

Interview with EEGA Postdoc Fellow Laura Demeter

Please present yourself and your research project

Currently, my research focuses on cultural heritage preservation in authoritarian regimes. My academic interest includes heritage preservation in state socialism, mechanisms of heritage evaluation, and the contribution of international organizations to cultural heritage preservation. I hold a PhD in the field of Management and Development of Cultural Heritage, from the IMT School of Advanced Studies Lucca, Italy (2017). In my dissertation 'Picking up the Pieces from the Communist Past: Transitional Heritage after 1989 in Germany and Romania' I have addressed the issue of heritage-making in context of regime change, with a focus on communist regimes in Romania and Germany. For the research project 'Transitional Justice in Romania in Global Perspective', I have pursued my research interest that focuses on the involvement of international organizations dealing with heritage preservation, such as UNESCO, in socialist Romania during the Cold War.

During my stay at EEGA, I will prepare a grant application for a third-party funding scheme with the project 'Authoritarian Regimes and the Global Heritage Project during the Cold War'. The proposed project aims to expand on previous research and to address the contribution of the socialist regimes prior to 1989 to shaping the global heritage project. Particularly I am interested in the connection between peripheries and the involvement with international organizations, such as UNESCO and its advisory bodies during the Cold War. The transnational potential of the research will be explored by questioning the connections between European socialist countries and the Asian and African socialist countries – to be defined – and their involvement in promoting heritage preservation.

How did you come up with your research project?

The research topic I developed throughout the PhD revealed itself a Pandora Box. I understood there were many issues still understudied, and that my dissertation opened the path to further research topics to be addressed. In my PhD I focused on heritage making in Eastern European countries during the Cold War and following the events from 1989. Yet the issue of the involvement of international organizations during the Cold War and the contribution of the socialist regimes to the global heritage project remained largely unexplored. The EEGA fellowship scheme proved a great opportunity to prepare the application for a larger funding scheme, that would allow me to address the topic at a larger scale.

How did you get to know EEGA ScienceCampus?

I personally followed the activities of several professors and scholars who contribute to the EEGA ScienceCampus. I followed the call for the fellowship grant, and it proved a great opportunity to exchange personally with the colleagues at GWZO, where I was based throughout my fellowship.

What are the links between your research project and EEGA ScienceCampus?

During my fellowship I have joined the research groups from the *Global and European Studies Institute (GESI)* and *Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO)*. My research proposal adopts an interdisciplinary approach which proved a perfect fit to the areas covered by the research groups established at EEGA, namely the research areas 2: *Self-Positioning of Eastern Europe in a New World Order* and 4: *Cultural and Intellectual Perspectives and Identifications*. The research focus of these groups on the transnational relationships which position Eastern Europe within a wider Global context and analyse the connection in particular with the Global South, proved a perfect combination to develop the framework of the research application. Also, the focus role of international organizations during the Cold War and of heritage preservation in Eastern European countries add significant value to developing my research application.

What is the EEGA ScienceCampus for you?

EEGA ScienceCampus stands for a successful platform which supports young scholars to advance at the highest academic level, by providing financial and academic input in order to secure research funding.

The benefit of EEGA ScienceCampus to me is ...

First, I see the EEGA ScienceCampus as a great opportunity to support young scholars in developing applications for research grants in Germany and internationally. Secondly, thanks to the interdisciplinary approach of the research groups that includes young and established scholars, I could benefit from the exchange, content-wise as much as formally, in order to prepare the funding application. Also, one has the opportunity to present the research application to a larger audience, which adds valuable feedback for the preparation of the application. Thirdly, due to the high number of assigned fellowships I could enjoy the experience to encounter and exchange with fellow colleagues who share similar experiences. And nevertheless, one has the opportunity to attend numerous events, conferences and talks, which offer the opportunity to enlarge the academic network.