

International Conference

to be held October 4 and 5, 2016 at El Colegio de México in Mexico City
in the context of the Dual Year Mexico-Germany



European Social Scientists as Refugees, Emigrés and Return-migrants

Transnational lives and travelling theories

at El Colegio de México and the New School for Social Research since the 1930s

Short description

The New School of Social Research and El Colegio de México (Colmex) both are results of receiving and inviting exiled academics, who had fled the Nazi regime or the Franco regime, to engage in research and teaching in the institutionalised embedding of the corresponding organisation.

The conference aims at analysing and comparing the founding and first twenty years of experiences of both organisations. Thereby, we want to get a deeper understanding of (1) the institutional context and impact of emigrated, exiled and refuged academics in the cases of Colmex and New School, (2) the ambiguities of the scientist's situation between exile, emigration and return-migration and the corresponding dynamics of application, adaptation or amalgamation/hybridisation of theories and methods they brought, and (3) of how the 'travelling' or transnational return of theories impact on the countries of departure, namely Spain, Germany and Austria.

Starting point

Refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe, but also in Central America indicate that the topic of people who have to flee their country of residence for political, ethnic, religious or gendered reasons is of high importance.

Academics, politicians and intellectuals are generally also highly affected by changes in their home countries which make them see the necessity of leaving their old lives behind. How do they manage to cope with their new situation of exile and what are their plans for future living

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and activities between decisive emigration and scheduled return migration? Could they develop a transnational professional life of 'cosmopolitans' without having to take a clear decision?

A lot of research has been done on historical cases of refuge and exile of these groups of persons, especially related to the case of those fleeing the Nazi regime in Germany or the Franco regime in Spain. Two, nowadays highly prestigious, places of academic research and teaching in social sciences and humanities in general are The New School of Social Research in New York City and the Colegio de México in Mexico City. As there already exists a lot of literature on both institutions, this International Conference aims to compare them from a perspective of more recent historical and social science approaches, namely that of transnationalism and travelling theories.

Transnationalism research has increased since the 1990s and focuses on the transnational social relations, networks and spaces spanning across the borders of national 'container societies' and overcoming methodological nationalism in a durable way. Taking this approach seriously, some new questions arise: Could certain transnational life strategies and transnational scientific engagement be identified as an enduring option beyond the dichotomy of either final emigration or ultimate return migration? How did those refugees, who stayed in Mexico or the USA, and those who returned to Europe after World War II, define their identity? Which impact did their travelling, staying or returning have on their scientific endeavour?

The concept of travelling theories focuses on the societal embedding of production of social theories and on the changes, by which these theories normally are effected, when shifting from one societal context to another. Transferring scientific theories and concepts from one place to another leads to the ambiguity and tension of either adapting (or thereby changing) such theory to local conditions or merely applying it (and try to change local conditions accordingly). Is Critical theory the same in Frankfurt as in New York? (How) Was the scientific work of José Medina Echavarría influenced and changed by his stays in Mexico and the USA (and formerly to Germany and other countries)? (How) Did theories change when arriving from Austria, Germany or Spain to the Colmex and New School? (How) Did theoretical approaches of academics change in exile and/or when returning back to their countries of departure?

Conference Program

1st day, 4th of October, 2016

Most presentations will be held in English

10:00 Welcome speech

Silvia Elena Giorguli Saucedo, Presidenta de El Colegio de México

10.30 – 13.30 First panel: Opening the context – the 1930s

Chair: Gustavo Vega, El Colegio de México

1.1 Forced migrants – a difficult status between exile and emigration (Ludger Pries/ El Colegio de México/ DAAD)

1.2 The European context of ‘producing refugees and exiles’ during the 1930s (Sascha Möbius/collaborator of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, El Colegio de México)

1.3 Receiving whom? Favoured and not-preferred refugees in Mexico (Daniela Gleizer/ Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, UNAM)

Break 13:30 – 15:00

15:00 – 18:00 Second panel

Life strategies between immigration and returning

Chair: Federico Finchelstein, New School of Social Research, NYC

2.1 Establishing oneself abroad: Comparing careers of German-speaking refugee academics in the 1930s (Christian Fleck/ University of Graz, Austria)

2.2 Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research in New York after 1933 – Intellectual Transfer and Impact (Claus-Dieter Krohn/ Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany)

2.3 Spanish emigré intellectuals at the origins of El Colegio de México. Insertion or integration? (Clara Lida/ El Colegio de México)

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2nd day, 5th of October 2016

10:00 – 13:00 Third panel

Travelling theories: What travelled and changed how?

Chair: Sascha Möbius, collaborator of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, El Colegio de México

3.1 Changes and continuities in New school scholar's interpretation of fascism and political violence (Federico Finchelstein/ New School of Social Research, NYC)

3.2 Legacies from intellectual refugees and immigrants in the constitution of Sociology at El Colegio de México (Arturo Alvarado/ El Colegio de México)

3.3 Dos casos: cal y arena del exilio (Martí Soler/Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte)

Break 13:30 – 15:00

15.00 – 17.00 Fourth panel as round table (in Spanish)

Exile and migration since the 1960s in Latin America and El Colegio de México

Chair: Ludger Pries, El Colegio de México/DAAD

Participants:

4.1 Rodolfo Stavenhagen/ Professor emeritus, El Colegio de México

4.2 Pablo Yankelevich/ El Colegio de México

4.3 Martha Schteingart/ El Colegio de México

4.4 Nelson Minello/ El Colegio de México

4.5 Roberto Blancarte/ El Colegio de México

17:00 Closure: Desiderata and Prospects

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