Workshop „The Nation State and Beyond: Governing Globalization Processes in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century“

Veranstalter: Isabella Loehr, History Department, University of Heidelberg; Roland Wenzlhuemer, Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context“, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg
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Bericht von: Jessica Lenz, Historisches Seminar, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

The dominant motive of this workshop was to ascertain the role of the nation state and its influence on international cooperation processes. As the hosts of the conference, ISABELLA LOEHR and ROLAND WENZLHUEMER (Heidelberg), stated, that they had intentionally opted for an inclusive workshop title in order to allow for a broad discussion of the frameworks of and driving forces behind globalization in the 19th and the early 20th century.

In her keynote speech MADELEINE HERREN (Heidelberg) set out the question on which the workshop centered: Which role did the nation state play in international cooperation? She portrayed the fragility of international organizations in the 19th and early 20th century. In contrast to the more or less „successful“ signs of international standardization like road signs or institutions with a „global membership“ like pollution, religion, anarchism, or terrorism, the international organizations between 1850 and 1939 suffered of weakness and they were not well protected. Her main thesis was, that „global places“ like post offices in the Ottoman empire or the seven seas were much better protected by the international system than the international bodies themselves, because they could not act under national laws as companies could. As an example of her most recent research MADELEINE HERREN explained the case of the BIS, the Bank for International Settlements, founded in 1930, situated in Basel. The bank was to take care of transgression costs of international organizations, for example pension funds of the ILO or funds of the International Red Cross. National laws, international developments, but especially the lack of the capacity to take legal action and liability paralyzed these international bodies. As a conclusion Madeleine Herren said that international institutional networks existed only in a very ambivalent and fragile status until the middle of the 20th century – as quantity cannot prove importance. She also stressed that the analytical tools of transcultural history should be used to lay open the basic structures.

MARCO PLATANIA (Frankfurt/Main) in his paper addressed the interpretation of France as a nation state operating in the context of rapidly increasing global exchanges and colonial competition. He was mainly interested in the field of the narrative of European expansion and stated how the French nation sought to govern global processes. Was the discourse of free trade only a better means of imperialism to strengthen the French position in Europe's new colonies? His example was France in the discourse of free trade in the expansionist phase of the 18th and 19th century. At the end of the 18th century the British East India Company had become the monopolist agent in the Indian-European market. Nationalist Frenchmen proposed to intervene in the market, cosmopolitans rejected this idea and proposed to let the market regulate itself in a free trade movement. The latter discourse was also adopted by French nationalists who tried to bemantle their nationalist approach by the free trade discourse. Like MADELEINE HERREN he mentioned the fragility of internationalism and the strength of national frameworks.

JAMES CASTEEL (Ottawa) presented a paper about German observers of the development of Siberia in the early 20th century (1905-1914) and started his lecture by quoting MICHAEL GEYER'S „transnational horizon of the nation“. As Germany was Russia's largest trading partner, the Germans followed Siberian developments with great interest. German social scientists travelled through Siberia to watch and record all activities, especially the creation of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and commented on it. In contrast to the assumed „backwardness“ of the European Russian peasants, the free settling in Siberia seemed to them modern and inspiring. The potential prospect of a continental empire influenced scientists' writings. Siberia was seen as

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a country in transition and as a laboratory for agrarian reforms, the advancement of a „primitive population" to a „cultivated population". Siberian products were to be integrated into global economy, the pace of development accelerated to keep up with Europe. But Germans were also interested in creating a market for their own goods in Siberia, Russian speaking Germans functioned as mediators and were fascinated by the possibilities in Siberia. The upcoming First World War changed the situation and showed how the entanglement of nations always works in confined interest frames.

KLAUS DITTRICH (Portsmouth) presented the case of the French Protestant Educator Ferdinand Buisson (1841-1932), institutionally tightly linked to the Third Republic of France, and questioned the motivation of international cooperation in the education sector. In contrast to his Catholic conservative superiors Buisson tried to establish a compulsory, gratuitous and secular school system in France. He used world exhibitions to establish international networks with educational scientists from other countries. As the USA were regarded as a modern model in the educational respect, Buisson, in 1876, travelled through the USA to study the educational system of primary schooling. After he had had the chance to implement compulsory, gratuitous and secular schooling in France, his interest in international educational exchange shifted and he focused stronger on showing the French superiority over other less advanced countries in the field of education. So KLAUS DITTRICHs main question, why actors like Buisson went transnational, was answered in three steps: firstly they wanted to learn for their own institution, secondly they wanted to represent their institution on the international scene to gain influence, and thirdly, after having succeeded in their national aims, they envisioned international cooperation to show their national success. Buisson therefore used the term „inter-patriotism" in reference to the term „inter-nationalism", a term that very well fitted also most of the actors described in other papers of the workshop.

GUIDO THIEMEYER (Kassel) in his paper on the International Bimetallic Monetary Union made clear, that the motives of France, the driving force of the union, to try and establish a European and transatlantic monetary union have to be questioned from three sides. The first question implores the political, the second the economic and the third the cultural sector. Smaller states joining the economically attractive bimetallic union, were soon informally controlled by France, the union developed rapidly and made it an intermediate economic success, e.g. because of the reduction of transaction costs. The cultural motives are to be found in the notion of civilization and progress, which the participation in the currency unit seemed to be bringing. Another development of the 19th century international framework THIEMEYER showed was the evolution of an international network of experts, also visible in other fields of international cooperation of the time. The attempt to establish an international currency unit supported a new development: Diplomats usually responsible for international relations experienced a lack of knowledge, not being experts for financial matters. Financiers subsequently had to network on an international scale to provide an experts' background. Nonetheless the union finally failed in 1897 because of the non-membership of Germany and Great Britain. In effect a nation state like France was able to act as a motor and to launch the first international monetary union experiment, whereas two other nation states like Great Britain and Germany, pursuing their national interests, were just as well capable of making this experiment fail. That again raised the main question of this workshop of how influential the interests of nation states were in the 19th century.

The paper of SIMONE MÜLLER (Berlin) showed very well the dichotomy of the evolving international networks in the 19th century in the „cosmopolitan mindset" on the one hand and the „full-hearted patriotism" of the cable agents, as she called it, on the other hand. Typical overland border lines suddenly were not applicable to submarine telegraph cables anymore, so that a complicated network of state and non-state actors had to negotiate for example possession rights of commercial cables. Here again arose the phenomenon of an internationally acting group of experts like cable company agents,

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who worked on standardization like privacy rights, censorship or the distribution of revenues. They thus somewhat adopted the role of diplomats – and even changed citizenship to meet the needs of their international operations – to keep good relations with experts of other countries, as cables could be cut in cases of crisis. Sharply interpreted in MÜLLERs field of research the nation state was more of a „disturbing moment“, as it put obstacles to internationally operating persons and projects.

TOM EWING (Blacksburg, VA), who talked about the Eurasian telegraph as a transnational instrument of colonial control and political mobilization, emphasized the contrast of intentions and outcome of the development of the telegraph. Intended as an instrument of stronger control over the colonies, the border-crossing telegraph system also empowered the anti-colonial actors to communicate faster and better and to counteract control. A number of political changes in countries like Iran, Russia or Egypt belong into the time of telegraph communication. However in contrast to single countries' studies Tom Ewing regarded the web that connected the world and that was accessible for everyone at reasonable cost in a more global access. Technical maps of telegraph lines of 1874, 1891 and 1924 shown by EWING even left out countries and continents or borders as such. Technicians who followed the lines of cables reported how the inhabitants of countries through which the cables went, at first admired and were amazed at the „rational and ordered West“, but how on the other hand very soon the admiration could change into contestation. By damaging the wires and poles they also began challenging this new Western form of power and control and the Western world had to accept the weaknesses of the new control organ. So the organ mainly intended to strengthen the nation states' powers in colonies and the „uncivilized“ world rather than that soon brought up new challenges to the nation states.

THIES SCHULZE (Münster) reported the role of the supra-national institution of the Roman Catholic Church in border regions like Alsace-Lorraine and South Tyrol in the interwar years between First and Second World War. Schulze stated as a starting point, that, as Protestantism is regarded as one of the driving forces for the nation-building, the role of Catholicism in its self-understanding of having a peace-keeping function is more complex. The archival sources of the Vatican are difficult to grasp, as a variety of opinions can be found in them and as the encyclicas since the times of Pope Leo XIII rarely contain the term „natio“. Pope Pius' XI statements in contrast included „good“ and „evil“ nationalism. One good example for the difficulties between supra-national orders and nationalist feelings of Catholic clergy members is the conflict about primary schooling in border regions. In Alsace-Lorraine the Catholic Church was accused of being biased by often being in favor of the minority group whom they taught religion in their mother tongue. In South Tyrolia a priest even asked the pope to ban Italian priests from teaching religion in South Tyrol, because he demanded that children were to be taught in their German mother tongue and not in Italian. So the conflict between the supranationalism of the Church as a world-spanning institution and the clergy members of border regions being influenced by nationalist movements of the population was depicted very well and could be described by the term „overlapping identities“.

The report of ROBERT JULIO DECKER (Leeds) described the immigration tests in Australia and the United States of America at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the Australian, New Zealand and South Africa practices functioning as a kind of „test run“ for the U.S. Australia had developed a literacy test to prevent undesirable illiterate persons from immigrating. These undesirable groups of persons were considered paupers, criminals, prostitutes and persons suffering of insanity. In practice the test was applied as a means for racial discrimination to keep non-white immigrants out of the country. The assumed Anglo-Saxon racial superiority over e.g. Asian immigrants also found an expression in the IRL, the Immigration Restriction League of the United States, a government project to protect the population from „biological dangers“. The league helped to transfer racial ideas and engaged in legislative lobbying, so that – after the illiteracy test law had been withdrawn in the States in 1897

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– it was finally passed and used in the U.S. as of 1914. The transnational aspect of the described development is – paradoxically – to be found in the circulation of test drafts between the different countries willing to use them for the exclusion of certain immigrant groups. So nations went transnational only to keep their national superiority.

GIJSBERT OONK (Rotterdam) talked about the complicated relationship between being native/indigenous to a place and being a migrant/stranger – like the Indian trading families having immigrated to Africa generations ago – and how the political developments of the nation state can influence the self-awareness of persons living in this dichotomy. In the 1840s the settlement of Indian traders in East Africa began, so that immigrants could settle freely, before immigration restrictions occurred or the nation state was even invented. These new inhabitants of the African coast successfully ran family trading businesses under the Arabic reign and the British colonization phase, in the latter their status being „somewhere between the British white colonists and the African black indigenous population". As an example for these trading families Oonk gave a brief summary of the Karimjee family, who mostly intermarried with other Indian families, but also held close relationships to the ruling governments. Especially in times of decolonization these close ties were important to keep the business running. Indian families developed „escapes", as Oonk put it, had bank accounts in diverse countries, and family members held passports of different countries (British, Commonwealth, African national), but by this raised the suspicion of disloyalty in the African native population. The Africanization laws of Idi Amin e.g. finally laid open this suspicion, as by 1971 more than 70.000 Asian Africans had been – regardless of their citizenship – expelled from Uganda. Other African countries treated their Asian African minorities less aggressively, but Asian Africans were mostly affected by discrimination, even though their self-concept was not that of internationalists.

The last paper in this workshop was presented by HEATHER ELLIS (Berlin), who showed the important role of higher education in the nation state building process of the 19th century, even though she stressed, that the perception of the 19th century history as the century of nationalism was oversimplified. Her paper consisted of three aspects: 1) the theoretical approach, which was to be historiographical and thereby transnational, 2) the evidence of growing cross-border contact being very strong in the British-German context of the 19th century, and 3) the reactions of the state side to the intense knowledge and personal transfer. But in this context Ellis also asked if the transnational approach as a concept might not be a binary simplification and if it is not rather an advantage to take into consideration the national and the international access to a subject, because it should be questioned that the terms „national" and „international" exclude one another. Her examples for border-crossing contacts between Germany and Great Britain showed that the self-concept of nationalism of a country does not need to exclude internationalism. Britain with its free educational system rivaled with the German education system under public auspices, but still students sought the knowledge transfer between countries. The students taking advantage of the exchange could be called „cosmopolitan nationalists", German academia being perceived as a model for British scholars, but working in first instance not for the nation state, but for science. German scholars like Leopold von Ranke or Robert Bunsen were famous in Britain and attracted many British students, so that from the 1830s onwards there evolved an active exchange of scientists and students. The British scholars even sought to advance the British towards the German system. At this point ELLIS turned to the third aspect of the subject, because British government members feared „the hotbed of revolution" when regarding the political development in Germany leading to the revolution of 1848, in which German students played a major role. The British government was especially aware of the fact, that the universities of Cambridge and Oxford were the recruitment base of officials for the British Empire. So ELLIS' main conclusion was that the nation state was always present, but that for certain actors it was more important, for others less and that to fully understand the

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phenomenon the focus needs to be on the actors themselves.

PEER VRIES (Vienna) began his concluding remarks with the question of what is meant by the terms „nation“ and „state“. The concept of the modern state firstly implies, that it needs to be a fixed territory. Secondly, the question of passports, of „belonging“ to a state, is inherent to the concept, a state needs inhabitants, citizens, so-called „subjects“. Thirdly, the state is defined by having the monopoly of legitimate violence, executed by people belonging to the state, Vries called it the „violence behind politics“, referring to mostly big state budgets for war activities. And the last point Vries mentioned, that makes up a modern state, was the question of sovereignty. Next to the monopoly over citizens fighting for their country there is the state's monopoly on taxation, the state's monopoly over the administration of the country and its inhabitants. Put in a simple sentence: If no-one believes in the state, there is no state possible, it would lack the legitimacy. To the question of nation and state Vries stressed, that both must be identical to have a stable nation state. The phenomenon of nation states is a very recent one and Vries agreed with Jürgen Osterhammel, that only at the end of the 19th century real nation states have arisen, even if the roots for this development lay in the 18th century. The emergence of Great Britain as on the one hand the first European nation state, on the other the biggest globalizer by forming the British Empire, was Vries' prominent example for his thesis, that internationalization or globalization and the nation state are no contradiction – as long as sovereignty is not affected. Another example for this thesis were the United Nations, which, Vries stressed, do work together, but still persist in their own national sovereign rights. So, referring to Heather Ellis' paper, Vries pointed out, that the question of state power and sovereignty could divide British and German scholars by making them shoot one another in World War I. The legitimate power of the state violence monopoly could easily rule out personal bonds developed by border-crossing university exchanges. So Vries's final conclusion was that the nation state would/will always stay the core of the „problem“ and that every attempt to get to something beyond the nation state must transgress state sovereignty.

Workshop Programme:

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Madeleine Herren (University of Heidelberg)
Keynote Speech: 'They already exist…' – Do They? Conjuring Global Networks

Panel One – National Perspectives on Transnational Challenges
chair: Katja Naumann (GWZO at the University of Leipzig)
Marco Platania (University of Frankfurt): Thinking to the Nation in a Global Perspective. From the 'Free Trade Nation' to the 'Imperial Nation-State', and back: The Fortunes and Problems of a Long-Living Pattern of Analysis“

James Casteel (Carleton University, Ottawa): „Exploring the Eastern Frontier of the Global Economy: German Observers of the Colonization and Development of Siberia 1905-1914“

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Klaus Dittrich (University of Portsmouth): „Appropriation, Representation and Cooperation as Transnational Actions: The Example of Ferdinand Buisson“

Panel Two – Global Institutions and Transnational Networks
chair: Monika Dommann (University of Basel)
Guido Thiemeyer (University of Kassel): „The Struggle for an International Bimetallic Monetary Union 1878-1900 and its Failure“

Simone Müller (Free University Berlin): „Beyond the Nations State? Cable Agents and the Global Media System on the North Atlantic, 1860-1915“

Tom Ewing (Virginia Tech University): „Connecting and Contesting the 'Bonds of Empire': The Eurasian Telegraph as a Transnational Instrument of Colonial Control and Political Mobilization“

Thies Schulze (University of Münster): „Nationalism and the Catholic Church: Papal Politics and 'Nationalist' Clergy in Border Regions“

Panel Three – Migration and the Nation State
chair: Antje Flüchter (University of Heidelberg)

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Robert Julio Decker (University of Leeds): „Tests 'found so valuable in Australia': White Settler Colonies and the Discourse on Immigration Restriction in the United States“

Gijsbert Oonk (Erasmus University Rotterdam): „Making States, Creating Strangers. Why Trading Minorities Cannot Become Natives“

Panel Four – National Traditions and Global Scientific Communities
Heather Ellis (Centre for British Studies Berlin): „National or Transnational? University Networks Between Britain and Germany in the 19th Century“

Concluding Remarks
Peer Vries (University of Vienna)

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