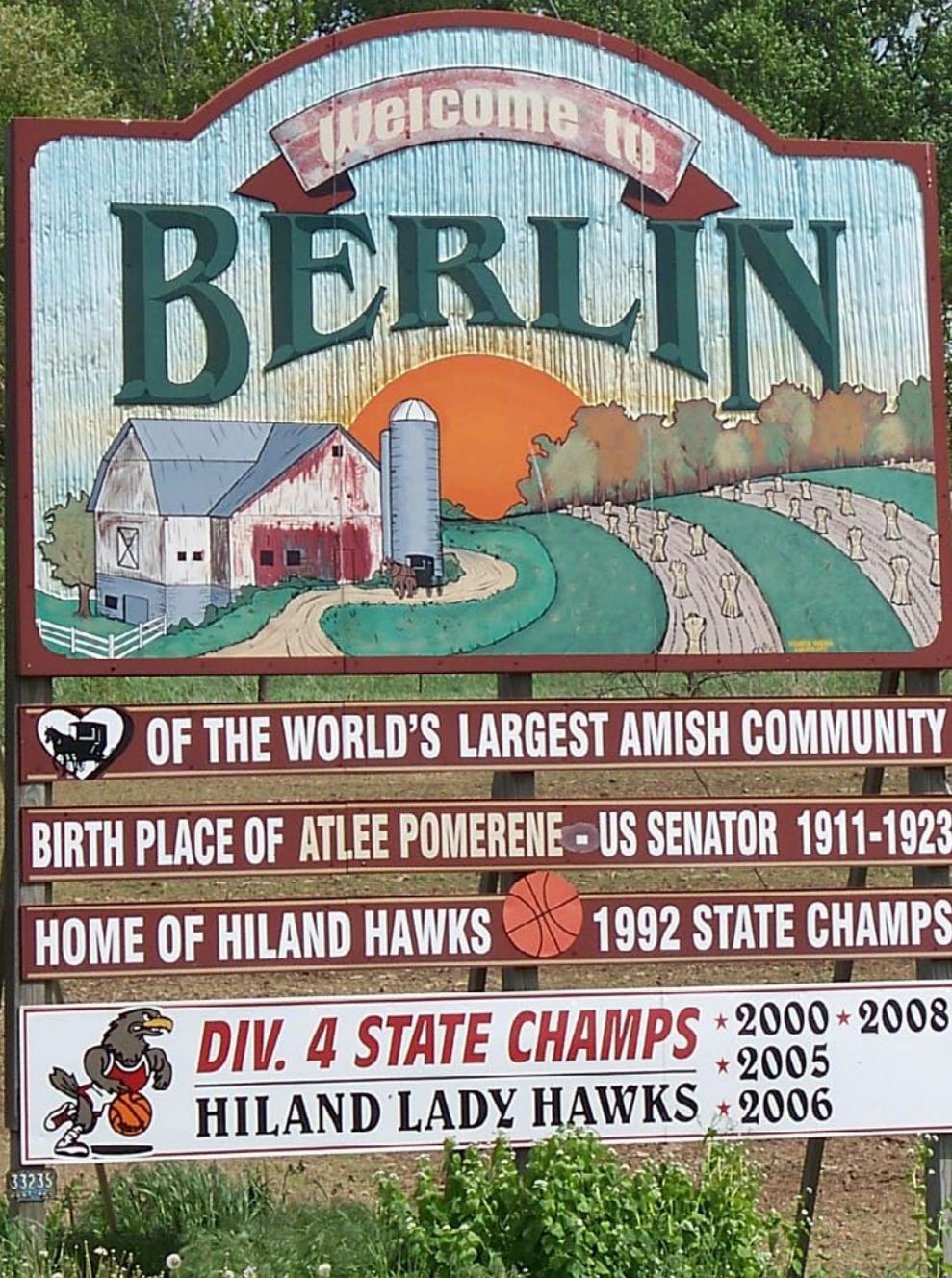


BERLIN PROGRAM

for Advanced German & European Studies

BERLIN PROGRAM SUMMER WORKSHOP 2012 German Studies Between the Global and the Local

Report



Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies
German Studies Between the Global and the Local
Report on the Berlin Program Summer Workshop
June 25, – 26, 2012, Freie Universität Berlin

Opening Plenary Discussion

Reflections by

David Barclay, Kalamazoo College & German Studies Association and

Sabine Hake, University of Texas at Austin & German Studies Association

An deutschen Spesen soll die Welt genesen. Schön wär's. Such were the concluding remarks by Josef Joffe, publisher-editor of the German weekly *Die Zeit* when asked to briefly comment on present German foreign policy. David Barclay started his reflections with a reference to the Tagesspiegel interview on June 25, 2012, in which Joffe described German chancellor Merkel as inept as Kaiser Wilhelm II in her public relations. Unable to explain German policy proposals, the German Chancellor is faced with the conundrum of constant calls for German leadership and fierce resistance to Berlin's policy proposals, Joffe argues. The recent "fiscal" update of the last two verses of Emanuel Geibel's poem *Deutschlands Beruf* commonly known as *An deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen* – a catchphrase often attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm II and used to criticize Germany's adamant, selfish and bossy behaviour – epitomized the level of tensions and conflicting interests in crisis ridden Europe at the time of the workshop.

After a brief introduction to the history of the GSA, David Barclay raised a number of challenges in German Studies. From the perspective of a historian, he explains, the ahistoricity in theory and the dangers of presentism should give us pause. Equally important are old questions which need to be re-examined, such as: what is the role of specific disciplines in an interdisciplinary environment, and what is the impact of German Studies – an Anglo-American creation – on German and Austrian scholarship? Last, but not least, he cautioned us against redrawing disciplinary boundaries which may run the risk of disciplinary self-destruction.

In her reflections, Sabine Hake reminded us that the discourse of the global and the local should be understood as a result of the end of the Cold War and the establishment of the neoliberal world order that requires us to rethink the national. We should be wary of the reduction of "global" and "local" to a critical cliché of vague spatialism. The reference to race, class and gender, which signified a knowledge of the current terminology, but was often of little consequence analytically is a case in point. The establishment of new critical models should also be carefully examined. *Botanisieren auf dem Asphalt* – a coinage by Walter Benjamin to describe the flaneur's aimless gaze – often produces its own particularisms, Hake argues. Both dangers have broader implications, the evacuation of the center (i.e. the German language), the self-destruction of disciplines/institutions as well as the loss of larger questions being the most pertinent ones to our concerns.

Karin Goihl, Berlin Program, Freie Universität Berlin

Panel 1

Moderator: Erika Hughes, Berlin Program, FU Berlin

April Eisman, Iowa State University

Reinventing Leipzig for a Neoliberal World

Sara Blaylock, University of California, Santa Cruz

Culver City's Wende Museum: *Alltag* by the Sea

Christina Gerhardt, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

Contexts: Neoliberal Economics, Transnational Politics and Local Color in Berlin School Filmmaking

The first panel of the workshop offered a wide-ranging discussion of the former East Germany as a case study for thinking about post-1989 dynamics of locality and globality. The presenters looked at the GDR from a number of perspectives: as a site of urban transformation in the wake of its dissolution; as an object of archival preservation; and as a setting for post-Wende German cinema. April Eisman (Iowa State University) examined the post-Wende renewal of Leipzig in terms of its artistic culture and urban landscape. In the neoliberal present, Eisman argued, a vibrant local culture and its history have been displaced by attempts to present the city to a global audience. Sara Blaylock (UC Santa Cruz) took us to an unexpected refuge for the material past of the GDR—Culver City, California's *Wende* Museum. For Blaylock, the Museum's unique location and aversion to master narratives offer an opportunity to supplement prevailing German histories of the Wende. Christina Gerhardt (University of Hawai'i at Manoa) returned us to issues of neoliberal economics in her look at Christian Petzold's film *Etwas besseres als den Tod* (2011). The film stages Thuringia as a transitional space for characters in search of a Heimat, and reveals the double nature of 21st century mobility—liberating for some, while forced upon others less fortunate. Much of our discussion circled around the question of speaking about the GDR today. How can scholars resist the triumphalist narrative of Western capitalism without turning the socialist past into an object of nostalgia?

Paul Dobryden, Berlin Program Fellow 2011/12

Panel 2

Moderator: Johannes Zechner, Freie Universität Berlin

Emily Bruce, University of Minnesota

Reading the World: The Geographic Education of German Children, 1770-1850

Patrick Hege, Fordham University/TU Berlin, Center for Metropolitan Studies

A German Colonial Type? The *Metropole* and the Production of Glocal *Heimat*

Pasquale de Caprio, Università degli Studi di Napoli "Federico II"/HU Berlin

The Idea of the Middle Ages in National Socialist *Volksschule* 1933-1945

Moderator Johannes Zechner opened the second panel by welcoming participants and members of the audience and noting that a unifying principle of the panel's papers was German identity in the broad sense of the word. In different contexts, the papers by Emily Bruce, Patrick Hege, and Pasquale de Caprio examined the ways in which Germans learned about their own past and geography.

Emily Bruce's paper examined the shift in the methodology of the geographic education of German children that occurred over the course of the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. Earlier geographic education was primarily descriptive and emphasized memorization, while later approaches reflected the intersection of contemporary shifts in geographic discourse and changing pedagogic techniques that combined to produce a form of geographic education that was to be active and "problem-based." Bruce argues that the changing nature of geographic education reflected a broader shift in pedagogic techniques that was more child-centered, flexible, and "cozy." Furthermore, the peoples and places that were included in children's geographic textbooks reflected, and in turn shaped, Germans' "colonial imaginations."

In his presentation, Patrick Hege utilized the discussions surrounding the planning and representation of *das Kolonialhaus* at the Cologner International German Werkbund Exhibition in 1914 as a case study in which to examine the interaction of the often opposed narratives of urbanization and empire and nation building. The lack of congruity between *das Kolonialhaus* and contemporary German colonial architecture was the product of the triadic interaction between the desires of officials in Dar es Salaam and Berlin, and *Werkbund* planners in Cologne. The final design of *das Kolonialhaus* downplayed any "primitive" and "foreign" elements and instead utilized more familiar Heimat motifs and monumentality to emphasize German modernity in an effort to win a global market for German wares and architectural forms of a standardized "authentic colonial type."

Pasquale de Caprio's paper returned to the issues of education as he examined the representation of the Middle Ages in German elementary school textbooks during the National Socialist period. The National Socialist portrayal of the German Middle Ages was an important component in a broader pedagogic project to convince Germans of their cultural and racial superiority in Europe. It is not surprising then, that elementary schools were identified as critical centers where the Nazi Weltanschauung could be passed on to German children. However, as de Caprio argued, Nazi officials were thwarted in their attempts to introduce a standardized curriculum by conflicts between the old "state" and "Volk" history and differences between Volksschulen and Landschulen. Thus, despite its "totalitarian" intentions, educational policy provides another context that demonstrates the gaps and tensions that existed between Nazi official ideals and actual practices.

Devlin Scofield, Berlin Program Fellow 2011/12

Panel 3

Moderator: Luis-Manuel Garcia, Berlin Program, FU Berlin

Quinn Slobodian, Wellesley College

Feminist Third Worldism in 1970s West Germany

Djahane Salehabadi, Cornell University

Seamless Lifecycles and Geographies: Analyzing the Unmaking of Digital Technologies in Berlin

Koby Oppenheim, City University of New York

At the Crossroads of a Changing Discourse: Voices of Young Jewish Immigrants in a Euro-Committed Germany

The third panel explored the transnational diffusion of identities, political strategies, and technology by discussing and comparing three distinct case studies. Koby Oppenheim (City University of New York)

dealt with processes of identity formation among young Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants in Germany by juxtaposing their personal experiences with the rhetoric of international recriminations surrounding the current Eurozone financial crisis. He framed this relationship around notions of debt and responsibility and their construction in reference to legacies of the past. Whereas recent comparisons in Greek newspapers between financial austerity measures and the horrors of Nazi occupation castigate the contemporary German government by appealing to a familiar discourse of historical guilt, the attitudes of these immigrants indicate a reversal of this discourse, in which efforts towards memorialization, reconciliation, and engagement with the past form the basis of identification with German society. Quinn Slobodian (Wellesley College) examined the changing perspective of the West German feminist movement towards the status of women in the People's Republic of China during the 1970s and 1980s. Although initially interpreting female political mobilization under Mao Zedong as the wave of the future and adapting it to their own domestic concerns, West German feminists later abandoned this model in response to the continued persecution of women under the Communist regime. Slobodian used this case to analyze the broader tensions of cultural relativism within the international feminist movement and to illustrate a more general shift in its attitude towards "Third World" nations. Rounding out the panel, Djahane Salehabadi (Cornell University) focused on the global proliferation of discarded electronic technology, or "e-waste," as an index of broader transnational relationships. In contrast to the traditional arguments of systems theory, she proposed an integrated approach to the history of technology that combines cultural, political, and economic factors in order to show a multilinear and multipolar series of interactions between the local, the national, and the global.

Bradley Nichol, Berlin Program Fellow 2011/12

Concluding Plenary Discussion

Moderator: Stephen Brockmann, Carnegie Mellon University & German Studies Association

The closing plenary session of the first-ever summer workshop of the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies featured reflective thoughts from Stephen Brockmann from Carnegie Mellon University, who also served as the President of the German Studies Association from 2010-2012. Brockmann's engaging comments elicited several responses from the audience, and a robust discussion session of approximately forty-five minutes followed his fifteen-minute, extemporaneous presentation.

Stephen Brockmann began by responding to the preliminary remarks by David Barclay and Sabine Hake, remarks that began the day's events during the "Opening Plenary" session. He pointed to four trends he noted throughout the workshop. First, Brockmann noted that the differences between a German Studies and a European Studies approach raised at the workshop provided engaging points for further discussion. He suggested that German Studies cannot be synonymous with European Studies, primarily because language still remains crucial to German Studies as it is practiced in the U.S. and elsewhere. Secondly, he suggested that there is a related need to explore the differences between a U.S. model of German Studies and a German model of German Studies, as a comparison may prove fruitful ground for further examination. He suggested, thirdly, that the U.S. cannot act in scholarship as a supposed neutral ground from which to engage German Studies; the U.S. perspective must be problematized as well. Finally, he noted that East Germany is often situated as a "lost world" in need of scholarly recovery, and

questioned the ability of contemporary scholars to position themselves in relation to the supposed, often idealized East German past.

Among the themes addressed in the three workshop panels, Stephen Brockmann noted clear distinctions among the first panel on aesthetic objects, the second panel on history, and the third panel on what he described as a kind of ethnography. He reminded audience members of Hake's warning about the evacuation of the center as well as the abandonment of agency, and encouraged further discussion and clarification of these two points with respect to the central role that German language, and German-speaking countries, need to continue to play in German Studies.

Thomas Haakenson, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Berlin Program Fellow 2003/04

City Walk: Places of Tranquility/Spaces for Reflection

Guided by Katharina Nobis and Stefan Tornack, Center for Metropolitan Studies, Technische Universität Berlin

In search of silence

A walking tour of Berlin structured around six points of interest, where behind the usual facades, and between the bustling streets of this metropolis, Master Students Katharina Nobis and Stefan Tornack of the Technical University's Center for Metropolitan Studies led an international group of doctoral students, professors, and professionals on a walking tour for the second day of the Berlin Program's Summer Workshop: "German Studies Between the Local and the Global." As a symbol of the unanticipated site of our liminal excursion, Katharina and Stefan had us meet in front of the Westportal of the Reichstag, suggesting to many of us that this excursion could be merely a repeat of something we all might have seen while riding the Bus 100 through our favorite European Hauptstadt. But expectations were soon dashed and met with greater excitement as our group swung to the outside of the Reichstag to behold a small park on the Schiffbauerdamm curated by artist Ben Wagin, which included a lengthy section of the original Berliner Mauer, as well as trees, images, and texts from a variety of artists designed to commemorate an area which was previously divided and now stands as the bureaucratic and political center of Germany. Continuing behind the scenes, Katharina invited members of the group to climb a staircase directly in the heart of this Regierungsviertel, from which views of the metaphorically-laden transparent glass facades of the governmental buildings could be had; and a little peace and quiet, too.

With the urban docent baton passed to Stefan, we moved from Tiergarten through Mitte to the old campus of the Charité hospital, where our guides reminded us of, among other things, the origins of psychiatric care as a form of wellness, and the need that all of us have for measured convalescence. From temporary rest to (pardon the clumsy transition) a final resting place, our fearless group was escorted into the peaceful environs of the Dorotheenstädtische Friedhof, where black cats and lunchtime recluses could be seen enjoying the respite that this 18th century cemetery afforded its urban denizens. Many of us paid homage to such heavyweights as Bertolt Brecht, G.W.F. Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Christa Wolf, and Karl Friedrich Schinkel, while enjoying the tree-lined pathways and sonic insulation they afforded. The Friedhof proved an excellent transition to the warm confines of our next locale, the Thaer-Saal at the HU. Completely drenched in natural light thanks to a Wintergarten-like ceiling of leaded

glass, the Thaer-Saal was equally remarkable for its incredible silence. Hardly a footstep could pass without a prodigious reverberation from nearly every corner of the room, causing most of us to listen like little Kita-Kinder to Stefan's chronicle of the Saal's shifting institutional identity, including its most recent history as a site of student occupation and protest following a Senate mandate to permanently close the exquisite architectural sanctuary. Nothing could have prepared us for the final stop on our excursion: the Geschichtspark Ehemaliges Zellenfängnis Moabit. This public park was opened in 2006 on the grounds of a 19th-century Prussian prison that now stands directly across the street from the bustle of the hypermodern Hauptbahnhof. We entered through the original prison gates and walls to find a vast open space of green grass and grizzled brick that managed to block nearly every audible sound from the neighboring streets: an incredible experience in the middle of every manner of urban tumult!

Thank you to Katharina and Stefan for the wonderful afternoon and for sharing your knowledge of some of the unique spaces of tranquility in this exhilarating metropolis.

Colin Lang, Berlin Program Fellow 2012/13

Organizing Committee

Dr. Thomas Haakenson is Chair and Professor of the Liberal Arts Department at Minneapolis College of Art and Design and Visiting Artist Committee Vice President of the Minnesota Chapter of the Fulbright Association

Dr. Matthew Miller is Visiting Assistant Professor of German at Colgate University

Karin Gohl is Academic Coordinator of the Berlin Program at the Freie Universität Berlin

Berlin Program Alumni Panels, Roundtables and Summer Workshops

Every year, Berlin Program Alumni present their work on panels and roundtables at the annual German Studies Association conferences. In the past, Berlin Program roundtables and panels addressed the following topics: *A New Era in German Bevölkerungspolitik?* *Legacies and Myths in German Discourses on Demography* (2012), *Architectures of Berlin* (2011), *The Visual Arts in Cold War Germany and Beyond* (2010).

This year the Berlin Program held its first summer workshop on June 25-26, 2012 which offered an opportunity to engage with another timely topic. Open to Berlin Program fellows and alumni as well as scholars working in German and European studies, the interdisciplinary setting served our efforts to strengthen the academic exchange in the field. A similar event is planned for June 2013.

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