

GLOBAL AND LOCAL

**EDITED BY DIRK HOERDER
AND LESLIE PAGE MOCH**

EUROPEAN MIGRANTS

PERSPECTIVES

European Migrants

Global and Local Perspectives

EDITED BY *Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch*

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European Migrants

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European Migrants

Introduction

LESLIE PAGE MOCH

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, local conditions propelled Europeans increasingly far from home. Many young men from the village of Valdoria in northern Italy worked in nearby Turin while their brothers and cousins labored in Switzerland and their sisters became domestic servants in Turin. Men from villages to the east of Valdoria traveled to Argentina for harvest work. Likewise, while men in the Polish village of Maszkienice left home to mine coal in a nearby town and women departed to dig sugar beets in Denmark, the men from a neighboring village mined coal in Pennsylvania, and eventually persuaded their countrymen to join them.¹

The village dwellers of both northern Italy and Austrian Poland sought work away from home because local resources had declined precipitously: populations had grown too large and farm plots too small for the declining agricultural incomes of the late nineteenth century; in addition, other sources of rural income, such as the production of silk or linen, had faded. Villagers felt the negative effects of a worldwide shift in capital and production that enriched large capitalist farms and urban industrial enterprises. Villagers' responses to change depended on the local repertoire of options. Increasingly, those options included leaving the region to work elsewhere for at least a period of several months, if not permanently. Destinations included more prosperous agricultural areas of Europe, the cities of the continent, and the Americas. Some fifty-two million Europeans departed the continent between 1824 and 1924, dwarfing previous transoceanic movements. Many more left their home villages seeking to earn a living in the fields, towns, and cities of Europe.

This volume of essays places these migrations in the context both of local history and of a global perspective, combining new findings on the impulse to migrate within and from Europe with the emerging globalization of migration studies. Imagining a roadmap of research on migrants to the United States, Silvia Pedraza-Bailey identified the roughest of unpaved back roads as "our need to do studies that link the micro and macro levels of analysis more tightly."² On the one hand, historical studies of individual migration streams have become very refined, delving into the meaning of chain migration and the experiences of specific migrant groups.³ Case studies have explored both ends of the journey for migrants by paying increasing atten-

tion to home conditions and investigating the varieties of reception and acculturation in North America.⁴ On the other hand, since 1980, scholars have increasingly incorporated a global perspective on migration; those studying contemporary migrations, in particular, perceive international mobility as part of a world system in which labor moves among dependent peripheries and dominant cores.⁵

Macro and micro perspectives are profoundly complementary, linking human decisions with the world economic framework. "While the configuration and pressure of forces at the upper structural layers set the limits of the possible and the impossible within which people moved," observes Eva Morawska, "it was at the level of their close, immediate surroundings that individuals made decisions, defined purposes, and undertook actions."⁶ The local and international perspectives on migration are mutually informative and together substantially enrich our insights into the process of migration. This complementarity applies not only to migrations in the Atlantic economy, but to movements across the Pacific and the Caribbean, and to contemporary and historical migrations as well.

The essays in this volume focus on European migrations, concentrating primarily on the period of the mass migrations between Europe and the Americas, *circa* 1840–1914. We focus on internal changes in Europe in the context of the world economy, and on links between macroscopic and microscopic change. Systematic studies of this relatively well-documented piece of the global puzzle of historical and contemporary migrations can provide a point of comparison for other movements. Studies of the migrations of Asians to North America in the nineteenth century and of the migrations in the Asian-Australian arena are increasing in number.⁷ Historical migrations also foreshadow today's important movements from Latin America and Asia to North America and the Middle East, and from central Europe and the Mediterranean basin to western Europe. Like the European migrations that are the focus of these essays, both contemporary and non-European historical migrations draw people into capital-intensive areas via professional recruiters and personal networks; both include massive temporary movements as well as permanent settlements at destination.⁸

The Essays

The first set of essays in this collection, "Migration Systems: Directions and Issues," addresses overarching questions about the transatlantic migrations. It opens with Dirk Hoerder's "Migration in the Atlantic Economies: Regional European Origins and Worldwide Expansion," which offers a magisterial survey of the migrations of Europeans since the thirteenth century. Hoerder shows how interlocking systems of migration have shifted in

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this analysis of worldwide European migration in the *longue durée*. James Jackson, Jr., and Leslie Page Moch's essay, "Migration and the Social History of Modern Europe," examines the emerging consensus emphasizing continuities and regional patterns in the history of migration within Europe. They explore the potential of an approach to migration that emphasizes mobility systems, and urge the marriage of economic and social approaches to migration so that neither large-scale change nor migrants themselves are lost. Walter Nugent's "Demographic Aspects of European Migration Worldwide" places the movement of Europeans in a hemispheric perspective; Nugent integrates his analysis of demographic systems both in Europe and at destination to explain the fundamental role in migrations played by population dynamics. He investigates the social and demographic character of the migrants themselves and its impact on the cultures, assimilation, and economic behavior of migrants in the new world. Finally, Donna Gabaccia's "Women of the Mass Migrations: From Minority to Majority, 1820–1930" explores the complexity of women's migrations to the United States from Europe, Asia, and South America. Gabaccia investigates the legal, cultural, economic, and familial explanations for changes in the gender composition of migration groups.

The second section of the text, "Leaving Home," illuminates departures from Europe. Leslie Page Moch's essay, "The European Perspective: Changing Conditions and Multiple Migrations, 1750–1914," surveys the ways in which migration had long been embedded in the family, landholding, and production systems of western Europe. Moch examines the relationship between human mobility and rural industry, which was a benchmark of European economic history and key to subsequent migrations. She then analyzes the nineteenth-century migrations as a socially mediated response to fundamental economic and demographic developments. Steve Hochstadt's "The Socioeconomic Determinants of Increasing Mobility in Nineteenth-Century Germany" is a rich and refined study that pinpoints the countryside as the locus of critical economic and political transformation. Hochstadt details changes in the German countryside that undermined the security of rural life and forced agricultural workers to take to the road. "Labor Migrations of Poles in the Atlantic World Economy, 1880–1914," by Ewa Morawska, demonstrates the value of investigations that work on multiple levels with a model case study. Morawska integrates micro and macro frameworks by setting Polish migrations in a global framework, in the economic and political context of a divided Poland that sent its people to Germany and to the United States, and in the local setting of the village of Maszkienice.

The final section, "Approaches to Acculturation: Comparative Perspectives," provides a sweeping comparative framework for migrants at destination. It opens with Dirk Hoerder's broadly suggestive essay "From Migrants to Ethnic: Acculturation in a Societal Framework." Hoerder surveys the

compendium of factors that influence the acculturation of migrants within Europe as well as overseas; he includes neglected issues such as the expectations and voyage experience of the newcomer as well as the structure of the destination economy, society, and political system. He builds a model of migration and acculturation that emphasizes these structural factors, while recognizing the individual agency involved in the decision to migrate and settle abroad. Nancy Green's "The Modern Jewish Diaspora: Eastern European Jews in New York, London, and Paris" applies a divergent analysis to the comparison of migrant groups, challenging the notion that Jewish communities are alike worldwide. Green sets up an investigation of migrants—moving in different-sized groups and by different timing—in significantly different political and cultural environments; her migration systems stretch from eastern Europe into western Europe and across the Atlantic. This section concludes with an exemplary case study by Samuel Baily, "The Adjustment of Italian Immigrants in Buenos Aires and New York, 1870–1914." Baily's comparative perspective allows him to investigate the first stages of acculturation in very distinct contexts to unravel the importance of migrants' social traits, the receiving society, and the nature of the immigrant community.

Perspectives

This collection expands the framework for migration studies in three areas, offering (a) a long-term perspective to explicate the context of mass migrations, (b) a collective view of migration that challenges individualistic push-pull models, and (c) an analysis of gender as a far-reaching consideration in migration and acculturation. In adopting a broad time frame, these essays situate the nineteenth-century mass migrations of Europeans in the history of human mobility from the thirteenth century to the present day. Dirk Hoerder constructs a temporal and geographical framework that begins with the preindustrial European migration system, emphasizing the movements of Germans and Jews that influenced later migrations. Political systems and economics, then, set a variety of mobility patterns for Europeans long before 1800. Hoerder points out the importance of the state in establishing these patterns, noting that many movements resulted from government sponsorship promoting settlement to the east into Hungary, Prussia, and Russia.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the countries of Iberia and western Europe emerged as a dominant core in a world system. The movements of small numbers of Europeans in colonial enterprises created a demand for labor that set off migrations of native Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans. Plantations and settlements generated systems of internal

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movement as well as massive systems of coerced migration of slaves and contract laborers.⁹

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and as late as the 1830s, relatively few Europeans moved across the oceans in comparison with the millions of people who comprised the tropical slave migrations. In total, about eight million enslaved Africans arrived in the Americas before 1820, compared with some 2.3 million Europeans.¹⁰ The great majority of Africans—an estimated 94 percent—were brought to the Caribbean and South America.¹¹ The European and African experiences were intimately connected; the European taste for sugar, coffee, and cotton spurred this massive and long-lived slave trade. Then, with the gradual abolition of the slave trade (in the British colonies after 1809 and in Brazil after 1830) and the subsequent abolition of slavery, Caribbean and South American economies recruited European and Asian replacements in the form of contract and free labor. (The migration of Asian contract labor emerged, and its cross-oceanic streams reached East Africa and the Americas.) The abolition of slavery, the end of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and the sea changes in European society and economy inaugurated a new era in the migrations of Europeans within the continent and worldwide.

Migration was a long-standing part of the family, landholding, and inheritance systems of the continent where free labor prevailed. Teams of harvest laborers had traveled to large farms since at least the seventeenth century. Departure from one's home village had routinely accompanied work as a young farmhand, urban servant, or marriage. Most people moved within their home county in preindustrial England, where rural people moved more than city dwellers, and women more than men. Between 1660 and 1730, over 76 percent of rural women (and 68 percent of rural men) left their village of birth.¹² Throughout Europe, elites worked and married in a wider geographical circle than ordinary people. Finally, the large cities of the continent, such as seventeenth-century Amsterdam, London, and Paris, cast a wide net for rich and poor alike.

A compelling critique of modernization theory is embedded in the long-term and global perspective of these essays. In terms of human mobility, migration theory has associated migration with relatively recent economic developments, rather than with long-standing population and economic systems. In addition, modernization theorists focus on permanent migration from the countryside to the city.¹³ Yet not only has cityward migration long been part of European life; rural migration has also enlivened the countryside for centuries. For example, in early modern Europe, three widespread systems of temporary migration brought thousands of workers into the Baltic, the North Sea region (particularly the Netherlands), and Britain; by the end of the eighteenth century, seven systems of long-distance temporary labor migration each moved at least twenty thousand men per year.¹⁴ As Steve Hochstadt points out, all the factors that would promote

the expanded migrations of the nineteenth century were in place before 1800.¹⁵ Moreover, migration has been a crucial part of labor systems in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, not simply of the historical core economies. The contention that migration is part of becoming modern—for economies, cultures, or individuals—distorts and obscures geographical mobility rather than illuminates it.

These essays emphasize the collective nature of the migration process. Underlying their discussions of the variety of interlocking and interacting migration systems is an implicit typology of migration systems. Migrations vary both by the extent to which migrants remain in the sending network and by the degree to which the move is definitive. People migrate when they depart or change residence outside their home villages or municipalities. *Local migrations* cover moves within the marriage or labor market that nonetheless historically removed a high proportion of people from their home villages.¹⁶ *Circular migrations* take people farther, but return them home. The harvest teams and temporary urban migrants of seventeenth-century Europe, as well as the Italian “swallows” who made annual grain-harvesting trips to Argentina, were circular migrants because they operated in a regular circuit, retaining their claims and contacts with home.¹⁷ *Chain migration* moves people in a network from home to destination as well, but some of them stay on and tie in with the network at destination, people who provide aid and information to newcomers. Such systems moved Europeans to destinations where many would stay, including cities on the continent and locations in the new world.¹⁸

Career migration responds to an employing organization and migrant aspirations. This kind of movement took church personnel within (and from) early modern Europe and included more bureaucrats and functionaries like the state-employed schoolteachers of Europe as the nineteenth century drew to a close. More permanent were many *colonizing migrations* that moved groups of people to a new area. The long distance of travel and the high mortality abroad prevented early modern European colonists from returning home. Finally, *coerced migrations* like the slave migrations of the tropical world allowed no return home, generally severing personal contacts between people at home and at destination.¹⁹ Historically, these types of migration have been related. The early colonizing migrations of Europeans, for example, set off chain migration systems of native populations and massive coerced migrations. Chain migrations have in many cases emerged from circular migration systems.

This volume emphasizes changing patterns of local, circular, and chain migration on the European continent as well as chain and circular migrations between Europe and the Americas between 1840 and 1914. The majority of free migrants in systems of chain and circular migration did not make one permanent move, but were at their initial destination only tem-

porarily. By contrast, colonial and coerced migrants were more likely to stay at their destinations than return home. It is for this reason that the term *migration*, rather than *immigration*, which implies permanent settlement, dominates these essays. Permanent stays were a minority phenomenon for the mobile Europeans who moved both on their home continent and to new worlds in the 1840–1914 period. For example, Prussian migration statistics allow James Jackson, Jr., to estimate that the typical migrant in the Ruhr industrial town of Duisburg may have been a man who moved fifteen times in his lifetime, making ten of these moves while single and under the age of thirty.²⁰ And between 1907 and World War I, an estimated 42 percent of northern Italians and English returned home; moreover, Europeans were more likely to return home from Latin America than from the United States—nearly half of those in Latin America went back to Europe.²¹

These essays accentuate the collective and communal nature of the migration process, embedding the decision to migrate in home conditions wrought by economic, demographic, and political change and mediated by local migration knowledge and traditions. Changes in information and norms about moving were communal changes; for example, the “secularization of hope,” the aspiration for improvement in this life rather than in the next, manifested itself in the communal Passover greeting “next year in America” among the Jews of Polotzk.²² Because migration systems included various members of a community, individual psychological traits do not distinguish movers from stayers; an attempt to categorize German migrants in Australia found that migrants were a heterogeneous group who defined themselves in relational terms as they moved between their sending and receiving network of relationships.²³

If migration is a collective process, acculturation is as well. These essays confirm the “chilling distance” that separates a collective interpretation of the migration process from both the individualist interpretation of acculturation and the old-fashioned American exceptionalism that claims a distinct story for newcomers to the United States.²⁴ Rather than define acculturation in terms of individual traits, Dirk Hoerder’s largely structural model guides our thinking about the work and accomplishments of newcomers in a new setting. The elements of home culture play a key role; as Samuel Baily demonstrates, they shaped, for example, the levels of literacy, labor skills, and experience in cooperative organizations that distinguished northern Italians in Buenos Aires from southern Italians in New York. Likewise, the structure of housing and employment available at destination yielded different kinds of opportunities, in this case a greater variety of housing and work for northern Italians in Buenos Aires than for the southerners in New York. Similarly, divergent economies shaped a different Jewish immigrant labor force in London, Paris, and New York. Perceptions of and prejudices about migrant ethnicity also shaped opportunity for newcomers. In the case of Italians in the Americas, those in Buenos Aires were

welcomed as civilizing Europeans in an uncivilized land while those in New York were viewed as an inferior race that threatened to dilute the population of northern European stock. Native-born Jews in London, Paris, and New York had different attitudes toward their newly arrived eastern European coreligionists, influenced by their own precarious status in the West. The contrast is most extreme among groups: Chinese contract workers, for example, faced regulations and restrictions, while Scandinavian farmers benefited from settlement acts in the Midwestern United States. The welcome mat was not evenly proffered within the continent of Europe either, where members of certain ethnic groups were ill-treated as international migrant laborers; in the nineteenth century, these included the Irish in England and the Poles in German states.²⁵ In the main, treatment was collective, not individual.

We maintain two caveats for our collectivist orientation. While recognizing the social nature of human movement, which properly replaces an individualistic push-pull conceptualization of migration, it is important to see the place of human agency and perception in migration and acculturation.²⁶ Migration is a more active, engaged process than the terms “migration flow” or “migration stream” imply; it certainly involves more agency than suggested by the terms commonly applied to immigrants in the United States—“uprooted” or even “transplanted.”²⁷ Historical actors were not helpless automatons; rather they decided among the possibilities known to them whether or not to leave home, to move again, or to return. Moreover, as Dirk Hoerder points out in his essay on acculturation, individual migrants’ perceptions of themselves and the world underwent changes that thoroughly altered their interpretations of their own lives.²⁸ Second, and more obviously, although individualistic considerations are not very helpful in explaining the processes of human migration or acculturation, individual characteristics, such as demographic traits, were absolutely fundamental to migration patterns and migration behavior. For example, every aspect of migrant life—including the propensity to move—was affected by gender, marital status, and age.

The third innovation of these essays is that they begin to correct a fundamental weakness of migration studies by incorporating a systematic analysis of gender. Although discussions of migration were often gender blind until the 1980s, specific discussions of migrants themselves were usually limited to men.²⁹ Studies of female migrants have since appeared, and are especially well established among investigations of contemporary migrants to the United States and Europe. However, gender has rarely been analyzed in depth as an analytical category for historical migrants.³⁰ To do so is a taxing enterprise, because women’s migrations are both interconnected with and distinct from those of men. Donna Gabaccia reports that the migrations of women to the United States (and return migrations), for exam-