

APPROACHING EUROPEAN HISTORY FROM SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

Comparing Social Movements and Social Change in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Institut für soziale Bewegungen (Bochum)

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The Balkans have been defined as Western Europe's negative alter-ego (Todorova) on the one hand, and as a historical space *sui generis* on the other (Sundhaussen). Methodological discussions on comparative and integrative European history pay little attention to Southeast European structures and agencies as parts of overall European phenomena. When they do include the region, scholars compare Empires (Habsburg and Ottoman), conduct inner-Southeast European comparisons, or choose case studies in Southeast, Central, and Eastern Europe, but these are rare examples and pertain mostly to research yet underway. The general and often rather unreflected coining of the Balkans as a synonym for backwardness, fragmentation, and instability - a »sense of lag and lack«, as Maria Todorova has recently coined it has produced a massive literature in the 1990s, sparked mostly by the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, which often served as a synonym for the whole region. Interestingly, when it comes to comparative research, the genuine *West-versus-Balkan* comparison, which so often conditions mental prerequisites when thinking of Southeastern Europe, has in fact hardly been taken up by scholars.

The workshop aims at contributing to a renewed reflection on such long-established mental maps which, over the last decade, have indeed been re-designed to approach Western and Eastern Europe, but have, at the same time, mostly marginalized the Southeast. By taking up issues crucial for Southeast European history and comparing them to structures and agencies in the rest of Europe, the conference thus focusses on a rather neglected geographical (and mental) angle. The workshop hopes to attract the interest of scholars working on social movements and/or social change in all European spaces and not necessarily in a comparative manner. In the ideal case, proposals will prove apt to be combined into comparable topical and methodological clusters, leading to panels fruitfully juxtaposing, say, national identity constructions in Germany, Serbia, Italy, and Greece, religious contest in Bulgaria, Sweden, Bosnia and Prussia, migratory processes in Saloniki, Amsterdam, Istanbul and Marseille.

Panels will be clustered along both, methodological and thematic aspects. All issues should be linked by a common methodological and problem-oriented approach, in order to provide for an inspiring and fruitful basis for comparison:

- *Research should be based on an agency-oriented approach.*
Mentalities, attitudes, and perceptions expressed by historical individuals or micro-historical groups are conditioned by their interaction with social, economic, political, as well as ideological contexts. Studying communicative networks between individuals and their surrounding settings leads to exemplary analyses of social structures and systems, which will allow interesting and challenging comparative discussions conditioned neither by time nor by space and, particularly important, going beyond a nationally coined historiography.
- *Research should be process-oriented and take into view social movements and social change over a period of time that allows to assess continuities and discontinuities.*
This might be long-durée studies, but also studies that consider a shorter period characterized by a historical turning point, for example going beyond (at both ends) the years of the First or the Second World War, beyond years marked by changes of statal structures, political regimes or borders, or beyond important markers of (attempted) social change, i. e. revolutions and similar upheavals.

The panels will be clustered along the following thematical units:

Mental Mapping – Perceptions of the Self and of the Other

The forceful – and sometimes rather unconscious – hierarchical or teleological mental map with regard to the stereotypical Southeast European »backwardness«, in particular with

regard to »the West«, elucidates that the region still is perceived on the matrix of a Western European model of progressiveness as the »other«, as »deviant« and »fallacious«. This comparison between progress and backwardness has long entered Southeast European discourses, too, fostering a difficult process of identity construction between a belated modernization and a self-confident individuality. The aim of this panel is to diversify this rather unilateral mental map by counterposing varying mental maps and mutual perceptions and stereotypes within Europe, and going beyond a simplistic *West-versus-East* cultural hierarchy.

National and Religious Identities

For Southeast Europe even more than for the rest of Europe is valid that geographical and social spaces more often than not are not compatible. The idea of the identity of nation and state lies at the root of many of the conflictual potentials in the region up to the present. The general post-socialist tendency to nationalize history-writing has largely prevented transnational perspectives and has rather fostered historiographical interests that force contexts, problems, and processes into a framework too narrow to grasp all layers, colors, and »grey zones«. Structural and multilateral as well as multilocal interconnections and relations went beyond national borders, and social spaces more often than not have to be defined transnationally to be adequately understood. This panel compares the construction and the mutual influence and intermingling of national, religious, and social identities in given contexts, and focusses on phenomena of multiple identities, of national and religious segregation, assimilation, acculturation, adaptation, hybridization, and resistance.

Social Movements

Having in mind the stereotypical and unilateral image of the modern, progressive »West« transferring its cultural, political, economic, and social patrimony southeastwards, this panel compares European social movements – revolutions, rebellions, feminism, pacifism, socialism, fascism etc. –, attempting at diversifying this image. What is of interest here are the receptions and modifications of ideas being transferred from one social and cultural context to another, as well as the specific characteristics and means of expression of social movements in given contexts (democracies, dictatorial regimes etc.). Obviously, social movements often are associated with national and/or religious issues; this intermingling and the making of sense out of several layers of identity hence is a focal point of this panel also.

Social Change and Demographic Mobility

Migratory processes of varying natures largely hold responsible for Southeast Europe's ethnic mixture. Yet migration, deportation, refuge, expulsion, and genocide are all-European phenomena characteristic for the 19th and especially the 20th century. Research having largely focussed on Western, Eastern, and Central Europe, this panel aims at contributing to adding comparative perspectives on Southeast European migratory and demographic processes. The panel is focussed on the social changes brought about in Europe by urbanisation, so-called »social engineering«, racial politics, ethnic and social »cleansing«, war etc.