

SPICE

Scientific Personae in Cultural Encounters
in Twentieth Century Europe



Bundesarchiv, Foto C. Ang. Dezember 1930

Travelling scientists, Berlin 1930. Albert Einstein leaving for America.

Science is not only about content and competence. It is also about embodiment and performance. To be acknowledged as a (true, good) scientist involves appropriating culturally anchored roles and repertoires—scientific personae—that signify reliability and trustworthiness. Historically, these roles have been connoted as male and white.

The objective of this project is to analyse the historical construction of scientific personae through scientific travel and international exchange involving Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden between the 1910s and the 1970s.

Instead of focusing on the circulation of knowledge or technologies through international encounters, we study the circulation of new social identities.

The research questions of the project are framed by three dimensions:

- by the tensions and connections between nationalism, internationalism and universalism
- by gender as a category which structures the practices and accounts of scientific international encounters of both men and women
- by the role of specific disciplinary cultures in travel experiences and the formation of scientific personae.

The project combines comparative and transnational history with discourse and rhetorical analysis, and analysis of visual representation. Basic sources include scholarship applications and travel reports, personal correspondence, published and unpublished travel letters, accounts of international conference visits, photographic reports and portrayals by scientists.

The project connects historical studies about how science is conducted and what is required to become an acknowledged scientist, to the contemporary debates about skewed gender structures in academia. It uses the past to inform the present about how scientific personae are culturally and socially constructed, thereby challenging assumptions about “pure”, non-embodied science and knowledge production.

SPICE is a European research program that examines the role of international scientific exchange in the creation of gendered scientific identities - or scientific personae - in a selection of countries: Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden.

The team:

Professor **Mineke Bosch**, and **Rozemarijn van de Wal** (PhD student), University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

Professor **Kaat Wils** and **Dr. Pieter Huistra**, KU Leuven, Belgium.

Associate Professor **Christine von Oertzen**, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, Germany.

Professor **Kirsti Niskanen**, **Dr. Annika Berg** and **Lisa Svanfeldt-Winter** (PhD student), Department of History, Stockholm University, Sweden.

SPICE is funded by the **Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Memorial Fund**

Contact information:

Kirsti Niskanen

kirsti.niskanen@historia.su.se

Department of History

Stockholm University, Sweden