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How to Study Eastern Europe as a Global Area?

Frank Hadler (GWZO Leipzig)

The moment my hands received the very well done poster announcing this fifth annual conference of the Graduate School for East and South East European Studies, I immediately knew what I would say first in my keynote. As I pinned the poster to the door of my office at GWZO in Leipzig and gazed upon the title of my talk, which I had given to Caroline Fricke by phone, I realized it is lacking a question mark. This is important since my intention today is not to offer a refined instruction manual on how to study Eastern Europe as a global area. I rather want to share with you my reflections on the overall topic and to outline possible research fields which empirically prove the globality of the region.

Area studies – and this is the topic of our conference - emerged at two particular moments: first in the history of higher education in the US – namely at the end of WWI with courses on regions not very well known to the troops sent to faraway battlefields. Second in the first half of the 1940s when the US military prepared for the intervention into WWII . We can conclude that the definition of areas is part of an exercise in – both intellectually and militarily – defining a global order and to position different regions into that order. This was, of course, not specific for North American interventions into the knowledge order of areas but can be observed with developing regional studies in Central and Western Europe since the 18th century and also with the emerging interest in other regions among Eastern European societies. Recent research by my younger Leipzig colleagues Torsten Loschke, Katja Naumann and Steffi Marung on area studies in several parts of the world – the US, Germany and France as well as East Central and Eastern Europe – demonstrate this similarity very well: conducting area studies contributes to the establishment of hierarchies in the world, to the legitimization of new power asymmetries and to processes of space re-formation through the dissolution of empires, the establishment of nation-states, networks, value chains and much more. These processes are not only and quite often not even

primarily imposed from outside by external forces. On the contrary, positioning and being positioned go permanently hand in hand.

My point of departure is the assumption that in Eastern Europe societies try to define their own way of positioning themselves in what they perceive as globalization. In this perspective, efforts in coming to terms with the *global condition* as emerged by the revolution in transport and media during the second half of the 19th century are to be considered as important driving forces for political, economic and cultural development in the region. Such an approach goes along the lines of Doreen Massey's *Imagining globalization*, in which she stresses the nexus between being passively globalized and actively contributing to global processes. And it acknowledges Benno Werlen's concept of *Gesellschaftliche Räumlichkeit* which underlines the importance of local connections to a globalized world. In this respect, ladies and gentlemen, Eastern Europe is to be understood as a globalized and globalizing region.

The international debate on the history and the current of globalization brought to the fore that it was not and *is* not a somehow natural process, being mainly of economic character, having started in the Global North and expanding from there to other world regions. Globalization, as we investigate it in the context of the Leipzig research cluster being formed by the University, the GWZO and the Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), is rather a bundle of political projects with different range, attractiveness and power to link actors and institutions within a changing world order. Consequently, there is not *one* but there are *many* globalizations which are related in one way or another. And these globalization projects reach into different directions and differently far. Therefore, we work with the term transregional as done so in the Handbook of Transregional Studies (currently in print with Routledge 2018) to insist on the fact that global doesn't mean necessarily planetarian but addresses the quality of transcending the borders of a single world region.

As to the region in question, here at our conference, from an epistemological point of view, it has been argued that there is hardly a consensus found as to what and who Eastern Europe is and what and who Eastern Europe is not; who belongs to the region and who does not; who is defined by whom as Eastern European. Regarding the later, there is no doubt that this is pretty much a German business since we tend to distinguish *östliches Europe* from *Osteuropa*, have in use –

analytically as well as institutionally - *Ostmitteleuropa, Südosteuropa, partly Nordosteuropa*. Tomasz Zarycki generally reflects on the issue in his *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2014). As for our Leibniz ScienceCampus *Eastern Europe – Global Area* in Leipzig (active since 2016) we see Eastern Europe as a spatial-institutional “frame” in which projects of globalization are created and a “stage” on which such projects are performed. Any endeavor to describe and to explain the globality of Eastern Europe is confronted with a state of research so far determined by plenty of studies about globalization projects by North American and Western European actors while Eastern European actors are often neglected. As an overarching topic that helps to overcome this imbalance, I have singled out the question of how actors in Eastern Europe reacted to and took position – and part - in the manifold processes of colonization and decolonization in the world outside of Europe. In dealing with this topic I will take a triple look back (1) to the situation after WWI when Eastern Europe was reshaped under the auspices of the principle of nationality, (2) to the situation around 1900 when Eastern Europe was part of an imperial setting, and (3) to the situation of the 1950s and 1960s when Eastern Europe was part of the so called Eastern Block. Before doing so, however, in the first part of my lecture, I want to tackle the position of Eastern Europe in the dichotomy of two concepts which determined the world order under Cold War condition: the concept of three worlds vs. the concept of a competition between two world systems. In the last part of my lecture, I will shortly reflect Eastern Europe’s position in the concept of global moments as coined for 1918/19 and 1989.

(I) Eastern Europe and the concept of three worlds vs. a competition between two world systems

To explain the order of post-WWII global power arrangements, the East-West axis was the most prominent one. For four decades it “connected” the Kremlin and the White House and lost its relevance right after the Cold War ended. At this moment, the term globalization quickly gained prominence: post-colonial studies entered many disciplines, subaltern studies grew and area studies revitalized significantly. All that happened in the aftermath of the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe. The subsequent break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 created a post-Cold War global constellation that, further on, was interpreted along the North-South axis. This evident change of the general perspective towards the relations between the global North and the global South caused attraction in historical and social as well as in political and economic sciences.

Within this new setting we can observe several trends concerning the history of the global Cold War. (a) The East was often overlooked as an actor belonging to the Global North. (b) In the Global South, the decolonized “Third” world became problematized as an “invention” of the West like Christoph Kalter showed in his *Entdeckung der Dritten Welt*. (c) The East, in retrospect, now was often called the “Second World”. While (d) the term “First World” for the West is still very seldom in use.

In the 1990s a strong hope was articulated that the end of the East-West-conflict would lead to one united world instead of three worlds. My daughters, born a few years before the Berlin Wall came down, were taught along this line. A textbook produced in the united Germany opened with a chapter on how “To learn to understand the ‘One World’”. The first sentence read like this, “The world of today is closely entangled. The tripartition into a *First*, *Second* and *Third* World is over.” On the next page, however, the headline “‘One World’ instead of three worlds” is followed by a question mark. And the text starts by stating that the end of the East-West-conflict did not end the tripartition of the world but made it porous. No further word about the “First World” but a clear statement concerning the “Second World”, explained in brackets as “the former bloc of socialist states” which “does not exist anymore”. And as to the “Third World”, explained as “developing countries”, my kids learned that “as a unit it did exist at the most in the final phase of the colonial times”. A comparison with textbooks in Eastern Europe of the same moment seems to be worthy.

As far as Eastern Europe’s position in the Cold War world order was concerned and *is* concerned, both historians and contemporary observers have been inclined to look along the East-West axis. No doubt to take such a perspective on the Cold War, focused on the super power relations, its arms race leading to the threat of a nuclear overkill, have had very good reasons. Libraries are filled with books on the Soviet-American relations between 1947 and 1991, books like Tony McAleavy’s *Superpower Rivalry: The Cold War* published in 1998 (Cambridge History Key Stage series). It took some time until scholars at several places started to expand the scope on the Cold War, to literally globalize it like Odd Arne Westad did in his path-breaking monograph *The Global Cold War* (2005) or like a whole team of historians did in the 3 volumes of the *Cambridge History of the Cold* (2012). They covered almost all wars, often civil and mostly hot wars during the cold war around the globe; local wars in the Third World which became proxy conflicts of the

superpowers. A growing set of studies directly focused on the relations between the socialist and the developing countries produced accompanying works. I should mention at least the studies by David Engerman on *The Second World's Third World* (2011) or by Sara Lorenzini on the *COMECON and the South* investigating the *East-South economic relations* and published in 2014.

What works like these have in common is that they pay special attention to the multiple challenges the process of decolonization caused in Eastern Europe. A big challenge was the Third World concept itself. It was not easy to accept in the East because it offered an option outside the scheme of the two world systems - capitalism and socialism. For this reason the very term "Third World" was not officially used in the socialist world. Instead countries becoming independent and emerging from the decolonization process were called either "young national states" or "developing countries". The latter term became predominant during the 1970s for the underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In East Germany 1972, a "Central council for the research on Asia, Africa and Latin America" (*Zentraler Rat für Asien-, Afrika- und Lateinamerikawissenschaften in der DDR*) was formed, which published a scientific journal with the initials of the three continents in its title – AALa. Although surviving until 2002, AALa did not concur a fixed position in the field of the fast growing area studies. As a source, however, for the history of knowledge production on the Third World in Eastern Europe, the journal – which twice a year was published in English - is of importance. From the beginning it contained articles by researchers from all socialist countries, working throughout the region in national research institutes on Africa, Asia and Latin America, often founded the early 1960s.

Browsing the tables of contents, one indeed hardly comes across the words "Third World". Concerning a general use of the term in Eastern Europe, Sara Lorenzini argued that it was "fully abandoned in the second half of the 1970s, when other formulas prevailed, such as developing countries". The handful of Soviet publications she mentions containing the term "Third World" on book covers are seen by her as exceptions from the rule, as a sign of détente. A closer look however to other socialist countries shows a different picture. In Hungary, from 1974 on, developmental problems of decolonized countries were increasingly discussed under the label "Hármadik világ", which is Hungarian for "Third World". Romania "declared itself to be a developing country, albeit a socialist one" in 1972. President Nicolae Ceausescu visited Africa six times until 1980 to present his country as a "fellow Third World state". In 1976, Romania attained

observer status with the Group of 77. Thus, Eastern Europe's position towards the decolonized world proves to be fragmented and this, ladies and gentlemen, again puts into question the general notion of a supposedly monolithic Eastern Bloc. The latest issue of the Journal *Twentieth Century Communism*, announced last Monday at HSozKult and dedicated to the relations of "Communist States and Postwar Africa", offers brand new research in that respect.

Another major challenge for the socialist states of Eastern Europe being confronted with decolonization in the South had to do with the Sino-Soviet Competition for the "Third World". Jeremy Friedman called it the "Shadow Cold War" in the title of his 2015 monograph. For the upcoming volume "Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World", currently under preparation by James Mark, Steffi Marung and Artemy Kalinovsky, the Hungarian Sinologist Péter Vámos sketches the Chinese Three-World concept in the years of Mao's global open-up policy. In Beijing's view the First World was formed by imperialists in the North, i.e. the US *and* the Soviet Union; the Second World was comprised of developed resp. industrialized countries of the West *and* the East; to the Third World belonged underdeveloped peasant resp. rural countries in the South - *including* China. In 1979, a leading party official from Moscow reacted to the Chinese position in very sharp words: I quote "It is of immense importance for the successful and consistent struggle for a genuine democratization of international economic relations that the countries in the socialist community, like many developing countries, should refute the false Maoist notion of world partition into North and South, into rich and poor countries; this has to be replaced by the scientifically grounded notion of the partition of the world into two social systems". As contributions to a special issue of the *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (forthcoming 2019) demonstrate, the quarrel was a long-lasting one. For more than two decades Chinese and Soviet leaders fought for support of their respective positions and, due to the lack of resources offered by Mao's China, often the Soviet Union prevailed since leaders from North Korea's Kim Il Sung to the Vietnamese party officials were first and foremost in support for their own developmental goals, be it in the form of weapons for warfare against external intervention, or be it in form of technologies for the advancement of their domestic economies. This started to change in the early 1980s and one may wonder of today's growing influence of China has its roots in the self-representations it established during the Sino-Soviet split.

(II) Shifting perceptions: Colonialism and decolonization in Eastern European perspective(s)

It is common sense that decolonization and the dismantlement of empires are two sides of the same coin. Thus any analysis of decolonizing processes needs to study the history of Post-Imperial settings. This has been done widely for post-WWII decolonization concerning the decline of the Western European colonial powers - for the British in India and the Dutch in the West Indies in the late 1940s, for the French in Algeria in the 1950s, for France and the UK plus Belgium in Africa in the 1960s and finally for Portugal in Angola and Mozambique in the 1970s. For my topic today, a reflection back on the decline of empires after WWI is important since Eastern Europe, in 1918/1919, was totally reshaped by the creation of independent states. The renewed Poland, the new Czechoslovakia and the old but considerable reduced Hungary were situated on territories that, before, belonged to the German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires.

How, in this post-WWI setting, was Eastern Europe touched by the colonial question is a research question that can be discussed through three examples:

(1) Germany, the only of the three named empires which had overseas colonies, lost of them with the Peace Conference. Poland, having gained access to the Baltic Sea, was eager to access some of German oversea possessions. The argument made in Warsaw was the following: 1/6 of Poland's state territory before 1918 was part of Germany, thus 1/6 of the former German colonies would have to be handed over to Poland – what the Peacemakers in Paris certainly refused. But the Polish desire for having colonies lived on. The “Liga morska i kolonialni (Maritime and colonial league)”, founded in 1924 and growing until WWII to a one million member organization (which was made by recruiting all pupils at all schools throughout the country), became the visible social backbone of the Polish colonial dream. In Poznan still in 1938 at a manifestation people were marching behind a banner stating “The power of Poland lays in colonies”. A year later, however, Poland became the first victim of Hitler's war to gain world power.

(2) In Prague, the capital of the landlocked Czechoslovak republic the possession of colonies was seen very desirable. Alois Musil, *prior* to the war called the Czech Lawrence of Arabia, acting *during* the War as Secretary General of the Austrian Oriental and Oversea Society, and becoming *after* the war a Professor for New Arabic languages at the Charles University in Prague, Musil put it that way: “Only the Orient may us compensate the colonies we do not have but we will need.

We are and will be an industrialized state, we need countries where to export our goods and others from where we import raw materials. [...] The West – in fact he called it “the West” – will offer us more than it will buy from us, and raw materials from there for sure will not be cheap. Thus it remains us only the Orient”. With a direct reference to the French model at the turn of 1919/1920, the Prague Professor argued for the creation of an Oriental Institute for scientific research that would support economic penetration into the Arab world within Asia Minor, known by the Europeans as the Middle East. The Institute in Prague was shaped with great governmental subsidies at the end of the 1920s. Thirty years later, reacting on the decolonization process in Africa, the Oriental Institute became the leading center for African Studies in socialist Czechoslovakia.

(3) Also Hungary was a landlocked country, a kingdom without a king but ruled by an Admiral – yes, the dual monarchy has had its navy (including submarines) in the Adriatic and Miklos Horthy, the regent, did serve there. The colonial question, as tackled in Budapest, was not only the expression of a political dream to rule over the Carpathian Basin but, at the same time, a reflection of what was going on in the then contemporary world. In 1928 the “Társadalmi lexikon” (Social Encyclopedia) contained an article on “colonial policy of our times”, to be distinguished from “pre-capitalist” times. “Nowadays” – this was stated a decade after WWI – “the exploited proletariat of the colonies, hand in hand with exploited labor of the mother countries, is fighting for the elimination of imperialism”. This was no doubt a clear communist rhetoric and in fact the author, József Madzsar, under the Horthy regime, immigrated to the Soviet Union where, in 1936, he fell victim to the Stalinist purges.

As different as the perceptions might have been of colonialism in Eastern Europe during the interwar period, they seemed to be quite similar before World War *one* and were so after World War *two*. To prove my assumption: on the one hand, I took a look into the entries of “colony” in the biggest Czech and Hungarian encyclopedias around 1900 and, on the other hand, into the entries “colonialism” in Polish and Hungarian and the lemma “colonial system of imperialism” in East German encyclopedias of the early 1960s. Around 1900, i.e. in the midst of the high time of imperialist colonialism in Prague as in Budapest, authors highlighted the economic advantages of colonial possessions. Thus contemporary readers easily could get the impression that having colonies is simply a normal thing and a *good* thing.

In the high time of decolonization in the 1960s in Warsaw, Budapest and East Berlin, the colonial system was described as already falling apart. No question Polish, Hungarian and East German authors for sure did so under the impression of the 11 pages-long article “kolonii” in the 1953-edition of the “Great Soviet Encyclopedia”. Along the Moscow guideline they stressed (a) the importance of the “Great Socialist October Revolution” of 1917, which overthrew the inner colonialism of the Tsars in Russia, (b) the importance of Asia marked by the formation of the People’s Republic of China, the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and (c) the victory of the Soviet Union in WWII followed by the rise of socialist states in Eastern Europe. According to Hungary’s *Új Lexikon* of 1960 – *Új* means “new” – the socialist world system, “unlike the imperialists, provided altruistic economic and political support to the countries that have become independent”. In *Meyers Neues Lexikon* (Leipzig 1962), the respective article ended with a clear optimistic statement: “The total breakdown of colonialism and the definite national and social liberation of the peoples of the currently still colonial and dependent countries is unavoidable”. Interestingly enough, only the Polish Great General Encyclopedia of 1965 speaks explicitly about “Decolonization”: we read that “the process of decolonization (*Proces dekolonizacji*) entered its decisive phase during World War II and immediately after” to be seen first in Asia (named are India, Indonesia, China), followed later on by “anticolonial uprisings” in many “other countries” and eventually leading to “a complete breakdown of the colonial system”.

Roughly half a century after the Eastern European encyclopedias dealt with colonialism as just shown, in the Oxford Handbook of the Ends (in plural) of Empire (in singular) an article was published on Eastern Europe, which is accessible online since January 2018. James Mark and Quinn Slobodian here pretend “to place Eastern Europe into a larger history of decolonization by focusing on both the domestic end of empires after WWI and the relationship of communist Eastern European states to Africa and Asia during the dissolution of overseas European empires from 1945 to 1976.” In the introduction to the article we learn that “Communists hardly ever used the term ‘decolonization’”, which in fact is not the case, if we look alone at the Polish encyclopedia quoted a minute ago. It has been argued that ‘decolonization’ was a “western term” invented “to hide the conflicts behind and stress the generous nature of the handover of power”. Mark and Slobodian take this for granted and announce that the “very term ‘decolonization’ was first

used in English in the 1930s to connect the already-achieved independence of states in Eastern Europe with an argument about the inevitability of the liberation of nations in colonized Africa and Asia in the near future". In my own research on Eastern European perceptions, I have looked back to 1900 and I must confess that I am not convinced neither by the idea to claim the end of empires in 1918 Eastern Europe as the first site of decolonization, nor by the idea to draw close analogies between the end of empires in Eastern Europe after WWI and in the Global South during the Cold War. But I haven't consulted yet Stuard Ward's text, "The European Provenance of Decolonization" published in *Past&Present* 2016, from which both ideas apparently are taken for the Oxford handbook of the Ends of Empire. And in fact, ladies and gentlemen, decolonization started as early as 1776 in North America when the United States were shaped, went on 1791 in Saint Domingue (later Haiti) and 1815 onward in Latin America. In respect to Eastern Europe, I should add that in 1799 Poles actually were involved in Napoleon's albeit unsuccessful attempt of recolonization in the Caribbean.

(III) Eastern Europe and the concept of Global Moments

To think, talk and write about global moments in world history became popular in the course of the increased interest in global history I mentioned in the beginning of my lecture. If global history is understood as the history of the global in the world, several global moments may be singled out alone in the 20th century. Ewald Frei, in his recent Essay *100 Jahre 1918/19 for Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, contributed to the debate. According to him the Great War became a World War not due to the fact that battles were fought all over the world but by the fact that people all over the world directed their actions and linked their aims along the line of a constellation of events (Ereigniskonstellation) caused by the war. Although, as he admits, a worldwide *Diskursgemeinschaft* "possibly" did not exist, Frie speaks about a struggle for "post-European Futures (in plural) to be noticed in different places around the world. In this sense the "global interaction" of 1918/19 made the end of WWI a global moment.

In Leipzig, roughly a decade ago, we discussed the issue while drafting a conference and putting together a volume on "1989 in a Global Perspective". In those days, the international discourse was still determined by the notion of 1989 as being the moment of a catching-up revolution for Western modernity. Our intention was to direct the focus on the question as to what extent 1989 might be interpreted as a caesura, which changed the world in general. My colleague Matthias

Middell, in theoretical terms, suggested to discuss a global moment in three variations: (1) events of peculiar importance often noticed by contemporaries, like for instance Hegel concerning the French Revolution because it “changed the whole world”; (2) events which are globally remembered or are at least of importance for large parts of the population worldwide due to their historical self-perception, such as WWI or II ; (3) a “temporally dense if not synchronous observation of shocks in the stability of societies and/or states caused by revolutions, rebellions, wars, coup d’états and public unrest” which leads contemporaries and ex-post observers towards “the idea that such an unusual cluster of crisis in different countries and world regions during a short period of time might be an indicator for a fairly long-term transformation process”.

Although stressing continuities rather than changes, George Lawson, in his introduction to the volume *The Global 1989* (edited with Chris Armbruster and Michael Cox in 2010), rightly underlined that Eastern Europe, at the end of Cold War, belonged to “1989’s heartland states”. As a matter of fact, this was the case also in 1918/1919, at the end of WWI, when those “heartland states” were renewed or newly came into existence. Any history of one or the other global moment is – and this is the point I want to make - unthinkable without Eastern Europe conceived as a global area.

To sum up:

In my talk, ladies and gentlemen, I first argued for a “relativization” of assumptions that the Western concept of three worlds during the cold war was incompatible with the Eastern theory of a competition of capitalist and socialist world systems. Secondly, I focused on Eastern European perceptions of the manifold processes of colonialism and decolonization in the world outside of Europe. Thirdly, I reflected on the position of Eastern Europe in the concept of global moments. In all three fields empirical evidence is to be found for the capacity of political, economic, scientific as well as cultural actors to perceive and to make Eastern Europe both a globalized and a globalizing region. Any efforts to study the area in this direction will push back the old question as to how Western or how Eastern the region was and will rather open new research avenues for – and this is the very title of our conference – “Studying East and Southeast Europe as Area Studies” under the global condition.

26.10. 2018