

6th Graduate Conference in European History (GRACEH) 2012. Transformation in European History: Preconditions – Processes – Perceptions

Veranstalter: Historisch-Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät, Universität Wien

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Bericht von: Burkhard Wöllner, Institut für Slawistik, Universität Wien; Florentine Kastner, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Universität Wien

The „transicion“ of political systems in Southern Europe and Latin America since the 1970s and the revolutionary changes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/91 have resulted in the rise of transformation studies in the social sciences. The term „transformation“ is commonly understood as the politically steered transition from communist dictatorship to democracy, from a planned to a market economy, and from a closed to an open society.

In contrast to this common understanding of the term, the 6th Graduate Conference in European History (GRACEH) intended to explore a historical approach to transformation. A very broad working definition was proposed, characterizing transformation as a historical period of especially intense and accelerated structural changes on a political, social, economic, and cultural level. Therefore, the concept of transformation was applied not exclusively to contemporary history, but to all major changes since the beginning of the Modern Age. The guiding questions of the conference were as follows: Which preconditions lead to periods of transformation? Which causes can be identified? Which factors triggered and which agents influenced these changes? On which levels did transformation occur? How was transformation perceived and evaluated by internal and external observers? And in how far was transformation a subject of discourse?

The Graduate Conference in European History takes place annually at one of the partner universities in Budapest, Florence or Vienna. GRACEH 2012 was organized by the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Sciences at the University of Vienna in cooperation with the Central European University in Budapest and the

European University Institute in Florence. It was sponsored by the City of Vienna and the University of Vienna. 34 international post graduate and postdoctoral students were invited to discuss their current research projects on different subjects in European history.

Several papers were devoted to transition in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1980s and 1990s. In his inaugural speech, PHILIPP THER (Vienna) stressed the importance of dealing with this period from the perspective of historical science and proposed two possible ways to approach the diverse phenomena of transition. First, he emphasized the necessity to examine individual experiences of these transformative events. Analyzing the different discourses and perceptions could help to deconstruct master narratives of success, revolution or failure and to challenge certain transition symbols such as the Round Table or the Fall of the Berlin Wall. Second, Ther suggested not to describe transformation processes in East Central Europe only as a competition between nation states, but to pay more attention to heterogeneities and disparities within the states and to deal with selected aspects of transition beyond the national paradigm.

The following presentations continued to explore transformation in a comparative perspective. Esther Wahlen and Eva Schäffler focused on societal and social issues within the transformation from socialist to post-socialist societies and discussed the role of the state in these processes. ESTHER WAHLEN (Regensburg) analyzed drug consumption and countermeasures in formerly Eastern bloc countries such as Romania and Czechoslovakia and showed that certain socialist specifics left their legacy behind in the new post-socialist states. EVA SCHÄFFLER (Salzburg) presented an outline of her doctoral project comparing heterosexual relationships in GDR and in post-1989 Eastern Germany. For example, she asked how relationship models, marriage motives and gender roles were affected by the reunification of Germany.

The papers by Iwona Łyko, Václav Šmidrkal, Andrea Talaber and Hans-Ulrich Lempert touched upon issues of identity and collective memory. IWONA ŁYKO (Prague) showed how filmmakers in Polish

and Czechoslovakian respectively Czech documentaries presented the political changes in 1989. Characterizing these documentary films as contemporary witnesses, she showed how filmmakers in both countries made use of the new freedom after the fall of ideological dictate and censorship. VÁCLAV ŠMIDRKAL (Prague) showed the implications of 1989 for the Czechoslovakian army. He asked how the identity of the soldiers changed when the mass socialist military transformed into a small professional army within a democratic framework. ANDREA TALABER (Florence) examined the transformation from Soviet-style symbolism to national symbolism in Hungarian commemoration policies on national celebrations, anniversaries and holidays. She mentioned that certain conservative political circles did not perceive the year 1989 as a revolution or historical break. HANS-ULRICH LEMPERT (Vienna) also attached importance to the investigation of national discourses and self-perception in transformation processes. Analyzing cultural and historical myths as well as ethnic symbols in post-communist Albania, he identified three main features of this discourse: the reorientation toward Western Europe, the preservation of traditional enemy stereotypes such as Greece and Serbia, and the feeling of community with Albanians in Kosovo.

HANSFRIEDER VOGEL (Vienna) focused on the issue of European integration in South Eastern Europe. He portrayed the European Union as an important actor in the process of the integration of Kosovo into the EU. However, he also questioned the opinion that Kosovo was a mere passive target of European politics and showed how the government of Kosovo influenced and reshaped state transformation. NINO KOVAČIĆ (Zagreb) dealt with cultural aspects of transformation. He illustrated the difficulties of the independent cultural scene in post-socialist Croatia in the 1990s and negatively evaluated nationalist tendencies in state cultural policies.

Marcin Jarzabek and Aleksandra Leyk presented their methodological approaches within their research on transition. MARCIN JARZĄBEK (Cracow) discussed the value of oral history as an important alternative to macrohistorical approaches to transition.

He showed how the interviews of Polish saleswomen could give insight into personal experiences of major changes in Polish society in the 1990s. ALEKSANDRA LEYK (Warsaw) presented results of a research project at the Institute of Sociology in Warsaw based on biographical interviews with workers who experienced privatization of state-owned Polish factories. She examined the effects of privatization on individual biographies and asked about perceptions of these social processes 20 years later.

Apart from transition in the 1980/90s, the concept of transformation was also applied to much earlier historical periods. Several papers dealt with the question of how elites perceived and reacted to political and religious change. STEFANOS BOULASIKIS (Vienna) explored the consequences of the fall of Constantinople to the Turks as one of the major turning points in European history in the 15th century. In his talk, he explored how secular and clerical elites from South Slavic and Byzantine Greek origin coped with the new reality of non-Christian rule. He pointed out that the loyalist strategies of the Christian intellectuals were based very much on traditional practices. IEVGENIIA SAKAL (Budapest) analyzed how clerics from the Kiev Orthodox church approached the challenges of Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Her investigation of *Teraturgema*, an account of miracles published in the 17th century, showed reform processes within the Orthodox church which integrated certain Jesuit influences in the sphere of doctrine and education, but also continued Byzantine traditions. VERONIKA ČAPSKÁ (Opava) explored how the confessional, economic and societal transformations in the lands of the Bohemian Crown after the Battle of White Mountain (1620) were perceived, evaluated and legitimized in early modern discourse. She identified fictional and literary patterns in the legitimization strategies of contemporary elites and pointed at the continuity of these narrative emplotments up to Czech national historiography in the 19th century, when this period of „recatholicization“ was characterized as a period of darkness. VALENTINA DAL CIN (Verona) analyzed the difficult situation of the Venetian

aristocracy after the end of the Republic of Venice and looked into the question of how these elites got along with the deep political, economic and social transformations during Austrian and French rule (1797-1815).

Two speakers addressed Christian-Muslim relations in imperial contexts. SCOTT RANK (Budapest) delivered an in-depth study of religious polemics in the late-19th century Ottoman Empire analyzing transformation of religious identity from the perspective of inter-imperial entangled history. Elaborating on the works of two Muslim scholars, he showed how contacts between Christian and Muslim confessional groups altered political and theological beliefs on both sides. Western philosophical thought and rational criticism was useful for them to deconstruct Christianity and defend Islam, but this also left an imprint on the own religious identity and fostered secularization processes. OXANA ZEMTSOVA (Florence) discussed the transformations Muslim society underwent in the Middle Volga Region in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. She described how the 1905 Manifesto affected the different non-Christian elites to develop their own political and identity projects and showed the reactions of the imperial authorities.

Dimitrios Kontogeorgis and Oskar Mulej examined the development of political movements in the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century. DIMITRIOS KONTOGEORGIS (Athens) analyzed the role of Romanian conservatives in 19th century modernization processes and vindicated their reputation of being hostile to progress. By dissolving the strict dichotomy of the National Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, he showed that conservatives also contributed to changes in Romanian society. The paper of OSKAR MULEJ (Budapest) was concerned with structural and ideological transformations of liberal parties among the German, Czech and Slovene population in the Habsburg Empire.

Intellectual perceptions and concepts of transformation were also in the focus of the following presentations. SARAH LEMMON (Vienna) studied travelogues published by Czech journalists, teachers and scientists travelling in Africa and Asia in the first half of the

20th century. She discovered that the foundation of Czechoslovakia (1918) left a significant imprint on the self-representation of these intellectuals and supported the formation of a Western European identity. ARON SZELE (Budapest) examined the different concepts of change and transformation in Hungarian historiography and traced the theoretical debates of the different historians and historical schools from the 1920s to the end of the 20th century. LORENZO FERRARI (Lucca) studied changes in the policy of the European Community toward the developing countries occurring in the 1970s. Investigating the discourse of European elites, he identified the different factors that contributed to the significant shift from a colonial approach to a more civilian attitude of European politics toward the Third World.

Reorientations and transformations in the aftermath of World War I and II were discussed in several papers. Johannes Kontny, Jan Bröker and Georgio Potì treated the changes after the breakdown of the continental empires in 1918, depicting the outcome of these changes on various levels of governmental structure in the new independent states. JOHANNES KONTNY (Vienna) examined the reactions towards the new rules after the Paris Peace Treaties on the local level, showing similar attitudes in the Belgian town Eupen on the German-Belgian border and the Moravian town Znojmo on the Austrian-Czech border. The skepticism in these communities toward the new political order became apparent in low election turnouts on referendums on the future of the two regions. JAN BRÖKER (Budapest) talked about juridical aspects of transformation on a federal level. He focused on transitional justice in Hungary (1919-1922) and explored the judicial measures taken by the counterrevolutionary regime to address the „red terror“ of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919). GIORGIO POTÌ (Florence) outlined the fundamental changes in international relations between European countries and the Middle East provoked by the acceptance of the new principle of national self-determination.

Fabien Théofilakis, Izabela Kazejak and Adrian Grama addressed the period of transition from war to peace after World War II. FA-

BIEN THÉOFILAKIS (Paris) shed light on a hardly known period of German-French relations, exploring the fate of nearly one million German prisoners of war in France. Drawing on archival sources from his substantial doctoral research, he described the changes in political and societal attitudes towards prisoners of war in the course of the transition from totalitarian to democratic frameworks and asked how this development influenced identities and images of the enemy. In conclusion, Théofilakis posited that this transformation could be considered more successful than the transformation after World War I. IZABELA KAZEJAK (Florence) turned the attention to the fate of the Jewish population, which had survived the Holocaust in Central Eastern Europe and investigated the new circumstances under socialist rule in Lviv and Wrocław. ADRIAN GRAMA (Budapest) submitted a paper dealing with the development of the Romanian Communist Party after the arrival of the Soviet Army in 1944. He attempted to reject moral reproaches of opportunism and stated that the rise of the party has to be explained with developments in industrial production.

Two papers dealt with socio-economic aspects of transformation. NATHAN MARCUS (Florence) reflected upon the effects of hyperinflation in Austria after World War I. He stated that hyperinflation in 1921/22 was neither cause nor consequence of postwar changes, but rather accelerated the transformation from an empire to a small republic. He showed the interdependence of these economic forces and social and political changes and saw hyperinflation as a catalyst for Austria's path of economic austerity, social conflict and political extremism during the next centuries. In his paper, MIHAI-DAN CIRJAN (Budapest) addressed the issue of the Great Depression in interwar Romania analyzing the effects of the public and private debt crisis on economic transformations.

A special panel addressed architectural and urban transformation. The papers of Nadja Weck and Zsuzsa Sidó dealt with urban change in Habsburg cities in the second half of the 19th century. NADJA WECK (Vienna) showed how the establishment of railroad infrastructure triggered changes in ur-

ban morphology in the Galician capital Lemberg. ZSUZSA SIDÓ (Budapest) pointed out the decisive role of the Hungarian aristocracy in shaping the urban landscape of Budapest, especially the aesthetic development of the Palace District. LILIANA IUGA (Budapest) described conceptual changes in the attitudes toward urban architecture in socialist Romania. Whereas the reconstruction of the cities after World War II had been based on ideological, economic and modernist principles, a shift to a preservationist trend in architecture could be observed during the 1950s and 1960s.

The role of the media as important agents in transformation processes was subject to investigation in the presentations of Karolina Pietras and Elizaveta Gaufman. KAROLINA PIETRAS (Paris) presented the results of her PhD thesis on perceptions of the Polish *solidarność* movement in Western Germany and France. She examined the role of the French and German press as a mirror and opinion maker during the events of 1980/1981 comparing different attitudes towards these developments on the political, diplomatic and societal level. Whereas both governments reacted rather cautiously to the *solidarność* movement, French society expressed its support more openly than the German population. In her talk, she examined networks of French and German journalists and their contacts to Polish intellectuals. ELIZAVETA GAUFMAN (Tübingen) pointed out the potential of social networks as triggers of democratization. Discussing recent developments in Russian civil society in the run-up to the presidential elections, she stressed the growing importance of social networks as an alternative to the state-controlled media landscape and stated that this new virtual public space had a mobilizing effect on the new Russian middle class and helped to launch several offline initiatives.

The conference was enriched by two keynote speeches. CHRISTIAN GERLACH (Bern) emphasized that investigations of political, cultural and socioeconomic transformations should not neglect the role of violence. Referring to Greek history as one example of mass violence in European and global history of the 20th century, he showed that massive physical violence was always a re-

sult of a multitude of reasons and due to the participation of diverse social groups cooperating with the state. GUUDRUN GERSMANN (Paris) dealt with politics of street naming in Paris as a form of symbolic transformation. Focusing mainly on debates arising from the French Revolution and lasting throughout the 19th century, she pointed out the double function of street names, being, on the one hand, an aid to orientation for trade, postal service etc. and, on the other hand, a medium of ideological propaganda and political self-representation.

The different papers presented at GRACEH 2012 covered a broad range of aspects of transformation and applied this term to various political, cultural and economic phenomena from early modern times until recent developments. The focus on transformation provided a common ground for the discussion of quite different doctoral and post-doctoral topics and was useful to open new perspectives on the various research projects. Continuing thematic and methodological traditions of previous GRACEH conferences, many participants explored issues of transformation in the context of comparative approaches, cultural transfer and transnational studies. Most of the students tried to avoid teleological assumptions in their studies of transformation and attached particular attention to specific factors and characteristics of change such as acceleration, diversity, simultaneity and intensity. A special focus lay on the study of perceptions, actions and strategies of elites as important agents of transformation. However, the proposed broad definition of transformation was also questioned. If transformation in fact means no more than change or development, its methodological value does not seem to be clear. Therefore, further transformation studies will have to rethink this concept and specify its theoretical underpinnings.

Conference Overview:

Inaugural lecture

Chair: Marion Romberg (Vienna)

Philipp Ther (Vienna): From the „Eastern Block“ to the „New Europe“. The Transformation in Historical Perspective

Panel 1 – Transformation in East Central Eu-

rope. Comparative Approaches

Chair: Florian Kühner (Vienna)

Iwona Łyko (Prague): Picture of 1989 Transformation from the Point of View of Polish and Czech Documentary Filmmakers.

Esther Wahlen (Regensburg): Drug Problems in the Eastern Bloc

Václav Šmidrkal (Prague): Return, Reverse, or Restart? In Search for a New Identity of the Post-Socialist Military (The Case of Czechoslovakia)

Discussant: Tatjana Thelen (Vienna)

Panel 2 – State and Society in Times of Political and Cultural Transformation

Chair: Burkhard Wöller (Vienna)

Eva Schäffler (Salzburg): The Loves They Are A-changin': Relationships in the Former GDR and in „Post-Wende“ Eastern Germany

Andrea Talaber (Florence): Commemorating 1989: Hungary's Unfinished Revolution?

Nino Kovačić (Zagreb): Culture in Transition – The Problem of Recognition of the Independent Cultural Scene in Croatia (1991–2011)

Discussant: Oliver Rathkolb (Vienna)

Panel 3A – Media and Communication During a Religious Transformation Process

Chair: Sandra Hertel (Vienna)

Stefanos Boulasikis (Vienna): Perceiving a Distinct Cultural „Kommunikationsraum“ in the European Periphery at the Dawn of the Early Modern Years. Balkan Christian Narratives Between Rejection and Loyalty Towards the Ottoman Power; Tradition as an Answer to Transition

Ievgeniia Sakal (Budapest): „Teraturgema“ (1638) of Afanasij Kal'nofoyskyi: Between Reformation and Byzantine Traditions.

Discussant: Gudrun Gersmann (Paris)

Panel 3B – Perceptions of Transformations in the Elites

Chair: David Pruonto (Vienna)

Valentina Dal Cin (Verona): Political and Ideological Attitudes of the Venetian Élite From

the End of the Republic of Venice to the Restoration Period

Sarah Lemmen (Vienna): From a Small Czech Nation to a Large Central European Power? National Reflections. From a Czech Cultural Elite in the Interwar Period

Lorenzo Ferrari (Lucca): Drawing a Post-Imperial Europe: A Socio-Intellectual History of European Elites in the 1970s

Discussant: Dirk Moses (Florence)

Panel 4A – Spheres For Challenging Legitimizational Patterns: The Dynamics of Empire, Nation and Religion

Chair: Katharina Ebner (Vienna)

Veronika Čapská (Opava): Re-interpreting the Process of Early Modern Recatholicization in the Lands of the Bohemian Crown

Scott Rank (Budapest): Late-Ottoman Inter-Confessional Dialectics and Transformations: The Case of Christian-Muslim Religious Polemics (1867-1915)

Discussant: Nadia Al-Bagdadi (Budapest)

Panel 4B – Aspects of Economic Transformation

Chair: Rafael Prehlsler (Vienna)

Nathan Marcus (Florence): Hyperinflation: A Catalyst of Austria's Postwar Transformations

Mihai-Dan Cirjan (Budapest): The Politics of Debt at the European Periphery: The Peasants and the State as Debtors

Aleksandra Leyk (Warsaw): Privatization as a Biographical Experience. The Case of Socialist Worker in the Light of Polish Sociological Discourse on Transformation

Discussant: Dieter Segert (Vienna)

Panel 5A – Media as a mirror and promoter of transformation processes

Chair: Marion Romberg (Vienna)

Karolina Pietras (Paris): Crisis and Change in German and French Media. The Case of the Polish Crisis of the 80s

Elizaveta Gaufman (Tübingen): Social Net-

works and Transition to Democracy in Russia

Marcin Jarzabek (Krakow): When Transformation ends? – Periodisation and Limitation of the Concept in the Perspective of Oral History

Discussant: Wolfgang Schmale (Vienna)

Panel 5B – Dealing with Imperial Legacies: Comparing Mechanisms on Local, Federal and International level

Chair: Katharina Ebner (Vienna)

Johannes Kontny (Vienna): From Imperial Periphery to National Border Towns: The Commemoration of the Change of Sovereignty in Eupen and Znojmo/Znaim During the Interwar Period

Jan Bröker (Budapest): Transitional (In)Justice? – Political Transformation and Criminal Law in Hungary 1919-1922

Giorgio Potì (Florence): A Moment for Self-determination? Imperial Violence in Mandated Mesopotamia and Syria and Its International Resonance: The Case of the Great Syrian Revolt (1919-1928)

Discussant: Christian Gerlach (Bern)

Panel 6A – State and Nation Building in Periods of Transformation

Chair: Florian Kühner (Vienna)

Aron Szele (Budapest): The Idea of Change and Transformation in 20th Century Hungarian Historical Thought

Hans-Ulrich Lempert (Vienna): Legitimizing Change and Changing Legitimization – The Two-edged Relationship of National Discourse and Transformation Processes in Albania

Hansfrieder Vogel (Vienna): Levering Transformation – Transforming the Lever – The European Union as an Agent of Change in Kosovo since 1999

Discussant: László Kontler (Budapest)

Panel 6B – From War to Peace: Reorientations After World War II

Chair: Burkhard Wöller (Vienna)

Fabien Théofilakis (Paris): Exiting the War,

Entering Captivity: European Transformation Through the Lens of German Captivity in France (1944–1949)

Adrian Grama (Budapest): The Democratic Interlude: The Romanian Communist Party between 1944 and 1947

Izabela Kazejak (Florence): Transformation in European Jewish History after the End of the Second World War in East Central Europe: Preconditions, Processes and Perceptions

Discussant: Ljiljana Radonić (Vienna)

Public lecture

Christian Gerlach (Bern): When Transformation Turns Deadly: Mass Violence in Crises of Society

Panel 7 – Reshaping the Urban Space – When Transformation Becomes Visible

Chair: Rafael Prehlsler (Vienna)

Zsuzsa Sidó (Budapest): The Role of the Aristocracy in the 19th Century Urban Transformation of Budapest: The Palace District

Nadja Weck (Vienna): The Railway as Trigger of Urban Transformation: Urban Morphological Developments of the City of Lemberg in the Second Half of the 19th Century

Liliana Iuga (Budapest): Re-conceptualizing Urban Change in 1960s Romania: From the „Socialist Reconstruction“ to the „Socialist Transformation“ of cities

Discussant: Markian Prokopovych (Vienna)

Keynote speech

Discussant: Sandra Hertel

Gudrun Gersmann (Paris): Lost in Transformation. Some Aspects of the History of Street Naming in 19th Century Paris

Panel 8 – Political Movements in Transformation Processes

Chair: David Pruonto (Vienna)

Dimitrios Kontogeorgis (Athens): Underestimated Agents of „Change“ in 19th Century Romania: Liberal Landowners and Conservatives

Oxana Zemtsova (Florence): Civil Freedoms

and Transformations in Russian Muslim Society (1905–1914)

Oskar Mulej (Budapest): Late 19th and early 20th Century Transformations of Organized Liberalism in Central Europe

Discussant: Markian Prokopovych (Vienna)

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