

**Annual Conference “Beyond the collapse: Globalization projects in Eastern Europe before and after 2022” in cooperation with ReCentGlobe at Leipzig University, 16 – 17 May 2023**

The EEGA Annual conference is an established format that attracts scholars from around the world each year. After a successful congress in April 2021 on “Globalising Eastern Europe – New Perspectives on Transregional Entanglements” in cooperation with the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES), then still online, a joint effort was made together with the Regional Studies Association (RSA) on „Bridging Old and New Divides: Global Dynamics & Regional Transformations“ in September 2022. The conference in 2023 continued the discussions along these lines.

Against the backdrop of recent developments in the region, EEGA’s Annual conference from 16 to 17 May 2023 asked “How do Eastern European actors respond to the new global challenges? How do they reconfigure their globalization projects?” The in-person event took place in cooperation with EEGA’s main partner, the Research Centre Global Dynamics (ReCentGlobe) at Leipzig University, in Leipzig, city of EEGA’s headquarters. At the two-day congress, taking place at Tagungslounge, scholars from all over the world presented their research on globalization projects about and from Eastern Europe in keynote lectures, panel sessions, book talks, and round table discussions. Presentations featured perspectives from the fields of geography, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, global and transregional studies, as well as neighboring disciplines. The conference situated Eastern European actors in historical and recent dynamics of what is often referred to abridgedly as “globalization”.

Grasping “globalization” neither as something new or as a universal trend of increasing connectivity but rather understanding it as result of a multiplicity of competing globalization projects, i.e. the efforts of a variety of concrete actors with different interests, imaginations, resources and strategies to “globalize” the world, was the starting point for discussion. Eastern European actors and societies are neither newcomers nor outsiders to such projects. In contrast, they have been both their objects or developed their own in the course of history. Obviously, the dynamics of the last years – from the pandemic to the war in Eastern Europe – do not herald the end of “globalization”, yet they have marked a profound rupture for the orientation and strategies of Eastern European actors with their globalization projects.

Actors from Eastern Europe, like in other regions of the world, perceive and address global challenges in various fields. They develop a multiplicity of strategies and practices on different spatial levels. Some respond on a local level by developing grassroot activities in rural areas and villages; others seek alliances on a regional level or attempt to establish solutions within international frameworks. There is no question that these already existing processes have been given a completely new dynamic by the current developments in Eastern Europe. The war on Ukraine has destroyed many established notions of a global/globalized world and the hopes attached to it. At the same time, it created new interconnections (ranging from the military to reconstruction aid, from donations for children to organising refugee movements), all of which have not yet been sufficiently examined, and it requires us to rethink the positionality of actors in it.

Recent scholarship in the fields of Transregional Studies and Global History has shown that a broad spectrum of actors enables, and controls flows of people, goods, and knowledge. In the realms of economy and culture, in social affairs as well as in international organisations, to name but a few, individuals navigate between local, national, regional, and international spaces, using the frameworks that the state provides while at the same time challenging national control mechanisms. This perspective has so far only partially informed the study of Eastern Europe. By applying a rigorous actor-centred perspective, panels at the conference did not take the nation-state as the main frame of reference but contextualized the national in the multitude of other spaces people use to cope with global dynamics.

In an interdisciplinary approach, the conference combined studies from Cultural History, Economics, Political Science, Geography, Anthropology and Sociology with perspectives from Comparative and Entangled Area Studies.

### Interdisciplinary Perspectives

**Seth Schindler** (University of Manchester) opened the conference with a keynote lecture on “The Second Cold War and the geopolitics of connectivity in (Eastern) Europe”. In his talk he conceptualized the rivalry between the US (and its allies) and China (and its allies) since the 2010s, arguing that it has become a master signifier shaping international relations and the domestic politics of many countries. Furthermore, he drew on recent insights from Cold War historiography to analyze how (Eastern) Europe is both shaping and responding to contemporary geopolitics of connectivity.

Day one included three thematic panels. Panel I on “Historical Perspectives on Current Transformations” featured **Réka Krizmanics** (University of Bielefeld) with a presentation on “‘A One-Time, Joint Solidarity Action’: Mass Organizations and the (Gendered) Practices of Socialist Solidarity in State Socialist Hungary” and **Christian Costamagna** (University of Rijeka) with a talk on “Reflections about the future of Serbia and Kosovo in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine: the case of the Serbian TV show ‘Ćirilica’”.

Panel II, “Understanding Class politics of East European Social Movements and Civil Society”, was divided into two parts. At first, **Agnes Gagyí** (University of Gothenburg) discussed post-socialist transformation as part of the long downturn of the post-WWII global capitalist cycle, based on an empirical comparison of Hungary and Romania. This presentation was followed by **Volodymyr Ishchenko** (Free University of Berlin), who drew on the case of Ukraine’s 2014 Euromaidan revolution to discuss how the class and political asymmetries of civil society impact the puzzling outcomes of contemporary civic revolutions.

Panel part two, chaired by **Stefan Rohdewald** (Leipzig University), picked up the discussions from the previous session to lead them further to questions of rural livelihoods and place attachment, and to most recent developments in, and effects of, sanctions against Russia after the attack of the Russian army on Ukraine in February 2022. **Daniela Ana** together with **Antje Jantsch** (both Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), Halle) gave insights into their research on “Living, not leaving the village: place attachment and rural livelihoods in the Republic of Moldova”. Online participant **Ksenia Maksimovtsova** (Uni Gießen / HSE St. Petersburg) introduced the topic “The Securitization and Desecuritization of Sanctions against Russia Imposed by the USA after the Ukraine Crisis: Insights from Russian Digital Media”.

Another highlight of the first day was a lecture by **Paul W. Werth** (University of Nevada, Las Vegas), moderated by **Gözde Yazıcı Cörut** (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO), Leipzig). In his talk on “Russia Beyond, Russia Within: Complications to a History of Russia’s Territory”, **Paul W. Werth** represented a portion of a grand, synthetic territorial history of Russia across some seven centuries, with global implications.

An open conversation between moderator **Steffi Marung** (ReCentGlobe, Leipzig) and **Sofia Gavrilova** (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), Leipzig) about Gavrilova’s most recent book *Russia’s Regional Museums. Representing and Misrepresenting Knowledge about Nature, History and Society* (2023, Routledge, London/New York) rounded off the programme.

The finale was EEGA’s second General Assembly with EEGA Affiliate Researchers, Research Area Coordinators and conference participants under the direction of the spokesperson of EEGA’s steering

committee, **Katja Castryck-Naumann** (online), together with the coordinators of the Leibniz ScienceCampus. After a report on EEGA activities and events, a festive get-together formed the celebratory ending of day one.

### **Transregional Connections Beyond the Region**

Whilst the first conference day explored the guiding themes in interdisciplinary perspectives, the second day was centred on transregional connections beyond the region. Under the title “Legacies and Ruptures in Culture and Economy - Wars and Crises as Turning Points?” panel IV, chaired by **Markus Sattler** (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), Leipzig), looked at moments of wars and crises as potential caesura in global history. **Karina Khasnulina** (Leipzig University) presented her research on “Reconstructing the Memory of Industrial Projects in Mao's China: The Industrial Turn and Narratives of Soviet Aid in 20th Century Chinese History”. **Nadir Kinossian** (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), Leipzig) together with **Kevin Morgan** (Cardiff University) talked about “Londongrad: The Dark Geography of Dirty Money”.

The history of the ties that existed between the socialist bloc and African liberation movements in the decades in which African countries moved to independence were in the focus of a book presentation in cooperation with the University of Évora, Portugal. **Chris Saunders** (University of Cape Town, South Africa), **Helder Adegar Fonseca** (University of Évora, Portugal), and **Lena Dallywater** (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), Leipzig), the editors of the volume *Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa. New Perspectives on the Era of Decolonization, 1950s to 1990s* (De Gruyter, Oldenbourg, 2023), together with some of the authors gave insights into the various project and chapters.

A guest lecture by **Martin Mulsow** (University of Erfurt) on Überreichweiten (Engl: “overreaches”) in cooperation with ReCentGlobe Leipzig extended the discussions to perspectives of a global history of ideas. Opening the view to other regions of the world, those contributions responded to another facet of EEGA’s global perspective, rounding off the conference programme.

Taken together, the conference brought to the fore a new global history and new global studies from the perspective of Eastern Europe and suggested pathways for the productive communication with and integration of yet other histories and historiographies from different world regions.