Max Weber Foundation

Global Insights

A Selection of Articles from the German Magazine

The Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad (Max Weber Stiftung, MWS) is one of the leading German organizations that conducts basic research in the humanities and social sciences exclusively abroad. At eleven academically autonomous institutes worldwide, German researchers work closely with international colleagues in the host countries and maintain long-term cooperations with local partner institutions. The institutes abroad are thus centres of research, qualification and international scientific exchange.

Especially in times when the autonomy of science is under threat in many places, it is a central mission of the MWS to create free spaces for the exchange of scientific expertise. Our institutes abroad and the newly founded Max Weber Network Eastern Europe provide a framework for open and critical academic debate. They foster the collaborative definition of relevant and exciting topics on site, which are indispensable for strengthening and expanding bilateral academic relations.

Internationality forms the core of the MWS profile – so what could be more obvious than making articles from our German research magazine “Weltweit vor Ort” accessible to an international audience? To this end, we translated selected articles from the magazine issues of the past two years into English. On the following pages, we will introduce you to the Max Weber Foundation's worldwide network and provide insights into some of our research projects by means of journalistic articles. We wish you an inspiring read!

Carla Schmidt,
Press and Public Relations Officer of the Max Weber Foundation

The Max Weber Foundation and its institutes: places of global research

The Max Weber Foundation (Max Weber Stiftung, MWS) is one of the mainstays of German global research in the humanities and social sciences. It runs eleven academically autonomous institutes around the world as well as Branch Offices. Its Central Office is located in Bonn. The institutes are situated in Beirut, Istanbul, London, Moscow, New Delhi, Paris, Rome, Tokyo, Warsaw and Washington. They act as a bridge between the host countries and Germany and play an important role in the international scientific landscape. As a multipolar network, the institutes jointly promote the internationalisation of research.

Research and Academic Dialogue

The institutes help to create networks between academic cultures and provide researchers with manifold opportunities to develop their research questions and conduct their projects in a stimulating international and interdisciplinary environment. They work closely and intensively with local, transnational and global partners and act as intermediaries between academic spheres within and outside Germany. They also offer an excellent insight into Germany's academic landscape. International researchers can often work far more effectively in a specific region than they can in Germany — as long-established non-university forums, the institutes make this possible. Each Institute's host country provides a distinctive perspective and a unique launchpad for innovative cross-border research. They allow researchers in Germany to access data and source materials in their host regions, opening up new frontiers in international research.

Support and Funding

Supporting early career researchers is a top priority for the MWS, and it is one of Germany's leading institutions promoting research in the humanities and social sciences abroad. In addition to temporary positions, the Foundation offers numerous scholarships of varying duration, internships and modes of academic exchange such as master classes, study groups, workshops, conferences and seminars. Every year, hundreds of researchers benefit from unique opportunities at its various locations. Spending time at an MWS institute enables them to earn qualifications that will set them apart as they forge their careers. They can also gain valuable experience in research/ museum management and related fields.

International Research Infrastructures

It is crucial that the MWS institutes help to establish excellent conditions for academic work. To achieve this, they foster an intercultural research environment, maintain wellstocked libraries and Rara collections of specialist local, regional and international literature, and help researchers to access local archives. They play a vital role in international networking by organising conferences, workshops, seminars and a range of public events. They publish their research in their own journals and book series, often in collaboration with renowned international publishers and in online format through publishers' open access programmes or via perspectivia.net, the Foundation's own publishing platform. Digital humanities are also integral to its academic activities. The MWS works with international partners to develop new research questions and digital research infrastructures. Academic blogs and social media enable it to reach a broad public audience.

Institutes

1 — German Center for Art History Paris · 1997/2006
The DFK (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte) Paris uses research projects, scholarship programmes and specialist conferences to develop topics from medieval art to contemporary art and makes them available to the public through its publication series. The institute sees itself as a starting point for innovative and interdisciplinary research on French and German art in a global context.

2 — German Historical Institute London · 1976
As the former capital of the British Empire and home to many of its key archives, London is the ideal location for a transnational research centre. The GHI London is extremely popular with historians of all eras working on colonial history and global relations or the history of Great Britain and Ireland. Current research focuses on intellectual history, media history, global history and gender history.

3 — German Historical Institute Moscow · 2005/2009
The GHI Moscow is committed to promoting academic cooperation between historians from Russia and Germany. The GHI Moscow particularly supports early career researchers from the two countries. The research focuses primarily on the entangled histories of the two countries in a global perspective from the early modern period to the present. Since February 2022, the cooperation with state Russian institutions has been stopped and the event program has been suspended.

4 — German Historical Institute Paris · 1958
The GHI Paris has three guiding principles (Research — Mediation — Qualification) that underpin its work on French, Franco-German and Western European history from Late Antiquity to the present day. It also focuses on digital history and African history and contributes to Franco-German and international academic exchange through its research, events, publication series, library and its journal Francia.

5 — German Historical Institute Rome · 1888
Italy, and Rome in particular, enjoy unique academic opportunities. The GHI Rome is an international forum for interdisciplinary research spanning eras from the early Middle Ages to the present day. Research focal points include Italian history, music history and the history of German-Italian relations in their European and global contexts, as well as transregional and transnational perspectives and the digital humanities.

6 — German Historical Institute Warsaw · 1993
Branch Offices in Prague and Vilnius
The GHI Warsaw conducts innovative research that considers Polish history in its European contexts and the history of German-Polish relations in all their chronological depth and thematic breadth.
The institute also promotes historical scholarly discourse at national and international level. At the two Branch Offices in Vilnius and Prague, since 2017 academic research on Czech, Lithuanian, German and Polish history in a European context has also been promoted.

7 — German Historical Institute Washington · 1987
Pacific Office at UC Berkeley
Guided by the principles of Advancing Research, Supporting Scholars and Building Networks, the GHI Washington conducts innovative research on German, European and Jewish history, American and transatlantic history, and global and transnational history since the 18th century. It also offers an extensive scholarship programme. Current research focuses on the history of knowledge, the history of migration and mobility and digital history, while the Pacific Office in Berkeley concentrates on (trans)Pacific history and combining the history of knowledge with the history of migration.

8 — German Institute for Japanese Studies Tokyo · 1988
The DIJ (Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien) Tokyo researches modern Japan in a global context with a focus on society, the economy, politics, history, culture, and international relations. It is an internationally recognised platform for Japanese Studies with a worldwide research network and highly regarded publication series. Currently, its research focuses on sustainability and resilience, digital transformation and transregional perspectives on Japan. Since 2017, together with partners at the National University of Singapore, it has maintained a joint research group on Asian infrastructures.

9 — Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies Delhi · 2021
The MWF Delhi was established in 2021. It acts as an intermediary between German and South Asian research in the humanities and social sciences, creating a space for academic debate with and about South Asia. The MWF Delhi is a central point of contact for historical and contemporary research on the interplay between South Asia and the wider world.

10 — Orient-Institut Beirut · 1961
Branch Office in Cairo
The OI Beirut conducts and promotes research in the humanities and social sciences related to the Arab world and the broader Middle East. Classical historical and philological approaches are combined with disciplines such as social anthropology, political science and sociology. Arabic plays a central role as a language of scholarship. Equal importance is afforded to global localization, the delimitation of processes and phenomena within the region, and collaboration and exchange with partners on the ground.

11 — Orient-Institut Istanbul · 2009
The OI Istanbul works closely with Turkish and international scholars, and is dedicated to a variety of regionally related research areas. In addition to the traditional Middle Eastern, historical, and philological perspectives, approaches from neighbouring sciences such as sociology, religious studies, linguistics, and musicology are increasingly incorporated. The Institute is also active in the field of academic exchange between Germany and Turkey as well as with the neighbouring regions of Iran and the Southeast Europe.

12 — China Branch Office · 2017
The MWS set up a Branch Office in recognition of China's academic, cultural and political importance, particularly in terms of research. The European Research Centre for Chinese Studies is located in Beijing and is a joint venture between the MWS and the École française d'Extrême-Orient. The two organisations facilitate contact between Chinese, French and German scholars working in the humanities and social sciences, conduct research, organise events and publish a joint academic book series in Chinese.

13 — Central office in Bonn
The Central Office was set up in 2002 when the Foundation was established and is responsible for core tasks. It supports the work of the Foundation's various bodies and the Academic Advisory Boards. It deals with German regulatory authorities on behalf of the institutes and their employees, maintains the publication platform perspectivia.net and is responsible for all Foundation-wide administrative matters and for public relations in Germany.

Italy and the EU. A complicated relationship

Italy and the European Union are inextricably linked. But the relationship is complicated. Two researchers from the German Historical Institute (GHI) Rome show that this phenomenon has historical roots which have influenced the EU since its foundation.

TEXT · VIRGINIA KIRST TRANSLATION · SUE PICKETT

Italy was one of the founding members of the EU. The Treaty of Rome was signed in its capital city in 1957, a major step towards the unification of the various states. Today, Italy is the third largest economy in the EU after Germany and France and the third biggest net contributor to the EU budget. Under its previous Prime Minister Mario Draghi, the country assumed a leading political role in the EU for the first time in many years alongside Germany and France.

But these close ties do not shield the country from criticism. On the contrary. In Italy, the EU is the subject of constant scrutiny. Since Brexit, politicians and the people of Italy have spent more time wrestling with the state of the union and its alleged mistakes than their counterparts in any other major EU country. The EU is criticised for interfering in the everyday lives of Italy's citizens while paying too little attention to Italian problems such as migration across the Mediterranean.

It was also its anti-EU stance that helped the populist Five Star Movement win the parliamentary elections in 2018. The Fratelli d'Italia party, which went on to win the 2022 elections, is also critical of the EU.

EU expansion thanks to and in spite of criticism Observers now fear that the newly elected sceptics from Rome will cause unrest in Brussels – and could hamper the progress of EU integration. Their arguments suggest that Euroscepticism in Italy is a new phenomenon that stems from the Maastricht Treaty and the consequences of the financial and eurozone crisis after 2008.

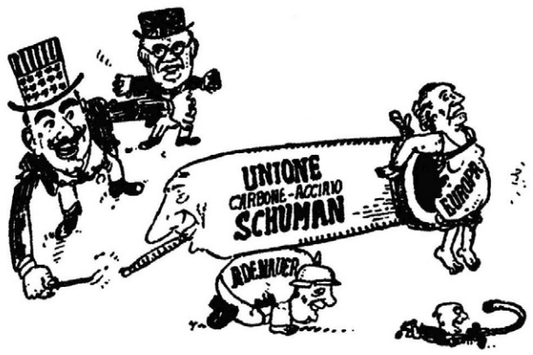
↖ From Strasbourg to Rome. Italian farmers take part in a European protest in Strasbourg on 25 March 1980.

But this view is too narrow. As two research projects at the GHI Rome show, criticism has always been an inherent element of the EU integration project. Particularly in Italy. It is precisely this opposition that has made the union of states what it is today.

Since April 2021, in the collaborative project "Europe's Counter-Movements. Eurosceptic Entanglements from the Beginnings of European Integration to the Present Day", Antonio Carbone and Andrea Carlo Martinez have been investigating how European integration has defined Italian discourse and, in turn, how Italian discourse has impacted the development of the EU. Their findings on these historical counter-movements also shed new light on modern critics.

Their project starts with the European Economic Community (EEC), in other words, the first pillar of the EU. Carbone and Martinez's theory posits that the development of the EU is portrayed retrospectively as being more conflict-free than it actually was: "It is not true that European integration has always progressed in a linear fashion or that problems have only emerged in the recent past," says Carbone. "There have always been alternative visions of European integration."

From oranges and olives to the single currency Carbone's post-doctoral research is based on this theory and draws parallels, for example, between the difficulties of the EEC's southern enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s and the problems the EU faces today. Issues that were not fully resolved during the enlargement period have developed into major problems over the years and have ultimately threatened the Union's identity.



← A socialist caricature from 1950 portrays the European Coal and Steel Community as an American project to which Europe is being sacrificed.

→ On its front page in February 1957, the fascist weekly newspaper Asso di Bastoni claimed that Europe had no soul – the same criticism expressed by right-wing nationalist politician Giorgia Meloni in April 2022.


Mercato europeo?

Asso di Bastoni

GIORNALE DELLA RIVOLUZIONE FASCISTA

Direttore: VANNI TEODORANI

DOMANI COME IERI

Europa senz'anima

DOLLMANN RIVELA

Responsabilità

Kruscioff il saggio

L'EUROPA SARA' FASCISTA, O NON SARA'

NASCERA' DOPO UNA LUNGA E LABORIOSA GESTAZIONE

IL MERCATO COMUNE DEL VECCHIO CONTINENTE

UN DISERTORE AL GOVERNO CONTRO I MUTILATI

L'on. Preti incassa e tace

"ASSO„ fra gli emigranti

UNA STORIA VECCHIA MA

Inghilterra

For example, before the EEC's enlargement to the south, two thirds of the budget was spent on the common agricultural policy. Agricultural issues therefore dominated policymaking. This was why the question of whether Greece, Spain and Portugal should be allowed to join the EEC caused rifts: on the one hand, Italian and French farmers would be competing within the EEC over oranges, lemons and olives. And on the other, the Community's geopolitical balance and priorities would be shifting towards the south and the Mediterranean.

"Even then we saw disputes about the different concepts of solidarity and North-South conflicts. Issues we are all too familiar with in the EU today," says Carbone. Many of the prejudices that impede cohesion in the Union today were already simmering – for example, the notion that the Mediterranean states were reliant on the economic support of the other European countries, while the richer nations opposed the fair distribution of wealth so as not to jeopardise their own advantages. "These issues were already there in 1980. They haven't been resolved and they are resurfacing again with renewed vigour," says Carbone.

He sees a parallel here with the euro, which was also introduced before the international community had satisfactorily resolved any potentially contentious issues. For example, the common currency was introduced without adjustments being made to fiscal policy. The reasoning was that, in time, the countries would resume friendly relations. This hope has been partially dashed, however, and the tensions this has created have repeatedly threatened to break up the EU.

Individual movements become a shared struggle Carbone analyses the discussions that took place between the mid-1970s and 1986, when Portugal and Spain followed Greece in becoming members of the EU. In contrast to the conventional focus, which looks at the history of the EEC from the perspective of the institutions, Carbone concentrates on the Italian farmers' organisations. He examines the conflicts between the organisations and their different attitudes towards the EEC in order to understand how the project was perceived and discussed – and he looks at the influence this then had on the EEC itself.

"One of the first effects I see is a process of integration taking place between European farmers. Isolated protests against EEC policies, for example because of cuts in subsidies, turned into a collective struggle," says Carbone. One of the first transnational networks of critics of European integration emerges. He believes that understanding this is important for the collective European identity. "European integration is a jagged line and the counter-movements play a key part in this."

This is also what Andrea Carlo Martinez wants to prove in his research project. He examines the role of the Italian media at various key moments in the early days of the European integration project. One such moment was the signing of the Treaty of Rome. Martinez is particularly interested in the debates in small local newspapers that were free of the influence of the powerful pro-European government in Rome.

"I've discovered that the situation in the 1950s was more complex than it is portrayed today," says Martinez. The viewpoints of the Communists is commonly recognised: they rejected the EEC on the grounds that it was an American project. But the position of the federalists is less well known. They too were critical of the EEC, but for

> “Debate and dialogue are at the heart of the European integration process. It is a lot healthier if we don’t just automatically exclude them.”
>
> Andrea Carlo Martinez

↗ President of the Italian farmers’ association Coldiretti, Arcangelo Lobianco, speaks at a congress on agriculture in the Mediterranean region and the European Economic Community on 22 March 1981.

the opposite reasons. For them, political integration did not go far enough. They wanted to establish a European mega-state – the United States of Europe. “So, ironically, we have the most pro-European people in the country criticising what is deemed to be the fundamental agreement of the European Community,” says Martinez.

Criticism that still stands 65 years on Another surprising position revealed by Martinez in his research comes from the neo-fascist weekly magazine Asso di Bastoni. Shortly before the signing of the treaties, the magazine featured an article claiming that Europe needed a soul, otherwise it would continue to be a boring, bureaucratic institution that did not really engage with the ideals of European unity and civilisation. Europe needs a soul? “Back then, this idea was completely novel,” says Martinez. “But today, it is a recurring theme in debates about European integration, and one that subsequent election winner Giorgia Meloni also used in her 2022 election campaign.”

The Christian Democrats, who led the Italian government at the time, positioned themselves between these two poles and promoted European integration for their own advantage. They labelled anyone who disputed their vision of a united Europe as anti-European or a sceptic, consigning them to the sidelines of the debate. A mistake, believes Martinez: “The EU and its institutions have long held the view that European unity is inevitable and that anyone who criticises this is anti-European.” But, he says, by marginalising such tendencies, a more powerful movement was able to emerge, one that is potentially far more dangerous for the EU.

Here, too, he sees a parallel with the recent past. In the Brexit debate, the fears of Leave supporters were labelled anti-European and therefore not taken seriously by Remainers. As a consequence, their concerns were exploited by right-wing nationalist politicians and ultimately turned into a Leave vote.

Martinez is convinced that this would not have happened if people’s criticism of the EU had been discussed seriously. He hopes his research will help us acknowledge that criticism of the EU mission has always existed: “Debate and dialogue are at the heart of the European integration process. It is a lot healthier if we don’t just automatically exclude them.”

Antonio Carbone has been a research fellow at the GHI Rome and a member of the joint project “Europe’s Counter-Movements” since April 2021. Prior to this, he completed his doctorate at the Technische Universität Berlin and was a lecturer at the Freie Universität Berlin. In his doctoral thesis, he examined the influence of epidemics on urban environments in 19th-century Buenos Aires. Carbone is interested in global history with a focus on Southern Europe and Latin America and the history of European integration.

Andrea Carlo Martinez Andrea Carlo Martinez has been working on his doctoral thesis in the joint project “Europe’s Counter-Movements” at the GHI Rome since April 2021. He previously studied Theology and Religion at Oxford University and International Relations and Politics at Cambridge University. His interest in Euroscepticism is not only reflected in his research but also in his journalistic articles. He writes for TIME Magazine, Euronews and The Independent, among others.

TEXT ·· EVA MURAŠOV TRANSLATION ·· SUE PICKETT

There are billions of stories of forced migration in the 21st and 20th centuries, but few of these are told, listened to and documented. Filling in the blanks is the goal of a group of researchers at the German Historical Institute (GHI) Washington. The International Standing Working Group “In Global Transit” has made it its mission to investigate the “spatial and temporal dimensions of global transit”.

↗ Jewish sisters Dora and Marie Claire Rakowski point out their journey to America on a wall map soon after their arrival in the US, 1949. The photo was published in the newspaper Agudat Yisrael along with an article describing how their immigration was organised.

Uncertain arrival: from stories of forced migration to global transit history

There was a very concrete starting point for the broad field covered by the group of researchers: the stories of Jews who succeeded in fleeing Nazi Germany and occupied Europe before or during World War II, but also the accounts of survivors who did not want to stay in Europe or their country of refuge after 1945.

"When we speak of Jewish emigration, the story often ends with the departure from Germany," historian and co-founder of the GHI group, Swen Steinberg, says critically with regard to the collective memory. But this was only the start of a long journey. Stories of escape to the US, England and Palestine have been very well researched, adds GHI Director Simone Lässig, who is one of the key members of the project group together with Steinberg and colleagues Anna-Carolin Augustin and Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş. "But the global dimension of the search for a new home, sometimes under enormous pressure, has not generally been covered in our subject or in Jewish and Holocaust history." Lässig and Steinberg recognise the need to reappraise and "raise awareness of" this chapter in Jewish global history. To do so, they are tapping into rich sources of information that have been previously overlooked, forgotten or hidden: from children's drawings, photographs taken by people in transit and personal documents, such as letters and diary entries, to statistics from public authorities, agencies and aid organisations.

What objects say about forced migration The researchers also study physical objects, that is to say, "material evidence of a life of flight or expulsion from one's homeland to arrival in a country where the people were able to build a new life and wanted to do so," says Lässig. However, shedding light on many of these previously untold transit stories is not easy. After all, people forced to flee can only take a few items with them. They have to move time and again, which means they cannot store anything, so they keep only their most important belongings.

"Where long distances and extended periods of time are involved, people take objects of sentimental value with them more than anything else," explains Steinberg. Besides obvious items such as watches, photographs of loved ones, notebooks and wedding rings, these might have been door keys or name signs. "The Laqueur family, who were forced to leave their home in Hamburg under the Nazis, removed their name sign from their front door. It hangs on the garden gate in Berkeley today, now in the third generation," says the historian, an assistant professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada.

Important treasure troves for research into artefacts are the Leo Baeck Institute in New York, which administers and researches numerous German-language documents, but also research museums, such as the Magnes Collection in Berkeley, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Jewish Museum in Berlin, to which Shoa survivors or exiles have donated family memorabilia and bequests. Private contacts and collections are of key importance for producing knowledge today, stress both Lässig and Steinberg, especially testimonies from the 1930s and 1940s.

Becoming a migrant, becoming an adult An example of an individual who underwent such a transformation is the Jewish son of the Arnhold banking family from Dresden and Berlin, Heinrich-Hartmut Arnhold. Simone Lässig has been researching the Arnhold family for several years. Despite the family's fairly privileged background, its members' emigration and flight from the Nazis were unplanned and, indeed, perilous for some.

It was also dangerous for his mother Lisa Arnhold. She and four of her five children initially emigrated to Switzerland, relates Lässig. But since she felt unsafe there as well, Arnhold applied for visas for the US. "While her 17-year-old son was spending his summer holidays with a school friend in Norway in 1939, the war broke out. He was still a German citizen at the time, so he was no longer able to return to Switzerland."

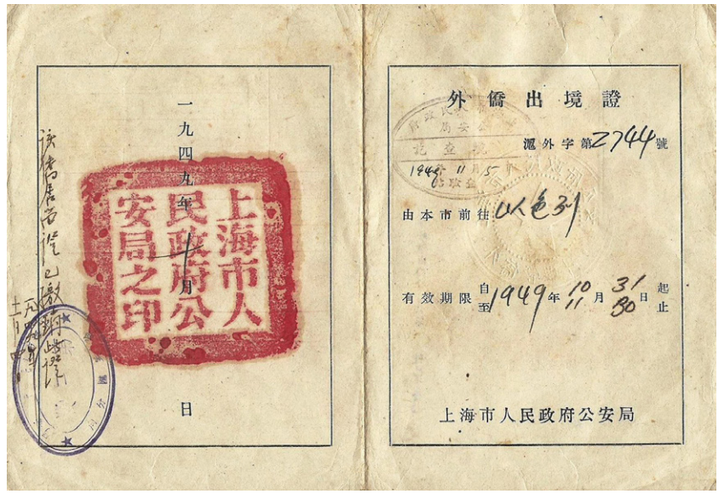
For Heinrich-Hartmut Arnhold, a few weeks' holiday in Norway turned into a four-year stay – during a formative phase of his life in which he was left more or less to his own devices. When German troops occupied the country from 1940, his life was also in danger there. He was imprisoned twice and released only thanks to the intervention of Norwegian friends. With the help of resistance groups, explains Lässig, he made his way to Sweden. "At the end of 1941, supported by the Swedish Resistance and international aid organisations, the family managed to arrange his escape, and he arrived in Cuba on a cargo ship." In April 1942, the now adult Arnhold was reunited with his family in the US.

This was all revealed to the GHI director in a previously unpublished escape report the boy-turned-young-man wrote during his Atlantic crossing, as well as in letters that his descendants made available to Lässig. The discovery of this plight – a story of non-arrival – prompted the idea of focusing research on the transit phase itself. Today, Lässig is especially interested in the perspectives of young people and children.

Focusing on the phase of "in-betweenness" That the study of Jewish transit covers the years 1930 to 1960 is a direct result of the fact "that most of these refugee movements were far from over in 1945," explains Steinberg. The same applies to the global and therefore imperial and colonial perspective. While we usually only associate Jewish flight history in our collective memory with the US, England or Palestine, we are actually dealing with a "complex global network of migration routes and historical contexts". In the 1940s, numerous migrants arrived after long journeys in Australia, China and Kenya.

The routes of the Judaica – Jewish ceremonial objects – traced by GHI researcher Anna-Carolin Augustin were similarly circuitous. These are objects of material culture that were saved and had been "in global transit" during or after World War II. After sometimes adventurous journeys, they arrived in North America, Israel, and occasionally even back in Germany.

The International Standing Working Group 'In Global Transit' has made it its mission to investigate the 'spatial and temporal dimensions of global transit'.



↖ Refugees arrive at Cologne-Bonn Airport on a special Deutsche Bahn train in September 2017.

↑ Polish children in a Red Cross refugee camp on the outskirts of Tehran, 1943.

← Exit visa in a passport issued in Shanghai with permission to leave for Israel, 1949.

In conversation with the transit researchers, it becomes clear that these phases of “in-betweenness” are a blind spot in the historical sciences. The odysseys of these people and their belongings are an area the researchers want to systematically explore. What did they mean for people’s personal life stories? What role do colonial framings and postcolonial movements or geopolitical conflicts and regime changes play in this context? Microperspectives intersect with macroperspectives here, and the researchers draw on both personal and institutional sources.

Global connections and narratives of “non-arrival” are highlighted by the example of the Chinese city of Shanghai, which allowed Jews visa-free entry during World War II. “Many stuck it out here until 1948,” says Lässig. But when Mao Zedong formally proclaimed the founding of the communist People’s Republic of China in 1949, the emigrants, many of them middle-class, realised they could not stay there. Their transit continued.

At the mercy of power games and authorities One thing that becomes apparent in this new context is the emigrants’ “limited agency”. This is demonstrated by the internment camps for refugees in Great Britain. “When the war broke out, for example, the internees were asked whether they wanted to emigrate to Australia or Canada. In many cases, however, the authorities gave them a visa for the very destination they had not chosen.”

Steinberg lists other countries where refugees were stranded and Jewish global history continued to be written unnoticed by the Western world: Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, the then British colony of Rhodesia, India, Cuba and the Caribbean. The civil wars and upheavals that were occurring in countries that were mostly under European colonial rule in the 1950s and 1960s often forced Jewish immigrants into exile once again. Lässig cites another especially drastic example of life in “spaces of in-betweenness”, which was caused by perpetual migration. “Many European Jews and other opponents of National Socialism who had survived the concentration and extermination camps or years in hiding and who didn’t want to stay in Germany or Europe had to register all over again and live in camps for displaced persons.” These camps were run by the Allies in Germany, Austria and Italy between 1945 and 1952. Many of the survivors, as Lässig points out, were “stuck there for several more years”.

This is a field of study that extends into the present day – and is continuing to grow. To better understand the transit and “interzones” that shape such life trajectories, “In Global Transit” examines not least of all concrete spaces and infrastructures, ships, airports, refugee camps, government offices – and therefore also the story of migration today.

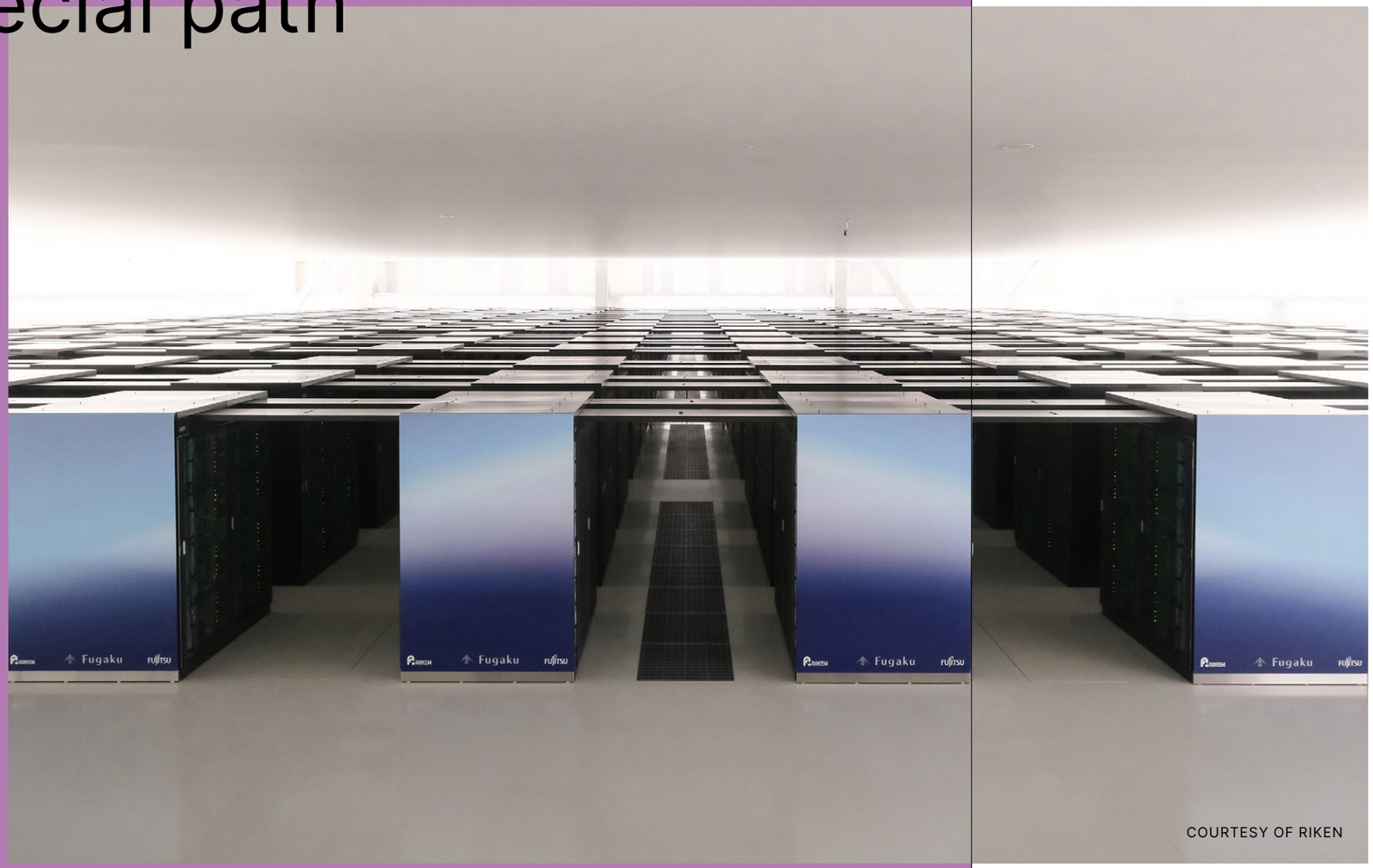
Focusing on airports as historical sites, Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş explores transit zones as centres of migration routes. She draws on archives and reports from organisations such as Pro Asyl, but also others, like Lufthansa. This sheds light on individual destinies, says Lässig of her colleague’s approach at the GHI. But it also shows that transit experiences are “essentially determined from above”. The reports devised and filtered by institutions tell stories very different from those one encounters in the personal documents written in private. Based in Washington and Berkeley but operating internationally, the group aims not only to broaden the horizons of migration historiography in terms of time but also to look at the subject outside its own discipline. Growing constantly thanks to conferences and panel events in Kolkata, Berkeley and Philadelphia, the network welcomes anyone interested in the places and times of migrants’ transit, whether from literature, cultural studies or the social sciences. In recent years, the GHI group has “become a kind of fluid collaborative research centre”, says Lässig with a smile, with more and more colleagues from all over the world wanting to become involved.

↖ Refugees working in a Jewish settlement field near Sosúa in the Dominican Republic, around 1942.

Simone Lässig is Director of the German Historical Institute Washington. The cultural and social historian specialises in the 19th and 20th centuries and is known for her research on Jewish middle-class culture. Her main areas of interest are religiosity, entrepreneurship and patronage, history of knowledge and digital history. She is currently researching the migration and transit experiences of children and young people.

Swen Steinberg is Assistant Professor of History at Queen’s University in Kingston, Canada. He has also headed the Strategy and Communications Department at the GHI, where he co-founded the International Standing Working Group “In Global Transit”. He is studying Jewish forced migration stories between 1930 and 1960 and is working to develop an international network to expand transit research. Since September 2019, he has also been a Research Ambassador of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Japan’s special path



COURTESY OF RIKEN

In the global power structure of the digital economy – dominated by internet giants from the US and China – Japan has been a low-profile player up to now. But the country has a clear strategy of its own and wants to bring data protection and data trade into sync. This makes it an attractive partner for Germany and Europe.

↖ Fugaku lies at the centre of Japan’s supercomputing infrastructure and is designed to help solve scientific and social problems and tasks. Its processing units display the profile of the largest mountain in Japan, Mount Fuji.

TEXT ·· MARKUS STREHLITZ TRANSLATION ·· IAN MCGARRY

Alongside an abundance of cultural stereotypes we associate with Japan, the word technology immediately springs to mind. Japanese people are known for their love of technology. The country has produced countless innovations, from the Walkman to the PlayStation. During the early 2000s, Japan pioneered the use of the mobile internet and was a leader in many digital technologies.

But when it comes to who is currently spearheading the digital evolution, Japan barely gets a mention. The major platform operators in the US, such as Amazon, Google’s parent company Alphabet and Facebook owner Meta, are the dominant forces here. Their equivalents on the Chinese side are Alibaba, Baidu and Tencent.

The power of these internet giants lies in the phenomenon of data. Or to be more precise, in the use of data belonging to the people availing themselves of the myriad services offered by Google and Co. Personal data is appropriated, for example, to accurately target advertising to users and increase engagement with the platform. Critical voices such as media sociologist Nick Couldry refer to this as a new form of colonialism: data colonialism. In the same way that countries in today’s global North have exploited the people and resources of the global South ever since the modern age began, the major platform operators view the social relationships of their users as a resource that they can monetise – converting them into data relationships which they can exploit.

Both Europe and Japan play only a subordinate role in data colonialism, unlike in the historic form of colonialism. They do not possess platform providers of a scale comparable to those of the US and China. Japan, however, is charting its own course, one that has so far attracted little attention in Germany, as Harald Kümmerle from the German Institute for Japanese Studies (Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien, DIJ) points out. Kümmerle is researching Japan’s digital transformation and also analysing the minutes of meetings of the Japanese parliament on the topic. He states that Japan’s digital strategy is based on two pillars: the creation of a comprehensive national data infrastructure and the formation of international standards.

The aim of the strategy is, on the one hand, to facilitate the free movement of data for the benefit of the Japanese economy. On the other hand, however, this valuable resource must also be protected – especially from foreign data colonisers. Or put differently: the free circulation of data has to be balanced with data protection.

Information banks: trading in data instead of money An example of how this will work in practice is provided by the information banks – a particularly intriguing element of Japan's digital strategy. These banks operate in much the same way as traditional banks, with one difference: their currency is data rather than money. Users can choose to hand over their personal information to these institutions. The banks then look for ways to invest the data anonymously on behalf of their customers, hoping to find companies that can utilise this information for a profit.

The information banks do all this in strict compliance with data protection rules and share the added value with customers. The banks thus operate along similar lines to the big platform providers, the one big difference being that data owners benefit considerably more from the arrangement.

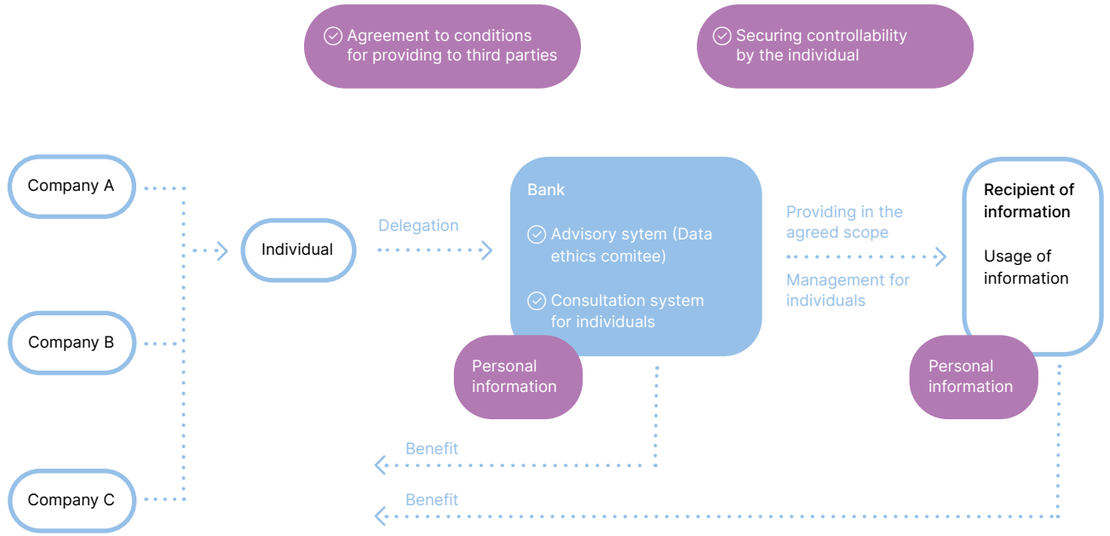
Kümmerle reports that the first information bank went into operation in 2019. The certification framework, however, is yet to wield any regulatory clout. One big reason for this is the hesitancy among Japanese people to entrust their personal data to third parties. Since the 2010s, citizens have been suspicious of the state or large institutions in this regard.

Negotiating the pandemic by supercomputer This approach was also a major factor in Japan's handling of the Covid pandemic. The country's strategy relied less on strict regulations than on the population's willingness to cooperate. From the outset, Japan focused on identifying clusters of infection early on and intervening in localised areas – for example by isolating those infected – and as far as possible preventing clusters from forming. Japan's successful navigation through the first wave of the virus achieved with relatively mild restrictions led Christian Drosten, one of Germany's leading virologists, considered the strategy to be promising in the summer of 2020.

> "We have yet to catch up with the new reality, in which data drives everything, where the D.F.F.T., the Data Free Flow with Trust, should top the agenda in our new economy."
>
> Shinzō Abe in Davos

↗ Functionality of an information bank.

→ Japan's then Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2019.



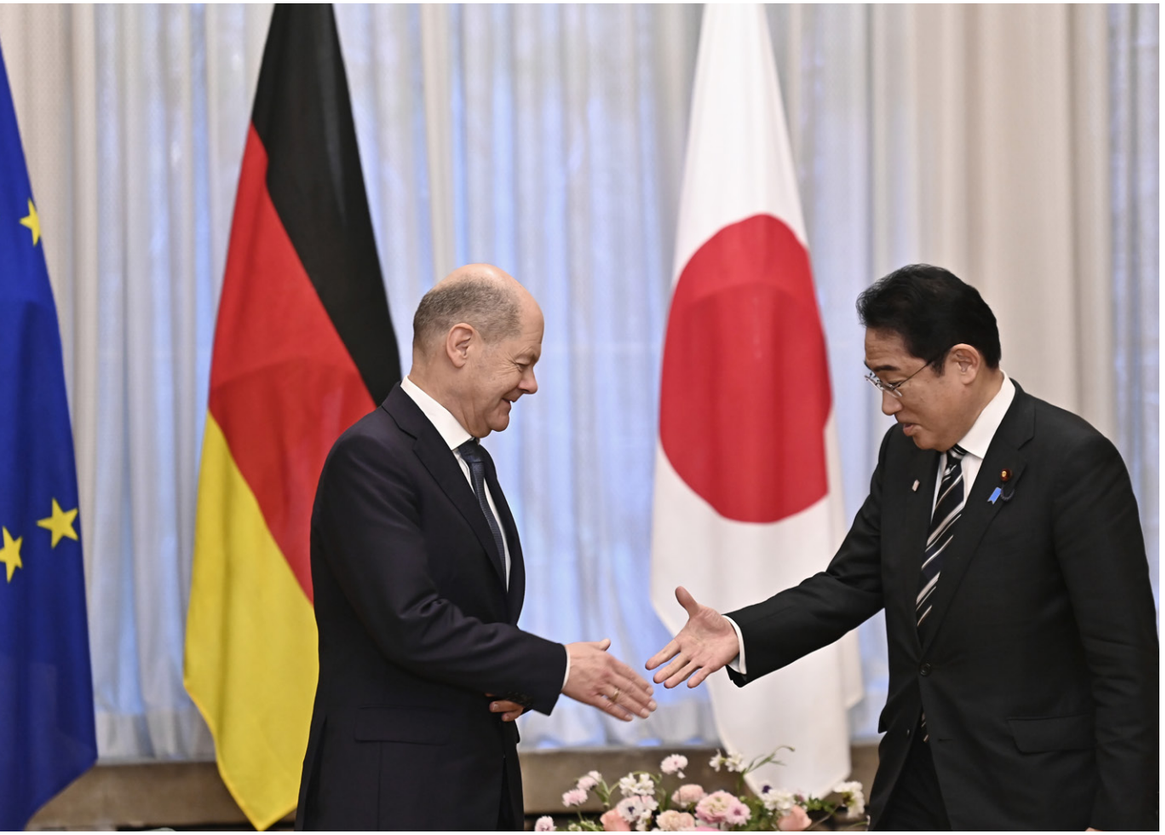
While Japan, like Germany, saw a sharp spike in infection rates in winter 2020/21, it largely resisted shutting down its public facilities. Instead, public life carried on under precautionary measures. With the help of Fugaku, the world's fastest supercomputer by far at the time, Japanese scientists had established with great accuracy how the virus spread via droplets and aerosols in numerous specific contexts. The cluster data was used to produce risk assessments that were shared with the general public.

With its computing units based at the RIKEN research institute in the western Japanese city of Kobe, Fugaku plays a central role in the national data infrastructure. Both for Japanese research institutions and Japanese industry, it forms the hub around which a common platform is created – in direct contrast to the situation in the US and China, where the platform giants each maintain their own infrastructure.

China's image eroding Hardly anybody outside Japan and not even the Japanese public were really aware of how specifics of the country's digital strategy made an impact during the pandemic. The focus instead was on China, whose progression to superpower status has long been driven by the mobilisation of digital technology. In November 2020, political scientist Maximilian Mayer from the NOCOVID initiative called Europe's decision not to pursue an elimination strategy in the pandemic like China irrational, citing "epidemic Orientalism" as the explanation. Kümmerle also quotes economist Wolfram Elsner, who put the handling of the pandemic in early 2021 into historical terms. In his book "Die Zeitenwende – China, USA und Europa nach Corona" (The Epochal Shift – China, USA and Europe after Corona), he writes: "The USA is in decline. China has finally emerged as the new leading economy and a global health power. And its importance in driving the world economy is increasing again, especially for Germany."

In the meantime, however, much has changed. China's restrictive Covid strategy has caused a massive economic fallout and apparently also failed on the epidemiological front. According to Kümmerle, Mayer's diagnosis of a (supposed) "epidemic Orientalism" was itself the product of an Orientalism that idealised Asia – and completely ignored a potential rational basis for Japan's special path. What's more, the term "epochal shift" has now gained prominence in a completely different context to the one Elsner had in mind, following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, launched on 24 February 2022. While Europe considers itself to be under existential threat, China is essentially standing by the side of Russia and, as Kümmerle sees it, will play a moderating role at best.

All of which has led to Japan once again moving more into Germany's focus. "Japan is regarded as a reliable partner in Asia, and as such is gaining in importance," says Kümmerle. This also applies to digitalisation and the handling of data. These are areas on which Europe, including Germany, wants to work together with Japan. The most important instrument here is the "Data Free



Flow with Trust" (DFFT) agreement, put forward by Japan's then Prime Minister Shinzō Abe at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2019. The G7 countries want to use this concept to facilitate the exchange of data between countries and to standardise data access. "You could almost call 'Data Free Flow with Trust' a tiered free trade agreement for data," says Kümmerle. The initiative shares the same premise as Japan's digital strategy, likewise seeking to harmonise data movement and data protection. Prior to touting DFFT, Japan had already updated its own data protection standards and harmonised them with European standards, creating the world's largest area for secure data traffic in early 2019. The Japanese certification scheme for information banks was also consulted during the drafting of the EU's Data Governance Act (DGA) in 2020.

Standards to encourage public trust According to Kümmerle, the fact that Japan is investing significant political capital into the "Data Free Flow with Trust" initiative also has domestic reasons. Which brings us to the second pillar of Japan's digital strategy: establishing standards. "If the Japanese government succeeded in establishing an international regulation for the exchange and protection of data with 'Data Free Flow with Trust', then its own citizens would likely also be more willing to provide their data." This willingness is vital for promoting the trading of data, which would ultimately benefit the country's own economy. The government therefore hopes that international agreements will instil confidence in the free flow of data among its own population, too.

↖ "We are united by democratic principles": Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz emphasised the close relationship between the two countries at government consultations in March 2023.

> "Hardly anybody outside Japan and not even the Japanese public were really aware of how specifics of the country's digital strategy made an impact during the pandemic."
>
> Harald Kümmerle

This would enable the EU and Japan to work together to counter the data colonialism of platform providers from the US and China. Kümmerle argues, however, that seeing Japan's role only as an opponent of data colonialism falls short analytically. He says that Japan considers itself a rule maker, especially for Southeast Asia, and is betting on the influence that "Data Free Flow with Trust" could exert. This would, Kümmerle goes on, mirror developments concerning the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), whose conclusion after the United States withdrawal was thanks to Japan in particular.

In Kümmerle's opinion, trying to establish one's own standards in structurally weaker countries could also be described as data colonialism – even if it is about more data protection and the goal is therefore a very welcome one. In other words, the roles in the new digital world are not necessarily clear-cut. What is clear, however, is that Japan intends to play a significant role again and in this it deserves Germany's attention.

Harald Kümmerle is a principal researcher at the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo. He studied mathematics and computer science at Technical University of Munich (TUM), Japanese studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU) and Japanese as a foreign language at Keio University Tokyo. He obtained his doctoral degree in Japanese studies from Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg with a dissertation on the "Institutionalization of mathematics as a science in Meiji- and Taisho-era Japan", for which he was awarded the Johannes Zilkens Dissertation Prize in 2020 by the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes). His interests include the history of mathematics, digital humanities, new materialism and critical data studie.

Language is integral to the argument

TEXT ·· CARMELA THIELE TRANSLATION ·· IAN MCGARRY

The theme of the year 2022/23 at the German Center for Art History in Paris (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, DFK) was “The Visible and the Sayable. The Languages of Art History”. The title alludes to the interdependent relationship between image and text. Researching different topics under this theme are seven DKF Paris fellows. They include an art historian dedicated to contextualising Hebrew and Arabic inscriptions found in 14th- and 15th-century European painting, and a photography expert whose work explores the idea of photography as a universal language. We spoke to Sarah Flitti, Guillaume Blanc-Marianne and DFK director, Peter Geimer.

→ Rogier van der Weyden, Maria Magdalene, detail from the Braque triptych, around 1450, Louvre Museum, Paris.

The building that houses the German Center for Art History (DFK) in central Paris stands between the Opéra Garnier and the Louvre, not far from the Bibliothéque Nationale. While the Center boasts its own well-stocked library, it mainly contains German titles. The research fellows have workstations in a shared workspace at DFK. “Alongside our work meetings and conferences, much of what we do is also impromptu. Chats in the corridor often spawn ideas for future events,” says Peter Geimer, DFK director and also art historian and professor. Guests are frequently invited to sit in on meetings, one recent example being Berlin philosopher Sybille Krämer. Also on board is art historian Georges Didi-Hubermann, winner of the 2015 Max Weber Foundation International Research Prize. He and Peter Geimer are heading the two-year project, “The Visible and the Sayable”, just one of a host of programmes at DFK Paris. “The relationship between image and text is something we are all examining. The debates help us improve how we structure our own theme. What we’re creating here is something special,” says Guillaume Blanc-Marianne. Sarah Flitti adds: “I was deeply immersed in studying writing systems and scripts. But my involvement with the DFK programme led me to switch focus in my doctoral thesis.”

How natural sciences and humanities differ Tighter guidelines are more commonly set by project leaders in the natural sciences, such as the choice of experiments, according to Peter Geimer. He continues: “In the humanities, it’s different. I would never dictate someone’s topic for their doctoral thesis. Deciding on their own research question is part of a research fellow’s remit. This works very well in our group. Everyone has their own position, but we still formulate guiding principles and concepts that we all see as key.” The work of one fellow, Anna Siebold, shows how the current adoption by many humanities scholars of methods applied in the natural sciences – collecting large amounts of data, digital methods, statistics – is also changing writing and publishing. Geimer argues that the trend towards empiricism bypasses core skills that are integral to the humanities: “The ideal of knowledge being something measurable does not fit in with the language culture established in the humanities. For humanities scholars, language is not a means to an end: it is central to their arguments.”

How do Hebrew inscriptions come to appear in Christian paintings? Language is not just a key instrument in art history: it is also the actual subject of academic research. Doctoral student Sarah Flitti is researching Hebrew and Arabic scripts in European paintings of the 14th

“For humanities scholars, language is not a means to an end: it is central to their arguments.”

Peter Geimer

↑ Bartolomé Bermejo, Death of the Virgin, 1460–1462, Staatliche Gemäldegalerie Berlin.

→ Johan Maelwael, Madonna with Butterflies, 1410, Staatliche Gemäldegalerie Berlin.

“Photography with the aim of acting as a common denominator for people living completely different lifestyles. How is that supposed to work?”

Guillaume Blanc-Marianne

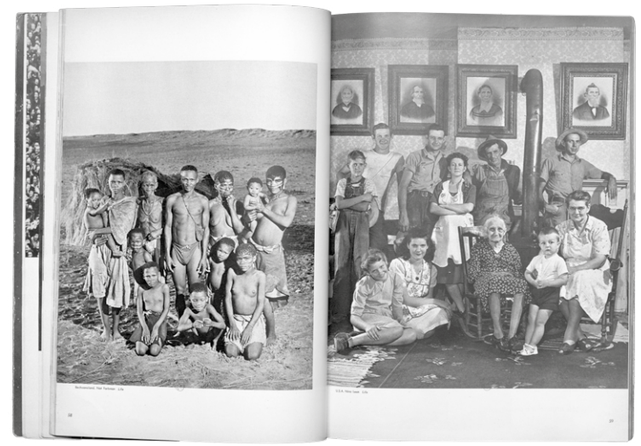
and 15th centuries. Experts in what are known as pseudo-inscriptions usually opt to research either Hebrew or Arabic, explains Flitti: “I investigate both scripts, though, and compare how they are used in paintings.” Pseudo-Kufic inscriptions often serve an ornamental purpose.

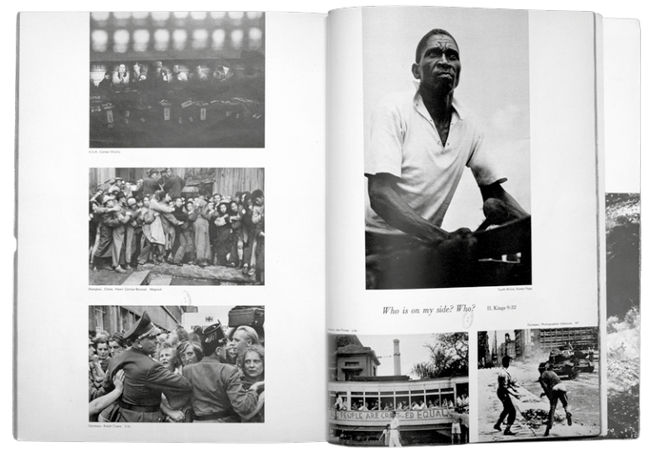
Flitti has delved deep into palaeography, the study of handwritten manuscripts, and epigraphy, the study of ancient inscriptions. While seeing herself an art historian, her interest lies not so much in the meaning or style of devotional painting as in details. One example is the inscription, painted in white onto white, on the headwear of Mary Magdalene in a work by Flemish painter Rogier van der Weyden. The portrait is part of the triptych of the Braque family, which is kept in the Louvre. “Erwin Panofsky described the inscription as being written in pseudo-Kufic, in other words in Arabic. But the characters are actually Hebrew,” explains Flitti. The Kufic script is an angular form of Arabic script. “I wondered how Panofsky could have made such an error. Then I realised that at the time he was working with reproductions that didn’t depict these kinds of details. Pseudo-Kufic inscriptions are often used in Islamic art. The ‘pseudo’ label denotes an illegible script. These were common decorative forms at that time.”

Flitti sees the use of these inscriptions as referencing the origins of Christianity: the Middle East, Jerusalem. In Death of the Virgin by Bartolomé Bermejo, a work from Berlin’s Staatliche Gemäldegalerie, the red canopy hanging from the ceiling bears a golden inscription, written in Hebrew letters that make no sense. “We don’t know much about Bartolomé Bermejo,” says Flitti. “But we do know that his wife most likely converted from Judaism to Christianity. So that gives us a lead to find out more about him.”

The art historian is also struck by another aspect. Johan Maelwael’s Madonna with Butterflies, also in Berlin’s Gemäldegalerie, features lavish use of gold. “This has to do with Islamic metalwork from the same period,” she says. Flitti sums up thus: “I am trying to show that labelling the inscriptions as ‘pseudo-Kufic’ isn’t really enough, because Kufic is a style within Islamic epigraphy. The medieval image makes visible part of a common material culture, a piece of Islamic material culture that was imported, as well as Jewish material culture that was present in much of Europe.”

The universal language of photography Meanwhile, Guillaume Blanc-Marianne, an expert in photography and image theory, is studying the exhibition The Family of Man, the brainchild of modern photography pioneer Edward Steichen for the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1951. The show, featuring around 500 photographs of people from all continents and touring numerous ven-





↗ Double-page spread from The Family of Man, families from then British protectorate Bechuanaland (now Botswana) and the US, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955, pp. 58–59.

↗ Double-page spread from The Family of Man; text: “… deep inside, in that silent place where a child’s fears crouch”; Lilian Smith, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955.

→ Double-page spread from The Family of Man; text: “Who is on my Side?”; Lilian Smith, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955.

ues, was understood as a global gesture of reconciliation after World War II. Blanc-Marianne, though, sees things differently: “Photography with the aim of acting as a common denominator for people living completely different lifestyles. How is that supposed to work?”

Blanc-Marianne explains his position using an example from the exhibition catalogue for The Family of Man. A double-page spread depicts a family from the then British protectorate Bechuanaland, now Botswana in southern Africa, juxtaposed with a family from the US. The exhibition’s aim was to demonstrate that human experiences such as birth, death, violence and the value of family were the same everywhere. Guillaume Blanc-Marianne again: “The African family were told how to pose for the shot. These people had no experience with this medium, and nor would they have owned any photographs themselves. For the American family, though, the whole thing was a well-practised routine. They would even have had photographs hanging on their walls and owned their own house. The other family, on the other hand, are virtually naked and have no house.”

Roland Barthes’ critique of The Family of Man exhibition Guillaume Blanc-Marianne’s position aligns with that of Roland Barthes’ criticism of the exhibition in the 1950s, as contained in his famous volume, Mythologies. But Barthes’ complaint about what he saw as the exhibition peddling an instrumentalised form of humanism was not the sole impulse for Blanc-Marianne’s research: the academic became increasingly interested in the economic background to The Family of Man. “Steichen knew exactly what he was doing. He worked for the Museum of Modern Art and had a political agenda. The exhibition was sponsored by influential donors. I don’t think he genuinely believed that photography was a universal language. But he was catering to the values of America at the time, then the most powerful country in the world. The Americans wanted to exert influence on a world they called the Third World.” Edward Steichen was forced to accept that he couldn’t include the photo of the exploding atomic bomb when the exhibition was shown in Japan, where US planes dropped atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

Complex relationship between image and language All the projects relating to the DFK’s “The Visible and the Sayable” theme of the year centre, in their own way, on the connection between image and text. PhD student Louis-Antoine Mège explores the position of the British artists’ group “Art & Language”, whose conceptual art replaces painting through various forms of language. Max Bonhomme examines the rhetoric and visual language of early writing on graphic art. Francesca Golia analyses the different interpretations of Grünewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece in German, French and Italian prose and poetry. Marie Schiele, meanwhile, investigates the linguistic images of Denis Diderot, the founding father of modern art criticism in the 18th century.

“Images are never presented without language, whether in the form of accompanying comments, captions or image titles,” says Peter Geimer. Equally, though, images cannot be perfectly translated into language. “Every picture contains something that can only be seen.” For Geimer, it is important to bring together the intellectual focuses of the recent past from a methodological perspective in the Paris project. What was referred to as the ‘linguistic turn’ of the 1970s was all about decoding all cultural expressions, including images, along the lines of the language model. A response to this came in the 1990s with the iconic turn. The idea now was that the image was historically the far older cultural achievement of mankind and that it was impossible to grasp the essence of images in purely linguistic terms. “Our project also aims to move away from this unproductive opposition. Language and image are an ideal match: they are different, but they also complement and need each other,” says Geimer.

↖ Detail from a double-page spread from The Family of Man; text: “... deep inside, in that silent place where a child’s fears crouch”; Lilian Smith, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955.

Peter Geimer is the Director of DFK Paris and Professor of Art History at Freie Universität Berlin. His fields of research include the history and theory of photography, the depiction of history in images as well as the history of science.

Sarah Flitti is doing a PhD in art history at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne university and is a research fellow at DFK Paris. Her specialist research field is the decorative use of Hebrew and Arabic scripts in a Christian medieval context.

Guillaume Blanc-Marianne is a research fellow at DFK Paris. He gained his doctorate from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne university focussing on photography relating to art history and has been General Secretary of the Société française de photographie since 2017.

In the English-speaking world of the 20th century, something remarkable was happening. Behind the scenes, more and more people were starting to invent new languages. The reasons for this were heterogeneous. The inventors' aims, for instance, were to create languages that would secure world peace, reflect the realities of women's lives or give fictional characters a linguistic home. What motivated these pioneers? Who were their followers? And how did their inventions evolve over time? – These are some of the questions historian Pascale Siegrist of the German Historical Institute (GHI) London is trying to answer.

The world in our head: language creators in the 20th century

TEXT ·· NORA LESSING TRANSLATION ·· SUE PICKETT

Esperanto stands for a great hope. Namely, a world united by language. Invented in 1887 by Polish ophthalmologist Ludwig Zamenhof, the new language whipped up a burst of enthusiasm in the early 20th century that lasted well into the interwar period. Networks were set up, meetings organised. Esperanto enthusiasts founded initiatives. "Zamenhof argued that dominance is also exerted by language and that the cause of all conflicts in the world is that we do not understand each other. He believed that misunderstandings were linguistically determined and therefore could be overcome by having an entirely neutral and universal language," explains Pascale Siegrist. The historian's research proves just how popular the idea was at the time. "When the League of Nations was established, there were serious discussions, for example, about whether Esperanto should be adopted as its official international language."

Reforms to Esperanto cause a rift in the language community At the same time, other language invention projects emerged. By the end of the 19th century, for example, Volapük, which was created by the south German Catholic priest Johann Martin Schleyer, enjoyed considerable popularity. And in the 1920s, Charles Kay Ogden introduced his Basic English. The British linguist believed he could eliminate redundancies from the English language, and devised a language consisting of only 850 core words that would enable people all over the world to communicate. The project did not go as planned and was never able to attract as many followers as Esperanto and Volapük. The latter language communities were much bigger. However, they weren't free of conflict. "To give an example: one group of Esperantists wanted to radically reform the language. They created Ido – a simplified version of Esperanto," explains Pascale Siegrist. However, just a few of the Esperanto followers welcomed the change. This resulted in a rift. Even today, Ido and Esperanto followers organise separate conferences, have their own associations and publish their own journals.

All of this may seem surprising – given that the original purpose of the project was to unite the world. But Siegrist's research shows that such conflicts, in fact, are not uncommon among users of invented languages. On the contrary, disagreements and painful rifts occurred repeatedly, and the original objectives of the language inventors regularly clashed with the ideas of subsequent generations. It is these kinds of historical developments that Pascale Siegrist follows in her work. Her project A Secret Artifice: Language Invention in the Age of Global English traces similarities and differences between language invention projects. In her work, the historian primarily focuses on language invention projects within the English-speaking world, covering a time span of 70 years. The period of investigation – from the interwar period to the 1980s – saw a sizeable increase in language-invention activities. Just as English established itself as a global language, English speakers, predominantly from the United Kingdom, went to great lengths to invent new languages. After World War II, the US took over as the primary birthplace of such projects.

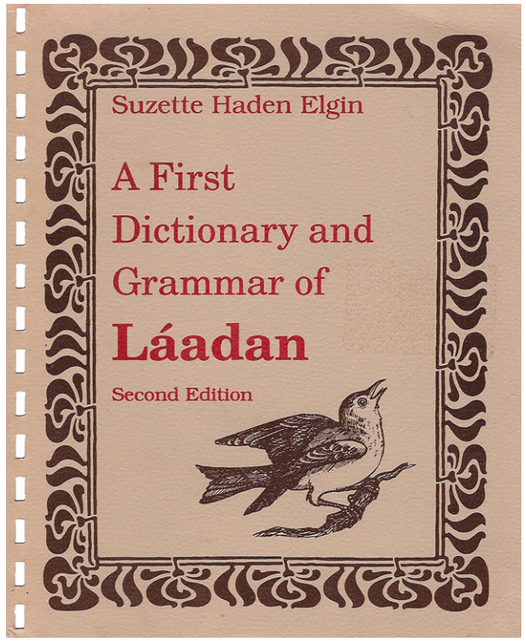
↖ Fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien invented several fictional languages for his literary worlds of Middle-earth, including the complex Elvish languages Quenya and Sindarin, as well as the language of the Dwarves Khuzdul.

“If there are two words for blue, as there are in Russian, for example, do we then see two different colours? Do we think differently when we speak a different language? These are the kinds of questions that are driving a second, far more inward-looking generation of language inventors.”

Pascale Siegrist

Behind the scenes Who were these people who often spent years painstakingly constructing words, grammars and language worlds? Pascale Siegrist aims to understand their motivation, wants to find out what inspired their projects. “The rise of English meant that there was already a world language, and one that was also the mother tongue of most inventors. So, what drove them to come up with new languages?” As the historian sees it from her research, there seem to be many factors at play. Personal ambition, for one, and a passion for language. But also a yearning for distant, unknown worlds and, more often than not, a sense of a personal mission. “I’m studying the inventors because I find the act of creating a language incredibly interesting,” explains the researcher. “It reflects a creative urge that is also connected with power and an awareness of power.”

To gain more insights, Siegrist has been scouring libraries and archives since 2021, sifting through personal papers and interviewing people who have dedicated themselves to learning, improving and speaking invented languages. By 2027, she hopes to turn her findings into a book in which she will compare language invention projects and identify differences and similarities. The material she studies is remarkably heterogenous. And yet, she finds certain elements and motives to be recurring. “For example, almost all of these initiatives follow a clear political, artistic or philosophical agenda,” explains Pascale Siegrist. At the beginning of the 20th century, for example, many language invention projects were motivated by a universalist idea: a hope for world peace gave rise to such projects as Volapük and Esperanto.



From political optimism to artistic and literary experimentation But then hope started to fade. World War II saw millions of Europeans emigrate to the US and efforts to create a new world language became rare. English had established itself as the lingua franca, and this perhaps put an end to such endeavours. Language invention thus lost political momentum. It now became more of a field of artistic and literary experimentation for writers. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, for example, invented a multitude of languages for his peoples of Middle-earth – from subtypes of Elvish to the languages of the Dwarves, Orcs and Ents. “He and other authors at that time believed that invented cultures and traditions could only be truly authentic if they had their own etymology and language, literature and mythology,” explains Siegrist.

↗ On 18 April 1922, the League of Nations held a conference on Esperanto. School and government representatives from 28 countries attended. Although it had numerous supporters, the constructed language failed to establish itself as a school subject.

← Suzette Haden Elgin started creating Láadan, the first language designed to describe the world from a female perspective, in 1982. The linguist and science fiction author also saw the experiment as a test of the Saphir-Whorf hypothesis, which posits a connection between language and thought.

Another motive Pascale Siegrist can derive from the writings of language inventors is rooted in scientific and philosophical disputes – for example discussions on cognition and language. “If there are two words for blue, as there are in Russian, for example, do we then see two different colours? Do we think differently when we speak a different language? These are the kinds of questions that are driving a second, far more inward-looking generation of language inventors,” explains the historian. Some initiatives were triggered by a linguistic controversy that spread far beyond academic circles. In the 1930s, linguist Benjamin Whorf studied Hopi, the language of an indigenous people living in the southwest of the USA. As a relativist, Whorf assumed that a person’s thoughts depend on the language this persons speaks. His analysis of Hopi verbs and how these express time-related matters led him to conclude that the Western linear concept of time was alien to the Hopi people. A public debate about the now world-famous and still controversial Sapir-Whorf hypothesis ensued. It focused on a misleadingly abbreviated version of Whorf’s argument. In consequence, many people started to believe that the Hopi people indeed had no understanding of time as a result of their language.

Casting care work and binary codes into language Linguist Suzette Haden Elgin, among others, tried to find out whether the limitations of our (linguistically structured) thoughts are actually the limitations of our world. Consequently, she wondered whether new worlds of thought can be created by new languages. In the 1980s, Elgin invented Láadan, a women-centred language that

focuses strongly on female realities, care work and has many words for love and menstruation. Another project that puts the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis to the test is James Cook Brown's Loglan from the 1950s. His goal was to create a language based on mathematics and logical thought – a language that thereby would be completely devoid of ambivalence. "If thought is determined by language, then the only way to think clearly is to communicate in a kind of binary code. That's the idea behind Loglan," explains Pascale Siegrist. Even today, learners of the language still discuss Loglan in specialist journals and try to improve it with software. "But there are very few people who can actually speak Loglan. The language is simply too difficult."

Loglan shares a rather modest fanbase with many of its sister projects. "None of the invented languages I study was successful in inspiring more than a small 'community of nerds'," concludes Pascale Siegrist. Even the Esperanto community, which was of considerable size in the early days, has been reduced over time to a small group. But such developments do not deter enthusiasts. Followers of invented languages enjoy lively and lengthy discussions in online forums, write e-mails to each other in Elvish or meet up for Klingon discussion groups. "What drives and motivates these people is the desire to speak the language or solve logical problems within the language, to discuss these problems. Their goal is not necessarily to reach a mass audience." The communities are formed by a shared enthusiasm for invented languages – and to this day, their work is not done. Perhaps, this is part of the languages' appeal. "These initiatives never come to an end. There are always new adjustments, new vocabulary is created," says Pascale Siegrist. "Maybe, in this case, the journey and the destination are one."

> "None of the invented languages I study was successful in inspiring more than a small 'community of nerds'"
>
> Pascale Siegrist

↖ The language problem as a global problem: no other symbol is a closely associated with this idea as the Tower of Babel. Umberto Eco chose it as a cover motif for his book on artificial languages.

Pascale Siegrist completed a PhD at the University of Konstanz with a thesis on Russian anarchism in the 19th century. Longer research stays have taken the historian to Italy, Russia and the US. Since 2021, Pascale Siegrist, who speaks five languages herself, is a researcher at the GHI London. In her project A Secret Artifice: Language Invention in the Age of Global English, she examines languages invented in the English-speaking world in the 20th century.

Are language and nationality intrinsically linked?

East-Central European modalities between the early modern period and today

TEXT ·· MILOŠ ŘEZNÍK UND MARKUS NOWAK TRANSLATION ·· SUE PICKETT

The purpose of language is to allow people and whole groups to communicate. To understand each other but also to set boundaries when no common language is spoken. In the Slavic languages, for example, the word for German and Germany is derived from the adjective “mute”. The term originally referred to speakers of foreign languages who could not communicate with the Slavs. But does the common language of a group mean they belong to one nation? This is one of the questions Miloš Řezník is investigating at the German Historical Institute (GHI) Warsaw.

← In almost 400 localities in Upper Silesia in Poland, signs are now in Polish and German, like here in Raschowa/Raszowa.

Jastrzębia Góra/Pilëce, Bytów/Bëtowò or Łapalice/Łapalëce. Anyone travelling through the north of Poland will see town signs in both Polish and Kashubian. Bilingual placenames are not uncommon in the country: in the east there are Polish-Belarusian and Polish-Lithuanian signs, in the south Polish-German and Polish-Lemko. The first three groups are considered national minorities in Poland, in other words ethnic groups that have their "own motherlands". The Lemkos, on the other hand, are an East Slavic ethnic group which historically settled in the Carpathian Mountains and today is considered an ethnic minority in Poland. In 2005, Poland introduced an act allowing minority groups that make up over 20 percent of the local population to put up bilingual signs. There are bilingual signs in over 1,200 localities between the Oder and Bug rivers: just under a dozen in Lemko, two dozen in Belarusian, 30 in Lithuanian, almost 400 in German and over 800 in Kashubian.

The case of the many Polish-Kashubian signs is particularly striking. A variety of sources shows that a debate has been going on since the modern era about whether or not Kashubian is a separate language. To provide some background information: the Kashubians are a long-established cultural and ethnic minority that has been native to Eastern Pomerania and western Pomeralia for many centuries. The issue of ethnicity was at the heart of the Act on Ethnic and National Minorities passed by the Polish parliament in 2005. The Kashubian representatives had refused to be considered a national minority, seeing themselves as Poles with their own language. The Polish government then came up with a new category, the "regional language group".

The Act now distinguishes between national and ethnic minorities and the regional language group of the Kashubians. This modern legal arrangement makes one question appear particularly topical. It has played a key role since the early nation-building period and is a research focus of Miloš Řezník, Director of GHI Warsaw, namely: Are language and nationality intrinsically linked? In the case of East-Central Europe, there appears to be no conclusive answer.

In French, for example, or in English, there is virtually no semantic difference between nationality and citizenship. In 18th-century France, the idea emerged that a nation is the sum of the citizens of a state. Consequently, the state defines and standardises the language, as has been the case in France since the Revolution. But this is a different story in Central and Eastern Europe. Nationality was defined not by citizenship but by language. An ethnic-cultural understanding of nationhood established itself here.

↗ Czech-German dictionary by Josef Jungmann, which was meant to demonstrate the lexigraphic richness of the Czech language. Jungmann's understanding of equality was closely linked to the idea of national and linguistic equality.

↗ Issue of the patriotic Lithuanian magazine Auszra (= morning light), founded in 1883, which communicated the ideas of the nationalist movement. Publisher Jonas Basanavičius later introduced the Czech phonetic diacritics, which meant that Lithuanian now also differed visually from Polish: Auszra became Aušra.

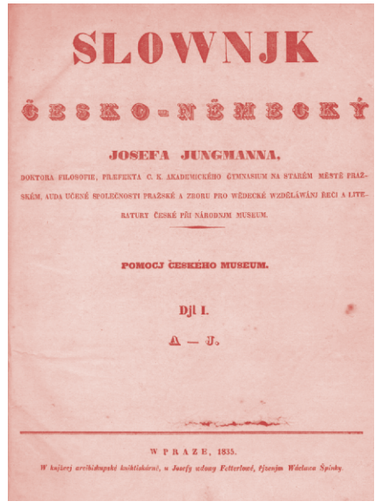
→ In Kashubia, in the north of Poland, access roads are signposted in Polish and Kashubian.

Linguistic codification, however, is the result of a national movement and therefore a process of social negotiation – however, without a defining role being played by the state, since Poland, Bohemia and Slovakia, for example, did not exist as autonomous states in the 19th century. And at this time, in particular, nationalism held that the nation was the fundamental form of social or political order and that it should govern itself. In other words, this was the opposite to the reality of East-Central Europe in the 19th century.

If it follows from the ethnic-cultural understanding of nationhood in the East-Central European states that where there is an independent language, there must also be a nation, this means that anyone who speaks Czech as his native tongue is Czech and anyone who speaks German is German. Yet this begs the question: Which dialects can "still" be categorised as Czech and which "still" qualify as German? Where is the distinction to other dialects? Why are Swiss German and Saxon "still" German, but Dutch is not? Some debates about language variants then become debates about a nation's borders.

In the case of Czech and Slovak, there are certain characteristics and parallels with Norwegian. In the early 19th century, the question was debated in Slovakia as to whether an independent language was already being spoken in the Hungarian Carpathians or whether this was another Czech dialect. A similar question was asked in Norway in the 1820s and 1830s: Do people speak a Norwegian language or are these Norwegian dialects not yet codified into a language? Or indeed are they dialects of Danish?

Such systematic analyses are rare. The Slovak-Norwegian comparison, in any case, shows that the debates taking place in those years were of a similar nature and that while the respective languages were being codified, or standardised, the idea to establish a separate Slovakian or Norwegian nation also emerged. This was a demarcation debate similar to the one taking place


SLOWNJK

ČESKO-NĚMECKÝ

JOSEFA JUNGMANNA,

DOKTORA FILOSOFIE, PŘEFEKTA C. K. AKADEMICKÉHO GYMNASIUM NA STARÉM MĚSTĚ PRAŽSKÉM, AUDA UČENÉ SPOLEČNOSTI PRAŽSKÉ A ZBORU PRO WĚDECKÉ WZDĚLÁWÁNÍ ŘEČI A LITERATURY ČESKÉ PŘI NÁRODNÍM MUSEUM.

POMOCÍ ČESKÉHO MUSEUM.

Díl I.

A — J.

W PRAZE, 1835.

W kněžecj arcibiskupské knihtiskárně, u Josefy wdowy Fetterlowé, ťjeznjm Wáclawa Spinky.


TRECZIAS METAS.

AUSZRA.

Laikrasztis iszleidžiamas Lietuvos mílëtoju.

N. I. Tilžëje, sausis. 1885 m.

„Auszra" iszeina Tilžëje 20. kožno mëneszio pavyzdyje kuigutës 32—48 pusiu. Prekia: ant metu 4 rubl. = 4 mark. Atskiras num. 35 pf. = 35 kap. Apgarsinimai, „Auszros" rëdystëje priimami, kasztuja už kožną pusian dalinę eilutę po 20 pf. = 10 kap. „Auszros" skaitytojams puse tiek. Vokiëtijoje galima „Auszra" prie kožnos cëcoriszkos karaliszkos pasztos paraszyteslimti.

Sveiki naujus metus sulauke!

„Auszra" skaitytojams.

Sztai jau trecziá metá buvio asz pradëjau;
Per metus praleistus nora dang vargo buvo,
Bet per Dievo valę viską iszkentëjau,
Dël naudos Lietuvin dar „Auszra" nežuvo.

Gan' nedraugai mano manę pludo, peikę,
Skundë manę Gudni, Vokiecziai ir Prusai,
Ir visokeis budais kunigams mus peikę,
Nužvelgë skirtumoj, nëkino ir Rusai.

Nors du rëdikus man per kerszta iszvijo,
Bet asz cidama vis tik kelin teisybës,
Iszlaikiau ik sziolei; vël „Auszra" atgijo;
Nesibijo dartës në piktos baisybës.

1

Nationality was defined not by citizenship but by language. An ethnic-cultural understanding of nationhood established itself here.

If all people are equal, why then should they have to give up their own language and identity to achieve advancement?

↑ The Livonians' flag flies proudly. Although only a few hundred people identify with this ethnic group, the Republic Latvia is officially declared as the "national states of Latvians and Livonians". However, the last native speaker of Livonian died in 2013 and the language is now considered extinct.

in Southeast Europe. Are the dialects spoken in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia part of one South Slavic, Illyrian language, or are there two or three languages? It should be noted in this context that the idea that there is a fully separate Croatian and a separate Serbian language – and not Serbo-Croatian – only established itself politically after the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

It is rather remarkable that throughout the 19th century and especially during the Habsburg monarchy attempts were made to discuss the "merger of dialects" without the monarchy itself being called into question. There was a large Czech national movement, for example, but it never contemplated splitting with Austria. Another language development imposed from above, however, was taking place at that time in Prussia, where the state tended to treat Kashubian as a separate language – and not part of Polish. The proportion of Poles in the eastern provinces could be statistically reduced in this way.

This shows that neither politicians nor the general public always defined their national identity according to purely philological criteria. Whether Kashubian is a Polish dialect or a remnant of a Pomeranian or West Slavic language from the Middle Ages is a philological debate. It rarely carries weight in political decision-making – for example, when it comes to bilingual signs – or indeed how people define their national identity.

Regarding the role language plays in the nation-building process, there are other aspects that are worth mentioning. For example, language was associated equally in this process with social order. The common people often spoke a different language to the country's elite. German and Polish, for example, are the dominant languages in East-Central Europe, and these have a kind of popular variant, a "simple" colloquial language, and a high variant, in other words the language of literature, administration, science and high culture. Certain languages did not have this high variant. Slovak and Slovene are two examples. Both languages are considered vernacular languages and as a result were often associated with both the ethnic origin and the social status of the speakers.

In the 18th century, social advancement automatically meant switching languages for speakers of Czech or Slovene. Language was a tool to distinguish between the elite and the common people. To pursue a career, people had to have an education and speak German. After 1800, however, a new understanding of equality emerged and this called into question the previous "order" associated with language. If all people are equal, why then should they have to give up their own language and identity to achieve advancement? The answer was the idea of equality of languages.

Another aspect of the inherent connection between language and nation-building was the assumption of the estate-based opposition from the 18th century onwards that language was also part of a particular national tradition. For example, language could have a special status in a country over the centralism in the composite monarchies, where several countries were under one ruler. Language became an historical, territorial and even legal symbol and as a result even attained a higher value, although the members of the estate-based community did not speak it. In late 18th-century Bohemia, for example, Czech ("Bohemian") was promoted as an antithesis to the centralism of the absolutist Viennese court. The German-speaking aristocrats used Czech to demonstrate the individual character of Bohemia and set themselves apart. Similarly, the Hungarian aristocracy turned to Magyar and Latin as elements of their own Hungarian heritage.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in South Tyrol today, not just in terms of language. Since the 1920s, more and more Italians in the Trentino region have voted for the South Tyrolean People's Party because they are increasingly interested in South Tyrolean autonomy. This has clear advantages. It enables them to use the ethnic characteristics of this country for their own benefit, to symbolise their own regionality and language.

Another example is that of the many Poles in the north of their country who identify with Kashubia, the region in which they live – even though they do not typically speak the language. This becomes clear, for example, in local referendums on the introduction of bilingual signs. Many Polish speakers voted in favour of bilingual placenames. Even street names are now bilingual.

Are language and nationality intrinsically linked? When it comes to East-Central Europe, the answer could be summarised thus: In the past this was not usually true, then it became more and more the case, while today it is an increasingly important issue again. The connection between ethnicity and language has not always been as clear-cut as the nationalists in the 19th century imagined. Nationality and language, however, are inherently connected.

Miloš Řezník was Director of the German Historical Institute Warsaw from 2014 to 2024. He studied history and completed a doctorate in Prague, worked in the Czech Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has been a research associate at various universities, including the Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) at the University of Leipzig. He completed his post-doctoral habilitation in history and was appointed Professor of European Regional History at Chemnitz University in 2009. His research focuses on the history of East-Central Europe, specifically Poland, Lithuania, Bohemia, Belarus and the Habsburg monarchy.

Under the auspices of the institutes in Beirut, Delhi and Istanbul, historians and researchers from related disciplines met at an inaugural summer academy in Istanbul to examine entanglements in conceptual history within their research region.

TEXT ·· NICOLE GRAAF TRANSLATION ·· SUE PICKETT

Historians typically focus on their own country. And given that research infrastructure in the "West" is more advanced than in the global South, the Western perspective tends to dominate historical research both in terms of the persons involved and the subjects they study. However, a shift is gradually occurring, reports Sebastian Schwecke, Director of the Max Weber Forum (MWF) in Delhi. "Within the broader scope of history, as it is researched in Germany, there is now a growing interest in exploring non-European regions without the focus immediately being placed on specific regional research. I believe the Foundation has an important role to play in supporting this trend."

Together with the Freie Universität Berlin, the University of Oslo and three Istanbul research institutes, the Orient Institutes (OI) Beirut and Istanbul and the Max Weber Forum in Delhi organised a summer academy on entangled histories of concepts in the region spanning South Asian Bengal and the Balkans, hosted by OI Istanbul. This is the first time the institute directors, Christoph K. Neumann (Istanbul), Sebastian Schwecke (Delhi) and Jens Hanssen (Beirut) have worked together on a project. The three agree on the key relevance of this constellation.

"Understanding entanglement phenomena between the regions in which we are engaged is absolutely key to all of us," explains Christoph K. Neumann, Director of OI Istanbul. "And naturally, a challenge we face more than other institutes is having to remove Europe from its traditionally central position, which anyway no longer really reflects reality."

Shifting the focus away from Europe The idea arose during a meeting of the International Association for Conceptual History in Helsinki, hence its thematic focus, explains Magrit Pernau from the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin and Chair of the Academic Advisory Board of the Max Weber Forum in Delhi. She is a leading expert in the field of conceptual history.

Conceptual history examines the meanings of concepts and their evolution in different historical and geographical contexts. That is to say, it looks at how concepts were understood and used by actors in their own times and at how their meanings shifted over a specific period or within certain contexts. One such example are terms relating to "state" or "statehood". The field of conceptual history has been significantly influenced by the contributions of German historian Reinhart Koselleck. It is considered a branch of historical studies but also a method that can be applied to work with historical sources in other humanities disciplines.

"Understanding entanglement phenomena between the regions in which we are engaged is absolutely key to all of us."

Christoph K. Neumann

Common methods in a connected space: a new framework for historical research outside Europe

↑ View over Beirut to Lebanon. Undated photograph, circa 1880, by Felix Bonfils.

Magrit Pernau says: “We always had the problem in Helsinki that our approach was very Eurocentric. So for some time, we thought about starting up another branch stemming from Helsinki that would operate from a distinctly non-European perspective, but also from a viewpoint other than that of Latin America, which has very close linguistic ties to Europe through Spanish and Portuguese.” In Latin America, the International Association for Conceptual History has been organising a similar series of events for this particular region since 2006.

A closely entangled region The name of the Summer Academy, “Bengal to Balkans”, was inspired by the work of Islam scholar Shahab Ahmed, who coined the term “Balkans-to-Bengal complex” to describe a region influenced by Islam. The organisers of the Summer Academy want to use this term in the sense of an historically connected region, but they also aim to explicitly embrace its non-Islamic parts.

At the start of the two-week event, participants discussed at length the term and the connections in this geographical region.

“One of the proposals that emerged at the end of our discussion was to refer to a region within Dar-al-Islam (the house of Islam),” reports Christoph K. Neumann. “But it is not at all important or accurate to say that Islam or Muslims are dominant there. Because for centuries, the historical term has essentially implied that non-Muslims exist there – in other words, Hindus and Parsis, Jews and Christians and, in modern times, people less connected to religion – and that these people are an integral part of society.”

← Hazi Abdul Latif, a resident of Karimganj, Assam, north-east India, reads the Haltunnabi (biography of the prophet) in “Sylhet Nagri” script, which was predominantly used in Islamic manuscripts from around the mid-19th century until the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971. Today, only a few, usually older, people in the region can still read the script, although there have been initiatives in recent years, especially in the diaspora, to revive it.

The researchers also stress the importance of understanding the boundaries of the Bengal-to-Balkans complex as being fluid – depending on context and in contrast to the monolithic understanding of culture that has historically dominated the humanities.

Given the significant differences in perspective, the researchers decided to turn the phrase around and speak of a “Bengal-to-Balkans complex”. The inversion is also meant to emphasise the intention to view the world not automatically from a European perspective, but to start considering it also from a different cultural and geographical standpoint.

↖ Pamphlet distributed by the Arabic and Turkish-language newspaper Hilâfet. Distributed sometime between 1900 and 1902, on the anniversary of the coronation of Abdülhamid II, the pamphlet criticises Abdülhamid as a Muslim ruler and berates the decline of the state. Both the newspaper and pamphlet were published in London and smuggled into the Ottoman Empire to escape censorship.

↑ Participants of the summer academy on the entangled histories of concepts in the Bengal-to-Balkans complex at the new headquarters of OI Istanbul.

What better place to host a symposium about entanglements in this region than Istanbul – a major hub where historical actors from this region may have met and and the source of many of the historical documents that researchers study today. The seminar room window offers a view of the Bosphorus, glistening under the blue, late-summer sky. The tip of Galata Tower rises above a sea of buildings, while beyond it the Hagia Sophia looms over the Golden Horn. Both are testaments to the diversity of cultures and religions that have shaped Istanbul over the centuries.

During a certain historical period, certain terms were at least understood by most of the actors of the Bengal-to-Balkans complex, even if they were not necessarily used in exactly the same way. Just as today’s politicians in a Western context speak of “democracy”, there were terms back then – relating to statehood and religion, but also art and everyday culture – that a scholar from present-day West Bengal, for example, would have easily understood while visiting Istanbul in the era of the Ottoman Empire, even if this term were interpreted differently in his homeland.

Diverse topics from various scientific disciplines The programme included a mix of presentations by established scholars as well as doctoral students and postdocs. It was explicitly designed to be more than just a summer school with seminars, aiming instead to provide a framework in which research could be collectively promoted.

This is why a joint publication is also being planned. Participants were selected to reflect maximum diversity in terms of the locations of their institutions, research regions, working languages and also gender.

"We're treating the event as a kind of pilot project," explains MWF Director Sebastian Schwecke. "Obviously, if we want to make this an established format, we need to gain acceptance in all the regions we cover and among all the researchers who work on it. It's important we have a certain balance so that it doesn't look like we're trying to create something primarily Turkish-Arabic or Islamic. That's not necessarily what we want." Besides Turkology and Islamic studies, numerous other academic disciplines were represented, such as Iranian studies, South Asian studies, general history, religious studies, art history, political science, linguistics and ethnology.

The event covered topics ranging all the way from the use of terms relating to the state and statehood during the Ottoman Empire, the ethnological study of religious practice in a Sufi shrine in Istanbul, concepts of freedom and justice in Iran, how material culture can be used as a source for research into the history of concepts, the reception of Persian-language journals in the studied region to issues relating to the translation and comprehensibility of concepts.

Helping connect Max Weber institutes globally Apart from advancing academic research, the Summer Academy is also helping to foster stronger links between the institutes of the Max Weber Foundation globally. The directors of the three participating institutes are firmly committed to promoting this network. They also hope to collaborate more extensively with other institutes in the future.

Jens Hanssen, Director of OI Beirut since July, describes his impressions: "I've only just joined the institute, but there seems to be a positive atmosphere among the directors, which is what makes collaborations like this possible. That's not something you should take for granted. It's fascinating for me to be able to view the world anew from Delhi, Istanbul and Beirut, and to see what insights we can relay back to colleagues at the European institutes." Sebastian Schwecke adds: "By working together, the three of us can achieve much more and have a far greater impact on research in Germany than any of us could achieve individually." Given that the institute in Delhi was established only two years ago, Christoph K. Neumann has been in office for less than a year and Jens Hanssen less than three months, this is a fitting time to introduce some new initiatives.

"I believe that institutes like ours fulfil the mission of the Max Weber Foundation to be active on the ground all over the world and indeed beyond the North Atlantic region."

Jens Hanssen

New premises for OI Istanbul OI Istanbul's recent relocation to the heart of the district formerly known as Galata, above the Golden Horn, may also provide fresh impetus. Galata was once the neighbouring city of Byzantium and was founded by Genoese-Italian merchants. As a district of Istanbul, it developed into a cultural and religious melting pot during the Ottoman Empire. "Latin" Christians and Jews, Armenians and Greeks settled there. OI Istanbul has moved into a four-storey fin-de-siècle building constructed by the "Club Teutonia", an association of German-speaking businesspeople and artisans who came to Istanbul to pursue their cultural and economic interests during the city's era of modernity.

The building now houses OI Istanbul's extensive library – including a public reading room and large archive containing some 55,000 books, around 1,550 journals and historical maps – exhibition rooms, a theatre hall and facilities for academic staff and guest researchers. There are plans to continue the Summer Academy format.

"I believe that institutes like ours fulfil the mission of the Max Weber Foundation to be active on the ground all over the world and indeed beyond the North Atlantic region," says Jens Hanssen from OI Beirut. "The Max Weber Foundation has a unique position in the German and European research community in this regard."

↖ In September 2023, OI Istanbul moved into a four-storey building in the city's Beyoğlu district.

Christoph K. Neumann is Director of OI Istanbul and Professor of Turkish Studies at the Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies of LMU Munich. His research focuses on the history and culture of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire.

Jens Hanssen has been Director of OI Beirut since July 2023. He is Professor of Arab Civilization, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean History at the University of Toronto. His fields of study include intellectual entanglements between Europe, North Africa and the Near East from the late 19th century onwards.

Sebastian Schwecke has been Director of the newly founded Max Weber Forum in Delhi since 2021. He was previously Associate Professor at the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. His academic interests relate to the study of markets and exchange.

“A platform for lively dialogue and exchange”

On 1 September 2023, medievalist and professor at Ruhr University in Bochum Klaus Oschema took over as director of the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Paris. He succeeds Thomas Maissen, who returns to the University of Heidelberg following his decade-long tenure. Below, they share their recollections and visions for the future.

Directors put their stamp on the institutions they lead. But institutions can leave their impressions on directors, too. Mr Maissen, what will you take back to Heidelberg from your time at the GHI Paris?

Many fond memories of being part of a committed team based in a magnificent hôtel particulier with solid funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Max Weber Foundation (MWS), creating a working environment for academic research that is the envy of our colleagues in Germany and especially in France.

Mr Maissen, when you took up your tenure as director, you set out a number of priorities. You made research in Africa a central focus, initially with a transregional research group in Dakar and now with the Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) in Accra. You also stated funding for young German and French researchers as a key topic. How would you assess the achievements on these fronts, and what challenges do you foresee for the future?

The support of German, French and African colleagues, all of whom I now consider friends, has enabled the GHI Paris to strengthen both of these areas. It was a learning process for everyone involved, and the work continues. Our project in Dakar came to an end in 2021, but the BMBF-funded Merian Institute in Ghana now faces the key question of what is to happen after 2026 regarding long-term funding and the mission of such an institution, now a vital research base for German humanities and social sciences. Klaus Oschema has a lot of important decisions to make, but he has the benefit of being able to rely on solid structures, established partnerships and committed staff.

In terms of junior academics, at the GHI Paris we have developed and optimised a funding system for PhD students that has proved very successful for both sides. Unlike at most MWS institutes, doctoral students can apply to us with their own project. We fund this over three years or employ students for a period of usually twelve months that enables them to complete a project. Alongside their scientific research activities, PhD students work twelve hours a week in the research service, contributing to public relations and social media work as well as editorial or administration tasks. This introduces them to areas of work that may be relevant to their career.

We have also further expanded other funding channels. One example is the Eugen Ewig Fellowship, which aims to support researchers who are preparing third-party funding applications after completing their PhD or habilitation.

Mr Oschema, providing young researchers with the right training and development is an ongoing issue. What priorities will you set here?

Enabling Early Career Researchers (ECRs) to gain relevant skills and training is undoubtedly important to our work, but it is by no means the only challenge in this context. The development of new methods, for example in the field of digital humanities, naturally implies the need to acquire new skill-sets. At the same time, many ECRs make it perfectly clear that future prospects and career planning are of great importance to them. In this respect, I hope that the German higher education sector manages to create more permanent positions besides professorships, thus opening up new possibilities for cooperation between the MWS institutes and German academia in general. Working at an institute like the GHI Paris is an extremely enriching experience for any researcher. It provides many opportunities to gain an in-depth understanding of another academic culture, to create international networks, and to familiarize oneself with tasks in the academic world that don’t feature as prominently at comparable career levels in universities. Still, the fixed-term nature of most of the contracts we offer means that researchers have to think about their future career. In a large number of cases, this implies returning to Germany. The MWS has already created mechanisms that address these very challenges. One option for the future could be to open up temporary positions abroad to researchers already in permanent posts at German universities. Granting them leave of absence in order to work at an institute like the GHI Paris would allow them to explore new avenues in their work for a certain period of time. Afterwards, they could return to their home university enriched with new experiences and insights – and hopefully also new-found motivation. For this to work, though, universities would need to be willing to cooperate: first, they would have to actually create these permanent positions – and second, the would need to be willing to release their staff for a certain period of time. Personally, I am convinced that all parties involved would ultimately benefit from this approach.

↖ Thomas Maissen and Klaus Oschema with the symbolic handover of keys on 7 July 2023.

“The function of the GHI Paris as a platform for lively dialogue and exchange should take centre stage. Thomas Maissen has certainly fostered this approach with great vigour – and I look forward to the challenge of building on the successful path that he has laid out.”

Klaus Oschema

What aspect of academic exchange between Germany and France is particularly important to you?

For me, doing academic research in several languages is a very enriching experience. As a consequence, I believe that we should promote working in multi-lingual settings that beyond the exchange of ideas in a kind of internationalised English. Working in different languages effectively encourages the development of different approaches and ways of thinking, which can have enormously beneficial effects for the individual researcher as well as for the scientific community in general. Academic subjects and analytical methods vary greatly across different linguistic communities and academic cultures. Learning about this diversity and the intellectual possibilities it generates, but also being able to utilise them in a productive way is extremely valuable to academic research across national and linguistic borders.

As to the initial question, I will be able to build on the already existing formats and previous work of the GHI Paris in many respects. Summer and autumn schools offer German researchers the opportunity to familiarise themselves with history as an academic discipline in France and to work on relevant topics. In this context, the participants can create contacts and open up perspectives that may prove valuable in the long term. One challenge lies in reflecting the diversity of our students at German universities. Many of my students at the Ruhr University have a migration background. Often they are the first members of their families to ever attend university. Getting people and groups like these interested in the opportunities offered by the GHI Paris is an important goal for me.

Mr Oschema, what areas of research would you like to focus on?

That’s not an easy question to answer, since I have a strong interest in a number of different areas. I definitively would like to get my colleagues at the GHI Paris involved in thinking more about the “truth(s) of historians”. The question of truth is a controversial issue in politics and the media at the moment – and it confronts us with phenomena that we can best understand if we include a historical perspective in our approaches. Given the current problems involving “fake news” and “alternative facts”, taking a look at different historical contexts can help us to better understand the mechanisms that are at work here and to analyse them in settings that combine the insights gathered from the scrutiny of different cultures and periods. My impression here is that a lot of judgements about the unique nature of our present time could – and should – be put into perspective: this includes the description of contemporary societies as “post-truth” and the tendency to explain the current developments mainly with the novel nature of what we know as social media. But, without wishing to disregard the latter’s specific characteristics, historical analyses show how the claim to truth and the way it is asserted has been debated in different periods and contexts. Taken as a whole, this subject is, above all, an opportunity to engage in a form of dialogue at the GHI Paris that transcends the artificial separation between different eras.

As a medievalist – and in the spirit of cross-border work between the Francophone and Germanophone worlds – I am also working on a brief history of medieval Savoy.

This “vanished dominion” can serve to illustrate how recent modern political delineations actually are, while also demonstrating that looking at the Middle Ages can provoke a hugely thought-provoking change of perspective. Many, if not most, of the central subjects we are researching for this era cannot be effectively conceptualised in terms of (modern) national borders. Instead, we observe processes of exchange and transfer on regional and transregional levels – all of which compels us to re-examine preconceptions from our present and to seek new approaches.

This also applies to a third area I’m interested in and which should not be neglected, namely the development and strengthening of global perspectives. Here too, the GHI Paris has already laid valuable groundwork in recent years with its new focus on Africa. I definitely want to reinforce this emphasis and even explore the possibilities of expanding the geographical scope of our work to Asia and the Pacific region in particular – which, from a French perspective, naturally plays a very different role than it does from a German one. Speaking again as a medievalist, I feel that thinking about pre-modernity in this context is as challenging as it is important and helpful in terms of methodology. So I am delighted that, among others, my colleague François-Xavier Fauvelle has agreed to team up with us on a semi-regular basis. He is probably best known to anglophone readers for his work, The Golden Rhinoceros, where he shines a spotlight on the history of medieval Africa.

What is your vision for the coming years at the GHI Paris?

Although I’ve referred several times here to my position as a medieval historian, I don’t want to give the impression that I intend the work of the GHI Paris to focus solely on this period. On the contrary, I think it is important for historical research in general, but also for works on different individual periods, to highlight their relation to the present, which is the time in which we all live, think, and work. In this sense, I’m particularly looking forward to learning a lot from many discussions and events spanning different eras. The function of the GHI Paris as a platform for lively dialogue and exchange should take centre stage. Thomas Maissen has certainly fostered this approach with great vigour – and I look forward to the challenge of building on the successful path that he has laid out.

↑ Thomas Maissen (left) and Klaus Oschema (right) in the courtyard of the GHI Paris.

↖ The Hôtel Duret-de-Chevry, built around 1620 in the Marais district of Paris, has been the headquarters of the GHI Paris since 1994.

Max Weber Network Eastern Europe

East European Studies in times of war, geopolitical revisionism and threats to academic freedom: the Max Weber Foundation sets up the Max Weber Network Eastern Europe

TEXT ·· SANDRA DAHLKE · TRANSLATION ·· SUE PICKETT

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, political repression in Russia and Belarus and massive threats to academic freedom in both countries have severely restricted work opportunities for scholars of East European Studies. Russia's planned military budget for 2024 suggests a further escalation of its war against Ukraine. The domestic political situation in Russia has deteriorated even further. Civil society and critical science are threatened with repression and persecution. The teaching of history in schools, in public spaces and at universities is designed to promote aggressive patriotism, the militarisation of society and geopolitical revisionism. On 1 September 2023, the programmes and curricula "DNA of Russia" and "Fundamentals of Russian Statehood" as well as compulsory history lessons for students of all subjects were introduced at universities. In grades 10 and 11, school teachers are required to teach exclusively according to the new history textbook by Vladimir Medinsky (former Minister of Culture and current personal aide to Putin). This extensive ideological intervention further restricts the already limited scope for discourse. Research trips to Russia and Belarus are impossible under such circumstances.

This situation represents a twofold challenge for East European Studies – both conceptually and in practical terms. Firstly, it is imperative that we continue to generate sound historical and social scientific knowledge about Russia and Belarus, particularly against the backdrop of Russian aggression. However, with research trips now impossible, this task will be difficult to fulfil in the foreseeable future. Given that historians only have limited access to archives and social scientists are restricted in their ability to collect data, research into Eastern Europe risks losing many of its knowledge bases. Secondly, Russia's war against Ukraine exposes the vulnerability of states located on the peripheries of the great empires of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and their successor states, in other words, on the borders of today's revisionist powers (Russia, Turkey, Iran, China and, to a certain extent, Serbia). It also reveals the extent to which these peripheries and their respective perspectivesy have been neglected in research into Eastern Europe as a result of the political and institutional conditions. The reconceptualisation of research into Eastern Europe is currently being discussed in several forums, partly as a result of calls to decolonise our outlook and perspectives as researchers. In this light, research into Eastern Europe faces the task of maintaining its expertise on Russia and the resources required to achieve this, but also focusing more on the history of non-Russian societies during the Tsarist Empire, the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet period, the contact zones of these peoples and states with other neighbours, their respective perspectives on imperial and post-imperial developments and thus their role in global structures and transnational processes.

↖ With locations in Tbilisi/Georgia, Vilnius/Lithuania and an anticipated expansion to Helsinki/Finland and the Ukraine, the decentralised network will continue to enable free and independent studies on Eastern Europe.

In response to these challenges, the Max Weber Foundation (MWF) is currently setting up the decentralised Max Weber Network Eastern Europe based in new and existing locations.

The first new location in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi began its work in September 2023. This base in Georgia sees the MWF cover the Caucasus and Black Sea regions jointly for the first time. The Georgia office will focus on three key areas of research: (1) spaces between the great empires and/or views of the imperial centres from the periphery of the empires, (2) the transnational and international history of the Black Sea region and (3) relations between Georgia and the other Caucasus states with Germany. The office will play a strong networking role and also oversee responsibilities concerning Armenia from Georgia. Due to the present political situation, however, establishing scientific relations with Azerbaijan seems feasible only in the longer term.

The network has also been expanded to include the office in Vilnius, Lithuania, which was set up by the German Historical Institute (GHI) in Warsaw. The network complements the GHI's activities, which until now have focused primarily on 20th-century history, by including research projects on earlier periods in the contact zone between East Central and Eastern Europe. Since the early modern period, Lithuania has been a prime example of an East European inter-imperial region thanks to its shifting affiliations with various state formations from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland-Lithuania to the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. The resulting written and material legacy pertaining to developments infor Eastern Europe in the early modern period makes Vilnius of particular relevance to research. Furthermore, the European Humanities University (EHU) is also based in Lithuania. In the past, the GHI Moscow collaborated with researchers from the EHU, but in 2005, the EHU moved from Minsk to Vilnius. Since then, the exiled university has served as an important refuge for dissident Belarusian historians. The network's Vilnius headquarters also offers academics the opportunity to maintain and cultivate existing relationships with scholars who fled Belarus.

To maintain its expertise on Russia in the current political situation and to provide research opportunities outside Russia, the MWF will establish a centre in Finland this year together with the Max Weber Forum Helsinki. Helsinki has an excellent research environment. The history of Finland and Russia, which have been closely intertwined since the 18th century, is reflected in the archives, which are relevant to the Max Weber Network Eastern Europe with its focus on the imperial peripheries. The Grand Duchy of Finland (alongside St Petersburg and Moscow) was also home to one of the Russian Empire's three state libraries, which has been preserved in its entirety and is known today as the Slavonic Library. All printed matter published in the Russian Empire between 1809 and 1917 can be found here. The Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki is one of Europe's most renowned centres of research in the field of Russian, Eastern European and Eurasian studies. The University of Helsinki is also well recognised for its historical research on World War II, the Cold War and the Baltic Sea region. Research activities in and with Estonian and Latvian archives and partners in the northern Baltic region will also be conducted and coordinated from Helsinki and Lithuania.

> "We are confident that our reorganisation measures will make a constructive contribution towards East European Studies despite very oppressive conditions."
>
> Sandra Dahlke

The new decentralised structure will create long-term research and networking opportunities for historical research into Eastern Europe at the respective locations through funding formats, events and publications in an international research environment. The Tbilisi office has already launched a small scholarship programme which will also benefit German researchers who are interested in working in South Caucasian archives. The Max Weber Network Eastern Europe will soon announce one- to three-month scholarships enabling early career historians at German universities and research institutions to carry out archival research in the successor states of the Soviet Union (with the exception of Russia and Belarus) and in Finland. The network also plans to set up a visiting researcher programme for established historians working at German universities and research institutions to foster networking activities with researchers and academic institutions, particularly in the Caucasus and Baltic states.

In the long term, the Max Weber Foundation will set up its own research infrastructure in Ukraine as soon as external conditions make this possible.

We are confident that our reorganisation measures will make a constructive contribution towards East European Studies despite very oppressive conditions.

Sandra Dahlke heads the newly founded Max Weber Network Eastern Europe. She studied history and Slavic studies in Paris, Cologne and Hamburg, where she completed her PhD in 2005 on the relationship between the individual and rule under Stalinism based on the example of the Bolshevik revolutionary Yemelyan Yaroslavsky. After stints as a visiting researcher at the Centre d'études des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen (CERCEC) at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris, a fellow of the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (MSH) and DAAD as well as visiting researcher at the Institute for Slavic Studies at the University of Leipzig, Sandra Dahlke was awarded a one-year scholarship at the GHI Moscow in 2012. She became Deputy Director of the GHI Moscow in 2013 and Director in October 2018. Her research interests focus on the history of the Tsarist Empire in the second half of the 19th century and the history of the Soviet Union.

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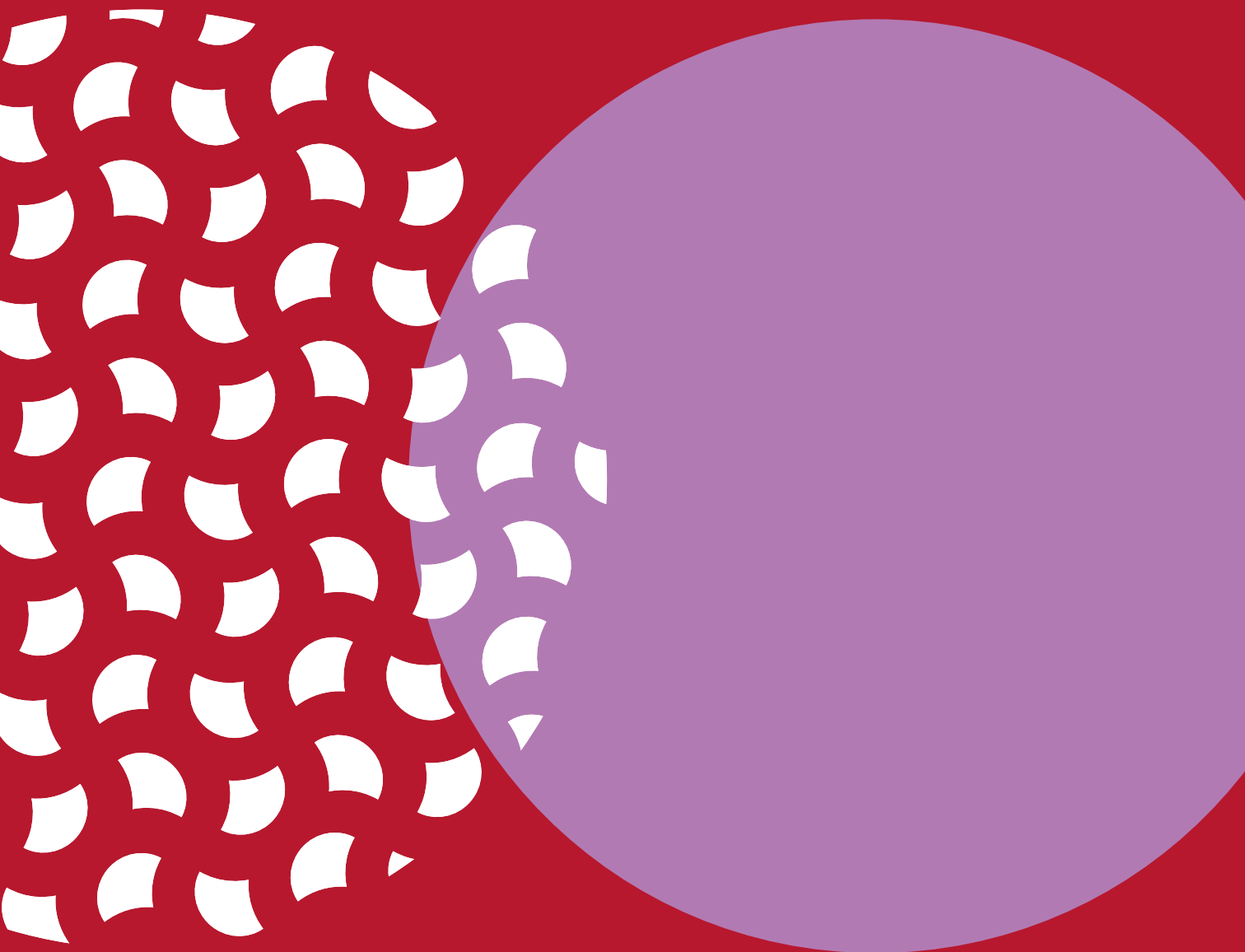

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