Call for Articles: Central and Eastern European Academia in Transition in the 1990s: Between Westernisation and Traditionalism

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(Call for Articles for a thematic section in Studia Historiae Scientiarum 2021, guest edited by Daria Petushkova and Jan Surman)

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the political transformation that followed, Central and Eastern European scholars found themselves facing a rapid transition on many levels. Some disciplines, approaches and theories were abandoned, and new ones, appropriated from the "West" took their place. Previous forms of academic communication changed - independent journals and publishing houses mushroomed, replacing the so far supervised and centralised system. At the same time, not only scholarly virtues, but also forms of academic sociability changed, and a new scholarly persona emerged.

This process happened with different intensities in different countries, but everywhere under the impression of the beginning of a new epoch, in which the norms of the "Western" academia prevailed. Thus we propose to call this process a "selective Westernisation". "Selective" should point to the fact that this process varied markedly across the post-Soviet space: what was appropriated in one country, did not necessarily have to be appropriated in another. And, of course, there was no "Western academia" either. Appropriation was mostly connected to specific countries (esp. France, (Western) Germany or the US), but also resulted in creating an image of an ideal, coherent "Western" academia.

Additionally, the 1990s led to a concurrent "revival" of pre-Socialist traditions (for instance of the Interwar Poland, or of the late Russian Empire). At the same time, academic systems were not completely overwritten, and maintained many traits formed during the socialist regimes. Thus, "selective Westernisation" met with "selective traditionalism," which led to tensions and conflicts of varying intensity.

In this thematic section of SHS we want to look more closely at the process of academic transition in the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe. We are, however, less interested in accounts about changes in different institutions, or statistical accounts. Instead, we want to inquire about the impact of transition on the scholarly
cultures, their forms of sociability and communication, values and virtues. What interests us is the process of selective appropriation of new norms and pertinence of the old ones, as well as conflicts between proponents of both: a process which can also be called academic hybridisation. Thus we invite contributions on following topics:

• What new forms of academic sociability and communication emerged in the 1990s? To which extent were they driven from below, i.e. from scholars themselves, and to which promoted by the foundations and new actors in different countries (for instance Soros Foundation, DHIs, etc.)?

• How did the criteria for "good scholarship" change during the early years of post-Soviet academia? To which extent did political, social and cultural changes affect values and virtues of science and scholarship? Did the incentives for those changes come from inside of academia (scholars, administration), or were they of external origin (public, government, etc.)?

• Which new "models" of academia (e.g. Humboldt model) were debated or introduced, and which arguments were used in the discussion? To which extent was the distinction between teaching and research reevaluated?

• How did the process of scholarly publishing change? Did new formats and genres emerge, or can we speak about more continuity than change?

• What narratives of break/continuity/revival have appeared following 1989/1991? Which arguments were used in these discussions (e.g. efficiency, international cooperation/competition, (national) tradition etc.)

Please send an abstract of no more than 500 words and a short biographical sketch to jan.surman@gmail.com and petushkovadaria@gmail.com.

The editors will ask the authors of selected papers to submit their final articles no later than June 1, 2021. Articles will be published after a peer-review process.

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The deadline for the submission of abstracts: January 20, 2021.

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