Thurman (University of Michigan) likewise investigated attempts at "preserving Germanness" by tracing the careers of several African American classical singers who moved to Europe to train as Deutsche Lieder singers. An analysis of these black performers' mastery of the genre despite their "blackness" provoked interesting responses, justifications, and rationalizations from the primarily German speaking audiences, which provide compelling insights into how the categories of "blackness" and "German" eventually became compatible. Finally, Julie Ault (University of Utah) presented a paper that established the inherently transnational nature of the East German environmental movement. Interactions between activists complicated Cold War binaries, creating "TransGerman" dialogues, not only between the GDR and the FRG, but also more broadly across the Iron Curtain. The general discussion following the panel picked up on threads from all three presentations, acknowledging that the experience of travel and exchange of ideas, while certainly possessing the ability to complicate national boundaries and categories, may also have the potential to reify them.

Larissa Stiglich, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

**Friday, June 24, 2016**

**Panel IV: Trans in Film**

**Moderator: Deborah Barton, Cardiff University**

Mine Eren, Randolph-Macon College

**When Women Can't Talk They Will Film – Sights and Sounds of Transnationalism in Yasemin Samdereli's *Almanya: Welcome to Germany***

Kristie Foell, Bowling Green State University

**Splicing a Transnational History: Fatih Akin's *The Cut* (2014)**

Nichole Neuman, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

**An L.A.-Sammlung in Berlin: Toward a Transnational (German) Film History**

The papers in this panel discussed contemporary German cinema and film preservation. As a whole, the panel coalesced around several issues: the conception of Heimat and the possibility of a "trans-Heimat" (a transitional, transnational, or even transcultural Heimat), the predicament of minorities in their homelands and abroad, and the role that genre plays in the films under discussion and in German film history as a whole. Mine Eren provided a new reading of the film *Almanya: Welcome to Germany* through the lens of the genre of woman's film and argued that the female protagonists are able to imagine a Heimat that does not yet exist for them in Germany; as these women navigate the majority culture as minorities they are able to envision a new mode of belonging and a new conception of Heimat. The dynamic of minorities within a hostile majority culture was also discussed by Kristie Foell in her paper on Fatih Akin's *The Cut*, a family saga about the Armenian genocide in Turkey. Foell examined as well the role that genre and past archetypal films played in *The Cut*, citing Martin Scorsese and Douglas Sirk's films and the genres of Westerns and Road Movies as provocative intertexts to consider alongside Akin's film. Nichole Neuman's paper traced the journey of Hermann and Meta Kleinhenz's collection of German Heimatfilme in Los Angeles as they

eventually made their way to join the official German film archive in Berlin. Neumann's paper highlighted the difficulty of locating the "Heimat" or principal site of German film history, and revealed the ideology—and at times contingency—behind official archives and the decisions regarding which films are considered worthy of preservation and which films or genres do not make it into the official German canon. Tara Hottman, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

## **Panel V: Transnational Approaches in German Studies**

**Moderator: Johannes Zechner, Freie Universität Berlin**

Svanur Pétursson, Rutgers University

**Tourism and Transgressing the Law on Procurement in 1950s and 1960s West Germany**

Edward Muston, Beloit College

**Cis-Nationalism: Transcending National/Transnational in Tawada and Flašar**

Bernd Fischer, Ohio State University

**Genealogies and Challenges of Transcultural Studies**

Christopher Ewing, City University of New York

**"Toward a Better World for Gays": Race, Erotica, and the Politics of Solidarity in West Germany, 1969-1986**

Panel V focused on "Transnational Approaches in German Studies," with two papers centered on the intersection between changing sexual moralities and transnational tourism in postwar West Germany and two that explored the theoretical dimensions of transnational studies through literature and philosophy. Christopher Ewing's paper on representations of Islam in West German gay men's magazines in the 1970s and 1980s tracked a shift in depictions of Muslim countries from eroticized tourist destinations unencumbered by West German sexual mores to sites of homophobic repression requiring the advocacy of West German gay men. Svanur Pétursson's paper showed how international tourism served as a popular means for unmarried couples in the 1950s and 1960s to bypass West German procurement laws and facilitated a liberalization of sexual morality even before these laws were overturned. Edward Muston's paper argued that the writings of the Japanese-German authors Yoko Tawada and Milena Michiko Flašar challenge "cis-nationalism," the presumed connection between language and nationality, by demonstrating that writing even in one's native tongue presupposes an act of translation. Bernd Fischer examined how Kant, Mendelssohn, and Herder grappled with the tension between internationalism and cultural difference, concluding that recent developments in evolutionary anthropology and epigenetics may point to a set of human universals that offer an alternative foundation for transnational studies. The discussion highlighted the importance of defining an approach to transnational studies that avoids the twin dangers of reifying the individual nations it seeks to overcome and suppressing the voices of the marginalized in favor of cosmopolitan elites. Brandon Bloch, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

## **Panel VI: Trans- Art, Architecture, and Photography**

**Moderator: Paolo Scrivano, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University**

Alice Goff, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

**The Krodo Altar and the Matter of German History in the Napoleonic Era**

Katrin Bahr, University of Massachusetts, Amherst/Freie Universität Berlin

**Through the Eyes of the Expert: Amateur Photographs of East German Men in Mozambique**

Bariş Ülker, Technische Universität Berlin  
**Going Beyond Borders through Photography**

In keeping with the workshop's goal of troubling boundaries, this panel featured three scholars working on art and visual culture from an array of disciplines.

Historian Alice Goff, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, explored the political and cultural tumult of early nineteenth century Germany through the Krodo Altar, a medieval object held in Goslar that attracted significant attention from German scholars and antiquarians. The Napoleonic conquest of Europe entailed widespread looting of art and examples of what we now term cultural heritage and, in Goff's reading, this precipitated a foundational rethinking of German history and identity. Goff further described her paper, and the larger project from which it was drawn, as concerned with the "failure" of German Idealism.

Katrin Bahr, currently a predoctoral fellow in the Berlin Program, drew our attention to the ways in which amateur photography structured postcolonial contact between DDR "Experts" and the citizens of post-colonial Mozambique. Based on extensive personal interviews and analysis of private photographic albums and archives, Bahr's work examined problems of race and gender in this instance of cross-cultural contact from an exciting new perspective.

Sociologist Baris Ülker, a wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter at the TU Berlin, concluded the panel with a stimulating account of former Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter and his activities in the Turkish capital of Ankara during his exile from Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Like Bahr, Ülker mobilized the specifically photographic record of Reuter's stay in Turkey to trouble the often rigid national boundaries that still trouble histories of architecture and urbanization, particularly in the modern period.

Peter Fox, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

**Saturday, June 25, 2016**

**Panel VII: TransBerlin**

**Moderator: Kimberly Redding, Carroll University**

Ruth Preser, University of Haifa/Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin  
**Lost and Found: Identity, Ontology and the Emergence of Queer Zion**

Christiane Steckenbiller, Colorado College  
**The New Berlin: Transnational and Transcultural Topographies of the City**

Scott Krause, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
**"First We Take Manhattan, then We Take Berlin:" The Transnational Campaign for a Pro-Western German Left, 1933-1959**

The first presenter, Scott Krause's, presentation "First we Take Manhattan, then we Take Berlin: Transnational Campaign for a pro-Western German Left, 1933-1959, focused on how members of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands developed a heavily anti-totalitarian edge to their thinking that further reinforced the West German Left's separation from the East. According to Krause, a coterie of SPD members including Willy Brandt focused on their cosmopolitan image and a rebranding as cold warriors to defend from criticism from the political Right and Left in the heavily divided political environment of Berlin.

Christiane Steckenbiller's talk, "The New Berlin: Transnational and Transcultural Topographies of the City," connected the prewar history of migration with the postwar to see where they intersect and how or when these intersections are visible. By deploying the concept of haunting, Steckenbiller explored the idea of presences and absences to focus on important sites such as the Schloss, the Humboldt Forum, and colonial street names. By participating and observing tours of Berlin focused on migration and oppression, Steckenbiller engaged with a particular view of the city that is highly critical of visions of a past that lacks sufficient engagement on a broader societal level.

Ruth Preser's talk, "Lost and Found: Identity, Ontology, and the Emergence of Queer Zion," examined how Berlin has been presented to in Israel as an alternative site free of oppressive mores, militarism, and high cost of living. In an interesting reversal of the Israel right of return, Preser discussed how a shift back to diaspora for freedom is becoming increasingly common for, in particular, white Ashkenazi Jews who can be both freer in Berlin, but also experience the othering effect of "queerness." In this process of migration, Preser argued that the othering effect of "queerness" comes of oppression and negative identity creation.

Audience participants posed some questions attempting to unify themes of each of these projects including a generational focus and the role of the city of Berlin. Oftentimes, in each project, historical actors reached back to histories for means of redemption, suppression of old narratives, or political heritage. Another audience member asked the panel if these projects focused overly much on Berlin and participated in a general trend of mythologizing the city, with further follow up questions on whether Berlin should be considered representative or unique for these historical processes.

Lorn Hillaker, Berlin Program Fellow 2015-2016

**Closing Plenary: Annette Timm, University of Calgary**  
**The Transatlantic Trajectory of Knowledge About Transsexuality**  
**Moderator: Omar Kasmani, Freie Universität Berlin**

In her talk, Annette Timm tracked the transfer of knowledge about transsexuality from Magnus Hirschfeld who founded Berlin's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in 1919, to the German-born American endocrinologist Harry Benjamin. Benjamin, the author of the pathbreaking first American book about diagnosing and treating transsexuality – *The Transsexual Phenomenon; a Scientific Report on Transsexualism and Sex Conversion in the Human Male and Female Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966) in turn had a close relationship to the American sexologist Alfred Kinsey and was instrumental in translating German-language works in the field.

Timm's fascinating research traced the personal network the scientists provided for individuals seeking gender reassignment surgery in the United States and shed light on the pivotal role images played in this process. Timm's analysis literally recovered the agency of the *trans* individuals who created new communities, educated doctors and the public by their stories and images. Thus, they shaped the research in the field at a time when the social and legal context in the United States and elsewhere at best denied diverse sexual identities if not persecuted such behavior.

The discussion reflected on the role of concepts with respect to power relations, e.g. the role of the state in categorizing, the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion as well as the rights associated with these positions. In addition, the role of science in knowledge production was critically reflected. The ambivalence of what the "discovery" of sexually diverse individuals by science and scholars means was discussed. What is considered "raw data" or "the field" needs to be carefully analyzed. The question how the co-produced knowledge empowers or challenges communities needs to be kept in mind. Last, but not least the question was raised what this visual access to the relationship with bodies might entail.

Karin Goihl, Berlin Program

The summer workshop had the great privilege to display parts of the *Trans Trans* exhibition currently showing at the University of Calgary which Annette Timm and colleagues curated. The show combines the historic images with present-day images of University of Calgary students, who shared self-presentations of their gendered selves in photos and videos. Read more on the exhibit's website: <https://nickle.ucalgary.ca/exhibitions/item/trans-trans>

**15:15-17:00 Exhibit (at the workshop venue)**  
**Trans Trans: Transgender Histories Between Germany and the United States, 1882-1966**

#### PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Dr. Deborah Barton | Cardiff University  
Dr. Jeremy DeWaal | Freie Universität Berlin  
Karin Goihl | Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin Program  
Dr. Thomas Haakenson | California College of the Arts  
Dr. Carol Hager | Bryn Mawr College

The Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies promotes a new generation of young North American scholars with specialized knowledge of modern and contemporary Germany and Europe. The program supports scholars in all social science and humanities disciplines, including historians working on the period since the mid-18th century. Since its inception in 1986 at the Freie Universität Berlin the program has brought more than 300 fellows to Berlin. In close cooperation with our North American partner, the German Studies Association, our Summer Workshop offers an opportunity to engage with a timely topic and strengthen ties between the program and scholars working in German and European studies. [www.fu-berlin.de/bprogram](http://www.fu-berlin.de/bprogram)

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

Berlin Program Alumni Panel at the GSA Annual Conference in San Diego  
Friday, September 30, 16:15 – 18:00 at Garden Salon 1  
*Refugees, Migrants, Citizens: Germany's Recurring Complexities of Becoming a Country of Immigration*  
<http://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/bprogram/roundtables/BPGSA2016Pro.pdf>

Berlin Program Summer Workshop June 21-23, 2017  
*Continuities and Ruptures*

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