

**Self-Positioning of Eastern European Societies in Global Relations – Conceptions of Space and Self-Presentations in School Textbooks**

**Veranstalter:** Leibniz ScienceCampus »Eastern Europe – Global Area« (EEGA); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde (DGO)

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The focus of the interdisciplinary conference „Self-Positioning of Eastern European Societies in Global Relations – Conceptions of Space and Self-Presentations in School Textbooks“ lies on empirical findings in the field of textbooks as well as school curricula/ syllabi analysis. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, not only political and economic but also a social reorientation was connected for the successor states and countries from the Soviet sphere of influence. This process was and is affected by various aspects and is different in each state. The textbooks play an important role in communicating the reinterpretation of one’s own history: as a source of information for the younger generation. They play a major role in the formation of identity as well and are therefore very well suited as a subject of investigation for the question of how societies (re) position themselves. The objective to raise awareness for the autonomy of Eastern European countries and societies with regard to processes of globalization through this kind of research is a part of the mission of both organizers. The Leibniz ScienceCampus »Eastern Europe – Global Area« (EEGA) is committed to developing new research perspectives on Eastern Europe and promotes the multi-disciplinary examination of processes of globalisation as a key for a better understanding of the actual societal developments. The German Association for East European Studies (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde, DGO), is an active forum for the discussion and analysis of politics, economics, and culture in Europe’s East. Their cooperation highlights, according to Gabriele Freitag (DGO), the development in the German research about Eastern Europe. Sebastian Lentz (EEGA) expanded the statement

by explaining the importance of textbooks as one of the major fields with which citizens are formed. But how do national interests and global conditions manifest and correlate in text books?

In 2013, Russia introduced unified textbooks for the subject of history. This is part of the idea to consolidate national sovereignty, so Nikolaus Katzer (Moscow). He associates the project with dangers of manipulation, falsification and reinterpretation of history. The leitmotifs of the new historiography in Russia are the lack of interest in the West and the pursuit of economic cooperation with global players such as China. According to Katzer, the imperialist self-image of Russia becomes clear during the reading. The differences in the interpretation of historical events in the development of the German-Russian history book, a project of the „Joint Commission for the Investigation of the Recent History of German-Russian Relations“, are striking. Controversial topics are for instance, the Battle of Stalingrad or the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

As a special indicator for self-positioning in the global context, Stephanie Zloch (Braunschweig) presents the aspect of migration in textbooks. She mentions Poland, the Czech Republic and Russia as examples of countries that have lost a younger and more entrepreneurial part of society in the recent past. Polish geography textbooks focus on economic and family reasons for migration. Regarding immigration, Poland is portrayed as a transit country for migrants from the East. In the textbooks discussed by Zloch, the integration of migrants is not an issue. She finds similar results in the Czech textbooks: Also this country understands itself as a transit country. In contrast, Russia presents itself as a multi-ethnic state and as a stabilizing anchor, or as a haven for refugees from the conflict and war zones in the post-Soviet space. The diaspora plays an important role in Polish and Russian textbooks. The Russian diaspora is still strongly associated with Russian values, as is the Polonia, which has ties to its homeland, Polish traditions and language.

Tamás Hardi and Andrea Miklosné-Zadar (Budapest) presented the results of a survey on self and external perception of societies.

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They see three typical positioning options: first, the tendency to locate one's own macro-region in the west. This is the exclusive or so-called go-west method, which goes hand in hand with a demarcation from the eastern neighbors. In the second approach, the escape from the East. In this case, respondents denied that they belonged to Eastern Europe and / or the Balkans. According to Hardi and Miklosné-Zadar, the third type of positioning was characterized by rejection and disillusionment, respondents felt that they belonged to a smaller region. Examples include the Hungarian „Carpathian Basin“ as a place of positioning or the renaissance of the Balkan identity in Serbia. As a general trend, it can be observed that after the regime change, states attempted to define themselves as non-Eastern in the international context.

These countries included also Poland, Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania, according to Rune Brandt-Larsen (Lund). Unlike Hardi and Miklosné-Zadar, Larsen defines the process of nation building and the establishment of a national community image through a feeling of togetherness. As an indication, he cites a large number of terms such as „we“ or utterances such as „our love of native soil.“ As a rule, these are local focusing, but sometimes also imperial aspects. All four countries positioned themselves as part of Europe, but their understanding of it differs. For example, Larsen contrasts the Belarusian image of Europe as a geographical location without mention of European values in contrast to the Lithuanian image of Europe, in which since the change of regime he recognizes a shift from „power and conquest“ to „peace and tolerance“.

LARSEN spoke about „soviet shadows of historiography“ in textbooks during the following discussion. These can be seen in expressions with roots in soviet textbooks but also in rhetorical tools like the words „partisan war“ which are closely connected to the 2nd World War. As a second important aspect BAGOLY pointed to the danger of misunderstanding the term Eastern Europe which is on one hand a geographical concept, but on the other has a strong meaning in everyday language. MIKLOSNE-ZADAR added that these terms also have different meanings for differ-

ent countries because of differences in mental spaces.

Péter Bagoly Simo (Berlin) dealt with the case study of Romania. In Romanian schools, national identity is an integral part of teaching: cultural artefacts are discussed, teaching takes place only in Romanian, there are no teachers who are members of a minority. According to Bagoly Simo, Romanians increasingly developed a Central European identity. For example, mathematical geography should prove that the land is at the center of the continent. Lack of argumentation, emphasis on factual knowledge, neo-nationalistic discourses as well as reproduction of knowledge as a goal are characteristic of the lessons. Interesting is the shift in attention that Russia is experiencing in Romanian textbooks: in the 1980s, Russia and Asia accounted for a third of the content of the books, and in the 1990s their share increased as a result of unclear structures after the regime change. The 2000s have brought a new positioning according to Simo's analysis: Russia has lost attention, Europe is now the most important spatial unit.

An example of the common self-portrayal of several countries is the macro-region „Lower Danube“, a promising link for cross-border relations, according to Volodymyr Poltorak (Odesa). The culture and history of this space are presented in the national programs on the history of Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria and Russia. However, the region is mentioned only episodically and people from countries in the region often do not receive information about their neighbors. According to Poltorak, the prevailing dominance of national historiography leads to tensions between neighboring countries. Thus, for example, the „Lower Danube Region“ is shown in Romanian textbooks as the heartland of Greater Romania. In the spirit of the European integration process, Poltorak called for the use of cross-border materials and a shift from ethnic to general civilization aspects of history.

Svitlana Potapenko (Kiev) spoke of the presentation of historical events and people from the 16. until the 18th century. This part of Ukrainian history, in which Cossacks are portrayed to Ukrainian pupils as historical protagonists, and which is Potapenko's field of

research, is depicted in the textbooks as rich in heroes and important events - an example of unselfish love of homeland, valor, and respect for deserving warriors. The biographies of the personalities presented are idealized and romanticized. The aim, according to Potapenko, is that the disciples worship the Cossacks as heroes and are proud of the past of their homeland. The constant focus on national identity serves as a protective mechanism of the Ukrainian nation in the globalized world.

In the following discussion Potapenko emphasizes that she does not see any progressive attributes in the analyzed textbooks. Omitting hostile language is, however, very progressive in her opinion in the light of comparison with older text books. As a result of the question from KATZER about the transfer of ideas, the three referents agreed on a critical perspective on the topic: The didactic material is supposed to be consumed, not discussed in schools. Memory is used as a label, economic aspects omitted. The application of knowledge has no place in the process of teaching. While governments have attempted to use geography and history books to shape identities, Bagoly Simo said they only partially achieved their goal. Whether that is the case, whether the teachers,

Hungary has developed many different spatial concepts in recent decades. Péter Balogh (Budapest) showed examples of an active repositioning of the country in a European and global context. The images of the country in numerous textbooks sometimes conflict, according to Balogh. He mentioned sources which use the concept of Turanism, an ideology according to which Hungary is on the one hand the gate to the east and a country with Asian roots, to describe Hungary. Others, in turn, portray the country as a border between Western and Eastern Christianity. At the same time, terms such as ferry country („Fährland“) are used, a self-image of a land travelling endlessly between the East and the West. Balogh illustrates the fact that the national aspects still play a role with a geography book from the year 2002 where only the names of Hungarian ethnographic regions are listed. Hungary underlines its position as a micro-region: it is mainly located in the

Carpathian Basin, secondarily in Central Europe.

How problematic the idea of space can be in the context of nation building was presented by Oleksandr Zabirko (Münster) who used the example of Ukraine. Until the independence in 1991, it was a blank spot on the map of European legal history and its law has been established beyond its present borders. The authors had to design the legal history of a country that did not exist as a nation state until the 1990's. The readjustment of state and law from a national-historical perspective was carried out with the aid of the sometimes metaphorical concepts of statehood, people and struggle. Statehood means not the state itself, but the representation of the state. In this concept, legal history becomes the history of power structures. The people are the protagonist of history, nation is presented as a romanticized image of a personified entity with feelings and goals, characterized by tragic beliefs and predetermined victory. According to Zabirko, the category of struggle is synonymous with the reduction of social life as a whole to a chain of confrontations and conflicts. The main discrepancy is the conflict between Ukraine's own law and foreign law. The discursive shift to the topic of Europe, which is no longer portrayed as a promised land but as a place of legal order, shows how important legal history is for the establishment of Ukraine's own position. Emphasizing the European nature of Ukrainian national law places the country on the one hand as European. However, on the other hand, Zabirko points to a history of mistrust of the West. Again, the authors of the law books resorted to a metaphor to resolve this discrepancy: they represented Ukraine as a bridge between the East and the West.

The understanding of space and position does not have to refer exclusively to one's own state. Using the example of the bilateral textbooks and their preparation, Jörg Stadelbauer (Freiburg) showed that the presentation in textbooks in the past was understood as a spatial production intended to serve the imaginative power of the students. However, the external constraints of school education limited this function. An incomplete picture of the other country is drawn and, accord-

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ing to Stadelbauer, distorted by a specific self-conception of one's own country, as well as by the maxim nihil nisi bene: students should only learn about the positive aspects of the other countries.

A more distanced perspective on the topic has been presented in the concluding words by LENTZ and FREITAG, who pointed out that the hermeneutic approach needs to be complemented by questions about who produced the objects and under which circumstances. In case of countries like Poland and Ukraine which had to recreate themselves and their national identity the textbooks reduce the content to what is useful for this goal and it's a usual approach. According to FREITAG portrayals in history books are reduced pictures and that they do not reflect the state of research in the disciplines.

After the conference, Nikolaus Katzer answered some profound questions about his focus country Russia during the EEGA Science-Lounge. The discussion with the title „Between North Atlantic and North Pacific - Russia's role as mediator in Europe and Asia“ has been led by Dr. Steffi Marung.

Asked about the position and definition of Russia, Katzer spoke of the geographical and scientific localization being more complicated than before 1989. Many crises show that the world needs to redefine itself and so does Russia. The situation is not comparable to the Cold War but the communication and maintenance of scientific and cultural relations became more complicated but not impossible. The realignment of Russia started already in the history. Katzer names Peter the Great as the first influence and describes his times of reign as an irreversible switch that led to an opening towards the West. In his opinion also World War 2 changed the country. It became a great power and this role is being sought nowadays as well. Except for the great power, Russia played a double role of a country between the East and the West, especially since the expansion to the East in the 19th century. Since then Russia faces the question of orientation towards one of the sides and maintaining a balance is becoming difficult. Marung remained at the topic of history asking about the politics of remembrance which is facing a big challenge and asked Katzer about his ex-

periences on who he actors of this debate are, to what Katzer points out that this debate is not necessarily the same as the official politics. The debate about coming to terms with the revolution and its consequences, are diverse and controversial. A general narrative cannot replace a social debate, especially in the topic of civil war. Katzer notices traces of the 100 years old debates in the present society, like the Trotsky-movement, and sees it as a fascinating feature of the Russian society. Asked by Marung about the participation of the German Historical Institute in this debate, Katzer points out the many popular topics and the idea of the Institute to engage in debates about other, less discussed parts of history, like colonialism or the 68's movement. He also reminds of the importance of the biography-research and the phenomenon of revolutionaries in curricula as something that should be fathomed and rethought. Going back to the topic of the Cold War, Katzer sees it as a term that brings back memories but is not operative anymore. In his opinion the clash between USA and China but also other global players will grow and this is why we need a new term. Another political topic picked by Marung was the soft power and its influence. Katzer sees it as a small force of a small group. There is a group of young people maintaining diplomatic contacts but there are no political ambitions connected to it and that is why they do not change the direction of the international politics. In the following discussion amongst all participants of the conference, Katzer came back to Russia's function of a bridge between East and West, this time in the context of China's Silk Road. Russia does too little to maintain it and does not take it seriously enough. In his point of view it is in Russia's interest to work in this function especially in the light of economic strength of its great Eastern neighbors China and Japan. Also the recent involvement in the Middle East has been mentioned. Katzer sees Russia's role as a political one: the government saw it as a chance to gain prestige and improve Russia's position as global player, especially in comparison to the U.S.

Programme

November 6, 2017

Venue: Saxon Academy of Sciences (SAW),

Leipzig

Opening of the Conference

5:00 – 5:30 pm Introduction by the Organisers  
Sebastian Lentz (Leipzig), Gabriele Freitag (Berlin)

5:30 – 7:00 pm Keynote Lecture

Nikolaus Katzer (Moscow) (in German)  
„Wo Russland steht. Ein Blick in Schulbücher und Angebote der Public History“ („Playing East and West. Russia's self-positioning in school textbooks and Public History“)

Discussion

Moderation: Peter Haslinger (Marburg)

7:00 pm Reception

November 7, 2017

Venue: Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of

Eastern Europe (GWZO), Leipzig

Part I: „External and Self-Positioning in Globalization

Processes“

9 – 10:30 am Presentations

Stephanie Zloch (Braunschweig): The Role of Migration Processes in the Self-Positioning of Eastern European Societies: A Comparative Analysis of Polish, Czech and Russian Textbooks

Tamás Hardi (Győr) / Andrea Miklósné-Zakar (Budapest): Where do We Belong and Where do They Belong to? Research on Spatial Concepts in Eight Central and Eastern European Countries

Rune Brandt-Larsen (Lund): Interpretations of a Common

Past - History Textbooks in Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, and

Ukraine

Chair: Steffen Sammler (Leipzig/ Braunschweig)

Discussion

10:30 am Coffee Break

Part II: „Self-Presentations in School Textbooks“

11 – 12:30 pm Presentations

Péter Bagoly Simo (Berlin): The West in the East: Self-Representation of Selected Former Socialist European Countries by Means of Geography Education

Volodymyr Poltorak (Odesa): Lower Danube Region, Culture and History: As it is represented in Ukrainian, Moldovan, Romanian, Bulgarian and Russian Textbooks

Svitlana Potapenko (Kiev): The Golden Age of Ukraine? Cossacks in Modern Ukrainian School Curricula and Text-books

Chair: Marcus Otto (Braunschweig)

Discussion

12:30 pm Lunch Break

Part III: „Conceptions of Space“

1:30 – 3:00 pm Presentations

Péter Balogh (Budapest): Spatial Concepts and Self-Presentations in Hungarian School Textbooks

Oleksandr Zabirko (Münster): Legal History as a Challenge. The Representations of Space, Nation, and Legal Order in the Textbooks on the „History of State and Law of Ukraine“

Jörg Stadelbauer (Freiburg): Nihil nisi bene – Deutsch-sowjetische Schulbuchgespräche über Geographie in den 1980er Jahren

Chair: Sebastian Lentz (Leipzig)

Discussion

3:00 – 4:00 pm Final Remarks and Conclusions

Comment: Sebastian Lentz

Moderation: Gabriele Freitag

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