

Berlin Program Alumni Panel
at the 40th Annual GSA Conference in San Diego
Friday, September 30, 2016

Refugees, Migrants, Citizens

Germany's Recurring Complexities
of Becoming a Country of Immigration

Report



Berlin Program Alumni Panel
at the 40th Annual GSA Conference in San Diego, September 30, 2016

Refugees, Migrants, Citizens?: Germany's Recurring Complexities of Becoming a Country of Immigration

Moderator: Levent Soysal (Kadir Has University, Anthropology/Communications, Berlin Program 2001-2002)

Commentator: Deniz Göktürk (UC Berkeley, German)

Participants

Sultan Doughan (UC Berkeley, Anthropology, Berlin Program 2015-2016)

Tolerance in Times of Crisis? How Refugees Unsettle the National Past and Future in Germany

Phi Hong Su (UCLA, Sociology, Berlin Program 2015-2016)

Transforming Refugees into Citizens: Vietnamese-Origin Germans and the Legality Divide

Lindsay Preseau (UC Berkeley, German, Berlin Program 2015-2016)

"Kein Englisch, Kein Schwörerdeutsch": The Effect of Language Ideologies and Policy on the Refugee Experience

On September 30, 2016 a group of Berlin Program alumni presented a panel on "Refugees, Migrants, Citizens? Germany's recurring complexities of becoming a country of immigration" at the 40th German Studies Association in San Diego, California, USA. The panel questioned paradigms of foreignness and integration and ultimately nation-building by focusing on instances of history education, language education and community building and how these are shaped and regulated by particularly German norms of what counts as rightful national history and language. The panel has pointed out how certain histories, ethnolects (*Kiezdeutsch*) and migrant relations to East Germany are marked and complicated as not really German by the defining institutions. The panelists provided research details on the ongoing "refugee crisis" and how this phenomenon has further crystallized an unwillingness to post-nationalize certain institutions to the reality of diverse migrant and refugee influx. The Berlin Program Alumni Panel was organized by Sultan Doughan, Anthropology, University of California at Berkeley.

In her presentation "Tolerance in Times of Crisis? How Refugees Unsettle the National Past and Future in Germany," Sultan Doughan argued that the discourse of 'refugee crisis' exceeds the commonly discussed theme of EU-border-regime crisis and has a specific German inflection. Arab-Muslim refugees who are already within the borders of the EU and residing in Germany are governed, controlled and policed by way of an epistemological border that is upheld by the politics of tolerance in contemporary Germany. Similar to Muslim German citizens after the change in citizenship law in 2000 and after the ongoing securitization of immigration since 9/11, refugees are confronted with this internal epistemological border that shapes their inclusion as always already on the outside of Europe, European history and liberal European values - on the outside because of their religious tradition, usually designated as culture. Doughan exemplified her argument by describing how a Jewish-Muslim grassroots movement has drawn parallels of being a refugee during WWII and in the contemporary in order to ask for tolerance and empathy for Arab refugees. She contrasted this act with the implementation of political education (*Bildung*) for young descendants of migrant parents, who are German born citizens and yet they are treated as a threat to German liberal-democracy, because of their perceived religious intolerance. According to Doughan's analysis the call for tolerance in general creates a hierarchy between majoritarian and minoritarian German groups. The current situation in Germany exemplifies what political theorist Wendy Brown in her book *Regulating Aversion* (2009) has conceptualized as a liberal form of tolerance embedded in a project of governmentality. In contrast to Brown, Doughan has demonstrated how tolerance is not only a civic virtue, but is being defined as the law that decides over the right

to reside and to be eligible for social welfare for newly arrived refugees. This intense redefinition of immigration law under changed conditions, Doughan reads as the crisis politics that can implement emergency laws in order to secure the future as already envisioned, before the arrival of those who triggered the political and epistemological crisis (Roitman 2014; Koselleck 2004).

Phi Hong Su argued in “Transforming Refugees into Citizens: Vietnamese-Origin Germans and the Legality Divide” that the current Vietnamese community is still divided in Germany by the legal and work divisions framed by the political systems of the two German states. Vietnamese workers from the North entered the GDR by way of work contracts, while the majority of South Vietnamese had entered West Germany as refugees and were subject to laws that impacted their work and residence permits. Phi’s paper included how legality divides have informed stereotypical thinking about Vietnamese in Germany as *Zigaretten-Mafia*. These stereotypes, and forms of stereotyping refugees as breaking the order, Phi Hong Su suggested were also present and discernible in how Middle Eastern refugees are talked about and shamed by the already established immigrant communities. More importantly, Hong Su demonstrated how the legality divide created two very broad different citizen-subject relations to the state. Those refugees, who were provided with social assistance and provisions, still feel that they owe their lives to the German state and to German kindness. At public festivals they display, loyalty, gratitude and their successes as good German citizens. As a community they were reaching out to the broader German society as well. In contrast, “former contract workers of the GDR focus their events on their friendship circles and celebrations of Vietnamese songs, dances, and outfits, without much interest in contributing to broader German society. Yet, many are also part of a history of activism, pushing for the human and labor rights of contract workers after 1990, and many have achieved success on their own terms, without attributing much or any of it to German hospitality,” as Hong Su argued. In concluding, Hong Su suggested that Syrians in particular are also fleeing from a civil war and that the divisions of the war might spill over to Germany or even produce new lines of legality that will have an impact of how the Syrian community will feel at home in their current host country.

Lindsay Preseau’s presentation “Kein Englisch, Kein Schwörerdeutsch: The Effect of Language Ideologies and Policy on the Refugee Experience” demonstrated how German language learning for refugees is dominated by language ideologies of purity. Preseau argued that language and code mixing are very common for multilinguals and serve social and cognitive functions. In the German context, however, language mixing is understood to be a *Doppelte Halbsprachigkeit*, the inability to speak one language properly, which Preseau debunked as a myth (Jones & Romaine 1986) that is most commonly applied to youngsters of Turkish descent. Preseau demonstrated how such language ideologies about language-mixing are not only scientifically false but also harming to certain social groups and populations. In light of the current refugee crisis these kinds of concerns for the German language resurface in a new guise. Preseau demonstrated how the refugee crisis added a new form of language mixing to the hitherto problematically discussed ethnolectal mixing, namely the use of English. By drawing on her fieldwork as a German instructor in language learning center in Kreuzberg, Berlin, she demonstrated how refugees who either already speak German or are proficient in English are sent to language classes to speak an acceptable language. In her talk Preseau clarified that further stigmatization of refugees happens in the arena of language learning, where also English is handled as a threat from abroad. She suggested that instead of censoring refugees in their English usage or post-migrant youngster to speak Kiezdeutsch, language trainers and social workers should be trained to understand language mixing as a normal transnational cultural phenomenon.

The panel provided an opportunity to address open inter-disciplinary questions, as commentator Deniz Göktürk highlighted. By connecting all three papers Göktürk, asked compellingly why Germany was still struggling with becoming a country of immigration. She pointed out that there is an affective regime of national boundaries that governs history, education, belonging and specifically language as something that can be only framed through the concept of the nation-state. The discussion between audience and presenters showed that the refugee crisis is also a crisis, because it challenges conceptions and imaginaries of the neatly designed nation-state, based on one single monolingual and monoperspectival culture and history. Given that all three Berlin Program alumni had spent the year of 2015/2016 in Germany they could confirm through their empirical data that there was indeed more policing and governing in their fields as opposed to an opening and

mixing. The refugee crisis is really the crisis of the nation-state challenged to maintain internal and external border in spite of a changing population.

Sultan Doughan is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation research examines the practices surrounding historical memory, liberal democracy, Muslim minorities, and political education in contemporary Germany. In researching major educational sites of Holocaust education, it investigates the extent to which discourses on Muslim integration in Germany are entangled with Germany's perception of itself as a liberal post-Holocaust society. It also explores how Muslim-Germans, whose 'true' citizenship rests upon their adaptation, make sense of these dominant self-perceptions.

Phi Hong Su is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her areas of interest are international migration and politics, and her dissertation focuses on relationships between individuals from varied migration streams out of Vietnam to Germany during and after the Cold War.

Lindsay Preseau is a PhD Candidate in the German Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Lindsay's main research interests lie in language contact and change in the Germanic languages. During her fieldwork in Berlin with newly-arrived refugees and youth with migrant backgrounds she conducted research for her dissertation project entitled "Dialect Transfer in Multilingual Germany: Kiezdeutsch and "Kiezenglish."

Levent Soysal is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Communication at Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Turkey. Between 2001-2002, he held a position as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, Freie Universität Berlin. During 1998-2001, he taught at the John W. Draper Interdisciplinary Master's Program in Humanities and Social Thought, New York University. His teaching and research interests cover contemporary urban spaces and spectacles, and movements of peoples, cultures, and goods. He is the co-editor of *Orienting Istanbul* (Routledge, 2010) and author of articles in academic journals and books.

Deniz Göktürk is Associate Professor of German at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research focuses on migration, culture and cinema. In addition to her contributions in journals such as *New German Critique* and *Framework*, she is co-editor of *The German Cinema Book* (with Tim Bergfelder and Erica Carter, 2002), *Transit Deutschland: Debatten zu Nation und Migration* (with David Gramling, Anton Kaes and Andreas Langenohl, 2011) and *Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?* (with Levent Soysal, 2010, in Turkish 2011) Göktürk has co-founded TRANSIT, an electronic journal launched by the Berkeley German Department in 2005.

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Our cooperation with the German Studies Association (GSA) offers Berlin Program Fellows and Alumni a chance to present their work at the annual GSA Conference to an expert audience. Each year, one or more Berlin Program Panels and Roundtables at the GSA serve as a site for critical engagement.

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Integration in Theory and Practice, 1960-2010 (2014)

Upcoming Events:

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Berlin Program Summer Workshop June 23-25, 2017: *Continuities & Ruptures*

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