Book of Abstracts

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bpb: Bundeszentrale für
politische Bildung

1918–1938–2018
Dawn of an
Authoritarian Century?

Conference, 5–7 September 2018, Schloss Eckartsau, Lower Austria

About the Conference

2018 sees the commemoration of several important historical events in Austria and Germany that continue to have an influence on our society. Federal Agency for Civic Education, Bonn and the Department of Contemporary History of the University of Vienna is therefore holding this conference that focuses on the events of 1918 and 1938 as well as their extensive effects and possible influence on the course of future events. The location of the conference is also a part of this history; Schloss Eckartsau, where Emperor Karl signed the declaration relinquishing his claim to the Hungarian part of the empire on 13 November 1918.

We will focus on three significant events in European history which are commemorated with varying intensity in 2018:

November 1918 – the end of the First World War and the short-lived blossoming of parliamentary democracy that followed the fall of various monarchies but quickly transformed in many cases into authoritarian or totalitarian regimes.

March and September 1938 – the two military and geopolitical conditions of Hitler's aggressive expansion policies that would lead to the violence of the Second World War were created amid international compliance: the "Anschluss" of Austria, already eroded by Austro-fascism, and the dissolution of democratic Czechoslovakia through the Munich Agreement.

November 1938 – the targeted destruction of synagogues and the imprisonment of Jews in the National Socialist German Reich, including racially motivated murder. The events represented a radical next step on the path to the Shoah, the persecution and genocide of the European Jews.

In 1997, Ralf Dahrendorf foresaw developments that are currently occurring in Europe and internationally that have fundamentally questioned parliamentary democracy as the "politics of freedom" (Dahrendorf), identifying them as a social outcome of globalisation. The digital revolution has had a greater effect than the sociologist Dahrendorf could predict; living and working conditions have been radically changed and overturned with dramatic consequences for all traditional lifestyles and societal cohesion. The longing for a new "strong leader" continues to grow.

The aforementioned historical events will be critically examined within this context. The varying perspectives on history reflect the intensity of a parliamentary democracy and the political enlightenment. Empirical studies have shown that active political engagement to strengthen democratic decisions and processes is more pronounced when a nation is able to examine their own "national" history more critically. Whereas authoritarian conditions and less critical examinations of the respective "national" perceptions of history make the extreme emotional instrumentalisation of history for ideological or party-political purposes much easier.

About the Venue

Schloss Eckartsau, first mentioned in the 12th century, lies amidst the scenic alluvial forest of the river Danube in Marchfeld, Lower Austria. It was owned by the Habsburg family and used as a hunting lodge until the end of the monarchy. After signing the declaration relinquishing any claim to the Austrian part of the Empire on 11 November 1918 in Schloss Schönbrunn in Vienna, Emperor Karl retreated to Schloss Eckartsau with his family with a view to trying to regain power of the Hungarian territories. However, on 13 November 1918 he had to sign a further declaration abdicating his claim to those areas too. This took place at Schloss Eckartsau. Schloss Eckartsau is now owned by the Austrian Federal Forests (Österreichische Bundesforste) who will kindly host the conference, and is used today for events and celebrations. It is also a popular destination for tourists who can book guided tours through the castle. In addition to the permanent exhibition on the national park Donau-Auen, a special exhibition "Karl & Zita – Im Schatten der Geschichte" (Charles and Zita – In the shade of history) will be shown in 2018. www.schlosseckartsau.at

Content

Gabriele Anderl and Anne Klein

Gabriele Anderl

Freelance scholar, author and journalist in Vienna

Anne Klein

Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Human Sciences, University of Cologne

Abstract:

Flight and Exile in the Culture of Remembrance

During the Nazi period victims of political and racist persecution tried to save their lives by seeking refuge in neighboring or overseas countries. At least since the Evian Conference in July 1938 it became obvious that the world state community was not willing to find a humanitarian answer to the so-called "refugee-problem". Even liberal democracies established a closed-border policy. In consideration of the actual debate on asylum and immigration in the European Union we want to discuss – from an Austrian and German perspective – discursive links to this past. We will consider the question whether it is legitimate to interrelate the mentioned historical developments with current events – for example when teaching "learning from history" as part of Holocaust-education. Critics of this approach argue, for example, that Antisemitism cannot be put on the same level with xenophobia or Islamophobia and that the National Socialist regime may not be compared with present terror regimes. Despite this justified criticism we want to argue that it is our civic duty to learn from history -- especially in a time when solidarity with refugees and spontaneous or organized support for persecuted people are depreciated and even become liable to prosecution. Representations of refugees as "the others" of the Western world, as pushed by right wing populist movements, take up racist stereotyping from the colonial and the Nazi periods. The problem is, that when humanitarian values as fundamental pillars of western civic societies are gradually abandoned, not only solidarity, but democracy is put at stake.

Programme: Panel 10, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

W. Lance Bennett

Professor of Political Science and Ruddick C. Lawrence Professor of Communication, University of Washington, Seattle USA; Senior Fellow, German Internet Institute, Berlin, 2018-2019

Abstract:

Who Are the People? Communication, Power, and the Rise of Anti-Democratic Politics

Many democratic nations are experiencing conflicts over who are the true citizens. These conflicts play out in various ways, including political battles over immigration, refugees, civil rights for religious or sexual minorities, press freedom, and opposition to supra national organizations such as the EU. These conflicts often involve competing claims about facts and truth that undermine shared national identities and political community. In many cases, the rise of political disinformation is associated with the efforts of movements and parties on the radical right to mobilize supporters against center parties and the mainstream press that carries their messages. The spread of disinformation can be traced to growing legitimacy problems in many democracies. Declining citizen confidence in institutions undermines the credibility of official information in the news, and opens publics to alternative information sources. Those sources are often associated with both nationalist (primarily radical right) and foreign (commonly Russian) strategies to undermine institutional legitimacy and destabilize center parties, governments, and elections. The Brexit campaign in the U.K. and the election of Donald Trump in the U.S. are among the most prominent examples of disinformation campaigns intended to disrupt normal democratic order, but many other nations display signs of disinformation and democratic disruption. In the background of all this are growing tensions between capitalism and democracy, including radical right, libertarian business interests promoting convenient alliances with so-called populist movements that undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions and governments. Rather than referring to these developments as "populism," I suggest we find more meaningful concepts and theoretical frameworks to understand the underlying causes and implications.

Programme: Keynote 5, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 15:30-17:00

Roman Birke

Research Fellow Fritz Thyssen Foundation/Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena, and PhD-Candidate at the Department of Contemporary History, University of Vienna

Abstract:

Turbulent Transitions. Political and Ideological Reorientation in the United States after the End of the Cold War, 1989-1997

During the Cold War, US liberal intellectuals and policy makers were keen to develop a coherent ideology that attempted to prove the superiority of the West over the Soviet bloc. Market liberalism, democracy, human rights, and the faith that such ideas will be adopted by others served as cornerstones of the United States' ideology. With the end of the Cold War, a decade long practice of viewing domestic and foreign policies in contrast to the policies of the Communist bloc came to an end and resulted in a fundamental political and ideological reorientation. This paper analyses the trajectory of the ideological underpinnings of US policy after the end of the Cold War. Particularly, it discusses the following questions: How can we explain that the term "illiberal democracies" was already coined in 1997 after what had seemed to be a triumph of Western political and economic liberalism in 1989/91? Why could Western societies not create a lasting enthusiasm for their political philosophies developed during the Cold War but are facing increasing challenges by populist currents today? The paper argues that examining the turbulent political and intellectual climate after the end of the Cold War is key for answering these questions. It is part of a planned research project and will present first results based on the analysis of public contributions of political actors, intellectuals, and scholars who debated the future perspectives of US domestic and foreign policies after 1989/91.

Programme: Panel 9, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Włodzimierz Borodziej

Professor for Contemporary History, Warsaw University

Abstract:

Poland: Deficient Democracy?

The Republic of Poland became unwillingly heir of several political cultures: the Austrian, Prussian-German, Russian, added to different Polish ways of coming to terms with modernity without an own state.

Parliamentary democracy worked for seven years (1919-1926) to be replaced by an authoritiarian dicatorarship about twice longer (1926-1939), followed by occupation (German: 1939-1945; Soviet: 1939-1941). After a brief period of transition (1945-1947), the country joined the Stalinist, after 1956 post-Stalinist model, which lasted until 1989. Only after this date parliamentary democracy prevailed again. So if we take the notion of 20th century literally, the country has a some 20 years old tradititon of democracy (1919-1926 & 1989-2000) standing against decades of foreign dictatorship/occupation/home made version of antilberal ruling.

Why? I'll try to give some possible hints without being convinced, that the next generation will not come up with different explanations.

Programme: Panel 7, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Constantin Christoph Eckner

PhD student at the School of History at the University of St Andrews

Abstract:

The two German "Asylum Debates": Lessons on How to Deal with Populism

"History teaches constantly, but it finds no pupils," says a famous quote from poet Ingeborg Bachmann. Since 2015, the second so-called 'asylum debate' has taken off in Germany's recent history, pushing the limits of the Sagbare (what is allowed to be said) and being detrimental to the standards of political culture. Germany already went through a comparable phase in the 1980s and early-1990s culminating in the decision to tighten the right to asylum in 1993 following heated confrontations in parliament, media and other spaces of discourse.

In both cases, the growing influx of asylum seekers was not the only trigger for extensive debate over immigration policy and the potential limit of the right to asylum. The growing support for populist, xenophobic parties had a considerable influence on the political agenda and the language of established players. Instead of drawing a line of decency, governing conservatives, for instance, chose to close the gap to the political right, its agenda and rhetoric.

The paper touches on the two 'asylum debates' and their similarities in terms of political rhetoric and populist tendencies. This allows us to deduce lessons in how to deal with populism with regards to immigration and asylum policy from these two events.

Programme: Panel 12, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Simone Eick

Director of the Deutsches Auswandererhaus (German Emigration Center), Bremerhaven, Germany

Abstract:

Feeling Powerless: Three Memories of Forced Migration from Journals, Diaries, and Oral Histories, 1921-2015.

A German dentist taken as a prisoner of war in Russia during World War I, a Jewish-German doctor turned refugee in New York, and a Syrian engineer seeking asylum in Germany: three middle-class lifestyles completely disrupted by forced migration. Very thoughtfully, almost as if observing themselves through a microscope, all three reflect on the (lifelong) consequences of their forced migrations. Often in focus: feared or actual loss of their social status. How does one resist this feeling of powerlessness? A feeling that washes over them again and again because they feel like they are at the mercy of powers beyond their control? The strategies these three very different people developed to regain their sense of autonomy can be reconstructed through their oral and written records. However, their stories also draw attention to the significant challenges faced by forced migrants who do not share the same advantages of good education and stable social networks held by these three individuals.

Programme: Panel 5, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Katharina Friedla

Post Doctoral Fellow (Gerda Henkel Foundation; affiliated with the International Institut for Holocaust Research Yad Vashem and the Polish Center for Holocaust Research Warsaw)

Abstract:

The Expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany 1938 – Experiences of Refuge and Rescue in Transnational Perspective

Through an analysis of archival materials, memoirs, and interviews, this paper shades light on the unknown aspects of the deportation of Polish Jews from Germany in October 1938. For many years, historians have not paid attention to the deportation of over 17,000 Jews from the Third Reich to Poland, on October 28-29, 1938. In the historiography of anti-Jewish persecutions of the 1930s, these events were overshadowed by the November Pogrom. Despite recently appearing publications, this picture of the events remains incomplete.

Looking closer to several cases, this paper presents a description of the lives of those who had managed to leave Poland before the destruction began. After their expulsion from Germany to Poland some of the refugees were forced to live in the refugee camp in Zbąszyń for several months until they were allowed to move to other parts of Poland. By the outbreak of the WWII many of those refugees escaped to the Eastern parts of Poland which were at that time under the Soviet occupation. Soon they were forced to leave again: at first classified as „class enemies or political undesirable elements", having been villainized, arrested and finally deported by the NKVD to the interior of the Soviet Union.

This presentation claims that the biographies of Polish-Jewish refugees from Germany reflect a variety of forms of refuge, flight, exile, and persecution as well as various strategies, possibilities, and complexity of survival. Each of these survival stories is complex and multi-faceted. Together they all record dramatic events, the Polis-Jewish refugees faced before and due to the outbreak of the World War II. This presentation seeks to suggest another approach by mapping the Jewish experiences of expulsion and flight via its geographic margins of new Diaspora spaces.

Programme: Panel 6, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Sheer Ganor

PhD Candidate at the Department of History at UC Berkeley

Abstract:

„My Viennese soul recoiled". How to Stay Austrian in the German-Jewish Diaspora

Following the Anschluss and the implementation of antisemitic persecution, dozens of thousands of Jews fled Austria and joined the diaspora of German-speaking Jewish refugees. In their displaced communities in different parts of the world, Central European Jews experienced a consolidation that lumped together people of various backgrounds under the umbrella of "German Jews." This conflation was not unnatural. For outsiders, distinctions between Jews from Hamburg or from Vienna were hardly detectable. Internally, too, Jews from German-speaking regions shared not only a cultural-linguistic affinity, but also business, social and familial ties. Yet these affinities did not erase cultural particularities that Austrian Jews had identified as uniquely their own.

This paper explores a delicate balance crafted by Jews from Austria as they joined milieus of German-speaking refugees yet continued to stress and celebrate their cultural particularity. Focusing on everyday rituals, I trace the motivations and strategies of performing an Austrian-Jewish identity. Enjoying Kaffee mit Schlag at Café Éclair in Manhattan, watching cabaret in Wienerisch in Shanghai, or cheering for Team Austria in football matches in Kent (UK) – these acts and others fused nostalgia, grief and pride, allowing Austrian Jews to access experiences they were forced to leave behind, as well as resist being subsumed by categories that, without being entirely false, obscured vital pieces of their story.

Programme: Panel 6, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Hannah Hecker and Christoph Wenz

Hannah Hecker

Student of Political Science, Geography and Sociology at Goethe University Frankfurt; Workshop Leader in the field of political education and anti-discrimination work

Christoph Wenz

Student of Sociology of Economics and Education Science at Goethe University Frankfurt; Working in the field of political education and anti-discrimination

Abstract:

Strategies Against Discrimination. Political Education as a Keystone for Building Resilience to Authoritarian and Populist Tendencies

As an explanation for the rise of authoritarian tendencies, especially in Eastern Europe, quite often a lack of democratic spirit and sensivity are held responsible.

For our work in the field of political education, we have reformulated and expanded Hufer's conception of "Argumentationstraining gegen Stammtischparolen"/"Argumentative training against barroom slogans" by drawing on a discourse-orientated approach. In this sense, discriminatory slogans and actions are also part of a discourse, that is, what Jürgen Link calls an "instutionally consolidated manner of speaking". A "field of speakability" is therefore the expression of both norming and normalizing processes which form and structure the reality of hegemonic modes of thinking, acting and perceiving. Our thesis is that the starting point of discussing the success of right-wing rhetoric is to critically deal with an increasing degree of arbitrariness by which the political positions uttered in current public discourses seem to be characterised. The basis of a democratic discourse – the consensus to protect human rights, equality and human dignity – is then delegitimized as antidemocratic, as a threat to the freedom of speech.

The goal of our workshops is to enable the participants to actively oppose right-wing rhetorics – and not just to respond to the arbitrariness of right-wing positions in discussions. We will also discuss how these experiences can be used in the context of a broader strategy of dealing with the rise of right-wing movements and of strengthening democratic processes.

Programme: Panel 10, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Elisabeth Holzleithner

Professor of Legal Philosophy and Legal Gender Studies at the University of Vienna and Head of the Department of Legal Philosophy; Vice Dean of Studies at the Faculty of Law, University of Vienna

Abstract:

Gender and Democracy: Achievements and Challenges

What is the state of gender (in) democracy today? Is the inclusion of women into democratic institutions that started with their gaining the right to vote a success story – regarding their participation in legislative procedures and influence on their outcome? Or has democracy rather "failed women" (Dahlerup)? The lecture is going to explore these questions by focusing on the following aspects: (1) the actors who participate in (2) diverse processes of democratic opinion and decision making, and (3) the outcome of these processes. The diagnosis, in short, is dire: There exists an ongoing underrepresentation of women on all levels of democratic decision making processes, and all too often, the law still contributes to their continued marginalization. Against this background, a few suggestions will be considered on how to deal with the challenges for an adequate representation of all genders in democracy. The focus will inter alia be on the use of gender quotas in politics and the difference that the presence of women can possibly make.

Programme: Panel 11, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Programme: Fireside chat, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 17:00-19:00

Vjeran Katunarić

Professor of sociology at the Department of Sociology of the University of Zadar

Abstract:

The Elective Affinities toward Non-Democracy?

According to an old adage, the new ruling classes in modern societies are anxious to imitate the preceding ruling classes (cf. Tocqueville, 2000[1856]; Derber, 2016). This tendency manifested itself in conspicuous consumption by the newly enriched social strata beginning in the West. Their counterparts in the communist countries were political leaders with personal ties to higher-level managers, both of whom could afford cars, villas and other assets that were inaccessible to most people. In parallel to the material enrichment of the Western and the Eastern upper strata, some ideological changes happened, which had not been immediately apparent. Eventually, the legendary couple of the modern revolutions – Freedom & Equality – became an irritant to the ruling groups. These, meanwhile, had contributed to building an almost impermeable class system. In a hardly changeable social reality, retro became chic, including the image of the old nobility. Thus, the old enemy of democracy became a dark object of desire for the new classes in democracy.

Basically, the same is true for a mass of workers who emigrated from the (former) socialist Yugoslavia in 1960s – their main goal, actually, was ceasing to be workers anymore. By the same token, the "neo-feudal tendency to striving up" has replaced the older tendency of workers to participation and self-management, i.e. the economic democracy. Therefore, some important premises for a new authoritarian age were built in the modern democracies as their alter ego.

Programme: Panel 3, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Alina Kislova

Master-student at the Faculty of Education at University of Glasgow

Abstract:

The Role of Informal Adult Education in the Development of Social Movements in the 21st Century

The case study explores the factors influencing emergence and growth of Anti-corruption movement in Russia with a particular focus on the role of informal adult education. Anti-corruption movement in Russia has not been scientifically recognized as a social movement yet mainly because general public started to openly support the idea of anti-corruption fighting a couple of years ago. But despite the fact it wasn't explored and described yet as a movement, there are some evidences and justifications, provided in the case study, why it can be considered as a social movement.

With the aim to increase the understanding of the relationship between informal adult education tools and the development of Anti-corruption movement in Russia, secondary and primary data was collected and analyzed. Results are studied through the lens of two social change theories: resource mobilization theory and intersectionality theory. The major findings of this study suggest that utilization of different social networks and internet platforms is useful in mobilizing support for the social movement, promoting human rights values and strengthening democracy, especially in countries with the presence of the anti-constitutional and, as a result, non-official censorship in media which does not allow any talks which are not if favor of the current government to be raised and discussed.

Programme: Panel 10, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

István Kollai

Assistant Professor at the Institute of World Economy, Corvinus University of Budapest

Abstract:

Ahead of the Byzantine Empire (Instead of Rome): Anti-Western and Western-Sceptic Historical Narratives in the Hungarian Public Discourse

Present paper intends to scrutinize the Anti-Western and Western-sceptic discourse within the Hungarian public life, which depicts the EU such a declining civilization like the Western Roman Empire. Such an expressively negative perception does not have deep sociocultural roots within the Hungarian national consciousness, since pro-Western attitudes remained dominant even during the authoritarian (but Anglophile) regimes between the world wars, or during the decades of the Communism when literarians called "Westerners" took the moral high ground. Until recent years, "catching up to the West" had been regarded as a moral imperative in almost all the layers of the Hungarian society.

Currently, this moral imperative has been outrightly questioned by a circle of opinion leaders, whose apparent aim is to take the mainstream position within the Hungarian public discourse. Their new narrative draws a parallel between the declining Roman Empire and the "declining European Union", depicting both civilisations as being under disastrous migrant pressure, and paying (direct or indirect) attention to the advantage of belonging to Byzantine autarchies, now represented primarily by Russia. Present research tries to highlight the postmodern interpretation of these historical epochs in the Hungarian public discourse.

Programme: Panel 2, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Harald Köpping Athanasopoulos

Project Manager "Fair Integration of Refugees" at ARBEIT UND LEBEN Sachsen e.V.; Associate Researcher at ESSCA School of Management Angers

Abstract:

Averting the Rise of the Right with a European Welfare State

In 2016 Wolfgang Streek published in article with Juncture in which he laments the invalidation of "national democratic institutions as channels for transmitting popular demands for social protection against market pressure." As a result, we have seen the rise of nationalist political movements throughout the developed world. I would like put forward that in the European case, the turn to the right is partially rooted in the voluntary disempowerment of European and national political institutions. Moreover, the current multi-level governance system of the European Union in general prevents policymakers from making the macroeconomic decisions needed to protect subaltern groups. This is particularly true for the European Union itself, whose political setup is only challenged by consensus of all member states, which practically leaves the European Parliament disenfranchised. There are two obvious ways to deal with this growing democratic deficit, not only of the EU, but also of the nation states. The first solution involves the reacquisition of political competences by the nation state. This was implemented with Brexit but risks parochialism and the reemergence of conflicts on the European continent. The second solution involves the creation of a European welfare state and the establishment of a sovereign European Parliament. The latter solution appears preferable as Europe as a whole carries more weight to protect subaltern groups against the spillover of globalization.

Programme: Panel 3, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Gleb Koran

PhD-student of Philosophy at European Humanities University in Vilnius

Abstract:

"Affectiveness" of New Media: Digital Threats on Democracy

Early scholars of new media saw internet as new free self-productive media which can transfers its own form on society at large. But with emerging of some kind of internet-monopolists (Google, Facebook etc.) such techno-optimistic point of view clashes with works of new generation of new media theorists. I am suggesting that such properties of new media as interactivity and common creation of content in contemporary political condition of "populist turn" and economical condition of neoliberalism lead to producing of "affectiveness" which endangers democracy. The last one I understand as possibility of people solve political questions as independent and rational persons. I see bad condition of neoliberalism mostly not as lack of competition in new media sphere, but as contemporary view on new media sees last as usual capitalist enterprises which can save their own "commercial secrets". Usual mechanism of Page Rank algorithm on Google or news feed on Facebook are such secrets which are not free to discuss in society. "Affectiveness" in such case understood as possibility of users of new media take and distribute lots of unverified information through "closed" mechanism of new media. Good example of such distribution is rise of Alt-Right internet communities, but in my speech I want to concentrate on some specific post-soviet and Belarussian cases of new media "affectivity".

Programme: Panel 12, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Claudia Kraft

Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna

Abstract:

The Gender of Transformation(s) and the Transformation of Gender Regimes: Struggles for Recognition in Times of Political Upheaval

1989 marked not only the end of state socialism in Eastern Europe but also a reconceptualization of gender relations in the societies of the region. Debates about gender relations took place in a complex triangle between the turning away from state socialist patterns of emancipation, the recreation of a new sphere of "the political" and the striving for European integration. And yet the reconceptualization of political institutions and spaces for political negotiations were not always conducive to promote gender equality. Gender issues did not seem to fit well into new political arena where the notion of the autonomous genderless individual dominated. From a gender-sensitive perspective, therefore, the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe can be described as characterized by the deprivation of political agency and the re-creation of traditional gender roles. The synchronicity of gaining political rights while simultaneously losing for instance the right to self-determination in the sphere of reproduction (as in the Polish case) can best be understood when one bears in mind that the political sphere is always constructed by gendered ascriptions, that struggles for recognition are constructed by gendered assumptions, and that progress in political rights and gender equality is not a linear process.

Programme: Panel 9, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Programme: Chair Panel 2, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Christoph Kreutzmüller

Curator of the new permanent exhibition of the Jewish Museum Berlin

Abstract:

The Pogroms Before the Pogrom – Local Race Riots in Germany 1933-1938

On February 28, 1921 the New York Times reported that Berlin had witnessed the first "pogrom in its history".[1] One pogrom, one might add, which was forgotten later as it was overshadowed by the violence to come. While there had been a near constant maelstrom of racist assaults in the Weimar Republic, violence escalated in 1933. Based on research undertaken in preparing the new permanent exhibition, the paper will discuss the waves of violence and frequent local race riots in Germany before the pogrom in November 1938. Where did mass violence happen? Who was targeted? Who where the perpetrators? Who/Which factors stopped or furthered the pogroms before "the Pogrom" – and what were the reactions of the targeted Jews?

[1] Students organize first Berlin pogrom, in: New York Times, February 28, 1921.

Programme: Panel 4, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Sylvia Kritzinger

Professor of Methods in the Social Sciences, Department of Government, University of Vienna

Abstract:

Pushing Authoritarianism and Populism? A Citizen Perspective

Recent general elections in Europe have one common denominator in their outcome: the electoral success of populist parties. While populism has been a central concern for political science for a while now (e.g., Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008), the relationship between populist parties and citizens' attitudes towards authoritarianism – and in the following on democratic representation – has not yet been fully analyzed. In my presentation, I will first focus on the connection between populism and liberal democracy and how the concept of authoritarianism can be related to it. Then, I will present some recent empirical findings in the literature on the relationship between citizens' populist and authoritarian attitudes, and its impact on voting decisions. Eventually, I will conclude by shortly looking at the representation function of populist parties and the representation gaps they aim to fill in order to reflect on their contribution to the transformation of the established party systems.

Programme: Keynote 6, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 15:30-17:00

Programme: Chair Panel 1, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Florian Kührer-Wielach

Director and Research Fellow of the Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (IKGS)

Abstract:

On Clowns and Hooligans. Romania 1918-1948-1989

The emergence of so-called "Greater Romania" as a result of World War I raised hope for democratization as well as economic and social advancement among the Romanian population. These initial expectations, however, were already disappointed in the first few years of the post-war transformation for various reasons: The establishment of a central state system led to a deteriorating relationship between the newly annexed regions and the "Old Kingdom", the government and the administration were increasingly experienced as biased, untrustworthy, corrupted, and violent. State and citizens gradually distanced themselves from each other, while the rule of law and the functioning of democratic institutions remained affected by structural weaknesses. The nationalist paradigm conflicted with the minority rights guaranteed by the minority treaties signed at the Paris Peace Conference 1919. Anti-Semitism was rampant in the general discourse and even influenced legislation. Yet, after 1989 this "long interwar period" has been considered as the "Golden Age" of the Romanian national state, even though it shares similar characteristics with the post-communist transformation after 1989. This imagined "Golden Age" ceased not before the communist seized power after World War II. Consequently, this paper aims to explore the "long shadow" of a "long interwar period".

Programme: Panel 7, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Margaret MacMillan

Professor of History, University of Toronto; Emeritus Professor of History, University of Oxford

Abstract

The Long Shadow of the Paris Peace Treaties of 1919 and the Impact on Europe in 2018

The peace made at the end of the First World War is often blamed for creating a divided Europe and for leading Europe and the world towards the Second World War. This lecture will examine the peace settlements and assess their long-term impact. Europe, it is true, was badly damaged, politically, socially and psychologically, by the 1914-18 war. Great empires fell to pieces and the successor nations struggled to establish their borders and political structures. The interwar years also saw the rise of radical anti-democratic forces and parties on both the right and the left. Yet liberal democracy, at least in some countries such as Britain and the United States, proved resilient and was to rise again after 1945. The League of Nations, which is now seen as a failure, inaugurated new institutions and norms, many of which we still value today. The lecture will also suggest ways that the Europe of 2018 has been affected by those peace settlements a century ago.

Programme: Keynote 1, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 11:00-12:30

Georg Marschnig

Lecturer for the Didactics of History and Civic Education at the Departement of History at Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz

Abstract:

Radicalized Language – Radicalized Politics? Language Sensitive Teaching in Civic Education

The presentation focusses the radicalization of language in politics in the recent years and links the language of politics and politicians with Civic Education in schools. It asks for new methodical approaches to deal with these new demands.

Taking language into to focus of political learning seems to be very rewarding, as language is not only depicting reality; it is constructing reality, too. Language is creative – it is including and excluding. Being voiceless in a society means being powerless, too. Language is the key to social participation and political codetermination. If silence means consent, Civic Education has to enable young learners to understand the language of politics and to deal with manifestations of politics.

The benefits of language aware teaching will be demonstrated with the first results of the study "Linguistic efforts of multiperspective learning", which was started in June 2018 to underline the role of language skills in historical and political learning.

Programme: Panel 11, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

Program Director and Deputy Director of the Jewish Museum Berlin

Abstract:

1938 Point of No Return

A large part of the collection and the archive of the Jewish Museum Berlin consist out of bequests and donations from families. Our collections paint a lively portrait of Jewish private, professional, and religious life in Germany. These family collections were preserved through persecution and emigration and donated to the museum by survivors and heirs from all around the world. It can be evocatively argued that a large part of the museum's collection "returned" after a long and difficult journey. Especially in our archival collections a strong material and thematic focus lies on the persecution during the Nazi era. How can such collections stay relevant for future audiences?

Should and when yes, how can those collections be used for educational and other purposes? What do the physicality and the special location of an object in relation to its relevancy mean in the digital age? And lost but not least; how can memory institutions effectively work together? The Leo Baeck Institute – New York | Berlin www.1938projekt.org could serve as a good case study for looking at new and engaging ways to present history and material culture and addressing some of the questions above.

Programme: Keynote 3, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 10:30-12:00

Wolfgang Merkel

Director at the Berlin Center for Social Science and Prof. for Political Science at Humboldt University, Berlin

Abstract:

Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century

The talk about crisis of democracy is as old as democracy itself. During the twentieth century it gained momentum in the 1920ies. Squeezed between the regime alternatives of fascism and communism many new and unstable democracies collapsed during the 1920ies and 1930ies. After a successful second wave of democratization 1945 pp. the crisis talk was taken up again in the early 1970ies (Habermas; Offe; O`Connor). None of the established democracies collapsed.

Nevertheless, the crisis talk reappeared in new clothes after the millennium. Democratic theories diagnosed an era of post-democracy, illiberal or defective democracies. The paper however observes a kind of paradox: the overall quality of democracies in the OECD-World is remarkably better than it has been in the so called golden three decades after 1945. Nevertheless, democracy today is far from being stable. It is faced by broken promises, illiberalisation, supranationalization and unresolved challenges.

Programme: Keynote 7, Friday, 7 September 2018, 10:30-12:00

Ernst Piper

non-tenured Professor

Abstract:

National Socialism. The Career of an Ideology

National socialism was to be the German way into modernity. The National Socialists modernized the German welfare state, but it was an anti-modern modernity aimed at a corporatist model that wanted to make man part of a people's whole. The integral nationalism of the Empire was further increased by the National Socialists to a highly aggressive expansive ideology, whose reference value was no longer the nation but an ethnically pure national community. The goal was not equality, but homogeneity. National Socialism created the vision of a popular community of national socialism that carried the destructive potential of an exclusive nationalism and the formative violence of an authoritarian social utopia. By combining socialism and nationalism, he gained a significant part of his ideological impact and attractiveness.

In view of the catastrophe of the Holocaust, National Socialism cannot be connected. But through the detour of the Conservative Revolution ideologies of national socialism are once again surprisingly popular today. This can be seen not least in the increasing recourse of AfD politicians to the Nazi terminology and elements of the politics of the Nazi regime.

Programme: Panel 1, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Olga Radchenko

Associate professor (docent) at Chair of tourism and hotel business, Institute of Economics and Law, Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University, Cherkasy, Ukraine

Abstract:

„We were refused return to Austria". Jewish Refugees from Austria in the Soviet Union

On 20 October 1939 912 Jews from Vienna were deported with a train to the small city Nisko near Lublin in Eastern Poland. This transport as well as 5 others were organised within the framework of Eichmann-Project about a huge Jewish ghetto between the rivers San and Bug. In the historiography of Holocaust the Eichmann-Project is a separate topic, which is generally well investigated. But still there is a lack of information about the fates of Viennese Jews, which crossed the demarcation line between the German- and Soviet-occupied zones of Poland at the end of October and found refuge in Lvov (Lemberg). At the end of June 1940 they were deported together with about 77 thousand mostly Jewish refugees from Poland and Czechoslovakia to Russian North. A part of Viennese Jews survived the World War II and the Shoa, but Soviet authorities did not allowed them to return back home to Austria.

Though the exact number of Viennese Jews on Soviet territory is not known, this group experienced special problems during the World War II and after the war. Follow-up of their destinies makes subject of historical research of particular importance.

The report is based on the NKVD-trials against 6 Viennese Jews in the archive of Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). It is important to clarify their fates during terms in GULAG and after release in 1946 as well as logic and dynamics of the Soviet policies, its duality toward the Austrian Jews.

Programme: Panel 5, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Ljiljana Radonić

Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of Culture Studies and Theatre History, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna

Abstract:

Post-Communist Memorial Museums from the "Invocation of Europe" to an Authoritarian Backlash

How do post-communist memorial museums dealing with the World War II display the end of interwar democracy, occupation, collaboration and the Holocaust? How did their permanent exhibitions change during EU accession talks? How do these museums reference trends coming from Holocaust memorial museums? One group stresses being part of Europe, copies the aesthetics of the USHMM and Yad Vashem and focuses on the individual victims. Another group demands from 'Europe' to acknowledge their suffering during the communist era. Narratives of Nazi occupation are used argue that communist crimes were worse. Yet, both kinds of museums refer to the archetypical aesthetics of Holocaust memorial museums – sometimes for narratives of collective victimhood. After the phase I call the "invocation of Europe" a national backlash is taking place first of all in Hungary and Poland – and contested museum projects are in the core of their memory politics. Fidesz wants a second Holocaust museum focusing on children and Hungarians who rescued Jews to outshine the Holocaust Memorial Center from 2004 which critically confronts Hungarian responsibility for the Holocaust. The Polish museum boom also shows a strong focus on Polish rescuers like at the huge museum in the village of Markowa. In contrast, Kaczyński attacked the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk for not showing "Polish truth", but "Polish shame".

Programme: Panel 8, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Programme: Chair Panel 12, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Oliver Rathkolb

Professor and Chair of the Department for Contemporary History at the University of Vienna

Abstract:

The Long Shadow of Authoritarianism in Central Europe in the 20th Century and Today

Over the last thirty years Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary have been experiencing deep changes in economics, politics and society. Due to the influence of internal opposition and favorable external conditions in 1989 the communist regimes collapsed and a process of transformation towards democracy and market economy started on different levels. Austria – after authoritarian and totalitarian experiences 1933/34-1938-1945 readopted a democratic political system several decades earlier.

Still the present remembrance of the authoritarian past during the inter-war period plays an important role in the political culture of societies and reflects authoritarian or democratic trends in attitudes and behavior of people.

Based on public opinion polls in these countries we can prove the long impact of the past in day to day politics. Societies which are prepared to deconstruct historical myths and the glorifications of the past strong leaders (like Pilsudski, Horthy or Dollfuß) have a more efficient basis for democratic debates and negotiations and resent new strong leaders without real parliamentary influence and a separation of powers with an independent judiciary and free media.

Programme: Panel 1, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Programme: Discussant Keynote 9, Friday, 7 September 2018, 14:30-15:30

Miriam Rürup

Director of the Institute for the History of the German Jews in Hamburg

Abstract:

How Germans Became Jews: National Socialist Expatriations of German Jews, Stateless Migrants and their Impact on the Human Rights Discourse

Soon after its rise to power the national socialist regime engaged in turning back the wheel of the emancipation of the German Jews. One of the major steps being refined further and further in an ever more totalitarian legislation was the annihilation of recent naturalizations of German Jews, the individual and ultimately also collective expatriation of native German Jews, rendering them stateless and thus unprotected. They thus were denieds all rights as citizens that they had only recently fully gained. After the war, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared in Article 15 the right to a nationality as an inalienable part of the bundle of human rights. This paved the way to United Nations Conventions such as the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954. Major protagonists who helped bring about this and other such human rights instruments were Jewish lawyers and their non-governmental organizations. As Jews they had experienced statelessness and the loss of a homeland through migration themselves, as Lawyers they had been experts in minority rights discussions of the interwar period and brought with them their expertise as lawyers to their new homelands. This presentation will thus begin with the total loss of rights and end with the production of a new body of rights that was meant to henceforth protect people from the evils of statelessness.

Programme: Panel 4, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Katharine Sarikakis

Professor of Media Governance, Media Organisation, Media Industries; Director of Media Governance and Industries Research Lab, University of Vienna

Abstract:

Media as the Fourth Estate? Between Agora and Tyranny in the Authoritarian Century

If the aim of democracy, as opposed to authoritarianism, is the utmost participation of citizens in public life, then this public life can only be conducive to meaningful citizens' participation, when openness, humanity, compassion and commitment are the pillars upon which institutions and processes are based. In that respect, public life and public speech are arguably the battleground, with freedom, Aristotle's eleutheria, the standard that contrasts democracy to authoritarianism and tyranny. It is in the media, and more comprehensively understood, in communicative spaces, where the pursuit for a better life is unfolding in citizens' everyday lives, bringing meaning about the world around them, about their own experiences and their place in this world. At the end of this authoritarian century of tyrannical rulers, violation of human dignity, mass extermination of the 'other', imposed war and catastrophe, we are faced with a spectrum of both hope and despair, as the lessons learned for the civics have been plenty, but as world politics seems to dive deeper and faster than ever before into barbarity and catastrophe.

Where is the place of the media as meaning makers, as the fourth estate, as the watchdogs, the institutions that hold power into account? Where is the place of the media as elements in a complex online and offline continuity of communicative spaces and what is their role as institutions tasked with defending true, open and comprehensive democratic processes, in the era of misinformation and 'fake news', social sorting, mass surveillance, and hate speech? What forms of governance have brought media to become unaccountable actors bedfellows in oligarchies and tyrannies across European countries, and what forms of resistance have also allowed for the creation of spaces to counteract barbarity, to connect, to pursue the 'good life' of true participation and belonging?

Through a closer look at the crises in the European continent, this discussion aims to respond to some of the biggest institutional questions, about the place and role of the 'media' between practices of the Greek Agora of free citizens and the demagogy and manipulation of tyrannical rule. The crises are the pivotal moments where both institutional and cultural worth are put into test: institutions are tested on their ability to withstand abuse of power and defy corruption, while culture is the testing ground of the resilience and strength of the values of a society: Forced mobility, the drama of refugee movement, isolation and filter bubbles in hate discourse and political marginalisation, imposed social impoverishment and rolling back of earned rights, the segregation of haves and have-nots, are the flashlights in crisis moments of the Northern Hemisphere. To that, inextricably connected is the frightening final assault against liberties, the delegitimisation of journalism as a worthy pursuit and as a pillar for democracy, with the targeted killings and intimidation against those who aim to restore institutional accountability and citizens existence in public life.

Programme: Keynote 8, Friday, 7 September 2018, 10:30-12:00

Karin Scherschel

Professor for societal-theoretical foundations of social work, in particular on social inequality and participation

Abstract:

Activist Citizen – Democratization and Forced Migration

Current theoretical approaches to the crisis of democracy mostly refer to a specific type of mass democracy as we know it from the twentieth century. Therein the nation state is the political space of democracy. Recent forced migration has proved to be a challenge for such theories of democracy. The presence of refugees in receiving countries raises the basic democratic question: How can people decide about their own living conditions? On the one hand, the living conditions of refugees are strongly influenced by the nation states they arrive at. On the other hand, they have no citizenship status in order to participate in political decisions. The presentation analyses the relationship between democracy, forced migration and citizenship. Initiatives like solidarity cities or urban citizenship are political reactions to this mismatch. Furthermore, activist citizens scandalize the discrepancy between the protection of human rights and the restrictive immigration system of the nation state. Conceptualizing the protest against the limits of democracy as an act of that allows to show new democratic potentials. Showing the limits of democracy such political protest may catalyze new processes of democratization.

Programme: Panel 5, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Programme: Chair Panel 3, Wedesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Oliver Jens Schmitt

Professor of Southeast European History at the University of Vienna

Abstract:

The Balkan States and the Impact of Regional Political Cultures since 1918

Constitutional democracies had a short and difficult life in the interwar Balkans. Its chances were limited both in victorious and vanquished states. The paper aims at explaining regional developments not in the frame of national states, but as postimperial history.

Romania and Yugoslavia constituted postimperial composite states whose official nationalist ideologies stood in sharp contrast to internal political and socio-cultural diversity. Among the interwar Balkan national states, only Greece was transformed by a radical population exchange into a ethnically homogenous national state which successfully eliminated almost all traits of Ottoman rule. Romania and Yugoslavia as self-declared national states led an intensive, but eventually mostly ineffective struggle against the multiple (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, Russian) imperial heritage. While historiography has traditionally insisted on discontinuities after 1918, this paper explores to what degree postimperial continuity lines can help us to understand the rise of authoritarian regimes.

Programme: Keynote 2, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 11:00-12:30

Ulrike Schulz

Research Fellow in the Department of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, University of the Armed Forces, Munich

Abstract:

A Handmaiden of Politics? The Changing Roles of Public Administration Between 1918 and 1938

In my talk I will reflect on the role, the organizational structures, and the general functions of public administrations in authoritarian states in a long-term perspective. I will pay particular attention to the question how the relationship between politics and public adiministration can be conceptualized and described. How does the division of responsibilities between the two sides work, and what does that mean for the functioning of dictatorships and autocratic states? More specifically, I will explore the founding and the development of the German social administration (Sozial- und Arbeitsverwaltung) between 1918 and 1938 and its implementation in Austria after the so-called Anschluss in 1938.

Programme: Panel 4, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Dieter Segert

Professor emeritus, Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

Abstract:

Weak Democracies Under Pressure. Contradictions Between the Democratic "Zeitgeist" and Ethnic Interpretations of the Polity in East Central Europe

After the WWI there was a general break of the political order and a new start, mainly in Central and Eastern Europe. Four dynasties break down and new national states emerged instead. The new states adopted constitutions that copied the constitutions of the Entente powers, mainly of France. In some states republics have emerged, in others constitutionals monarchies. It seems as if the historical rise of the democracy as a political order would continue in this part of Europe irresistibly.

In fact, there was a reinforcement of autocracy in the region during the 1920s and 1930s. Only Czechoslovakia remained a democracy. The power of presidents or monarchs was strengthened; the rights of the opposition was diminished. The number of political murders has risen; the judiciary was unfair and instrumental. Ethnic nationalism harmed the rights of religious and ethnic minorities.

The paper looks for the general reasons for that authoritarian backlash. Another puzzle is whether there could be parallels drawn with the recent situation in some countries of the region.

Programme: Panel 8, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Nataliia Steblyna

Assistant Professor at the Department of Journalism, Advertisement and Publishing at the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov University, Ukraine

Abstract:

Coverage of the War in the Digital Era: Online Mass Media as an Illusion of Free Public Discussion (Battle of Ilovaisk in the Focus of Ukrainian News Sites)

Digital technologies provide war journalists with some new possibilities. They can use evidences of locals, publish posts of volunteers, experts. Meanwhile, free discussion about the war in mass media is can be a problem. So it is important to understand, how war journalists use the new possibilities, and how the process of public discussion is formed.

Battle of Ilovaisk – the turning point of the war in Donbas (Ukraine) – was chosen for this research. The materials of two Ukrainian leading news sites (Ukrainskaya Pravda and Livyi Bereh) were content analyzed.

Ukrainian online mass media predominantly used reprints as a way of news gathering (Facebook accounts were cited in 62% of cases). The average number of positions in a publication is 1,4 (a typical news text contained only one source). Digital journalists included some new non-official participants to the public discussion (like Semenchenko, battalion Donbas commander, or, Tymchuk, an expert), but other sources, which could be newsworthy as well, were rarely mentioned.

Free and opened public discussion is a crucial thing for the democracy, however, the internet media create an illusion of forum of ideas. And having in mind an increasing number of people who prefer to get news online, we should raise a question about the future of the democracy in the reality of fast, rarely checked and incomplete information.

Programme: Panel 12, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Marc Stegherr

Assistant Professor for South Slavonic Philology, History and Culture at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich

Abstract:

Eastern Europe's Illiberal Revolution. Its Intellectual Origins in the Long 20th Century. A Critical Analysis

In Central East Europe a national conservative turn has recently taken place which is being harshly criticized in the west for its rejection of central values of a democratic and modern civilization. The phase of uninhibited growth of western style democracies which also left a visible imprint on East European societies seems to have come to an end. Leading politicians and intellectuals from Slovenia, the Czech Republic or Serbia argue they would only draw different conclusions from the long and catastrophic 20th century. Theories, social criticism of western European conservative intellectuals from the interwar period would serve as a source for an alternative interpretation of the totalitarian past and the imminent future. Conservative intellectuals and authors who would have fallen into oblivion because the general trend in western social and political thinking would have turned left and liberal, they say. Conservative intellectuals like Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, Ernst Jünger or Christopher Dawson just like the critique of relativism of Pope Benedict XVI. are being discussed by Polish, Hungarian, Serbian intellectuals like Ryszard Legutko or Matija Beckovic. They are firmly convinced that not democracy per se but the leftist, liberal democracy, its "progressive deformation" is coming to an end. The presentation introduces and analyzes leitmotifs and leading thinkers of this new and different interpretation of the long 20th century.

Programme: Panel 9, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Sybille Steinbacher

Professor of Holocaust Studies at the Goethe University Frankfurt/Main and Director of the Fritz Bauer Institute for the History and Impact of the Holocaust

Abstract:

1938: German and Austrian Antisemitism and Preparation for an All-Out War

Very soon after Austria's annexation in March 1938, Hitler turned his attention to Czechoslovakia—he intended to also incorporate the Sudetenland into the German Reich. The so-called Sudeten-crisis quickly brought Europe to the edge of war, preparations for a major military conflict already being underway in a number of countries. Hitler banked unrestrainedly on escalating his policy of escalation. Very openly, he was focused on the violent takeover of East Europe. After Austria's "Anschluss," the Nazi regime's anti-Jewish measures intensified rapidly, with Jews now being handed over to rampant violence. While systematic murder was not yet an agreed-on aim, it was clear that in the future there would be no place for Jews in the German Reich and annexed Austria. In that context, in the summer of 1938 the approach to be taken to Jewish refugees became a central international question. November, with its coordinated pogroms in the German Reich, was just around the corner. To all appearances, whether to intensify or suppress anti-Jewish violence in the last year of peace was a question tied to expansion-centered interests. As two policy strands, conquest and antisemitism, although hardly brought together in the historiography, need to be focused on as interdependent phenomena. One significant dimension of this is the attitude of the European Powers to the Nazi persecution. A second dimension involves attitudes within the Nazi populace (the "Volk-community"), and a third the perspective of persecuted Jews.

Programme: Keynote 4, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 10:30-12:00

Programme: Chair Panel 9, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Liana Suleymanova

PhD candidate at the Interdisciplinary International Studies PhD Programme, jointly organized by Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (Vienna School of International Studies) and University of Vienna, Department of History

Abstract:

Role of Historical Legacy in the Democratic Transition Process. The Case of Albania, 1991-2016

Democracy came to Albania later than to other countries and at first the country seemed to possess a perfect atmosphere for a smooth power structure change: people welcomed democracy with open arms, newly created civil society was strongly advocating the necessity to get rid of "everything communist" and to start building Albania's democratic future. The enthusiasm faded quickly when faced with the reality of persistent communist legacies such as political elites, inherited from communism, lack of institutions taking care of accountability issue, lack of independent courts, widespread corruption and underdeveloped civil society. These together with the legacies from pre-communist past such as importance of historical myths, tribalism and familialism, all constituted the backdrop against which Albania's democratization process started off. Historical legacy in the case of Albania plays a major role in shaping international and domestic policy outcomes: the country's aspirations towards the EU and its wish to become the Balkan region's uniting power influence the decision-making and "rules of the game" in the international and regional context. Through such concepts as stabilitocracy and coffeehouse democracy as well as by analyzing the critical juncture paradigm, the study will attempt to explain the model of the regime in place and to answer the question whether democracy remains an endgame for Albania.

Programme: Panel 7, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Frank Uekötter

Reader in Environmental Humanities at the University of Birmingham (außerplanmäßiger Professor at the University of Bielefeld)

Abstract:

The Discreet Charm of Friends in High Places, or: Why the New Authoritarianism May Be Green

Environmentalism might look like an unlikely source for a new authoritarianism. Most people see environmental problems as genuine issues of new social movements and evidence of democracy in action. But activism is only the most visible side of environmentalism. Green policy is also about scientific expertise, legal details, and endless negotiations, and most of the everyday business goes on behind the scenes. In this setting, it helps to have friend in high places: corporations, politicians, foundations with deep pockets. There is no reason to assume that environmentalists are immune to the multiple temptations of power, and every reason to assume that this will be a non-issue as long as most people see green as good.

We know this because environmentalists have fallen for authoritarianism before. In my book The Green and the Brown, I have shown that the environmental history of Nazi Germany was about such an alliance. While previous studies have flagged ugly quotations, I have trace the process by which conservationists became trapped in a self-delusion that the Nazi regime was the first German government that truly understood their concerns. That does not mean that environmentalism is obsolete in a century that will likely see an escalation of environmental conflicts, but the story provides a warning in an age where climate change adaptation is a high-stakes, multi-billion dollar business.

Programme: Panel 11, Friday, 7 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

Miloš Vec

Professor of European Legal History at the University of Vienna; Permanent Fellow at the IWM, Vienna

Abstract:

The Rule of Law after 1918 between Internationalism and Nationalism

The rule of law was shaken to the core during World War I; this left a deep memory of disappointment to all of those who believed in this legal principle. Political interest and military needs turned out to be by far more important than restrictions through statutory and particularly constitutional law. This attitude did not only affect the domestic sphere but also international relations. International law faced a hostile climate of ferocious militarism, nationalism, and extreme violence. The doctrine of "extreme military necessity" gave the blank cheque to disobey international treaties and long-standing customary law and lawyers became miserable comforters in the interest of the state.

But how about the years after 1918 and the interwar period? My talk aims at combining observations from both the domestic and the international sphere to tell a cultural history of mentalities towards the trust in the rule of law. How did contemporaries perceive bindings through legal norms? Did the experience of disappointment lead to a disbelief in legal forms or was more law the answer to the original catastrophe of the 20th century?

In my analysis of the intellectual history of international law, two different poles can be identified at that time. First, the changing collective mentality: the years around 1900 promised a shining future for international law which never came. Instead, they had to discuss after 1914 the legality of terrifying new technologies on the battlefields and justify breaches of legal obligations. Second, the reinforcement of the "invisible college of international lawyers": Mutual trust in a shared normative framework also shaped the collective behavior after 1918. What can tell us the attitudes of the international lawyers on both sides about the rule of law and its (de-)politicisation?

Programme: Panel 2, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Programme: Chair Panel 8, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Georgi Verbeeck

Professor of German History, University of Leuven, Belgium and Associate Professor of Modern History and Political Culture, Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Abstract:

The Legacies of the Past. Interwar Fascism Compared to Contemporary Right-Wing Populism

The suggested similarities between 'classic' interwar Fascism and current movements and tendencies of right-wing populism belong to one of the strongest political-historical imaginaries of our time. Both popular and scholarly discussions on the nature of present-day populism are strongly informed by the experiences and horrors of Fascism and National Socialism. The latter caused the seminal catastrophes of the 20th century and continue to shape our collective memories today. At the dawn of the 21st century Europeans will continue to use the experiences of the previous century as a lens through which they try to understand the challenges of today.

Scholars and public opinion makers usually navigate between two lines of argumentation. The first line of thought suggests a strong connection between 'classic' Fascism and right-wing politics today. The second model of interpretation tends to question the usefulness of such comparison. Notwithstanding similarities in ideologies and policies, in rhetoric and mentalities, critics will argue here that one central element should not be omitted: history hardly repeats itself and historical conditions have changed fundamentally, rendering any comparison between current developments and the 1930's and 1940's impossible.

This paper intends to contribute to the debate on continuities and discontinuities between the past and the present. It will critically assess the various arguments put forward in the debate amongst historians, as well as their impact and relevance for the political discussion.

Programme: Panel 1, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Ekaterina Vikulina

Associate professor at the Russian State University for the Humanities (Department of History and Theory of Culture) in Moscow

Abstract:

The Politics of Memory and Oblivion: Monuments of the Second World War in the Latvian Public Discourse

This paper tries to answer the question how the interpretation of history is linked with political agenda, precisely - how the Second World War is recontextualized in Latvian national political discourse. Memory policies imply the interpretation of historical events and facts from the angle of actual political expediency. This process is accompanied by the displacement of historical facts that are inconsistent with the general picture of the ideological consciousness. The choice of what is to remember and what is to withhold becomes a form of management of the past, the politics of memory, means of social control and legitimation of power. The paper looks on the strategies of commemoration in Latvia, that try to approve its own version of history. In these strategies Latvian people appear exclusively as victims of Soviet repressions, however the fact of participation of the local collaborators in the Holocaust is rarely mentioned in Latvian-speaking press. At the same time we see the heroization of the Latvians soldiers fighting with the Soviet power in the ranks of the Waffen SS (the erections of monuments, the celebration of 16th of March, when soldiers of the Latvian Legion, part of the Waffen-SS, are commemorated, etc). History of the war is transforming under the construction of a national identity and public discussions about memorials are part of this process.

Programme: Panel 8, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 17:30-19:00

Thomas Walach

University Assistent at the Department of History, University of Vienna

Abstract:

Society Without History. From Post-Historicism to Post-Democracy

With the decline of Historicism came the demise of historical scholarship which since then seems to be in permanent crisis. While the rise of "post-modern" Humanities was essential in the overcoming of the naïve positivism and nationalism that were defining aspects of historicist scholarship, it also put an end to History's self-confident notion of its ability to produce representations of the past "like it actually was". History as an academic discipline has subsequently lost much of its former credibility.

The new, more self-reflecting and cautious History struggles with what has always been a key function of History: collective historical identity. Since historians are no longer able to assume "truths" about the past in good conscience, the public has begun to look elsewhere. Often, it finds reassurance where populist groups have established politics of history as politics of identity – regardless of what scholarship might have to say about the facts involved. Thus, the historical consensus on which Europe's liberal democracies are built, is becoming brittle.

In order to regain some of the authority over historical discourse that has been lost, historical scholarship needs to accept the fact that the public use of history is based on unconscious desires (for identity, for the emotional avoidance of guilt and shame, etc.) rather than rational observations. History after Historicism must understand and embrace these desires while helping the public to voice them in a way that is consistent with what scholarship considers to be established facts.

Programme: Panel 2, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Georg Winckler

Professor for Economics (retired) former Rector of the University of Vienna

Abstract:

Macroeconomic Policy Approaches to Strengthen Democratic Trends in Europe

In recent years, Acemoglu – Robinson (2012, 2016) and others have shown that bad institutions are the main cause for economic underdevelopment. The emergence of inclusive political institutions in a state with broadly distributed power fosters economic growth and sustained wellbeing. The evolution of macroeconomic thought after Keynes has emphasized "intertemporal tradeoffs, so the beliefs of economic agents about the future have become a crucial part of the story" (Mankiw 2017). Anchoring the agents` beliefs in good, inclusive institutions can be regarded as key to macroeconomic policy successes.

The paper will discuss approaches to strengthen inclusive institutions in Europe. E.g., union wide social security systems in specific areas such as insurance against youth unemployment might strengthen the macroeconomic growth and democratic trends in the European Union.

Programme: Panel 3, Wednesday, 5 September 2018, 14:30-16:00

Magdalena M. Wrobel

Project Manager at the Leo Baeck Institute – New York|Berlin

Abstract:

"My brother-in-law in Dallas attempts to issue us affidavits, hopefully he will be lucky". Role of Transnational Social Networks in Forming of a New Diaspora Chapter

The above quotation comes from a postcard sent in September 1938 to Ludwig Guckenheimer in Pennsylvania. The author of the letter names potential family members who could help him secure affidavits required for obtaining a visa to America. Reading letters of German and Austrian Jews from 1938, one has the impression that similar conversations happened in every circle of family and friends circle separated by the ocean. Relatives still in Germany correctly recognized that their contacts abroad could ease their emigration and they were not shy to ask for help.

This paper asks what role the transnational social networks of families and friends played in the escape from Nazi Germany and how these linkages worked in practice. The study uses examples from the 1938Projekt, a year-long innovative project of the Leo Baeck Institute – New York | Berlin. By presenting personal stories of German and Austrian Jews day by day, the entries follow the growing tension in the life of the local Jewish communities throughout 1938. By offering insights into the micro history and struggles of individuals, this presentation asks questions about how transnational networks facilitated the escape and how the lack of networks made flight more difficult.

By focusing on social networks, this paper claims that during the time of the Nazi regime and growing danger, the German-Jewish Diaspora was not only becoming the "know-how" point of reference on the emigration process but also the first and last source of practical help for refugees.

Programme: Panel 6, Thursday, 6 September 2018, 13:00-14:30

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