

**The Transnationalization of Struggles for Recognition. Women and Jews in France, Germany, and Poland in the 20th century**

**Veranstalter:** Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Universität Lausanne, Universität Krakau, Universität Warschau (in Zusammenarbeit mit der Stiftung Volkswagen)

**Datum, Ort:** 10.10.2008-12.10.2008,

**Bericht von:** Agnès Chetaille, Paris / Berlin; Iwona Dadej, Berlin

The international conference „The Transnationalization of Struggles for Recognition – Women and Jews in France, Germany, and Poland in the 20th century“, held in Krakow, October 10th-12th, 2008, was organized within the frame of the international research project of the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, the University of Lausanne, the University of Kraków, and the University of Warsaw. The project is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

Transnational struggles for recognition are based on cross-border civil society networks, which may be an instrument in overcoming nationalism and ethnocentrism. After the expansion of the European Union in 2004, the lack of unity and common identity in Europe has been widely discussed and deplored. Examining civil society networks of domestic actors, which have transcended cultural and national borders or even developed a pan-European context, can contribute to building valuable knowledge which may enable us to confront the challenges of today's Europe. Research on these networks in an historical and contemporary perspective is still a desideratum. The project promises to fill this gap with empirical research focusing on two social groups, women and Jews, in European 20th century history, in a twofold comparison: between two time periods (1900 to 1930, and 1980s to the present) and across three countries (France, Germany, and Poland).

The first session of the conference gave insight into different ways in which concepts such as „transnationalization“ or „recognition“ can be used. The discussion specifically tackled this problem, and questioned the difference between internationalism

and transnationalism, between transnationalization and globalization, between recognition and integration as well as assimilation or emancipation.

JAN T. GROSS (Princeton) highlighted some aspects of the situation of Jews in France, Germany and Poland directly after World War II. He insisted on differences in the persecution itself (e.g. the role of state collaboration in France; the exceptional „scale“ of persecution and the lack of institutional State apparatus in Poland), and showed how the response of Jewish survivors was dependant on social, historical and political domestic contexts.

MOSHE ZIMMERMANN (Jerusalem) explored some of the historical aspects of transnationalization processes within the Jewish community in Germany before the Second World War, focusing on the question of whether transnationalization is a concept which can be applied to Zionism in particular and other Jewish causes in general, and on the obstacles and failures which can befall such social movements in the face of a rise of undemocratic and ethnocentric tendencies. Interesting insight into transnationalization was offered through the description of a particular institution working at a transnational level, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and its activities in France during and after World War II, given by LAURA HOBSON FAURE (Paris). She outlined the role of the JDC in strengthening bonds between American and French Jews, and showed the specific nature of these links, calling them the „traditional bonds of philanthropy“. Recipients and donors both incorporated these transnational links into their identity, though in very different and unequal ways. Conflicts were frequent. And it is through learning the very language and skills of the „American Welfare“ that French Jewish representatives finally started affirming their agency, and imposing their own wishes for post-war reconstruction.

The second section of the session gave interesting inputs for understanding the connections between the two different types of movements considered by the project – the women's movement, and Jewish groups. The discussion extensively addressed the nexus between sexist and anti-Semitic stereotypes, as

---

well as the category of gender as a tool for social analysis.

ALINA CAŁA (Warsaw) presented her concept of Aryan and Semitic femininity within the Polish and German anti-Semitic discourses, illustrating her point with literary examples. The image of the Jew, inherited from the Christian tradition, was an image of the Jewish man, making it almost impossible to find any medieval written opinion on Jewish women. As seen in the legendary literary descriptions of Estera and Rachela, Jewish women were depicted as femme fatale or feminine monsters. Aryan women on the other hand, were seen as entirely different.

DIETLIND HÜCHTKER (Halle/ Berlin) in turn gave a presentation on gender order as a medium for conceptualizing reform movements in the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century. She proposed that the category of „gender“ proved to be a factor in implementing new forms of social movements. The 19th century saw new developments in the area of politics and social movements, namely socialism, Zionism, nationalism and feminism, representing various groups. Each of them, while independent from each other, shared the notion of being discriminated. The Austrian province of Galicia was an arena for political and social reform movements and, as emphasized by Dietlind Hüchtker, Galicia was a typical case as seen from a comparative perspective. Similar reform and social movements were in existence there as well as in other parts of Europe.

The third session raised several questions concerning methodology in social sciences, especially the question of the nature and role of theory in the research process, compared to those of method. Since the difference between scientists' theories and theories used by social actors is not always clear, it is important to reflect on our own methods and practices as social researchers as well as on the way theory is being used.

DIETER RUCHT (Berlin) gave a methodological insight, insisting on the prominent role of theory in social research and advised to carefully look at the level of analysis (micro, meso or macro), as well as at the whole context the given social movements evolve in. Assuming that the meso-level is the more ap-

propriate for the project „Transnationalization of Struggles for Recognition“, Rucht proposed six different approaches for studying social movements (as strategically oriented actors, as promoters of ideologies and values, as collective identities, as creators of frames, through the role of external opportunities and through the role of precipitating incidents) and he exhorted PhD candidates to specify a clear-cut research question, and to avoid the „trap of a case-study“ by doing comparative research.

HANS JOACHIM HAHN (Leipzig) insisted on the existence of differences between situations faced by Jews in Europe in the 19th century, both at a national and international level. He also showed the shifts in these situations with the rise of modern or „national“ (Klaus Holz) anti-Semitism, turned against all Jews regardless of their position in society. Therefore categories of „national“ and „transnational“ don't allow for a full understanding of forms of solidarity, identity-building processes, and struggles for civil rights and further recognition undertaken by Jews at the beginning of the 20th century. Hahn argued that the notion of „diaspora nationalism“ developed by Jewish historian Simon Dubnow (1860-1941), beyond national and transnational, could be very enlightening to the study of Jewish identity politics and struggles for recognition in Europe between 1900 and 1930.

PIOTR WEISER (Warsaw) illustrated the history of anti-Semitism in Poland by choosing three biographies. Among the philosemites Weiser counted several members of the Żegota-council as supporters of the Jews during World War II (Żegota - Rada Pomocy Żydom). According to the presenter, Zofia Kossak Szczucka, writer and fervent Catholic, was also a philosemite.

The fourth session gave the opportunity to the participants to discuss the specificities of gender and women's studies, and how they could be included in the research projects. The presentations given on gender-research and gender-discourse in Poland proved to give a nuanced picture of Polish historiography as well as of Western stereotypes about Poland.

DOBROCHNA KAŁWA (Krakow) emphasized in her presentation the fact that the dominant historiography in Poland is political

or structural history. Combined with a lack of female historians in universities and research institutions, this results in merely a faint interest in women's or gender history. As Kałwa pointed out, gender-research is still being marginalized in today's Poland. Positivist historiography, which is still predominant, supports the exclusion of „Western“ methods, e.g. including cultural turn, theoretical concepts and histories of oppressed and marginalised groups, from research. Women's history in Poland is deprived of the „gender“-category. There is a clear preference for the term „women's history“ instead of „gender history“. Polish history is dominated by a perspective lacking either multi- or transnational aspects, and emphasizes a national point of view legitimizing national identity.

AGATA MŁODAWSKA (Krakow) explained that the „Western“ stereotype about Polish anti-feminism (supposedly linked to traditionalism and Catholic fundamentalism) is far from the reality of anti-feminism in Poland. Her research in Polish press shows that religious tradition is only the 3rd argument used by anti-feminists, far behind social functionalism and, to an even greater extent, biological and racist arguments inspired by the American antifeminist literature. Anti-feminism is as „modern“ and „transnationalized“ as feminism, and also develops stereotypes about gender relations in other European nations (such as Ukraine or Sweden). Thus, anti-Feminism is not more „essential“ to Polish culture than feminism, and is changing through time, according to social and political contexts.

Closing the proceedings, DIETER GOSEWINKEL (Berlin) presented the central research question of the project „Transnationalization of Struggles for Recognition“, namely why and how do transnational struggles for recognition of women and Jews in the early and late 20th century emerge from national contexts, and what is the impact of these struggles on both the national and transnational level? Gosewinkel insisted on the specific design of the research project, including comparison across time and countries.

#### Conference Overview:

##### Session 1

Chair: Zdzisław Mach

Jan. T. Gross, Some aspect of the situation of Jews in France, Germany and Poland directly after World War II

Moshe Zimmermann, Transnationalization of the history of the German – Jewish emancipation and de-emancipation

Laura Hobson Faure, American Jews, French Jews and the JDC: How the JDC strengthened the connection between American and French Jewry

##### Session 2

Chair: Jacques Ehrenfreund

Alina Cała, The Concept of „Aryan“ and „Semitic“ women in the Ideology of German and Polish Antisemitism

Dietlind Hüchtker, Gender Order as a Medium for Conceptualising Reform Movements in the End of the 19th/Beginning of the 20th Century

##### Session 3

Chair: Jolanta Ambrosiewicz- Jacobs

Dieter Rucht, Concepts and theories in social movement research: An overview and some recommendations

Hans-Joachim Hahn, Jewish Struggles for Recognition around 1900- some cultural aspects

Piotr Weiser, Democratic Party and Jews: Short Stormy Story of Polish Filosemitism

##### Session 4

Chair: Dieter Gosewinkel

Dobrochna Kałwa, Non- gendered women in a nationalized society: Some reflection on women's history in Poland

Agata Młodawska, Antifeminist Poland – cliché or reality?

##### Session 5

Dieter Gosewinkel, Presentation of the project The Transnationalization of Struggles for Recognition- Women and Jews in France, Germany and Poland in the 20th Century

Presentation of the PhD Projects prepared in

---

the framework of the project.

As part of the conference, reports were also delivered by PhD candidates working on the following topics:

MAJA BRAND, Some reflections on the opposition against banning ritual slaughter as a case of struggles for recognition and their transnationalization

EMMANUEL DEONNA, The creation of the World Jewish Congress: a paradigm of Jewish transnational mobilization

AGNES CHETAÏLLE, The gay and lesbian movement in France and Poland: public controversies, sexual politics and transnational organization in Europe

IWONA DADEJ, German and Polish Feminists around the turn of the 20th century: Dialog and transnational cooperation

JENNI RAMME, Studying women's transnational networks in Europe: orientations and problems

Tagungsbericht *The Transnationalization of Struggles for Recognition. Women and Jews in France, Germany, and Poland in the 20th century*. 10.10.2008-12.10.2008, , in: H-Soz-Kult 04.03.2009.