

### **Narrating an Entangled World: to What End(s) do we write Global History?**

**Veranstalter:** Project „A13 – Subaltern Diplomacy“ and Interdisciplinary Research Group „MC12 – Floating Spaces“, Cluster of Excellence „Asia and Europe in a Global Context“, University of Heidelberg

**Datum, Ort:** 21.03.2014-22.03.2014,

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„Narrating an Entangled World: to What End(s) do we write Global History?“ Under this matter of fact title Madeleine Herren (Basel) and Roland Wenzlhuemer (Innsbruck / Heidelberg) invited a group of historians to an international workshop addressing approaches, theories and meta-narratives in the field of Global History. BENJAMIN AUBERER (Heidelberg) and TIMO HOLSTE (Heidelberg), members of the organizational committee of this workshop, stressed in their opening remarks that Global History, in its attempt to narrate stories of an entangled world, is confronted with several challenges on different levels. In order to approach these issues the panels of the first day focused upon key analytical concepts in historical writing.

MAX GAWLICH (Heidelberg) opened the first panel about „Actors and Networks“ with his talk „Same Same but different“ which dealt with electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) as a transnational phenomenon with different local appropriations. He focused on the period between 1937 and 1948, when ECT reached the status of a common and established therapy. As his title indicates, Gawlich drew the conclusion that the narrative of a uniform ECT should be reconsidered, his paper having highlighted local differences concerning the understanding and approach of ECT. CHRISTIANE BERTH's (Basel) talk on „Global Trade Networks in Times of Crisis“ further emphasized the utility of a network approach to analyse complex relations on a global level. In addition she struck a blow for the integration of biographies in network analysis. Berth used such an approach to examine trade networks between Northern Germany and coffee pro-

ducing regions in Central America between the 1920s and the 1950s.

The second panel of the day addressed „Gender and Hierarchies“ and was opened by ELIFE BIÇER-DEVECI (Bern). Her contribution on „The Turkish Women's Union and the International Alliance of Women from an Entangled Perspective“ gave insights into the relationship and mutual influence between the Turkish Women's Union (Türk Kadınlar Birliği – TKB) and the International Alliance of Women in the 1920s. Doing this, Biçer-Deveci was able to contest established assumptions concerning the feminist debate in the first decades of the twentieth century in Turkey. The panel's second paper was presented by IVAN SIMIC (London) and dealt with the subject of Soviet influences – in the case of collectivization – on Yugoslav Gender Policies between 1945 and 1955. Simic argued that the Communist Party's Women Section (Antifašistički front žena – AFZ) used collectivization to emancipate peasant women and to bring socialist modernity to rural areas.

The third panel about „Ideas and Practices“ was opened by MICHAEL OFFERMANN (Bern) speaking about imperial networks, knowledge and prisons in nineteenth century British India. He examined the knowledge exchange between Europe and other parts of the world and presented the career of Frederic John Mouat (1816–1897), an administrator of Indian prisons, as part of an actor-centered approach. PHILLIP WAGNER (Berlin) focused on practices of expert internationalism through the lens of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning in the first half of the twentieth century. He argued that by using different strategies and practices unofficial expert networks managed to internationalize their knowledge and achieve the adoption of their ideas by national institutions. In her paper, SUSANN LIEBICH (Townsville) showed that in the case of New Zealand's soldiers reading practices on troopships during the First World War it is difficult to speak of reading as a specifically local or national practice, as texts and readers travelled on the ships. The following discussion problematized the vagueness of the notion of „practices“ and that Global History should, rather than distinguishing between

ideas and practices, examine their interplay and transfer dynamics.

After the first three panels ERIC DECKER (Heidelberg) and CORNELIA KNAB (Basel) presented the multidisciplinary project „Global Politics on Screen – A Japanese Film on the Lytton Commission in 1932“<sup>1</sup>, which is coordinated by the Cluster’s Heidelberg Research Architecture (HRA), a pool of expertise on digital humanities. They spoke about the possibilities of digital humanities by analyzing historical film material through a film annotation tool. They presented this tool as a potential for supporting research digitally, obtaining better knowledge of a film’s historical context and for its use in student classes and teaching.

The first day was closed with a keynote lecture from ANGELIKA EPPLE (Bielefeld) who introduced her theoretical approach of Global Microhistory. With this approach she aims at an understanding of historical processes by acknowledging the simultaneity of global transfers leading on the one hand to homogenization and on the other hand to heterogenization and difference. She highlighted the value of focusing on the micro level, actors and localities while at the same time considering the(ir) global context.

On the following day the workshop moved on from central analytical concepts and towards one dimension of historical writing, namely „Space“. In her paper JOHANNA DE SCHMIDT (Heidelberg) „zoomed“ aboard the micro level of nineteenth century intercontinental ships and drew attention to the importance of ship newspapers as mirrors of space aboard. Due to the existence of socially constructed space on a ship, she argued, examining ship newspapers written by passengers can give information about the author’s reflections. In the next presentation, PASCAL SCHILLINGS (Cologne) gave insight into European Antarctic exploration around 1900 and the geographical discourse of the Antarctic. He emphasized that this exploration can be seen as a European project established by scientific global networks. He concluded his paper calling for the analysis of connections established by the actors. AMALIA RIBI (Geneva) completed the panel with her paper on Leon Estabrook and the first World Agricultural Census in 1930. She argued that this cen-

sus was the result of the connections between national and international institutions, which cooperated in order to achieve economic stability and progress. Through the study of the American censuses president, Ribi gave an insight into his spatial perceptions and geopolitical mind maps. The three papers dealt with different forms of space: the limited space of a ship, the isolated space of the Antarctic and space as a scope of mind. They showed that Global History can be national and transnational at the same time and that the approach of Global History does not automatically mean pointing to connections and entanglements but that it can also be concerned with isolation and closed spaces. In the ensuing discussion, questions of connectivity and the ownership of space were raised as a result. The debate also discussed concepts of space which might help to overcome the simple distinction between hierarchic space levels (local, national, global) and the polarization between connectivity and isolation.

The workshop’s last panel addressed the second basic dimension in historiography and moved from „Space“ to „Time“. NADINE WILLEMS (Oxford) led off with her talk on the anarchist journalist Ishikawa Sanshirō. Whilst rejecting the nation-state as institution, he also criticized the common notion of linear progress. With this, Ishikawa Sanshirō negated the concept of a modernist development aiming at the nation state in Japan’s historiography at the beginning of the twentieth century. CAROLIN LIEBISCH (Heidelberg) shared some theoretical reflections about time with respect to the subject of interwar internationalism and the „New Turks“. Following Aleida Assmann’s concept of „cultural time regimes“ and the cultural character of time perception, she argued that the European time regime of modernity also affected elites in Turkey and their ideas on national reform and international order. On this basis Liebisch emphasized firstly that modernity was not a mere Western-driven phenomenon but a global discourse. Secondly she argued that this discourse and its local manifestations was not

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Herren et al., Global Politics on Screen – A Japanese Film on the Lytton Commission in 1932, <<http://kjc-fs2.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/omeka/>> (17.9.2014).

only a discourse on imitation and adaption but also one that implied critique on the Western model and striving for difference. JUDITH FRÖHLICH (Zürich) made the last contribution to this panel with which she refuted the common assumption in historiography that historical writing in Japan only appeared after its opening to the West at the end of the nineteenth century. Instead, Fröhlich showed that some characteristics which are linked to Western historiography existed simultaneously in Japan. The three papers demonstrated that although the dimension of time touches the core of every historical narration, its alterable character and cultural meanings are widely neglected. Time – implicitly or explicitly – appears in many narrations in terms of a linear progress linked to the idea of modernity. While detecting a Eurocentric comprehension of this category as cause for this mode of narration, the contributors of this panel provided alternatives to this understanding.

MADELEINE HERREN (Basel) moderated the final round table discussion and summarized the most important aspects mentioned during the workshop concerning reflections on the narration of Global History. Central to the concluding discussion was the awareness that the avoidance of the nation-state as methodological frame of historical writing leads to a vacuum. The „global“ and the search for transfers and connections seem to have filled this vacuum and replaced the „national“. It thus turned into a master narrative itself. As a way to avoid this „global“ bias, the participants of the discussion urged for a closer study of how the examined actors themselves perceived their spatial embeddedness and connectivity. This requires a closer look *into* the relations, and not only *at* them. The workshop has sharpened awareness of the challenge facing a new Global History. This is not only limited to the overcoming of existing categories, rather, we have to consider that the production of categories is inherent to historical narration: The avoidance of old categories leads to the creation of new ones. These new analytical instruments could then gain the same absolute meaningfulness as the old ones in such a way that historians will be liable to use them just the same – as an unquestioned stencil.

### Conference Overview:

#### *Welcome and opening remarks*

Benjamin Auberer (Heidelberg) / Timo Holste (Heidelberg)

#### *Panel I: Actors and Networks*

Chair: Roland Wenzlhuemer (Innsbruck / Heidelberg)

Max Gawlich (Heidelberg), „Same Same but Different.“ Transnational Histories of Electroconvulsive Therapy

Christiane Berth (Basel), Global Trade Networks in Times of Crisis

#### *Panel II: Gender and Hierarchies*

Chair: Stefanie Michels (Düsseldorf)

Elife Biçer-Deveci (Bern), The Turkish Women's Union and the International Alliance of Women from an Entangled Perspective

Ivan Simić (London), Soviet Influences on Yugoslav Gender Policies, 1945-1955 – The Impact of Collectivization

#### *Panel III: Ideas and Practices*

Chair: Julia Angster (Mannheim)

Michael Offermann (Bern), „Imprisonment is the Punishment to Which we Must Chiefly Trust.“ Imperial Networks, Knowledge and the Prison in 19th Century British India

Phillip Wagner (Berlin), Practices of Expert Internationalism – The International Federation for Housing and Town Planning in the First Half of the 20th Century

Susann Liebich (Townsville), New Zealand Soldiers' Reading Practices on Troopships During the First World War: Local, Global or Oceanic Print Cultures?

#### *HRA Digital Humanities Presentation*

Eric Decker (Heidelberg) / Cornelia Knab (Basel), Accessing Digitalized Historical Film Material through Video Annotation

#### *Keynote lecture*

Angelika Epple (Bielefeld), Beyond Synthesis: The Return of Microhistory in Global Contexts

#### *Panel IV: Space*

Chair: Johannes Paulmann (Mainz)

Johanna de Schmidt (Heidelberg), „Our Small

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Republic on Board, Which is Confined Within  
so Narrow Limits“ – Space Arrangements on  
Intercontinental Ships

Pascal Schillings (Cologne), The End of the  
Last Blank Spot on the Map. European Ant-  
arctic Exploration around 1900

Amalia Ribi (Geneva), Around the World in  
926 days. The Global Travels of Leon Estab-  
rook for the First World Agricultural Census  
in 1930

*Panel V: Time*

Chair: Dominic Sachsenmaier (Bremen)

Nadine Willems (Oxford), Questioning Mo-  
dern Time: Japanese Anarchism in a Global  
Context During the First Decades of the Twen-  
tieth Century

Carolin Liebisch (Heidelberg), „A Turkist is  
at the Same Time an Internationalist“ – from  
Studying Turkish Modernization Ideology to  
a Global History of International Organizati-  
ons

Judith Fröhlich (Zürich), The Age of Revoluti-  
on and the Historical Writing of Japan

*Round table discussion: Writing Big Narrati-  
ves?*

Chair: Madeleine Herren (Basel)

Discussants: Julia Angster (Mannheim), An-  
gelika Epple (Bielefeld), Madeleine Herren  
(Basel), Johannes Paulmann (Mainz), Dominic  
Sachsenmaier (Bremen)

Tagungsbericht *Narrating an Entangled World:  
to What End(s) do we write Global Histo-  
ry?* 21.03.2014-22.03.2014, , in: H-Soz-Kult  
08.10.2014.