

**Spring school 2011:  
Global History: Connected Histories or a History of Connections?**

London, 11-14 April 2011

Deadline: 2010-08-31

Organisers:

- Antje Flüchter, Roland Wenzlhuemer (Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”, Heidelberg University)
- Ulf Engel (Graduate School “Critical Junctures of Globalization”, Research Academy, University of Leipzig)
- Matthias Middell (Global and European Studies Institute, University of Leipzig)
- Katja Naumann (Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum Geschichte und Kultur Ostmitteleuropas (GWZO), University of Leipzig)
- Andreas Gestrich, Silke Strickrodt (German Historical Institute London)

Applications are invited for the spring school “Global History: Connected Histories or a History of Connections?” that will take place in London from 11-14 April 2011. The spring school is jointly organized by Heidelberg University, the University of Leipzig and the German Historical Institute London. The school cooperates with the Third European Congress on World and Global History hosted by the London School of Economics and Political Science and provides an ideal introduction to the main congress theme of connections and comparisons.

In recent years, Global History has firmly established itself as a new and highly productive field of historical research. An allegedly ephemeral historiographical fashion has proved to be a well-grounded and well-respected research perspective. And yet the question of what Global History actually is and what its practitioners ought to research and teach is still hotly debated. The often confusing multitude of differing opinions on this question can at times be hard to come to terms with – especially for researchers at the start of their careers. Therefore, the organisers think it desirable to discuss some of the aspects of this problem in the form of a spring school to be held in close temporal and spatial proximity to the Third European Congress on World and Global History. Referring to the overall congress theme of Connections and Comparisons, the spring school has the title Global History: Connected Histories or a History of Connections? and will focus on two distinct approaches to Global History that particularly illustrate the differing presuppositions and intended insights informing research in the field. It is one of the distinct traits of Global History not to accept the presupposition of self-contained, autonomous cultures, societies or nations as principal units of investigation. Hence, terms and concepts such as connections, connecting or connectedness are close to the core of almost every historical study in the field. And still the concept of connections can be operationalised in very different ways reflecting the different possible approaches to the purpose of Global History.

The first approach that we have chosen to call connected histories builds on the presupposition of globality, of global entanglements, that provide the context for the historical processes under scrutiny. No matter if one, two or more cultures or societies are looked at, they must always be treated and assessed as connected and entangled with others. But as important as they may be, the connections themselves merely form the background, the context of the analysis, while the people, things and entities connected stand in the focus of research. In this way, statehood or state building – to name but one example – are examined as embedded in global spaces of communication and interaction rather than as principally endogenous and autonomous processes.

The history of connections-approach, on the other hand, primarily looks at the emergence and functioning of globality by way of global connections. Here, the connections themselves constitute the object of research, while that which has been connected mainly provides the research context. This research approach often leaves traditional understandings of space behind and focuses on the rationale and the local impact of the emerging global sphere. The study of the emergence of a global telegraph network and its transformative impact on global spaces of communication and interaction can serve as an illustrative example here.

The history of connections-approach focuses on distinct topics and subjects that have had a formative impact on our global(ised) world and whose analysis helps to explain and understand current problems of (and in) globalisation. The connected histories-approach allows the researcher to throw new light on established topics that have previously been viewed exclusively in the context of the nation state or other self-contained entities and to carry a global and exchange-oriented perspective into this field.

Of course, none of the two approaches is better, faster, more useful or, indeed, “more Global History” than the other. Rather they reflect the research questions and desired insights of the historian. The spring school seeks to highlight both the differences and the similarities between the two approaches and also aims at exemplifying the connection between the historian’s questions and the chosen perspective on Global History. It wants to provide PhD students in the field of Global History with an opportunity to study these concepts. This will encompass in-depth discussion with renowned experts in the field, the reading and interpreting of key texts together as well as the presentation and discussion of the participants’ own research projects in the light of the spring school’s principal questions. Applications for participation in the spring school should be in English and contain a letter of motivation, an outline of the research project to be presented (1.000-1.500 words) and two letters of reference. They must be sent electronically to Antje Flüchter ([fluechter@asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:fluechter@asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de)) by 31 August 2010.

Successful applicants will be required to present their projects at the spring school (in German, English or French). The fee for participation is 85 Euro. A limited number of scholarships will be available for participants from less-privileged backgrounds and need to be applied for separately.

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