

**9th BGHS Annual Seminar „Grappling with the Global: The Challenge of Boundaries in History and Sociology“**

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**Datum, Ort:** 13.07.2017–15.07.2017, Bielefeld  
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In recent years, ‘the global’ has become a key term in history, sociology, and related disciplines. By analysing entangled relationships on different scales, research fields such as transnational studies, global history or world society bear witness to this ongoing trend. At the same time, the impact of globalisation on virtually all aspects of human life is a recurring issue in the public sphere. However, when applied to empirical research, ‘the global’ as an analytical category tends to be difficult to pinpoint and operationalise. The 9th Annual Seminar of the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS) offered an interdisciplinary forum for young researchers to present their approaches to the related conceptual, methodological, and empirical challenges. To complement the conference programme, on 12 July the BGHS office hosted its first Interdisciplinary Dialogue, during which resident and visiting BGHS professors discussed the implications of ‘the global’ within their respective research fields.

In his opening keynote lecture, AHMET ÖNCÜ (Istanbul) problematized the relationship between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ by asking whether there is a global understanding of the term ‘justice’. Following an historical outline between premodern and modern times, he contrasted the Western notion of individual ‘rights’ with the Turkish equivalent of collective ‘hakk’.

Panel one, titled „Shock and Awe—Violent Conflicts and their Global Repercussions“, started with a presentation by NIKO ROHÉ (Bielefeld) about the Greco-Turkish War of 1897. By asking how war correspondents raised the events they witnessed to a global hype and how they shaped contemporary visions of world order, he highlighted the

paradox of this local war becoming a global event. MORAN ZAGA (Haifa) drew attention to the ongoing Syrian conflict and analysed the metamorphosis of political borders in comparison with social boundaries in the region. KEI TAKATA’s (Duisburg-Essen) presentation about the activity of the U.S. Deserter Support Movement against the Vietnam War in the Japanese ‘Global Sixties’ investigated the conditions that made this movement possible. By tracking the paths of deserters through local, national, and transnational trust networks, he emphasised the ability of a specific group to send out deserters from the Japanese islands.

The second panel, „Outside the Box—Reflecting the Global in the History of Ideas“, started with a presentation by MARIA IULIA FLORUTAU (London). Using the example of Transylvanian Calvinist philosopher József Fogarasi Pap, her talk questioned the validity of the ‘unitary Enlightenment’ theory when assessed from an Eastern European perspective. STEFAN BARGHEER (Los Angeles) analysed the emergence of comparative-historical sociology from the 1920s to 1970s. He showed that it was the contingent political situation and the involvement of sociologists in the war effort that gave rise to this sub-field of sociology. ZOLTÁN BOLDIZSÁR SIMON (Bielefeld) closed the panel with a critical reflection upon the scholarly debate in the field of global history. He asked if there is a ‘global’ subject in history at all, and emphasized the relevance of this question by referring to current debates around anthropogenic climate change, transhumanism, and technologies of human enhancement, all of which evoke humanity as a global subject.

The first day was closed by SASKIA SASSEN’s (New York) presentation on new geographies of power and the processes through which a recent form of globalised capitalism characterised by extractive logics is challenging traditional notions of borders and territoriality. According to Sassen, the domination of ‘nomadic’ high finance has led to practices of profit extraction in increasingly local territories, a phenomenon she illustrated with her own case study of global metropolitan property investments.

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The second day opened with a panel focusing on the decisive role of empires in the development of a more and more interconnected world. ADETIBA ADEDAMOLA SEUN (Grahamstown) reconstructed the spread of malaria in British-colonised Africa. The epidemic diffusion of the disease on a continental scale during the 20th century, he argued, was directly linked to the expansion of railway networks. The infrastructural dimension within imperial and global power relationships also constituted the central element in the paper of ADITYA RAMESH (London). Adopting an environmental history perspective, he argued that water control practices pursued by the British in India during the late 19th century represented a new speculative frontier for imperial capitalist interests.

The fourth panel focused on religion and its entangling dynamics. The Jewish-orthodox movement Chabad Lubavitch was presented by MELANIE EULITZ (Leipzig) as a paradigmatic case study. She highlighted how this religious organisation overcomes the apparent contradiction between global and local by recurring to both religious universalism and local identity. Similarly, ROUVEN WIRBSER (Bielefeld) pointed out the interconnecting dynamics empowered by religion on a global level during the Early Modern era. By considering the Catholic reformation within a multidirectional global framework, he showed how the cult of St. Francis Xavier (1506-1522) first developed in the eastern Asian „peripheries“ of global Catholicism, later spread to Western Europe, and was finally adopted in Westphalia.

LAIA PI FERRER's (Tampere) paper, which focused on Portuguese and Spanish parliamentary debates during the latest economic crisis, opened the fifth panel on the global embeddedness of political processes. Relating to the concept of world culture, she conducted a quantitative analysis showing the discursive interdependency of Spanish and Portuguese policy-making in relation to other countries affected by the crisis. MELINDA HARLOVCSORTÁN (Budapest) addressed the question of a worldwide cultural system by offering an analysis of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention from both a global and national viewpoint. Based on a Hungarian case study,

her presentation showed that the Convention raised questions of history and memory which involved both national policy-making and regional identity, thus emphasising the critical interaction between global and local.

In his keynote lecture, DREW THOMPSON (Annandale-on-Hudson) highlighted how political processes throughout the world can be illuminated through photographic sources. His analysis of photographs from the Mozambican civil war demonstrated how symbolism was used by both independence and anti-independence movements to ideologically mobilise public opinion both on a local and on a global level. The second day was closed by an artist talk by KARINA SMIGLABOBINSKI (Munich), who presented her artwork ADA, the key visual of the 2017 BGHS Annual Seminar. With its globular shape and its ability to leave a physical trace on any surface, it touches while floating around in space, ADA was presented as a metaphor of the relationship between individual agency and the memory of collective interaction.

The last day of the conference included two panels and a roundtable discussion. Under the heading „Inside Moloch—Dissecting the Globalised City“, the sixth panel added an urban dimension to the debate over the meaning of ‘the global’. BAPTISTE COLIN (Bielefeld) proposed to address the phenomenon of squatting from a global perspective by investigating squatting movements in Paris and Berlin in the post-war period. Providing a definition of squatting as a way to link scales and boundaries, he highlighted the effects of global capitalism on local space. Afterwards, ARTURO DÍAZ CRUZ (Mexico) presented his current work on Tepito, the largest informal market in Mexico City, and emphasised the fundamental interconnectedness of the metropolitan, the national, the transnational and the global scales within this local entity.

The last panel of the Annual Seminar, „Transcending Identities—Migration in a Globalising World“ looked at ‘the global’ from the perspective of migration studies. Focusing on Japanese and Chinese immigration to Guatemala, PING-HENG CHEN (Heidelberg) discussed the relationship between global economic and migratory flows and the

emergence of a racial imagination in a specific local context in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The aspect of race was also central to SHIWEI CHEN's (Singapore) presentation. Challenging existing concepts of race and ethnicity, she argued that the process of boundary formation between the peoples of North Korea and China was not mainly based on ethnic or national identities, but rather on belief and socioeconomic status. Finally, JIALIN CHRISTINA WU (Louvain) presented her current research on diasporic identities in colonial Southeast Asia. With her reconstruction of oral histories of Indian and Chinese immigrants in British Malaya in the early 20th century, she was able to provide historicity to 'the global' by showing how its meaning evolved over time for different communities.

The 9th BGHS Annual Seminar concluded with a roundtable discussion which summarised the main challenges that emerged in the process of grappling with 'the global'. All in all, the participants agreed that 'the global' should not be understood as an empirical fact, but rather as a socially constructed concept, an analytical artefact that provides a symbolic order to society. Referring to a metaphor used by Ahmet Öncü in his opening lecture, defining 'the local' and 'the global' is just as difficult as pinpointing the present moment between past and future—it is impossible to grasp because it is never there. Turning to more methodological concerns, the participants pointed out the benefits of thinking globally as a way of covering a broader range of phenomena and overcoming the limitations of other concepts. Being aware that not every topic must or should be approached from a global angle, they also warned against the exponential use of the concept in academia. Finally, the discussants agreed that the issue remains unresolved, and that different fields of study take different approaches to 'the global'. Therefore, the participants called for more interdisciplinary exchange in an attempt to globalise knowledge production.

#### **Conference overview:**

##### *Keynote Lecture I*

Ahmet Öncü (Istanbul): Hakk or Right: A Veblenian Reflection on the Social Origins of

Juridical Sensibilities in Western Europe and Turkey

##### *Panel I: Shock and Awe – Violent Conflicts and their Global Repercussions*

Niko Rohé (Bielefeld): Turning a Local Conflict into a Global Hype – and Back Again. Foreign War Journalists in the Greco-Turkish War of 1897

Moran Zaga (Haifa): The Challenge of Boundaries in Syria: Past, Present and Future  
Kei Takata (Duisburg-Essen): Escaping through the Networks of Trust: The U.S. Deserter Support Movement in the Japanese Global Sixties

##### *Panel II: Outside the Box – Reflecting the Global in the History of Ideas*

Maria Iulia Florutau (London): Transfers of Knowledge from Transylvania to the Netherlands in the Enlightenment: The Convergence of Ideas in József Fogarasi Pap's Metaphysical Dissertation

Stefan Bargheer (Los Angeles): Military Intelligence and the Laboratory Research Method: The Rise of Comparative-Historical Sociology during World War II

Zoltán Boldizsár Simon (Bielefeld): Is There a Global Subject of History?

##### *Keynote Lecture II*

Saskia Sassen (New York): Embedded Borderings: Making New Geographies of Centrality

##### *Panel III: Globalism avant la lettre? Rethinking Empire*

Adedamola Adetiba Seun (Grahamstown): „Tracks of Death“: A Global History of Railway and Malarial Mortality in Twentieth Century Africa

Aditya Ramesh (London): Historical Sociology and the Making of the Nineteenth Century Environment: Debt and River Improvement in the British Empire

##### *Panel IV: Faith Crossing Borders – Global Dimensions of Religion*

Melanie Eulitz (Leipzig): Global Hasidism, Local Jewishness: The Worldwide Inner-Jewish Missionary Activities of Chabad Lubavitch and its Effects in Germany

Rouven Wirbser (Bielefeld): From East

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Asia to Westphalia: The Global Cult of St. Francis Xavier and His Veneration in the Prince-Bishopric of Paderborn Kult 28.10.2017.

*Panel V: Staging the Global in the Political Arena*

Laia Pi Ferrer (Tampere): Looking at Others in National Policymaking: The Case of Portugal and Spain in the Recent Economic Crisis  
Melinda Harlov-Csörtán (Eötvös): UNESCO World Heritage: connecting local to global in one cultural system

*Keynote Lecture III*

Drew Thompson (Annandale-on-Hudson): Naming Mozambique's Dead Photographs

*Artist Talk on the Conference Key Visual*

Karina Smigla-Bobinski (Munich): ADA - Grappling with the Globe

*Panel VI: Inside Moloch – Dissecting the Globalised City*

Baptiste Colin (Paris): Beyond the Phenomenological Global Reading : Introducing a Global Perspective. Squatting as a Way to Link Scales and Boundaries  
Arturo Díaz Cruz (Mexico City): Assembling the Scales: Ethnographic Reflections on the Study of the Economic and Political Regimes in the Local Order

*Panel VII: Transcending Identities – Migration in a Globalising World*

Ping-Heng Chen (Heidelberg): „Those who fit in with our place“: The Emergence of a Racial Discourse on East Asian Immigration in Late 19th-Century Guatemala  
Shiwei Chen (Singapore): One Hundred Years of Transnational Migration in the North Korean-Chinese Borderland: Race, Nation and Formation of Boundaries  
Jialin Christina Wu (Louvain): The Location of the Global: Anecdotal Histories of Diasporic Identities in Colonial Southeast Asia

Concluding Roundtable Discussion: Grappling with the Global

Tagungsbericht *9th BGHS Annual Seminar „Grappling with the Global: The Challenge of Boundaries in History and Sociology“*. 13.07.2017–15.07.2017, Bielefeld, in: H-Soz-