

Regionalism, urbanity, and modernity in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Eastern Europe in the 20th century

Veranstalter: Thematic German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) Network „Zones of Cultural Contact and Conflict in Eastern Europe“, Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe, Marburg; Gießen Centre for Eastern European Studies (GIZO); International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC), Justus Liebig University Gießen

Datum, Ort: 26.11.2013-27.11.2013, Gießen

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Given the assumption of the workshop that regionalisms in multi-ethnic Eastern European contexts are important political, social and cultural movements which are – as well as urban entities – influencing modern(izing) societies, the question how to address this diverse set of actors and concepts in the 20th century is of high interest. Within this framework, the workshop critically discussed themes such as the role of town planning as well as the efforts of public state actors, local authorities and minorities to promote a specific regional or urban space trying to offer identification models for a frequently multi-ethnic population.

In his introductory speech PETER HASLINGER (Marburg / Gießen) addressed many of the theoretical and methodological challenges his younger colleagues might face while dealing with regionalism and urbanity studies. He thus urged them to be careful with definitions and agency and strongly encouraged them to approach their topics from a comparative perspective. By referring to the different texts assigned as readings to the participants, he summarized the interplay between the various political, legal and identity factors that define a region in contrast to a nation.

LYUBOMIR POZHARLIEV (Gießen)

opened the floor to the first panel of students' presentations with a talk on auto-transport infrastructure and its role in social cohesion and personal emancipation in socialist Bulgaria and neighboring Yugoslavia. He presented an analysis of the opportunities and limits of the infrastructural technological approach in understanding social cohesion and/or identity formation. The discussion then shifted northwards with the presentation of MARYIA NEKRASHEVICH (Minsk) on the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in the Gomel region in Belarus. Following the nuclear accident, the region benefited from international and state assistance, which however failed to prevent emigration and the ageing of the population. ARTEM KRISTIANINOV (Kazan') illustrated the different strategies of unification and integration of the non-Russian population in the Volga region in late imperial Russia, ranging from cultural and linguistic assimilation to the „creation“ of national minorities, where an important role was played by religion. CARL BJORK (Glasgow) presented his views on Russian rhetoric and the myth of Chechen normalization in light of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. The speaker addressed the various controversies surrounding the event and questioned the role of international presence in promoting stability and governance in the North Caucasus.

In the late afternoon, two distinguished scholars from New Zealand delighted the audience with their views on (applied) sociolinguistics. The first to speak was ALEXANDER MAXWELL (Wellington, NZ), who analyzed Slovak linguistic nationalism and the politics of „dialects“ through the works of Ľudevít Velislav Štúr and Ján Kollár. In his intriguing speech, he expressed his concerns over applying present-day (political) categories to 19th century writings. The question whether Czech and Slovak are two separate languages or one is a dialect of the other is essentially political and, according to the speaker, only linguists can fully understand the extent to which these issues are not linguistic. ROBERT GREENBERG (Auckland, NZ) closed the Tuesday session with a presentation on language, religion and nation-building in the Balkans. The redrawing of

ethnic and linguistic boundaries in the 1990s created new in and out-groups with complex implications for former Yugoslavia. The break-up of Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian language in four mutually intelligible languages was profoundly influenced by ideology, which additionally hardened linguistic borders.

During the opening session of the second day HEIDI HEIN-KIRCHER (Marburg) gave an overview of recent trends in urban history studies. Firstly, she discussed how urban history reflects general historical processes in the development of cities like in a burning glass. Secondly, she turned to focal points of modern urban history studies on cities in Eastern Europe and research desiderata. According to these, urban history on Eastern European cities should on the one hand focus more on local government structures and in general discuss more intensely the multi-ethnic, -religious and -cultural heritage influencing the urban way of life particularly in comparative studies.

As DANIELA ZUPAN (Stuttgart) exemplified by the city of Perm', town planners and architects had a crucial role in producing and developing new images of this „most Eastern European Capital of Culture“ in recent times, conflicting not infrequently with the interests of the local population. She questioned the marketing strategies to promote the modern urban master plan applied in Perm' as a role model for other Eurasian cities. Subsequently JOHANNES FLORIAN KONTNY (Vienna) placed the development of the two border towns Eupen and Znojmo/Znaim in the interwar period in a comparative framework. He analyzed the techniques and consequences of the „Belgization“ and „Czechoslovakization“ attempts and contrasted the identification models for the inhabitants of both towns offered by local political practices. The Tatar capital of Kazan' was then depicted by EKATARINA MIKHAYLOVA (Kazan') as a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional spot where particularly the duality of Russian and Tatar national cultures influenced its urban development throughout history. She emphasized the current debates on reconstructing and preserving old Tatar settlements and architecture. Again a stress on a specific re-

gionalism was brought out by ELIZAVETA NAVOSCHIK (Minsk) while presenting different justifications strategies of placing Belarus in the concept of one Baltic Sea Region. It became obvious that the concept of region was here past-justified and future-oriented. CLAUDIA GABRIELA SPIRIDON (Cluj-Napoca) showed how German regional literature struggled in Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania between late socialist realism and a recovery of the so called „Heimatliteratur“ shifting to „Antiheimatliteratur“ in the 1970s and 1980s. She exemplified this tendency with the „Aktionsgruppe Banat“ that was active since 1972.

In the third panel THERESA ADAMSKI (Vienna) presented space and identity issues in company towns of the Bat'a concern, conceived in the 1930s as modern towns for modern people. The reference point for Bat'a concern company towns was Zlín, where a specific model of industrial and social organization took shape. More specifically, Tomáš Bat'a's model promoted the increase of work efficiency through competition and a gender-based division of labor. CHANTELE BARRAGER (Glasgow) briefly outlined social housing in Glasgow from the rent strikes to the poll tax and its socio-political implications. In particular, Barrager questioned the assumption that „the way you live defines your political views“. GUNTIS VĀVERIS (Riga) presented his research on temperance societies in the Livland Governorate, with a special focus on the Milgravis industrial suburb. He devoted particular attention to the North Star non-alcoholic society in the period from 1904-1914 and the ways in which it tried to keep its members away from alcohol and smoking. ANTON BURMISTOV (Kazan') shortly presented Soviet cinema in the 1920s and 1930s and its role in creating a culturally and politically integrated space in multinational Tatarstan. Last but not least, IHAR AŬLASENKA (Minsk) spoke about East Polesian peasants and collectivization represented in the literary work of Ivan Melezh and his trilogy „Polesian Chronicle“. Aŭlasenka argued that the Belarusian author realistically depicts the unwillingness of peasants to enter kolkhozes and various power abuses that took place during the collectivization cam-

paign in the Soviet Union, but his work does not (and was probably not even intended to) provide a comprehensive in-depth analysis of the phenomenon.

The honor to close the two-day event went to RUDOLF POLEDNA (Cluj-Napoca), who delivered a lecture on urban revolutions and urbanization in modern Romania. Before explaining the patterns of urbanization in Romania, the guest lecturer focused on the meaning and of the concept of space and its construction and how it transforms into place by social engineering when there is a certain identity embodied in it.

Each presentation was followed by a lively debate and saw the active participation of the present scholars and participants. Despite the distinct spatiotemporal gaps some of the discussed issues had to bridge, the concept of the masterclass proved to be fruitful for the junior scholars. As an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas, this approach encouraged organizers and participants to perpetuate and enhance the format in collaboration with the international partners of the DAAD-Network and beyond.

Conference Overview:

Introduction & Input 1

Peter Haslinger (Marburg / Gießen), Regionalism – Concepts of Space and Region

Panel 1

Chair: Peter Haslinger (Marburg / Gießen) / Jan Surman (Vienna)

Lyubomir Pozharliev (Gießen), Auto-Transport Infrastructure and its Role for Social Cohesion and Personal Emancipation in Socialist Bulgaria and Yugoslavia

Maryia Nekrashevich (Minsk), Gomel region and the Chernobyl disaster

Artem Krestianinov (Kazan'), The strategies of unification and integration – Authorities and baptized non-Russian populations in Volga region in the late imperial Russia

Carl Bjork (Glasgow), Continued resistance – Russian rhetoric and the myth of Chechen normalization

Keynote Lecture & Herder-Kolloquium

Chair: Jan Surman (Vienna) / Comment: Pe-

ter Haslinger (Marburg / Gießen)

Alexander Maxwell (Wellington, NZ), Linguistic Nationalism and the Politics of 'Dialects' – The Case of Slovakia

Evening Lecture

Chair: Stefan Rohdewald (Gießen)

Robert D. Greenberg (Auckland, NZ), Accommodation or Assimilation – Language, Religion and Nation-Building in the Balkans

Input 2

Heidi Hein-Kircher (Marburg), Recent trends in Urban History Studies in Eastern Europe

Panel 2

Chair: Heidi Hein-Kircher (Marburg) / Jan Surman (Vienna)

Daniela Zupan (Stuttgart), Constructing a New Urban Image Top-Down? A Case Study of Perm'

Johannes Florian Kontny (Vienna), Unfinished transformation? The integration of Eupen and Znojmo/Znaim into the new state during the interwar period

Ekatarina Mikhaylova (Kazan'), Originality of the Kazan' cultural space

Elizaveta Navoschik (Minsk), Internal and external justifications of the Baltic Sea Region and the place of Belarus in this framework

Claudia Gabriela Spiridon (Cluj-Napoca), The development of the German regional literature in Romania in the 1970s and 1980s

Panel 3

Chair: Heidi Hein-Kircher (Marburg) / Jan Surman (Vienna)

Theresa Adamski (Vienna), Modern Towns for Modern People – Space and identity in the company towns of the Baťa concern in the 1930s

Chantelle Barrager (Glasgow), Social housing in Glasgow. Scotland from the rent strikes to the poll tax

Guntis Vāveris (Riga), Activities of Temperance societies in Governorate of Livland (1889-1914)

Anton Burmistrov (Kazan'), Soviet Cinema in

the 1920s and 1930s as an instrument of creating a cultural and political integrated space in a multinational region – the Republic of Tatarstan

Ihar Aŭlasenka (Minsk), East Polesian peasants and the collectivization (according to the „Polesian Chronicle“ of Ivan Melezh)

Guest lecture

Rudolf Poledna (Cluj-Napoca), Urbanization in modern Romania. Evolution or revolution?

Final Discussion

Tagungsbericht *Regionalism, urbanity, and modernity in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Eastern Europe in the 20th century.* 26.11.2013-27.11.2013, Gießen, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 10.03.2014.