

Abstracts

Keynote lecture

Stefan Berger, Institute for Social Movements, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Borderlands of Nineteenth Century European Contiguous Empires in Comparative Perspective

The paper focuses on three nineteenth-century contiguous empires: Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary. It asks about the role of borderlands for those empires: which parts of the empire were defined as borderlands and what importance was attached to them from the empires' centres. It will also analyse the perspective from the borderlands asking how those borderlands saw themselves in the course of the long nineteenth century and how they defined their position vis-à-vis the imperial centre. Here the role of nationalism will play an important part. Given the length of the time period under consideration the paper will also differentiate between different time zones in the development of centre-periphery relations of the three empires under discussion here.

Keynote lecture

Diana Mishkova, Centre for Advanced Study in Sofia

A symbolic borderland: 'expert knowledge' and the conceptualizations of the Balkans in late-eighteenth to early-twentieth century Russia

The paper will discuss imperial Russia's views of the Balkans, the Balkan Slavs in particular, as informed and buttressed by 'expert (scientific) knowledge' and in the context of debates on Russia's national and imperial identity, historical consciousness, and cultural and political space.

Session 1: Defining space on the early modern borderlands

Kimmo Katajala, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

Finland as a Political Space by the Russian Border in the 16th and 17th centuries

In recent decades, Finnish historical research has largely adopted the view, emphasised by Swedish research, that the area now called Finland was a fully integrated part of the Swedish Empire in the early modern era. On an organisational level, this was the case: Finland did not have its own separate administration, no judiciary or military system different from Sweden,

and the Finns had no national ideas to separate themselves from the Swedish Empire. So, could early modern Finland even have been a political space?

When you take a closer look at the historical source material of the 16th and 17th centuries, you can see that Finland was nevertheless referred to as a separate unit. When talking about the old core areas of the Swedish Empire, the expression “Sweden and Finland” is regularly repeated in the source material. The most important Swedish scholars of the 15th and 16th centuries argued that Finland, along with the kingdoms of Svea and Gothia, was one of the old kingdoms from which the Swedish realm was formed. Finland was thus considered a country, although that concept should not be understood in its modern sense as associated with the characteristics of a state.

In those works of scholars, the central characteristic of Finland, which was always mentioned, was its location in the easternmost part of the empire, facing the border of the Grand Duchy of Moscow. When King John III of Sweden decided to take over the title of Grand Duke of Finland in 1581, this act was also connected to the ongoing war with Russia. Gradually, in the early 17th century the Grand Duchy of Finland also became a territorial concept that came into use in administrative speech, cartographic representations, literary representations in general, and finally, at the end of the century, Finland and the Grand Duchy of Finland began to be presented as the author’s fatherland, to which he directed his patriotic feelings.

I would argue that, even though Finland was in no way an administratively separate unit from the perspective of formation of the modern state, it was nevertheless a political space that was initially defined especially by its location near the Russian border. At that time, that political space was determined from above, from the point of view of Swedish scholars and the supreme administration of the realm. During the 17th century, Finland and Grand Duchy of Finland developed into a territorially defined entity, with which at least some of its most learned inhabitants began to identify and experience patriotic feelings towards it by the end of the century at the latest. That way Finland began to be perceived as a political space from the perspective of Finns as well.

Kasper Kepsu, Åbo Akademi

Ingria and Kexholm County as Borderlands in the 17th Century

While under Swedish rule, the provinces Ingria and Kexholm County were turbulent regions with great ethnic and cultural diversity. In this presentation, I will discuss these provinces as border regions. How did they develop to territories and how did the Swedish Crown try to control migration and the mobility of the local population? In both provinces, authorities faced constant difficulties in controlling the inhabitants, particularly because of their great mobility and use of borders. Peasants could slip over borders in threatening situations, but deserting was also a latent threat to keep the taxes and duties on a bearable level. Ingria as well as Kexholm County in the 17th century can be described with the concept unruly borderland, which highlights incoherent power structures, where neither the state nor the local elite had established an undisputed commanding position over the local population.

Ricarda Vulpius, Universität Münster

Local Forms of Representation and Concept of Autonomy in the Southeastern Frontier of the Tsarist Empire in the 18th Century

It was not only in the west and southwest that the Russian Empire established imperial substructures by granting autonomy to the Hetmanate of the Cossacks, the Grand Duchy of Finland, the Kingdom of Poland or the Baltic provinces. The centre also granted forms of representative self-government to the steppe peoples in the southeast. However, these concessions were based on sophisticated tactics from the very beginning. Fundamental to the success of 18th century Russian policy on the southeastern frontier was the strategic approach of, on the one hand, lulling the steppe peoples into the belief that they were being granted political autonomy and ceremonially consolidating this impression, and, on the other hand, covertly increasing dependence on the imperial centre and gradually disintegrating and destroying autonomy.

My paper will analyse the concept of autonomy as it was developed first by the Kalmyks and then by the Kazakhs in the process of negotiation with the imperial centre after their admission into the Russian subjecthood.

Jenni Merovuoto, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland

Local agency and space on the Russo-Swedish borderland in the late 18th century

After the Russo-Swedish war, 1741–1743, the state border was relocated, but the borderline was never fully established. Nevertheless, boundaries were built and institutionalized in various ways through the period of 66 years. In my paper, I discuss the ways that the locals build space in between the borders questioning the ideals of the eighteenth century. Investigating the space and agency on a disputed area between the realms reveals how the locals could forge the existing conditions on the borderland between Sweden and Russia.

Session 2: Borders, power, and the First World War

Ilya Solomeshch, OSUN Scholarship Fellow, European Humanities University, Vilnius, Lithuania

“To hell with all of them!“. Patterns of imperial rhetoric in decision-making on the Finnish question during WW I

During the last decades of the Finland's autonomy, the imperial Centre attempted to restrict and eventually erode the foundations of the autonomous status. Political, legislative, and economic innovations met with resistance in Finland, forming the contours of the political conflict. On the eve of the war, the imperial priorities became more and more determined by considerations of security, both military and political. Finland was seen as the imperial capital's shield, which had to be equally reliable in terms of possible enemy hostilities and the

political loyalty of the population. The imposition of martial law seemed to have given the hardliners in the Finnish question almost unlimited freedom of action. However, actual decision-making practices turned out to be much more multi-factorial.

The paper seeks to identify and analyze the multiplicity of approaches to the Finnish question as revealed in the rhetoric and concrete proposals of traditional actors (Finnish Governor-General, Council of Ministers, Duma, Foreign Ministry, and War Ministry) and in the activities of special wartime bodies (Committee for Restricting Supplies to the Enemy, Special Council for National Defense). The phrase thrown out by Russian Prime Minister Ivan Goremykin in 1915 reflects considerable inconsistency in the approaches of these actors.

Tuomas Teuho, Tampere University

Furthering Russian imperial unity through military presence – the case of the town of Hämeenlinna in 1900–1917

In my presentation I present a case study on how Russian military presence was used to further imperial unification on the ethnically non-Russian borderlands during the years 1900–1917. As my study case I examine the town and surrounding regions of Hämeenlinna, a provincial administrative centre in Southern Finland.

At this time period the Grand Duchy of Finland was a target of Russification measures in the areas of cultural and political life, with the increasing presence of the imperial Russian army also playing a part in this policy. In addition to their strictly military purpose, the soldiers and the military infrastructure associated with them were deployed in Finland also to bring the borderland politically and culturally closer to the imperial centre.

With its sizable Russian garrison relative to the civilian population Hämeenlinna constitutes an interesting example of this phenomenon. The town was surrounded by three garrison areas, which complemented by a centrally located Russian Orthodox garrison church made the imperial military a very visible and spatially tangible element of everyday life in the region. My presentation examines both the workings of this military presence and the civilian reactions to it, ranging from conformism and cooperation to active resistance.

Tamara Polyakova, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland

Looking West. The Russo-Finnish Border in Civil War-era and Early Soviet Imagination, 1918–1924

On December 6, 1917, the boundary between Russia and the Grand Duchy of Finland formally became an international border. For the next four years, the area east of this border was a battlefield of Allied, White Russian, Finnish, and Red Army troops. Using both official and personal sources, this paper explores the ways in which people and institutions east of the Russo-Finnish border, in Olonets and Arkhangelsk gubernii and later the Karelian Labor Commune, imagined and experienced this boundary, and how its meaning and function changed throughout the war and the early postwar years.

Thomas Rettig, University of Greifswald

(Re)envisioning the Empire from a Western Borderland. The West Russian Volunteer Army in Courland 1919

The paper presents the case study of the West Russian Volunteer Army – a joint German-Russian military adventure in the Baltic in 1919. This army acted for a short period as an occupying force in the former Baltic Governorate Courland. Despite the short duration of its control of the region, it is striking that the army leadership under its monarchist commander-in-chief Pavel Bermond-Avalov attempted to implement a political program competing with the nation-state and Bolshevik concepts. By even including the contemporary vocabulary of democratization and self-determination the army's propaganda tried to convince the local population of the benefits of a resurrection of the Empire in the Western borderlands. Treating this communication strategy seriously helps to get a deeper understanding of the contemporary political concepts, which imperial actors found promising for a state reorganization of the Western borderlands. Defining the concrete reasons for its consequent failure gives further insights, why a reimperialization of the region was eventually out of the question.

Session 3: Interpretations and uses of history

Marja Jalava, Tampere University

A State, a Province, or Both? Finnish Historiography on the Status of the Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire

This paper examines the Finnish historiography of the Grand Duchy of Finland's politico-legal status after its separation from the Kingdom of Sweden and incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1808–1809. It focuses on academic historians' use of their professional authority and knowledge to justify their arguments in debates on the topic. Of special interest in the paper is the semantic field concerning the Finnish and Swedish terms Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta/Storfurstendömet Finland (the Grand Duchy of Finland), which include such key concepts as valtio/stat (state), maakunta/provinssi/provins (province), autonomia/autonomi (autonomy), and perustuslaki/grundlag/konstitution (fundamental law, constitutional law, constitution). By analysing the changing uses and meanings of these concepts and the conceptual clusters they form, the paper aims to show how and why Finnish historians' understanding of the Grand Duchy of Finland's politico-legal status has varied and changed, as well as how these changes are related to the paradigmatic changes within historical scholarship and broader historical transformations in Finno-Soviet/Russian relations.

Kati Parppei, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

Nikolay Danilevsky's (1822-85) ideas and Russian imperialism then and now

Nikolay Danilevsky (1822-85) was a Russian philosopher and an eager developer of pan-Slavism. His ideas –including the theory of historical-cultural types – supported Russia's imperialist endeavors, considered the empire's influence on non-Russian peoples essentially beneficial and emphasized the insurmountable difference between Russia and Europe. Danilevsky's ideas have been resurrected by contemporary Russian advocates of neo-imperialist, neo-Eurasianist and particularistic approach to Russia's role in the world.

Olga Dorokhina, Caucasus International University

Georgia as the Borderland of the Russian Empire: how the past attempts to influence the future

The Russian Empire had the most effect on the process of defining boundaries in the Caucasus (including Georgia), attempting to create spaces that were favorable for military control. By the end of the XIX century, the dynamics of the Caucasus' administrative-territorial division mirrored a policy aimed at bolstering authoritarian state power structures. Several administrative-territorial reforms were implemented during the Soviet period, including the merger/enlargement of territories and the inclusion/exclusion of some territorial units within republics, which were frequently not reflected in relevant documentation and maps.

During the Sovietization period, the functioning of the external boundaries was subordinated first and foremost to military-political tasks. The principal line of defense was along the USSR's border with Turkey. Since Georgia's independence, this line has relocated to the Caucasus Range, and the current status of Georgian-Russian relations along the border is the result of the necessity to construct a type of buffer defensive zone.

The paper demonstrates trends in the formation of modern Georgia's territory under the influence of the Russian empire and the period of Sovietization in terms of territorial institutionalization, changes in the significance of borders at various historical periods, and their relationship with modern problematic issues in Georgia's borderlands.

Luuk Winkelmolen (co-authors: Paschalina T. Garidou, Henk van Houtum), Nijmegen Centre for Border Research (NCBR), Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

The past as a geopolitical weapon: How Putin is anachronistically instrumentalising Russian history to justify the invasion in today's Ukraine

In this paper we critically examine how Russian president Putin instrumentalises the past to legitimise Russia's brutal invasion in Ukraine. Conceptually building on Zygmunt Bauman's 'retrotopia' (Bauman, 2017), we close-read Putin's political rhetoric by interrogating how he retrotopically constructs a selective Russian historical, religious, and geographical legacy to justify his grand imperial dream, the restoring of the 'Holy' Russian Empire. It is in this light that he conceptualises the invasion of Ukraine as a 'holy' mission, a divine plan to reconquer the lost territories, currently in the hands of what he sees as the morally corrupt, hedonistic

and decadent 'West'. To this end, Putin anachronistically and opportunistically borders and prescribes a sacralised and purified view of the Russian national (id)entity, claiming a need to restore the imagined historical wrong of the empire's withering. We conclude that the unlawful invasion in Ukraine showcases that Putin's dream, however delusive it might be, requires serious consideration as it is arguably the most violent example of the tragedies that chronotopolitics – the politicisation of a certain space in a certain time to imagine a certain bordered future – and the weaponisation of words can lead to. In that sense, history is always now.

Session 4: Boundary-building in Russia

Jukka Korpela, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

The Frontier against sin. Extensions of Holy Russia

Oleksandr Kravchuk, University of Bristol

~~Cancelled. The perception and conceptualization of borders by imperial bureaucrats within the Northern Shore of the Black Sea region and Crimea in the late 18th and first half of the 19th century~~

The Northern Shore of the Black Sea region and Crimea was a specific region within the Western borderlands of the Russian empire. It was highly heterogeneous and compared in size to European countries like France. The bureaucracy played a key role in the process of external and internal boundary formation. They wrote diverse proposals and reports, as well as conducted inspections. During this work bureaucrats also created imaginary borders, which often did not coincide with the administrative division into districts (uezd). The emperor and ruling circles pursued internal policies based on these data and perceptions. In this context, the bureaucrats' perception of the region and its borders becomes important to understand the history of the region. My presentation will focus on the following questions: How did bureaucrats perceive borders within the region, and did their perception change from the late 18th to the first half of the 19th centuries? Were there differences between imagined boundaries and the actual administrative division? Did the geographical factor influence the choice of service locations for officials within the region? Where did officials of noble origin prefer to buy land and conduct economic activities?

Piotr Kuligowski, Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

Phantom pains: The concept of borders in Polish parliamentary discourse, 1815–48

The paper aims to shed light on how members of Polish-speaking representative assemblies in Cracow, Lviv, Posen, and Warsaw between 1815 and 1848 perceived the concept of borders. I focus on three distinct meanings of the concept: 1) Borders as demarcation lines that cut across estates, necessitating stringent formal regulations; 2) Borders as tools for economic exploitation, as capital flowed outwards, primarily towards imperial centers; 3) In 1831, during the November Uprising, borders took on the symbolic role of representing the territorial scope of freedom and constitutionalism. In conclusion, I argue that the various meanings of the concept of border in the Polish parliamentary discourse of that era reveal that imperial borders established after 1815 divided previously united territories. Therefore, the sense of a phantom polity persisted in the way borders were perceived.

Raymond (JR) Drause, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland

Decembrists and Semeiskie: Exiled Nobles and Old Believers in the Transbaikal Region

Many Decembrists perceived in Siberia a land of freedom and possibility unencumbered by the deleterious institutions of European Russia against which they had struggled. The Semeiskie Old Believers, exiled religious schismatics who adhered to pre-Petrine forms of worship, and through whose Siberian villages the Decembrists passed during their imprisonment, particularly impressed the nobles. In the depths of Siberia, far from the halls of imperial power and untainted by the blight of serfdom, exiled communities of free men and women of European Russian origin flourished. Semeiskie health, longevity, industriousness, hospitality, and wealth favorably impressed the Decembrists, who also took an interest in Semeiskie history and religion.

The Decembrists' writings helped to familiarize European Russians with the Transbaikal region and underscored in their minds the legitimacy of the empire's claim to it by highlighting European Russians who had lived there since the eighteenth century. However, the prosperous Semeiskie also served as a stark contrast to the condition of serfs in European Russia and undermined tsarist authorities by underscoring the increasing failure of a Siberian exile system that bred only hardened criminals. Finally, the Decembrists' writings contributed to the perception among some Russian intellectuals that Russia's true future lay in eastward expansion rather than in European colonization.

Session 5: Tensions between borderlands and the Empire

Justyna Straczuk, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology Polish Academy of Sciences

"Lords' School and Peasant Children". Rural education as an instrument of Russian and Polish expansion in the Polesie region at the beginning of the XX century

At the beginning of the 20th century, Polesie was considered one of the most backward regions in Europe. For a long time it remained an 'unconquered' territory, a borderland of clashing Russian and Polish influences, each claiming ownership of the land and its people,

who preferred to describe themselves in non-national terms as 'local'. In my paper, I would like to present the project of nationalising the inhabitants of the Polesie villages through rural education, which was treated primarily as an instrument of political expansion - first by the tsarist authorities and, after the First World War, by the authorities of the reborn Poland. While the former emphasised confessionalism, treating the Orthodox Poleshuks as members of the triune Russian nation, the latter propagated a culturalising mission, seeking to integrate the Polesie inhabitants into the universe of the Polish cultural world. Here the greatest obstacle was mutual alienation, marked by sharp class divisions and reinforced by religious differences. In analysing the reasons for the failure of both the Russian and Polish political missions, I will refer to the material collected by the Polish sociologist Jozef Obrebski, who conducted extensive ethnographic field research in the Polesie villages in the 1930s.

Takehiro Okabe, University of Helsinki

The Kalevala and Pan-Finnism between the Imperial and National in the Late Russian Empire

This paper scrutinizes the entanglements of the national and the imperial among the Finnish intellectual elites and between them and imperial ones through the discussions on the Kalevala and pan-Finnism in the late Russian Empire from the 1870s to the early 1910s. The Kalevala has been strictly interpreted within the Finnish national history and the ideology of pan-Finnism has been regarded either as purely Finnish cultural production to salvage the Finnic peoples under the pressure of “Russification” or as propaganda by Russian nationalists to demonize the Finnish “separatists.” Between them, however, were there those intellectuals who struggled to reconcile the Finnish national with the imperial through emerging controversy over the Kalevala and the pan-Finnism. The controversy was academic one but reflected geopolitical and ideological changes the Russian Empire faced at that time. Through the discussions this presentation tries to integrate the history of the Grand Duchy of Finland into the recent discussions on the imperial Russian borderland history.

Jeremy Smith, Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland

The Place of Nationality and Rights in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union

The talk begins with a restatement of the argument (Semyonov and Smith 2017) that the decolonising of history writing that accompanied the revolutions of 1917 and 1991 should not lead to over-exaggeration of the issue of nationality to imperial politics. It then goes on to describe the different forms national demands took in imperial Russia, where only in the case of the Grand Duchy of Finland was a widely-held understanding of rights based on nationality embraced. The rights-based discourse of nationality was prominent in rhetoric at the Versailles Peace Conference, but in practise most of the nationality-related issues arising from the collapse of the Austrian and, especially, Ottoman Empires were settled by force.

In Soviet Russia, practical discourses continued to dominate discussions and policies towards nationalities. Overall, while there were severe disagreements between the

Bolsheviks, all saw a solution to the national question as a necessary part of building a strong unitary state. A Rights based discourse to nationality did reemerge, however, as the number of officially recognised nationalities was progressively reduced, so that recognition became an existential matter, while the entitlements belonging to those nationalities that did make the cut became more clearly defined.

Finally, as Mark B. Smith and others have argued, the experiences of the Great Patriotic War led to the emergence of an understanding of Rights in general on the part of the citizens of the USSR. Although these concepts were denied the ability to flourish as long as Stalin was alive, they were very much embraced as part of the Khrushchev thaw. So that 1956 saw a highpoint in discourses about national rights. This was opposed, however, by Khrushchev at the end of 1958, when he posited alternative rights against those of the USSR nations. Beyond the Right to Self-Determination (which itself served practical ends) discourses of nationality as a matter of rights were only formally established in the USSR with the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

Session 6: Conceptualizing connectivity

Prof. Dr. Ulrike von Hirschhausen, University of Rostock

Re-Conceptualizing border concepts?

Anton Kotenko, University of Helsinki (co-author: Catherine Gibson, University of Tartu)

Imperial Threads: Towards a New Spatial History of the Romanov Empire

This paper suggests a new spatial approach for the history of the Romanov Empire. Nineteenth-century empires have traditionally been understood as “radial power structures” (Osterhammel 2014, 614) whose vertical axes of power and lines of communication flowed outwards from the metropolitan core to the peripheries. The Romanov Empire is no exception (see for instance, Gorizontov 2007; LeDonne 2020). We argue that the time has come to move beyond this well-worn image of the empire as a vertical structure of centre-periphery relations and consider the heuristic potential of horizontal threads connecting border regions, not necessarily through the metropole. Drawing inspiration from studies of the Habsburg Empire as a “cooperative empire” (Osterkamp 2016), which focus on cross-regional economic cooperation between its provincial institutions, we will present a preliminary illustration of our argument through discussion of examples of horizontal knowledge-sharing in the spheres of imperial administration, learned societies, and the management of non-human animals.

Jussi Kurunmäki, University of Jyväskylä & Ilkka Liikanen, University of Eastern Finland & Jani Marjanen, University of Helsinki

Autonomy, Sovereignty and Independence in the Conceptualization of Finland's Position within the Russian Empire

The period between 1809 and 1917 is commonly labelled as “the age of autonomy” in Finnish history. The periodization coincides with Finland's imperial connection as a Grand Duchy in the Russian empire and precedes “the age of independence” from the declaration of independence on 6 December 1917 onwards. Present-day banal every-day usage of this key-periodisation of Finnish historiography, tends to employ the concepts of autonomy and independence as milestones of a linear development towards a modern nation-state and the fulfilment of the moment of reaching independence. As we point out in this chapter, the term “independence” was, in fact, used to refer to Finland's status much earlier than any explicit mention of the autonomy of Finland and “autonomy” was introduced as a term for describing the grand duchy first in the 1850s, thus contradicting any popular idea of the “age of autonomy” as a step toward independence. References to the autonomy of Finland became more common first since the 1870s, and even after that independence and autonomy were often used interchangeably to refer to self-determination in the sense of the capacity of the nation to act. We argue that, in this period, new conceptions of sovereignty challenged old notions of both the internal development of Finland and its external position in the empire. Consequently, the use of the terms autonomy and independence did not follow a straightforward path of progress, but variance in the use reflects the articulation of different political interests in the country.

Wiktor Marzec, University of Warsaw

The spatial imaginations and solidarities of Polish socialists at the verge of revolution 1905–1915

The aim of the paper is to scrutinize the spatial imaginations and resulting solidarities among various breeds of Polish socialisms in the threshold decade between the revolutions. Various socialists imagined the spatial community of struggle much different, spanning from empire-wide community of class to alliance of democratic, territorial nationalisms fighting for self-assertion against autocratic powers. Correspondingly, socialist writers developed various visions of spatial order of a possible state and correspondent visions of territorial representation unfolded. The parliamentary ideal with varying spatial correlates served to renegotiate the arrangements of imperial political space. The options ranged from sufficient imperial presence of class-based claims to national self-assertion in a territorial state. Meanwhile, rank-and-file workers enacted spatialized form of solidarity which resulted in divergent forms of imagined community ranging from a single factory, through branch-wide solidarities, national filiation up to pan-imperial class alliance, displayed in various forms of protest and strikes.

These experiences and considerations had grave consequences in the critical juncture of the revolutionary sequence leading to the territorializing of political community and the emergence of the Polish nation state from the spirit of revolution but also against it. Correspondingly, in my paper, I aim to reconstruct the subjective spatial embeddings of

Polish socialisms as expressed via lived solidarities, protest cultures, reference points, benchmarks and overall coverage of affiliated places and events. To do so I look through an extensive textual database composed of socialist leaflets and newspapers to identify patterns regarding these spatial references.