

## [Discourses of Transition in \(post-\)Habsburg East Central Europe, 1917-1941](#)

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Call for Papers

Date:

May 24, 2022 to May 25, 2022

Location:

Slovakia

Subject Fields:

Cultural History / Studies, Eastern Europe History / Studies, Intellectual History, Local History, Modern European History / Studies

CfP: "Discourses of Transition in (post-)Habsburg East Central Europe, 1917-1941"

4th annual conference of the ERC Nepostrans - Negotiating post-imperial transitions: from remobilization to nation-state consolidation. A comparative study of local and regional transitions in post-Habsburg East and Central Europe 1917-1930

When the political institutions, social ties, cultural traditions, and economic links of the Habsburg Empire were pulled apart at the end of the First World War, a change in the mental lives of its inhabitants also took place. When it became apparent that they would no longer live within Austria-Hungary, how did individuals think through the transition out of Empire and into whatever came after? Reflecting on one consequence of this historical rupture, the Hungarian economist Elémer Hantos wrote that

[t]he old world in the middle of Europe has disappeared. What has taken its place bears—easily recognizable—the stamp of the provisional, the unbalanced, and the unsatisfactory. But it is precisely this feeling of incompleteness which ought to inspire us to create new things, to prompt us to prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually (seelisch und geistig) for the work of reconstruction. [1]

At first glance, one may date this text to the months and years immediately following the functional collapse of the Empire in late autumn 1918. But these words were rather published in 1933—part of the introduction to Hantos's *Der Weg zum neuen Mitteleuropa*—in the middle of the democratic, fascist, and authoritarian experiments in statehood that were taking place across the former territories of the Habsburg Empire. Hantos envisioned a new economic unit in the middle of Europe, one founded on the Empire's old economic ties, but without the revision of the region's political boundaries to the pre-1918 status quo ante. It was an unrealized alternative, but fully informed by a sense that with the loss of the old order, something new—perhaps something more just—could take its place.

Newness in and of itself was not a guarantee of harmony in the international system, however, nor was it a promise of coexistence at home, in the localities distant from cosmopolitan metropolises. Visions of post-imperial social, political, and economic orders were myriad. Discourses of transition in post-Habsburg East Central Europe took numerous forms and reflected quite different interpretations of the dynamic changes that had taken place. The scale of these processes operated globally as much as they did within a single household. Indeed, the temporality of these processes mattered a great deal as well: a social change that had become inert at one level could well have remained in action within another spatial horizon.

Co-organized by the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the Faculty of Law of Comenius University, and the Institute of Political History in Budapest, the Fourth Annual Conference of the ERC Consolidator Grant Project “Negotiating post-imperial transitions” (NEPOSTRANS) will be a forum to present recent research on the theme “Discourses of Transition in (post-)Habsburg East Central Europe, 1917-1941.”

Under this broad heading, we invite papers to reflect on and interpret the mental phenomena (ideas, discourses, concepts, and theories, for example) which took postimperial transition as its object. While papers are welcome to treat the entire span of the interwar period in post-Habsburg East Central Europe (~1917-1941), we are particularly interested in research which is temporally centered on the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the early period of postimperial transition, and the beginning of the consolidation of post-Habsburg successor states, that is, focused on the late 1910s through the 1920s.

The conference will take place in **Bratislava, Slovakia**, between **May 24-25, 2022**. The submission deadline is **Friday, March 1, 2022**, and responses will be given on April 1, 2022. Abstract submissions should be no longer than 400 words and should include a brief biographical note of no more than 150 words. In your email submission, please also indicate the extent of your financial need (full, partial, none); the conference organizers are pooling resources to assist in covering the travel and accommodation costs of the attendees. Submissions and inquiries should be addressed to Cody James Inglis (Central European University / Institute of Political History, Budapest) and Gábor Egyri (Institute of Political History, Budapest) at [nepostrans@phistory.hu](mailto:nepostrans@phistory.hu).

The range of possible themes treated by “discourses of transition” within post-Habsburg space is vast, and while the following list is in no way exhaustive, we would like to suggest the submission of research topics which center on discourses related to:

transitions in politics and regimes (democratic, liberal, authoritarian, fascist, socialist, communist);

transitions in state form (republican, monarchist, dictatorial, federal, centralist, autonomist);

the specific transition out of the Habsburg Empire (nostalgia for the Habsburg Empire as a discursive trope, comparisons of a nation-state present with an imperial past, historical reflections on the Empire in the initial postimperial period);

transitions in identity (contestations or reinforcements of various forms of collective and individual

identity);

conceptual transitions (changes in the symbolic trajectories of basic concepts [Grundbegriffe], e.g., “minority,” “nation,” “state,” etc.);

transitions in the social order (the tension between “recasting bourgeois Europe” and the search for new forms of society);

the First World War as a transition (the war as a turning point, as a historical rupture, as a crisis left unresolved, as a catalyst for the restructuring of Europe);

the local resonance of transition (regionalist and localist projects, sub-national forms of collective identification, visions of postimperial social change at the local level);

the temporality of transition (new vs. old dichotomies, uncertainty, revolution, future-oriented visions of society and statehood, nostalgia and memory of things “lost”, reflections on and reactions to a postimperial “modernity”);

transitions in the economic sphere (new plans for old economic zones, autochthonism, globalization/deglobalization, corporatism, capitalism and its variants, socialist experiments);

legal transitions (inheritance of legal traditions and legal corpora, clash between post- and pre-1918 legal arrangements, legal pluralism, constitutionality, rule of law in transition).

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[1] Elémer Hantos, *Der Weg zum neuen Mitteleuropa* (Berlin: Mitteleuropa-Verlag, 1933), 13.

Contact Info:

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