Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives

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Preface

Ideas, Innovation and Communication – IDee

In fall 2008, the then rector of the University of Vienna Professor Georg Winckler appointed the University's winners of the *Wittgenstein-Award* (Austrias most prestigious prize for elite academics) as organisers of interdisciplinary debate and research on an interdepartmental and cross-faculty level – thus initiating the "*Forum for Interdisciplinary Dialogue*" (IDee).

Accordingly, we provide researchers who have an interest in interdisciplinary research with the opportunity to exchange experiences with interdisciplinary project work and – in doing so – establish local, national and international networks. Our aim is to bring social sciences, cultural studies and natural sciences into dialogue; to this end, we support events and project teams of interdisciplinary character and create an open space for innovation and ideas, exchange and discussion across divides defined by the limits of disciplines, faculties, departments or individual Austrian universities.

Since the inception of the Forum, interdisciplinary lectures (the lecture series "IDee Lectures"), "Scientific Speed Datings",[1] interdisciplinary workshops and the symposium "Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives"[2] have taken place, supported and/or organised by IDee.

The theme of "Migration/s" emerged right at the outset – in one of the first meetings in the late fall of 2008, participants from various scientific backgrounds declared and emphasised their interest in interdisciplinary and critical research on migration. Soon thereafter, interdisciplinary project teams were formed and their workshops funded by IDee.[3] But this was not sufficient in our view. Because of the

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[1] At Scientific Speed Datings, students and scholars with as many different disciplinary backgrounds as possible are invited to discuss certain salient and complex social phenomena, terms or concepts in small groups, while sharing their common ground and reflecting on their different approaches.

[2] http://id-migrations.univie.ac.at/

[3] The following workshops and conferences were founded by IDee since 2009:

"CogSci@univie2010" The Future of interdisciplinary research and teaching in cognitive sciences at the University of Vienna; "Body meets Brain"; "(Un)conceived Alternatives – The Assessment of the Underdetermination of Scientific Theory Building and its Role in Scientific

political, sometimes heated and polemical, debates about migration and the many political and legal changes (frequently to the worse) in terms of asylum rights and migration issues across Europe, the urgent need for in-depth, interdisciplinary and cutting-edge research on migration became apparent. Hence, we invited prominent international researchers from the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences to the interdisciplinary, international three-day conference "Migrations: Interdisciplinary Perspectives", from 1 to 3 July 2010 at the University Campus of Vienna. This book is one of the outcomes of the conference.

During the process of organising the conference, we had to deal with several complex, closely related issues, resulting in a "threefold challenge":

First, interdisciplinary research itself is a substantial challenge of its own, regardless of the topic (see Weiss and Wodak 2007; van Leeuwen 2005). On the one hand, every scientist who crosses disciplinary boundaries is confronted with more or less static, restrictive and petrified institutional structures, which frequently function as obstacles to innovative and alternative research approaches. On the other hand, such a researcher must also partly overcome the – probably no less rigid – internalized cognitive schemata and conventions of his/her discipline in order to gain and retain a more open state of mind, curious, less biased and tolerant of new and unconventional ideas. Because communication, terminology and argumentation have to be accessible to teams in an interdisciplinary network, researchers have to develop a common ground in terminology and methodology to be able to work across departmental boundaries. This frequently leads critics of interdisciplinarity to assume that transcending disciplinary boundaries must necessarily go hand in hand with ambiguous expressions, vague and imprecise definitions, oversimplifying concepts and blurred issues ("bad science").

Interdisciplinarity necessarily requires of those engaged in it that they be or become experts on various approaches to their field(s) of interest. Otherwise they would always be at risk of being accused of being "unscientific" or, worse, being amateurs. But how do we define "interdisciplinarity", "transdisciplinarity" and "multidisciplinarity" which have become catchwords of academic discourse?

Peter Weingart and Nico Stehr point out that scientific jargon has changed in recent years (Weingart and Stehr 2000a–c). According to them, the above catchwords have to be used to "belong to" the *academic community*. A new "jargon of authentic being" (*Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*; Adorno 1964) seems to be evolving. Furthermore, Weingart states that interdisciplinarity can be seen as the result of

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Reasoning"; "Inszenierung von Weiblichkeit"; "Arbeit im Lebenslauf"; "Wissenschaft und ihre Texte – Schreiben als Wissensproduktion"; "Migration: Soziale Integration – Soziokulturelle Räume–Wirtschaft–Sprache"; Resolution für eine Reform von Asylrecht, Schubhaft und Abschiebung; "Migration and Memory in a Global Perspective": "Discourse Analysis and Critique"; "Risky Entanglements? Contemporary Research Cultures Imagined and Practised"; "Access to Protection for Refugees in the European Union – Towards an European Asylum System"; TANGenS Workshop: "Körperregimes und Körperrepräsentationen"; "Import–Export–Transport. Queer Theory, Queer Critique and Activism in Motion"; "Gemälderedereien", "Österreich 1933–1938. Interdisziplinäre Bestandsaufnahmen und Perspektiven."

opportunism in the production of knowledge: researchers seize interdisciplinary opportunities to produce new knowledge; practitioners recognize these opportunities as well and provide the necessary resources. From this perspective, specialization and interdisciplinarity complement each other; they are not opposites or new dichotomies, but coexist (Weingart 2000). In this way, Weingart and Stehr liberate the concept of "interdisciplinarity" from jargon-like vagueness. They also stress that the existing matrix of traditional academic disciplines is dissolving and that significant changes in the traditional canon of knowledge are imminent (Weingart and Stehr 2000a, b, c).

Roger Hollingsworth, a renowned American sociologist and historian, has been examining the questions of where, how and why *creativity* thrives for many years: how should excellent research be conducted in the future? In his essay (2000) "Major Discoveries and Biomedical Research Organizations: Perspectives on Interdisciplinarity, Nurturing Leadership, and Integrated Structure and Cultures", he concludes that interdisciplinary teamwork at a very intensive level, i.e. teams working together in the same location, is an or even THE salient prerequisite for creativity. In addition, he states that such teams should include scholars of different disciplines and traditions. Thirdly, Hollingsworth underlines that traditional hierarchical structures have an adverse effect on innovative research. "Nurturing leadership" is required, a concept that stands for a respectful, cooperative but at the same time firm stance of project managers: "...organizations require distinctive structural and cultural characteristics if their scientists are to make major discoveries time and time again." (p. 215) While Hollingsworth investigated institutions and teams in the field of the natural sciences, we can nonetheless ask ourselves to what extent his findings and proposals may also be applied to research and university institutions in the area of the social sciences and the humanities (see Weiss and Wodak 2007 for a comprehensive discussion).

Focusing on interdisciplinary research within feminist theory, historian and sociologist Axeli Knapp (1995) presents five arguments in favour of such an approach. Slightly modified, we believe that they also fit the visions of IDee:

A historical argument: The clear differentiation and specialization of individual disciplines are suited to solve problems comprehensively within a specific debate, in "normal science"; however, complex, new problems, such as the many dimensions of "migration", require more than the expertise of an individual discipline.

An argument related to the sociology of science: Competition and careers often determine progress in individual sectors of the traditional canon of disciplines; such progress no longer meets the requirements of the problem areas identified. Another consequence is that university training and the institutionalization of disciplines have to be re-examined and adjusted. Last but not least, this implies that new professional profiles and models have to be developed and accepted.

An epistemological argument: Traditional conventions of data sampling, theory formation and validation increasingly prove an obstacle to constructing new knowledge. It is therefore necessary to transcend long-established modes of thinking. Doing so often violates taboos and is therefore perceived as a threat.

Moreover, frequently many specialized details have to be ignored, which might provoke valid criticism of individual disciplines. In fact, there is a real danger of "doing an amateur job", i.e. of superficially dipping into other disciplines. This is another argument in favour of teaming up specialists of different disciplines.

An argument related to the content of research: Cooperative and interdisciplinary research projects are becoming ever more important due to more complex social relations. New problems are considered to be of relevance. In many cases, this demand might be met by resorting to eclecticism.

Finally, a political argument: Critical thinking leads to new organizational forms and applications of knowledge. Thus, universities should create new spaces for interdisciplinary debate – such as IDee, which allows for first steps into the right direction.

Let us now move to the term "Migration", which encompasses a variety of phenomena across different disciplines, departments or faculties: beyond the challenge of interdisciplinarity, the second challenge consisted and continues to consist of the complexity of the topic itself (or rather, the whole range of topic(s)) and the problematic nature of interdisciplinary research already mentioned (see above). In this volume, we have tried to cover as many approaches to, and conceptions of, "migration" as possible and bring the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences into dialogue.

This turned out to be a truly daring enterprise, given that in biology, chemistry and physics many terms are used in a clearly defined experimental set-up that is only valid in the defined context; however, the same terms are historically and politically connotated when used in a non-defined background. For example, the term "parasites" is used to describe specific migrating species of plants or other organisms, which interfere in a negative way with the ecosystem they migrate to (see Chapter VI, "Spread and Diffusion in the Natural Science and Beyond" by Gero Vogl). While calling a plant a "parasite" may seem "innocent" from a biological point of view, the recontextualisation of this originally biological concept into the complex historical and social field of human migration studies, e.g., in media reporting or in political discourse, poses an ethical and ideological dilemma and problem as exemplified in National Socialism and its ideology (see Chilton 2007; Musolff 2010; Maas 1985). It is well documented that in National-Socialist ideology, the so-called "*Untermenschen*" (Jews, Roma and Slavs) were labelled "parasites"– the consequences of this totalitarian fascist ideology which led to the deportation and extermination of Jews, Roma and Slaves in the Holocaust are, of course, obvious to everybody.

Our concept of interdisciplinarity and our book, of course, neither support nor encourage such misuse of scientific concepts and the resulting illegitimate metaphorisation; on the contrary, we address, reflect and discuss the many risks of such a recontextualisation of concepts from one discipline to another, but we also propose alternative options.

While in science many different concepts and meanings of "migration" coexist, in everyday life and in the media the term "migration" is mainly used to refer to the "physical movement by humans from one area to another", a definition of human

migration also provided by Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_migration). Migration has indeed become a ubiquitous and prominent topic in the public sphere, it dominates political campaigns and debates, and heated discussions about (im)migrants, integration, refugees and the right of asylum confront us in daily news reporting and everyday conversations (see Amin et al. 2010; Delanty et al. 2011; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2009; Köhler and Wodak 2012; Wodak and Köhler 2010). Thus, the third and maybe most difficult challenge we faced was dealing with the complex (socio-/geo-)political dimensions associated with migrations and the (all too) often unvoiced presuppositions.

According to Rainer Bauböck (2012), "[i]nternational migration not only involves a crossing of territorial orders, but also creates populations of foreign residents inside and expatriate citizens outside state territories." He suggests the concept of "citizenship constellations" as an analytic tool for understanding the often multi-faced legal status of migrants. By moving beyond a merely national comparison, Bauböck illustrates the complex ways in which the rights and duties of migrants are defined by several nation states and their political allies.

Apart from general restrictions of the so-called security guidelines (*Sicherheitsvorkehrungen*) for refugees, inhumane deportation procedures along with the tightening of asylum laws across Europe, we can also notice a general swing to the right across Europe (Bruter and Harrison 2011). Most importantly, the concepts of asylum seeker, refugee and migrant have merged in public discourses: all terms serve to depict the dangerous "Other". In this way, foreigners are perceived as threatening the welfare state, the nation state, security, employment, and so forth, specifically in the reporting of tabloids, but also in mainstream media (Baker et al. 2008; Wodak 2011a, b; Wodak forthcoming).

We are deeply troubled by these developments, both as scholars and citizens of Europe.

Most of the time, researchers are subjected to their disciplinary paradigms and scientific ethos; their methods are open to scrutiny. But as scholars, we also carry responsibility: to provide critical insights and differentiated results by analysing and interpreting data, even more so if they seem to contradict political common sense, and especially if human rights and human dignity are at stake.

Although a vast amount of research exists, political discussions about migration in many cases continue to be led without experts, researchers or practitioners working with migrants or asylum seekers and, of course, also without the people concerned, namely migrants and asylum seekers themselves and their families.

This is why we illustrate the wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to "Migration" in this volume. They allow for many different perspectives and are useful to counter unsubstantiated and polemical arguments in debates of the political elite and in the media.

When dealing with migration and integration, one should most certainly consider educational policies for schools. On the one hand, children and adolescents from different ethical and linguistic backgrounds always find ways to communicate and make friends with each other without language proficiency, sometimes even

without any common "verbal language" at all (see section "Developmental Perspectives" in Strohmeier and Spiel 2012 and Krumm 2012).

On the other hand, a successful school trajectory and active participation in (the) local public and political spheres require sufficient skills and knowledge of the target language.

While there is broad consent about the importance of second language skills, the native language of immigrant children and adolescents is frequently neglected or even stigmatised and marginalised. Such a problematic attitude is also reflected in the persistent neglect of both the results of linguistic studies about second language acquisition and insights from experience of language teaching at school, such as the by now well-established fact that a lack of sufficient first language competence makes acquiring a second language even more difficult.

But this is just one of the many prejudices towards multiethnic classrooms in school. Another stereotype suggests that especially male children and adolescents with a Turkish or Slavic background are per se more aggressive, due to the patriarchal family structures they are being raised in. The chapter by Dagmar Strohmeier and Christiane Spiel on "**peer relations among children and immigrat adolescents: methodical challenges and key findings**" deals with friendship between and/or bullying among immigrant children/peers/pupils at school. Peer relations, they conclude, are a very important factor in development, socialisation and also integration.

People immigrating to and emigrating from one continent, country, nation to another have shaped history as well as the culture we are living in today for many centuries. Both documentations of broad migration processes and individual migration stories allow insight into prevalent migration concepts from the past; simultaneously they also reveal ideological–methodological presuppositions and assumptions about current migration processes. However, it can be highly problematic to superimpose current concepts of migration onto migration processes in the past. The section "**debating migrations**" (organised by Walter Pohl and Ruth Wodak) investigates early modern conceptions of migration and nomadism. From an archaeological perspective, for example, burial customs in ancient Egypt contribute to a better understanding of migration processes in prehistoric times (see Bader 2012). The section on "ego documents" (organised by Annemarie Steidl and Edith Saurer) presents ways in which "**ego documents entered migration history**". Diaries, letters, testaments etc. can be understood as materialisations of individual narratives used to construe a migrant's identity.

The discursive (re-)construction of "race" and "ethnicity" via media, politics and law (but also science) is, of course, highly problematic; nationalist borders are frequently essentialised and thus re-established, most of the time simply due to methodological reasons, but also because of underlying nationalist ideologies, which frequently go hand in hand with ethnic and racialised attributions (see Fortier 2012, van Dijk 2012, and Musolff 2012). In the section on "**media representation of migrants and migration**" (organised by Brigitta Busch and Michał Krzyżanowski), British newspaper articles and Frontex press releases were analysed with(in) the (methodological) framework of critical discourse analysis.

Newspapers utilise different strategies and different grades of explicitness in terms of xenophobia, while the European border control agency FRONTEX argues with (in) a humanitarian discourse against migration and its perceived "threats".

The section on "**migration and the gene**" (organised by Renée Schroeder), taking a biological perspective, warns of political conclusions drawn from the subtle genetic variations between humans; however, these should not be neglected either when it comes to intolerances, diseases, risk of cancer, etc. The last decades have witnessed an unprecedented progress in genetic and epigenetic analyses of populations due to new powerful high throughput sequencing technologies. It has become possible to sequence whole genomes of individuals in very short times, providing access to the historical analyses of human, plant, viral, bacterial and animal migration across the whole planet. The history of migration can thus be reconstructed with "the genetic eye". The most important outcome of all these genomic analyses is the realization that the concept of "race" does not make any sense from a genetic point of view, because genetic diversity between neighbours can potentially be larger than between individuals living far apart. It is thus impossible to establish genetic boundaries. Moreover, all living organisms on our planet use the same genetic code (the same genetic language), providing evidence that we all derive from the same primordial cell via migration and evolution. A new discipline that will have a high impact on migration research is just emerging: *epigenetics*. Among the questions this emergent field tackles are the following: How does the environment affect the epigenetic state of our genes? How are epigenetic markers changed via migration?

When talking about migrants, their identities are frequently oversimplified by reducing them to the culture and tradition(s) of their country of origin. This is even more problematic, as "identities" are always fragile, contradictory, dynamic and fluid (Bauman 2009). Migrants accumulate multiple national/cultural identities, similar to the manifold skills they acquire in the respective languages. In the section on "**migration, identity and belonging**" (organised by Jelena Tošić), these complex and intricate concepts are discussed from an anthropological perspective with respect to gender, age, nationality, profession, geopolitical, urban and economic context, mobility etc. Personal migration stories account for the different reasons for, and consequences of, migration which lead to ruptures in migrants' biographies as well as many difficulties in everyday life. Finally, the section on "**fundamentals of diffusion and spread in the natural sciences and beyond**" (organised by Gero Vogl) suggests a diffusion model that may be useful for conceptualising migration phenomena in the social sciences, while illustrating this model with research on the plant species ragweed.

In this book, we deconstruct the complex phenomenon of migrations(s) from as many perspectives as possible. We also provide evidence that there is frequently more than one valid theory, methodology or approach to analyse, understand and interpret the many dimensions of this complex social phenomenon.

In this book, we also attempt to bridge many gaps: between disciplines and faculties, between politics and science, between experts and the general public, and between migrants themselves and individuals or organisations fighting for the

human rights and dignity of migrants, on the one hand, and policymakers and bureaucrats who take the decisions, on the other hand. In doing so, we hope that this book presents the first step towards a more differentiated and rational debate on this timely and relevant topic.

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