

Leibniz ScienceCampus

Eastern Europe – Global Area (EEGA)

International Academic Conference Colonial Entanglements in Central and Eastern Europe Before 1939. Sources and Methodologies

4.-5.9. 2023

Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw

The International Academic Conference on Colonial Entanglements in Central and Eastern Europe Before 1939 took place at the Institute of Polish Culture of the University of Warsaw on September 4-5, 2023. The Leibniz ScienceCampus "Eastern Europe - Global Area" (EEGA) decided to contribute to the conference with the shared goal to bring together scholars interested in the field of colonial and imperial histories of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), discuss the methodological challenges of researching colonial entanglements and imperial culture in CEE as well as test bold ideas, hypotheses and doubts in an academic environment. Presentations by a total of 16 academics and two artists were distributed over 6 sessions on the two conference days in Warsaw.

The first session was introduced by the organizers Agata Łuksza and Łukasz Zaremba of the Institute of Polish Culture, who opened the conference with a warm welcome to all participants. The morning continued with presentations on Polish historical writing in Britain and racial fantasies in 19th-century Polish culture, followed by artist talks in session 1B. The afternoon delved into topics such as the foundation of Central–Eastern European nation-states after World War I, colonial goods and commodity racism in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938, and everyday practices of migrants from Polish lands in the interwar period.

On the second day Lena Dallywater, representing the Leibniz ScienceCampus EEGA, provided an introduction outlining EEGA's commitment to developing new research perspectives on Eastern Europe, focusing on the positioning of Eastern European actors within global processes, conflicts, and the new world order. She continued explaining how EEGA's approach aligns with the theme of the conference as EEGA equally brings forth research that explores the region's interconnectedness with and imprints on the global sphere while acknowledging the reciprocal impacts that these engagements brought about in Eastern Europe itself. Dallywater delved into the two facets of entanglement, which the conference explores in its colonial perspective: positioning oneself and being positioned by others. Both facets were highlighted in research studies presented at the conference's first day. She summarized, that the conference was not only a welcome contribution to the networks' internationalization strategy by fostering exchange with colleagues from the region in Eastern Europe itself, the exchange also showed the significance for collaborative and transnational research, interdisciplinary approaches, and the exploration of untapped sources from various archives and languages to contribute to a deeper understanding of the region's position within global processes.

The second day continued with discussions on transnational colonial imagination in 1930s Poland and the pre-World War II Polish colonial project. The second session included presentations on race and sovereignty in literature as well as Poland's entanglements in Africa in the 20th century. The final session covered global histories of race and colonialism in Hungary, interwar Poland's aspirations of global status, and the tracing of ethnographic shows in Central and Eastern Europe. The conference concluded with a summary and final discussion, offering insights into the entangled histories and diverse perspectives presented throughout the event.