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Mobility and Biography: Methodological Challenges and Perspectives

Abstract: *This introductory article discusses methodological challenges for and perspectives related to a field of study that has only recently gained importance in historical research: transnational lives. For a long time, methodological nationalism had slowed down or even prevented investigations of individual or collective life-courses that were characterised by a high degree of mobility and internationality. We argue that a critical engagement with concepts from the social sciences related to the current interest in processes of globalisation and transnational phenomena can open up new perspectives on “mobility and biography”. In doing so, we first explore how focusing on lives that crossed political, social or cultural boundaries can bring aspects of individual agency together with larger structural settings as explanatory factors. In the second part, this article attempts to conceptualise transnational lives for historical research. Introducing our own concept of “cosmobilities”, we demonstrate how engaging with two sociological strands, “rooted cosmopolitanism” and “mobilities”, might provide a fresh impetus for analysing transnational subjects and their practices.*

In 1849, Lorenz Brentano, today an almost forgotten activist during the European Revolutions of 1848/49 in the Grand Duchy of Baden, set sail with his wife via Switzerland for the United States. Almost thirteen years later, in 1862, this son of a merchant from Mannheim with family roots in Tremezzo (Lombardy) was finally granted an amnesty. Nonetheless, Brentano, who by then had settled in Chicago and acquired US citizenship, would not return to Germany for good. Only during his term as American consul in Dresden from 1872 to 1876 did he resettle for an extended period in Germany.¹ At first glance, then, and in particular as displayed in dictionaries of national biography like the *Neue Deutsche Biographie* and the *American National Biography*, Brentano seems to have lived two separate lives: as

¹ On the history of the Brentano family, see Manfred Beller: *Die Familie Brentano – Vom Comer See zum Rhein. Migration, Assimilation und die Folgen*, in: Bernd Thum and Thomas Keller (eds.): *Interkulturelle Lebensläufe*. Tübingen 1998, 159–169; Konrad Feilchenfeldt and Luciano Zagari (eds.): *Die Brentano. Eine europäische Familie*. Tübingen 1992.

a failed revolutionary he had to flee German territory, only to achieve success as a journalist and politician in the US.²

This division is problematic because it not only simplifies a life's course unduly but also because it shows a bias towards national narratives. Analysing such biographies as "nationalised" lives ignores the transnational dynamics and entangled practices shaping their agency. For such transgressive life stories were not bound to one territory or one nation-state but rather marked by a high level of mobility and internationality, especially if one keeps in mind larger group relations, like family or business networks.³ Bringing research on aspects of "mobility and biography" during different epochs and in various spatial dimensions together, this issue of the *European History Yearbook* intends to open up new perspectives on the emerging field of transnational lives.

Transnational Lives: A New Perspective on Writing Biographies?

The subject of transnational lives has only recently gained importance in historical research, for instance in the study of imperial biographies and careers or diasporic minorities.⁴ This seems surprising given that during the last two de-

² Both assertions have also had a deep impact on the historiography of the so-called "Forty-Eighters" – a term that is highly problematic in itself. Wolfgang Hochbruck: Einführung. Das offene Ende einer Revolution, in: id. (ed.): *Achtundvierziger – Forty-Eighters. Die deutschen Revolutionen von 1848/49, die Vereinigten Staaten und der amerikanische Bürgerkrieg*. Münster 2000, 12–28; Sonja Maria Bauer: Lorenz Brentano – Vom Advokaten und Revolutionär in Baden zum Journalisten und Politiker in den USA, in: Hans-Peter Becht, Kurt Hochstuhl and Clemens Rehm (eds.): *Baden 1848. Bewältigung und Nachwirkung einer Revolution*. Stuttgart 2002, 217–238. On transnational approaches that avoid this dilemma, see in particular Sabine Freitag (ed.): *Exiles from European Revolutions. Refugees in mid-Victorian England*. New York 2003; ead.: *Friedrich Hecker. Two Lives for Liberty*. St. Louis 2007; and more recently Hélena Tóth: *An Exiled Generation. German and Hungarian Refugees of Revolution, 1848–1871*. Cambridge, MA 2014.

³ Elizabeth Buettner: *Empire Families. Britons and Late Imperial India*. Oxford 2004; Simone Derix: Transnationale Familien, in: Jost Dülffer and Wilfried Loth (eds.): *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte*. München 2012, 335–352.

⁴ Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Woollacott: Introduction, in: ead. (eds.): *Transnational Lives. Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–Present*. Basingstoke 2010, 1–14; David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.): *Colonial Lives across the British Empire. Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge 2006; Malte Rolf (ed.): *Imperiale Biographien*. Special Issue of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40, no. 1 (2014), esp. 5–21; Clare Anderson: *Subaltern Lives. Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920*. Cambridge 2012. On recent,

cares, history as a discipline has been increasingly marked and reshaped by the so-called “transnational turn”. What are the main reasons for this hesitant reception, only gradually producing spill-over effects on the *analysis* and *writing* of biographies? If we follow the analyses of sociologists, one important reason seems to be that, despite programmatic claims of change, “methodological nationalism” (Ulrich Beck) or “methodological territorialism” (Neil Brenner) continues to dominate in the social sciences – and, one might add, in the humanities.⁵ Yet through the lens of this volume’s topic one can identify another obstacle, pertaining more to the practical sphere of the historian’s profession and everyday business: the difficulty of finding and gaining access to relevant sources for analysing transnational lives due to their fragmented existence, scattered across different national and local archives. This challenge increases even further if we include historically marginalised groups (e.g. women and religious or ethnic minorities) in our analyses. For in most cases, they have neither consciously left traces of their lives behind nor have they been identified by researchers as subjects worth pursuing.⁶ Hence, it is safe to assume that there are many more “hidden” transnational lives yet to discover.

The reluctance which has so far been shown to make transnational lives a prominent research subject has also been reinforced by a more general discourse on the merits of the biographical approach itself. Especially among German historians, writing biographies was for a long time overshadowed first by historicism and then by negative connotations the genre of biography carried to later generations of scholars.⁷ A main argument of earlier critics against the biographical approach was that it lacked not only analytical strength but also reinforced

partly converging attempts to re-explore the transnational dynamics of “Germans abroad”, see H. Glenn Penny and Stefan Rinke: *Germans Abroad. Respatializing Historical Narrative*, in: iid. (eds.): *Rethinking Germans Abroad*. Special Issue of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41, no. 2 (2015), 173–196.

5 Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznajder: *Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences. A Research Agenda*, in: *British Journal of Sociology* 57 (2006), 1–23, esp. 2; Neil Brenner: *Beyond State-Centrism? Space, Territoriality, and Geographical Scale in Globalization Studies*, in: *Theory and Society* 28 (1999), 39–78, esp. 46.

6 On these challenges in a colonial and global context, see Hannes Schweiger: *Postcolonial Studies*, in: Christian Klein (ed.): *Handbuch Biographie. Methoden, Traditionen, Theorien*. Stuttgart 2009, 408–413, esp. 409; Deacon, Russell and Woollacott, Introduction, 1–14; Hannes Schweiger and Deborah Holmes: *Nationale Grenzen und ihre biographischen Überschreitungen*, in: Bernhard Fetz and id. (ed.): *Die Biographie – zur Grundlegung ihrer Theorie*. Berlin 2009, 385–418.

7 For general reflections on the genre of historical biography, see Simone Lässig: *Die historische Biographie auf neuen Wegen?*, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 60 (2009), 540–553.

the dominance of heroic, “great men” narratives. Over the last decades, however, and partly due to the “cultural turn” and its impact on the humanities, biography as a genre has been re-evaluated. The insight has gained ground that one of its strengths is to link the “individual” with “society”, thereby turning such biographies into valuable sensors for general trends and changes in society.⁸ Emphasising the relationship between subject and context, individuals are no longer portrayed as acting completely independently of their social context. Out of this reflexive process a “new biography”⁹ has emerged that attempts to avoid the pitfalls of past biographies. The writing of transnational lives has to take these recent advances even further, because such an approach must take into account several contexts in which individual and collective lives were entangled.

Conceptualising Transnational Lives for Historical Research

Closely linked to the aforementioned historiographical trends is the heightened interest in the agency of transnational (or global) subjects.¹⁰ Given the specific perspective of this volume, two questions arise: How can we conceptualise actors if

8 Peter Alheit: *Biographie und Mentalität. Spuren des Kollektiven im Individuellen*, in: Bettina Völter et al. (ed.): *Biographieforschung im Diskurs*. Wiesbaden 2005, 21–45; Thomas Etzemüller: *Biographien. Lesen – erforschen – erzählen*. Frankfurt 2012, 8–13; Hans Erich Bödeker: *An näherungen an einen gegenwärtigen Forschungs- und Diskussionsstand*, in: id. (ed.): *Biographie schreiben*. Göttingen 2003, 9–64, esp. 19–20; Volker R. Berghahn and Simone Lässig (eds.): *Biography between Structure and Agency. Central European Lives in International Historiography*. New York 2008; Margit Szöllösi-Janze: *Lebens-Geschichte – Wissenschafts-Geschichte. Vom Nutzen der Biographie für Geschichtswissenschaft und Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, in: *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 23 (2000), 17–35; Volker Depkat: *The Challenges of Biography. European-American Reflections*, in: *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 55 (2014), 39–48; Levke Harders: *Legitimizing Biography. Critical Approaches to Biographical Research*, in: *ibid.*, 49–56; Andreas Gestrich: *Einleitung. Sozialhistorische Biographieforschung*, in: id., Peter Knoch and Helga Merkel (eds.), *Biographie – sozialgeschichtlich*. Göttingen 1988, 5–28, esp. 14–17.

9 Jo Burr Margadant: *Introduction. Constructing Selves in Historical Perspective*, in: ead. (ed.): *The New Biography. Performing Femininity in Nineteenth-Century France*. Berkeley, CA 2000, 1–32.

10 Johannes Paulmann: *Regionen und Welten. Arenen und Akteure globaler Weltbeziehungen seit dem 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 296 (2013), 660–699; Madeleine Herren: *In-szenierung des globalen Subjekts. Vorschläge zur Typologie einer transgressiven Biographie*, in: *Historische Anthropologie* 13 (2005), 1–18; Bernd Hausberger: *Globale Lebensläufe. Menschen als Akteure im weltgeschichtlichen Geschehen*. Wien 2006; Tobias Weger (ed.): *Grenzüberschreitende Biographien zwischen Ost- und Mitteleuropa. Wirkung – Interaktion – Rezeption*. Frankfurt 2009.

we want to acknowledge the dynamics of their multiple identities and, at the same time, give due consideration to their specific, localised links, with the goal in mind to avoid defining them solely as individuals or groups who crossed boundaries? And given that we do not view them as “heroes” acting autonomously with regard to larger structural settings, how can we explain their agency in its complexity and ambiguity? Trying to cope with both the methodological challenges as well as the perspectives that manifest themselves in these questions, we propose an approach to “mobility and biography” that brings two sociological strands – “rooted cosmopolitanism” and “mobilities” – together with a historical research agenda. We subsume this approach under the term “cosmobilities”. We think that this offers a stimulating impetus for analysing transnational lives. We have developed our own approach initially with dictionaries of national biography in and across Europe in the long nineteenth century¹¹ in mind but its applicability reaches further in time and space.

Applying “Rooted Cosmopolitanism” to Historical Research

In the fields of philosophy and political thought, the term *cosmopolitanism* is primarily used in a normative sense to describe an ideal of world citizenship that corresponds with a harmonious understanding of individuals or groups, crossing geographical, national, cultural or social boundaries. This understanding rests on the further assumption that a cosmopolitan identity can overcome “difference” caused by particularistic notions of belonging.¹² Hence, the meaning of cosmopolitanism overlaps in part with the logics of universalism (inclusion) and

¹¹ Although some of the dynamics connected to our approach of “cosmobilities” are not peculiar to the nineteenth century, mobility was, as Jürgen Osterhammel and others have pointed out, one of the century’s main features. Jürgen Osterhammel: *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. München 2009, 1290–1291; Christopher A. Bayly: *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons*. Oxford 2004, 1–22. For the changing semantics of mobilities in different historical epochs, pointing also to the fact that mobility in the early modern period often existed independently of spatial movement, see Wolfgang Bonß and Sven Kesselring: *Mobilität am Übergang von der Ersten zur Zweiten Moderne*, in: Ulrich Beck and Wolfgang Bonß (eds.): *Die Modernisierung der Moderne*. Frankfurt 2001, 177–190.

¹² Out of the vast body of literature, see Jeremy Waldron: What is Cosmopolitan?, in: *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8 (2000), 227–243, esp. 238; Carol A. Breckenridge et al.: *Cosmopolitanisms*, in: ead. et al. (eds.): *Cosmopolitanism*. Durham 2002, 1–14, esp. 12; Andrea Albrecht: *Kosmopolitismus. Weltbürgerdiskurse in Literatur, Philosophie und Publizistik um 1800*. Berlin 2005, 1–9; Pauline Kleingeld and Eric Brown: “Cosmopolitanism”, in: Edward N. Zalta (ed.): *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2013 Edition). URL: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/cosmopolitanism/> (23 Apr. 2015); Mike Featherstone: *Cosmopolis. An Introduction*, in:

particularism (exclusion) – a conceptual pair that has been applied on different levels in the social sciences as a category for the analysis of “difference”.¹³ Nonetheless, because of its strong normative overtones, most historians still prefer to treat cosmopolitanism as a contemporary phenomenon or descriptive category. And although this catchy label has made a lasting impression on studies of transnational, transcultural and global phenomena, it has only rarely been credited with explanatory power or heuristic value as a concept for critical analysis.¹⁴

In the social sciences, however, the situation is quite different. Since the 1990s, large-scale attempts, especially among sociologists, have increased to re-define and operationalise cosmopolitanism as an analytical concept. Picking up this trend and embedding it in his own theory of reflexive modernisation, Ulrich Beck in particular became a leading proponent of a “cosmopolitan turn” in the social sciences.¹⁵ Despite the persuasiveness of Beck’s arguments, he clearly developed them mainly against the background of challenges for sociological analysis related to the present and not – as is important from a historian’s perspective – to the past. In contrast, Sidney Tarrow’s concept of “rooted cosmopolitanism”¹⁶ seems to offer a more concrete starting point for historical analyses: On the one hand, Tarrow characterises cosmopolitans as those who strive for world citizenship. Hence, humanity as a whole serves as a central point of reference for their way of being in the world. On the other hand, he argues that cosmopolitan actors are rooted in transnational social relationships, linking them to multiple contexts. Thus distancing his concept from the stereotypical notion

Theory, Culture & Society 19 (2002), 1–16, esp. 8; Garrett W. Brown and David Held (eds.), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*. Cambridge 2010.

13 Mark Currie: *Difference*. London 2004, 1–20 and 105–126; Ernesto Laclau: *Emancipation(s)*. London 1996, 20–35; Chris Lorenz: Representations of Identity. Ethnicity, Race, Class, Gender and Religion. An Introduction to Conceptual History, in: Stefan Berger and id. (eds.): *The Contested Nation. Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*. New York 2008, 24–59, esp. 25.

14 Julia Horne and John Sluga: Cosmopolitanism. Its Past and Practices, in: *Journal of World History* 21 (2010), 369–374, esp. 369–370. On first attempts in this direction, see the workshop on “Kosmopolitismus: zum heuristischen Mehrwert eines wissenschaftlichen Modekonzepts” (organised by Bernhard Gißibl and Isabella Löhr), 12.09.2013–13.09.2013 Mainz, in: *H-Soz-Kult*. URL: <http://www.hsozkult.de/event/id/termine-22553> (24 Apr. 2015).

15 Beck and Sznaider, *Unpacking*, 1; Ulrich Beck, Wolfgang Bonß and Christoph Lau (eds.): *Entgrenzung erzwingt Entscheidung. Was ist neu an der Theorie reflexiver Modernisierung?* Frankfurt 2004; Ulrich Beck: Mobility and the Cosmopolitan Perspective, in: Weert Canzler, Vincent Kaufmann and Sven Kesselring (eds.): *Tracing Mobilities. Towards a Cosmopolitan Perspective*. Aldershot 2008, 25–36.

16 Sidney Tarrow: Rooted Cosmopolitans and Transnational Activists, in: id. (ed.): *Strangers at the Gates. Movements and States in Contentious Politics*. Cambridge 2012, 181–199. For an earlier version, see id.: *The New Transnational Activism*. Cambridge 2005, 35–56.

of “rootless cosmopolitans”, Tarrow stresses that transnational actors remain “rooted” in – i.e. connected to – particular localities and networks.¹⁷

There are several advantages of such an approach to transnational actors: First, the entanglements between local, national and global contexts in which their agency was shaped and constructed are put into focus. Second, acknowledging the complex dynamics of the lives of such “rooted cosmopolitans” challenges us to pay equal attention to the question of how they coped with their respective situations of transnational mobility and of connectedness in multiple societal environments. As a consequence, “rooted cosmopolitans” could be mediators of transnationalism and internationalism¹⁸ but did not necessarily have to take on this role. For the challenge of finding one’s way and place in different contexts could also put transnational actors into a marginalised position and possibly strengthen local attachments and particularistic attitudes. A nuanced approach to those multiple biographies, then, can open up new perspectives on how individuals and groups crossing boundaries negotiated their agency in the past in varying political, social, and cultural circumstances.

“Rooted Cosmopolitans” and Mobility: Movements, Networks and “Motility”

Closely linked to debates about cosmopolitanism and globalisation are the developments in the field of mobility studies. Starting with the programmatic first issue of the journal *Mobilities* in 2006, a “new mobilities paradigm” has been emerg-

¹⁷ Id., *Rooted Cosmopolitans*, 183–185. On a similar argument, yet for the phenomenon of network transnationalism, see Janine Dahinden: “Wenn soziale Netzwerke transnational werden”. *Migration, Transnationalität, Lokalität und soziale Ungleichheitsverhältnisse*, in: Markus Gamper and Linda Reschke (eds.): *Knoten und Kanten. Soziale Netzwerkanalyse in Wirtschafts- und Migrationsforschung*. Bielefeld 2010, 393–420.

¹⁸ Our usage of the terms *transnationalism* and *internationalism* points to different nuances in relation to the concept of “nation” as well as “nationalism”. Whereas the first term implies a going beyond the “nation” in a rather cultural and non-governmental sense, the second puts more emphasis on boundary crossings that lead, for example, to forms of cooperation between actors representing different “nations” and political interests in an international arena or in intergovernmental organisations, like the League of Nations. Both concepts and the dynamics associated with them overlap, however, on many levels and are furthermore not without ambiguities of their own. On the question of how to define internationalism see, pars pro toto Johannes Paulmann and Martin H. Geyer: Introduction. *The Mechanics of Internationalism*, in: iid. (eds.): *The Mechanics of Internationalism. Culture, Society, and Politics from 1840 to the First World War*. Oxford 2001, 1–26.

ing.¹⁹ There are obvious points of contact between the fields of mobilities studies and transnational history. Nonetheless, and contrary to recent developments in the fields of cultural studies and anthropology²⁰, its methodological aspects have not yet been widely received by historians.²¹ Mobility studies focus especially on the current increase in migration due to globalisation, interacting systems of mobility and the associated political issues and questions of governance. From a historian's perspective, however, it is not these processes as such but only their current manifestations and practices that seem to be *new* phenomena. But the analytical potential of the field of mobility studies from which historians may benefit becomes clear when looking at Weert Canzler's, Vincent Kaufmann's and Sven Kesselring's proposed division of "mobility" into three sub-components: "movements", "networks" and "motility".²² While the first two components are rather widely used terms in transnational studies, "motility" – i.e. the capability to become spatially or socially mobile – points to structural prerequisites as well as the intentionality behind individual and collective boundary crossings.

"Motility" therefore relates on the one hand to capabilities and opportunity structures – like education, social status, gender, religion, ethnicity or capital – on which individuals and groups depend in order to move spatially, socially or culturally between different localities and contexts. On the other hand, it also comprises the motivations, strategies and socio-economic or political restraints of actors – i.e. the question of why such movements occur or why transnational and transcultural networks start to exist and which purpose they serve. Hence not only commodities, people and ideas should be taken into account when analys-

19 Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry: Editorial. Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings, in: *Mobilities* 1 (2006), 1–22; Tim Cresswell: *On the Move*. London 2006, 1–24; John Urry: Moving on the Mobility Turn, in: Canzler, Kaufmann and Kesselring, *Tracing Mobilities*, 13–24; Canzler, Kaufmann and Kesselring: *Tracing Mobilities – An Introduction*, in: *ibid.*, 1–12; Peter Adey et al. (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities*. Hoboken 2014; Bonß and Kesselring, *Mobilität am Übergang*, 177–190.

20 Silke Göttisch-Elten: Mobilitäten – Alltagspraktiken, Deutungshorizonte und Forschungsperspektiven, in: Reinhard Johler, Max Matter and Sabine Zinn-Thomas (eds.): *Mobilitäten. Europa in Bewegung als Herausforderung kulturanalytischer Forschung*. Münster 2011, 15–29; Johanna Rolshoven (eds.): *Mobilitäten!* Berlin 2014 (= *Voyage* 10).

21 One exception is, for example, Valeska Huber: Multiple Mobilities. Über den Umgang mit verschiedenen Mobilitätsformen um 1900, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 36, no. 2 (2010), 317–341; ead.: *Channelling Mobilities. Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869–1914*. New York 2013.

22 Canzler, Kaufmann and Kesselring, *Tracing Mobilities*, 3–4. Cresswell, in turn, argues that whereas "movement" is rather an "abstract and scientific conception", pointing to a linear understanding of the relationship between time and space, "mobility is thoroughly socialized" and includes aspects of power and social representation. Cresswell, *On the Move*, 20.

ing the agency of such “rooted cosmopolitans”, but also the impact of opportunity structures²³ and the question of how individuals or groups perceived their chances of mobility. Additionally, and most importantly, focusing on mobility instead of “the nation”, without denying that the latter might have been an important – or even the most important – reference point for contemporaries, reveals aspects of those transnational life-courses that otherwise would remain hidden.²⁴ In such a research setting, it is not only the reflexive side of mobility – i.e. the subjectivity and construction of worlds by those who managed to become spatially or socially mobile – but also its moorings²⁵ and transformations in time and space²⁶ that this volume addresses as a whole.

Spatial Dimensions in a “Cosmobile” Research Setting

“Boundaries” and “borders”, whose meanings are both comprised by the German *Grenze/Grenzen*, are terms related to multiple dynamics of mobility, encompassing such different phenomena as geographically, politically, socially and culturally coded crossings. Consequently, “boundaries” and “borders” are terms often used in a very broad sense. Although such an openness allows for a flexible and dynamic usage of the concept, it also complicates locating exactly *what* “boundaries” and “borders” transnational subjects are either crossing or have already crossed and how they experienced these multiple mobilities.²⁷

Furthermore, “boundaries”, “borders” and “space”, even when they seem to be politically and territorially fixed categories, are not *per se* powerful but unfold their meaning only through concrete social practices. As Georg Simmel

²³ Jürgen Mackert: Opportunitätsstrukturen und Lebenschancen, in: *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 20 (2010), 401–420.

²⁴ Deacon, Russell and Woollacott, Introduction, 2.

²⁵ Hannam, Sheller and Urry, Editorial, 2.

²⁶ Vincent Kaufmann and Bertrand Montulet: Between Social and Spatial Mobilities. The Issue of Social Fluidity, in: Canzler, Kaufmann and Kesselring, *Tracing Mobilities*, 37–56, esp. 40–42.

²⁷ On the challenge of conceptualising boundaries and borders, see, for example, Jürgen Osterhammel: Kulturelle Grenzen in der Expansion Europas, in: *Saeculum* 46 (1995), 101–138; Stefan Böckler: Grenze. Allerweltswort oder Grundbegriff der Moderne?, in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 45 (2003), 167–220; Monika Eigmüller and Georg Vobruba (eds.): *Grenzsoziologie. Die politische Strukturierung des Raumes*. Wiesbaden 2006; Étienne François, Jörg Seifarth and Bernhard Struck: Einleitung. Grenzen und Grenzräume. Erfahrungen und Konstruktionen, in: iid. (eds.): *Die Grenze als Raum, Erfahrung und Konstruktion. Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen vom 17. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt 2007, 7–32; Hans Medick: Grenzziehungen und die Herstellung des politisch-sozialen Raumes. Zur Begriffsgeschichte und politischen Sozialgeschichte der Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: Eigmüller and Vobruba, *Grenzsoziologie*, 37–51.

already pointed out in 1908, in his *Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms*: “boundar[ies]” – to pluralise his definition – are not “spatial fact[s] with socio-logical effects, but a sociological reality that is formed spatially.”²⁸ Particularly for such historical settings as East Central Europe, where “boundaries” and “borders” have historically been difficult to define because of the region’s multi-ethnic composition, recent studies have shown how phenomena of de- and re-territorialisation can make us overcome pitfalls of the imperial past(s). In such a scenario it is no longer the implementation of the nation-state model but the dynamic and complex entanglements between regional, national, imperial and global levels that are put into the analytical focus.²⁹ This, in turn, connects to our understanding, which views “mobilities” as both infrastructural prerequisites for actors going beyond borders and influential factors in (re-)shaping and (re-)negotiating boundaries. Furthermore, it is why a dynamic understanding of space is necessary if one-dimensional and static narratives are to be avoided.

This, in turn, also implies that the main features of “rooted cosmopolitanism” and “mobility” which we used as a starting point to conceptualise “cosmobilities” are not self-explanatory when it comes to “boundaries” and “borders”, but need to be part of larger reflections about “space” – a category that has gained new interest among historians in the context of the so-called “spatial turn”³⁰. Taking these reflections on “space” into account, “cosmobilities” proposes to connect local rootedness, transcultural orientations and global entanglements with insights on mobility and its three defining features: movements, networks and “motility”. In doing so, this approach is particularly suitable for putting forward a multi-sided perspective on transnational lives that avoids the pitfalls of merely constructing a new master narrative, as one-dimensional as the binary ones we seek to overcome (e.g. *nation* and *cosmopolitanism*).

28 Georg Simmel: *Sociology. Inquiries into the Construction of Social Forms. Vol. 2* (translated and edited by Anthony J. Blasi, Anton K. Jacobs and Mathew Kanjirathinkal). Leiden 2009, 551.

29 Steffi Marung and Katja Naumann: Einleitung, in: ead. (eds.): *Vergessene Vielfalt. Territorialität und Internationalisierung in Ostmitteleuropa seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Göttingen 2014, 9–44.

30 On the spatial turn, see Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Reinbek bei Hamburg 2006, 284–328; Matthias Middell: Der Spatial Turn und das Interesse an der Globalisierung in der Geschichtswissenschaft, in: Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (eds.): *Spatial Turn. Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*. Bielefeld 2009, 103–123; Frithjof Benjamin Schenk: *Russlands Fahrt in die Moderne. Mobilität und sozialer Raum im Eisenbahnzeitalter*. Stuttgart 2014.

Mobility and Biography in and across Europe: An Interdisciplinary Panoply of Transnational Lives

Given the broad subject matter of this volume, the individual articles focus on a wide array of aspects and themes connected to “mobility and biography”. Hence, most of the articles either combine both aspects or – if perfect symmetry cannot be maintained – focus on one aspect and reflect on the other along the way. Networks, movements and the capacity to become socially or spatially mobile in and across Europe are not only analysed as structural factors but rather seen as connected to concrete practices of mobility among different groups in the spheres of business, politics and the arts: from Jewish merchants via legal and financial advisors all the way to musicians.

The articles can be grouped around three sub-themes of “mobility and biography”, though cross-references exist in most articles: hidden transnational lives and the role of networks, multiple contexts and “rooted cosmopolitans”, and, finally, opportunity structures and mobility. Furthermore, the sample represented in this volume has been chosen in a way that each one of the three sub-themes includes a case study that either precedes forms of mobility before the modern nation-state emerged as a leading category or that addresses aspects of “mobility and biography” from an alternative disciplinary perspective, i.e. that of a non-historian.

Hidden Transnational Lives and the Role of Networks

With her case study of members of the Ashkenazic mercantile elite between Warsaw, Frankfurt (Oder) and Amsterdam, *Cornelia Aust* focuses on the role of commercial and familial connections across eighteenth-century Europe. In this context, she discusses what historians have long disregarded: how Jewish merchants shaped these networks, and the strong position of women within them. While networks and boundary-crossings furthered Jewish mercantile interests, they also had an impact on cultural and social practices, like marriage patterns. Combining “mobility and biography” from the perspective of Jewish history in the early modern period, this article points to new insights at the intersection of economy and culture, before the age of Jewish mass migration from Central and Eastern Europe set in during the nineteenth century.

Rainer Liedtke, in turn, views the agents of the Rothschild dynasty as important nodes within an information network characteristic of the nineteenth century. In doing so, he discusses how they placed their mobility at the service of the

business success of the Rothschild family. Far from being a homogeneous group, the Rothschild agents, who were located at places where the banking house had not yet established a permanent presence, included Jews as well as non-Jews. Hence, the main selection criterion for employment as an agent in the service of the Rothschilds was not so much, as one might have expected, the factor of shared religious belonging but rather trustworthiness and the willingness to uproot oneself and become spatially and culturally mobile.

Addressing aspects also present in both preceding articles, *Simone Derix* asks how to identify and conceptualise historical actors who have so far remained hidden from the historian's agenda. Focusing on the first half of the twentieth century, her programmatic contribution reflects on how connecting a biographical approach with infrastructures of wealth and mobilities shifts the focus to the central role of legal and financial advisors of the Thyssen family. Though working in the background and thus not attracting much public attention, these "hidden helpers" were decisive brokers of capital for the Thyssens. As experts with very specific transnational knowledge on how to move money in and between different contexts, they occupied a central position in the field of wealth management. Exploring legal as well as illegal means for saving taxes and finding tax havens, they furthered both their employers' as well as their own interests.

Multiple Contexts and "Rooted Cosmopolitans"

Nico Randeraad's contribution considers new insights on transnational knowledge exchange by tracing mobilities among social reformers participating at international congresses between 1840 and 1914. Discussing two overarching topics prevalent in debates about social reform around the turn of the century, he demonstrates that overlapping dynamics between local, national and international contexts shaped the multiple agencies of this sample group. In this context, he makes biographical sketches of four social reformers from different social, political and cultural backgrounds. Whereas aspects of mobility and internationality are permanent companions of the analysed life-courses and professional careers, his study makes us aware of the different logics and dynamics that have to be taken into account when studying the lives of "activists beyond borders".

Approaching this volume's topic from a political science perspective – and hence from a methodological starting point quite different to that of the historical case studies –, *Lucas Geese*, *Wolfgang Goldbach* and *Thomas Saalfeld* address the relationship between mobility and parliamentary representation in the British House of Commons between 2001 and 2015. They focus in particular on the ques-

tion of how the voting behaviour of legislators with a “Black or Asian Minority Ethnic” background was influenced by their geographical origin. Whereas more recent immigrants tend to focus strongly on issues connected to transnational mobility, the second generation shows a greater concern for issues of social mobility within Britain and their local constituencies. Analysing parliamentary questions for written answer, this article demonstrates not only the diversity among immigrant legislators, but also when and why they still rely on networks that are marked by ethnicity. In doing so, the authors join biographical distance and transnational mobility with the wider framework of democratic representation in the British House of Commons over the last fifteen years and provide an alternative avenue of how to approach “mobility and biography”.

Opportunity Structures and Mobility

Gesa zur Nieden's article discusses the relationship between musicians as an occupational group and their paths of migration in early modern Europe. Her case study focuses in particular on Glückstadt (in today's Schleswig-Holstein), a city that was founded by Christian IV of Denmark and Norway in 1616, and on the biography of Johann Jakob Froberger, a harpsichord player, organist and composer, travelling in the service of the Viennese court across Europe. Hence, it provides insights into the question on what resources musicians could rely on in order to become mobile. This case study is in particular of added value for this issue, for it focuses on historical subjects who lived in a pre-modern setting where mobility was a rather negatively connoted phenomenon that often meant a complete exclusion of vagrant groups from early modern society. Yet even in the case of musicians for whose careers movement and migration played an important role, the attitudes towards such life-courses were in many respects ambivalent, too. Hence, immobility could sometimes be a more promising choice for those musicians who strove to further their social status in a particular locality or to settle in a permanent and stable manner.

The final contribution on opportunity structures by *Alix Heiniger* and *Thomas David* examines the activities of French philanthropists in Geneva during the Belle Époque, widening our understanding of practices to control and restrict migration before the First World War. In doing so, it discusses aspects of spatial as well as of social mobility among French immigrants. Compared to the situation of many other groups of immigrants, their difference was based on citizenship and even more so on the question of social rights and not on language. The authorities of Geneva, notably the police, tried to keep groups who could not provide for their own means of living from staying permanently. In this context, such “undesir-

able” – mostly unmarried male – immigrants who did not have the capacities to further their social mobility were considered a threat to the interests of the French elite in Geneva as well as to the general public. Pointing to the ambivalent aims of multi-sided philanthropic activities, the article examines also the relationship between the French elite who took care of the immigrant community and the recipients of their philanthropic support.

Whereas we propose “cosmobilities” in our introductory article as a way to operationalise “mobility and biography”, in particular for the long nineteenth century, this volume’s strength lies in its temporal, spatial and methodological spread. Coming therefore from divergent disciplinary backgrounds (history, music and political science), the selected case studies which start in the early modern period and end in the present address “mobility and biography” from multiple perspectives. It is exactly from this intellectual diversity that we hope to gain impulses for future concretisations of our “cosmobilities” approach.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Fritz Thyssen Foundation for funding our feasibility study “*Cosmobilities*” – *Transnational Lives in Dictionaries of National Biography across Europe during the Nineteenth Century*. For the year of its duration, we explored how combining historical research questions regarding “mobility and biography” with instruments and methods of the digital humanities can lead to new insights on transnational lives. In this context, and as part of a use case co-developed by members of DARIAH-DE located at the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz (Michael Piotrowski) and the Chair of Media Informatics in Bamberg (Andreas Henrich and Tobias Gradl), we have started to develop our own tool for identifying transnational dynamics in national biographies (URL: <http://search.de.dariah.eu/cosmotool/search>).

The concrete idea for this volume, by contrast, stems mainly from insights, challenges as well as perspectives coming up during an explorative workshop that took place in Mainz on January 23–24, 2015; for a conference report, see URL: <http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/article.php?rec=54> (5 Aug. 2015).

We are grateful to the anonymous reviewers whose critical comments helped much to improve the volume as a whole as well as the individual articles. Special thanks go to Joe Kroll (Mainz) for carefully copy editing all articles in this edition of the *European History Yearbook*.