The conference of the project group "Transnational Contemporary History" at the GWZO Leipzig aims at approaching the history of the first half of the 20th century in East Central Europe from a transnational perspective. Taking traditional national historical narratives, these decades appear to be a period of nationalization and deglobalization, which holds true for the region. (Nation)states such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia were (re)established after the monarchies of the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanovs fell apart. Wilsonian idealism, promoting national self-determination, gained a fertile ground in East Central Europe. As a by-product of the "principle of nationality", national minorities started to play an increasing role in the region's inner and outer relations. Not least, the 1930s were dominated by the Great Depression as well as autarkic economic policies and nationalist ideologies of many regimes. In an ex-post perspective, these "national" lines of development are made more prominent with the knowledge following World War II, resulting in all processes during this period to be reduced to a history of "inter-war". In this reduction, however, other aspects of social development are marginalized by this dominant perspective: the continuities across the apparent historical breaks of 1914/18 or 1939/45, the openness of the moment felt by contemporaries after World War I, and the sense of the beginning of a "New Europe" in a "New World" after the break-up of the empires. A transnational perspective may help to see the region and the period in another light.

Our conference focuses on the multiple changes of conditions under which people migrated; enterprises gained new markets; cultural exchange was revived; and territorialization processes were globalized. In the League of Nations, many specialists, organizations, and state institutions from the region took part in the formation of new supra-, inter- and transnational organizations; and the global interconnectedness of social
and economic arrangements became apparent with the worldwide economic crisis. Processes of nationalization and globalization were not exclusive to each other but highly intertwined, as can be seen, for example, with the global regulation of the national minority issue - a problem that had been produced by the nationalization of states.

In an attempt to grasp these transnational and global dimensions of East Central European history, we have developed five dimensions that we have already applied to the region's late imperial history up to the First World War: economy, culture, international organizations, territorialization, and migration.

Proposals should fit into one of these sections. Papers combining comparisons with the study of mutual entanglements and operating with a narrative framework larger than a single country are especially welcome. We are also interested in contributions addressing methodological issues of writing a transnational history of East Central Europe.

**Economy**

The economic development of East Central Europe in the first half of the 20th century was obviously influenced to a large extent by external and global factors: the First World War; the post-war order with numerous border changes; foreign political alliances and interests; the Russian Revolution and the partial separation of the Soviet Union from the world economy; the Great Depression of the early 1930s and its consequences like the worldwide foreclosure trends; the economic penetration by the German Großraumwirtschaft (greater economic sphere); and last, but not least, the Second World War. While literature about economic history of East Central Europe generally follows a master narrative of a more (Poland and Hungary) or less (Czechoslovakia) difficult construction of national economies under adverse external conditions, this sections aims to read the global developments as a central part of the story.

Papers should contribute to a more nuanced picture with the analysis of:
- the reorientation of older (pre-war) and/or the emergence of new transnational flows (commodities, capital, and labour);
- the transnational transfers of institutions and of strategies to deal with the consequences of war, inflation, and crises;
- economic actors operating across borders besides (and sometimes against) the state policy (multinational firms, banks, associations, and labour movements);
- attempts of cooperation between East Central European states in the field of economy.

**Culture**

The section on culture inquires into the continuities and ruptures in cultural history. As some would argue, the Great War and the concluding peace treaties marked such an emphatic geopolitical caesura that no true cultural continuity could possibly survive it. The (re-)emergence of individual nation states on the map of Europe nevertheless did continue to bestow a politicized role on the arts and artists in shaping national
identities and elaborating the cultural bases of how nations see themselves. At the same time, this approach to cultural expression had to face its emergent rival in the form of avant-garde movements with their pronounced cosmopolitanism and apolitical self-referentiality. Beyond the sphere of arts, an intense circulation of intellectual goods also persisted in the broader sociocultural field on the level of social practices and the institutionalization of these practices.

Presentations are invited to address the various branches of the arts, visual and popular culture and the printed press, as well as the relationship between social change and cultural practices as mirrored in lifestyle issues, material culture, or knowledge production.

Possible themes include:
- cultural expression as a contested field between national identity and cosmopolitan abstraction, and as a projection screen for other identities (e.g., gender, minority, Jewish);
- processes of cultural transfer and observable exchange in the domain of fine arts (also including exhibition practice); literature; theatre and modern dance; music (classical, experimental, and popular); and the internationalism of modern architecture and design;
- the emergence of, and early co-productions between, national film industries;
- the ideological trajectories of artists: artists' political affiliations, including their relations to, and involvement in, wars and revolutions, militarism, and peace movements;
- club and association culture as sites of an emerging civil society transcending the nation;
- the effect of social modernization on various social groups (e.g., women suffrage, and the working class and the socialist international).

Internationalism
Institutionalized cooperation across borders did not stop during World War I or in the decades after; their significance in global affairs rose. Pre-war international organizations (IOs) were transformed while new ones, also outside of the Western European core, were created. With the League of Nations, together with its related bodies and its striving for centralization, institutional rivalries became a driving force. The conditions for border-crossing cooperation, however, changed due to the collapse of the imperial order in the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian lands; the rising national movements in the remaining empires; and the programmatic recognition of the right to national self-determination. In effect, internationalism underwent a transformation. Whether it created a closer linkage between sovereignty and international organization, for example by changing the latter from alliances of subnational interest groups to federations of national organizations, or marks the beginning of transnational logics and doings in international organization is currently being debated. The panels seek to situate East Central European international(ist)s in these changes and by that to also shed new light on the rescaling of international movements and institutions in the first half of the 20th century.

We invite papers including but not limited to the following aspects:
- continuities and shifts in the engagement in international organizations around World War I and in its
aftermath, analysing also the role of the war (in terms of actors, agendas, resources, recognition, etc.);
- founding of locally/regionally based IOs as well as the holding of international congress as strategies for international engagement;
- participation in and distancing from the League of Nations and other large-scale IOs of the time;
- emerging networks and contacts in the context of the engagement in IOs, particularly with extra-European actors.

**Migration**

During the first half of 20th century, conditions for cross-border migrations changed in fundamental ways: the reshaping of borders, the Russian Revolution, and the rising National Socialism fostered in very different ways the claim to an unambiguity of belonging, which created a “nation of the stateless” with its new forms of transnational existence. The refugee crisis created the demand for international regulatory agencies that eventually facilitated transnational existence. Economies in the old and the new states depended on migration even more than before, which resulted in a juridification of migration where every national measure had transnational repercussions on other states and on migrant groups. The duty of care claimed by the sending states promoted the establishment of care agencies destined “to keep migrants national”, which offered new opportunities for transnational practices. Nationalization processes thus did not end migration, while internationalization initiatives failed to fill the social, administrative, and juridical gaps left by the former. Both, however, led to an expansion of transnational phenomena either in migrant strategies or in national efforts of administration.

We invite all possible perspectives, including those on state actors, agencies, as well as individual migrants or migrant groups, that elaborate on:
- transnational aspects of seemingly national and bilateral phenomena, such as migration controls and citizenship regimes;
- transnational aspects of migration strategies and patterns;
- new forms of transnationality linked to the new forms of support, care, and control by the nation states as well as religious and political agencies.

**Territorialization**

In this section of the conference, we aim to bring together contributions that place the spatial dimension of social interaction at the focal point. In traditional narratives, imperial forms of the organization of space in East Central Europe appear to have been abruptly replaced by national ones in 1918. Doubting that this change was so sudden, we would like to discuss whether, or to what degree, imperial forms of governance persisted within the emerging nation states. Beyond the state level, we would like to uncover and identify the interaction between economic elites and their established ways of organizing space according to their needs and interests, on the one hand, and the reorganization of political space along the criteria of national territorialization, on the other. The same question can be raised for the cultural sphere, where transnational frameworks had to be replaced by spatial frames fitting the discourse of nation state building without being automatically functional.
Thus, we invite papers that discuss how far-reaching was the turn from the imperial to the national and to what extent this transformation was caused by internal as well as by global factors.

Proposals of ca. 500 words should be sent to Prof. Dr. Frank Hadler and Dr. Katja Naumann before 30 July 2015 by email: hadler@uni-leipzig.de and knaumann@uni-leipzig.de

The decision about the selection of the contributions will be announced by the end of September 2015.

Kontakt

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