



«global – local»

Third Swiss Congress of Historical Sciences
(*Geschichtstage*)

7 – 9 February, 2013, University of Fribourg

Call for Panels

The third Swiss *Geschichtstage* will take place in February 2013 in Fribourg. Organized by the History Department of the University of Fribourg in coordination with the Swiss Historical Society, it follows the two successful prior conferences in Bern (2007) and Basel (2010). In 2013, the conference is again designed to attract the participation of a broad circle of scholars, teachers, and students of history from Switzerland and elsewhere.

Conference theme: “global – local”

The third *Geschichtstage* will cover the historical development of societal structures, processes, and mentalities in narrow and wide contexts. It will explore the ways in which the interactions between local and global processes affect such historical changes. These effects can be seen in the geographical transfers of people (voluntary and involuntary), of goods, and of information, techniques, ideas, religious beliefs, and philosophies. Positive and negative reinforcement of such transfers have posed challenges for the historical actors involved, stimulated innovation, disrupted traditional mores, and provoked counter-reactions. Such interactions and interconnections, tight-knit and far-flung, have led to links between localities. In their totality, these links comprise a key facet of “globalization” as explicated since at least the 1990s. The “globalization” debate of recent years has further encouraged study of both the historical aspects of such trans-local connections and of the global dimension of developments that are primarily local. World history and global history have thereby been among the fastest-growing specialties in the profession. Long-distance migration flows, growing mobility, and the end of the Cold War have further heightened interest in worldwide processes, trends, and influences.

Recent political developments have evoked comparisons to transnational events in the past, and lent new impetus to discussions concerning locally and globally applied concepts, such as human rights, and stoked interest in the processes of their dispersion and implementation. Local disturbances have often had global effects, and global tendencies have displayed local implications. Contemporary economic events and issues have highlighted the dependency of local markets and politics upon global capitalism, underscoring the importance of comprehending its developments, fluctuations, disruptions, and counter-reactions, in a local context. The terms “global” and “local” encompass not only a diverse geographical range, but also point to historical patterns that are “shrinking” the world and reinforcing contemporary expectations, hopes, and fears of the “global village.”

The *Geschichtstage* 2013 will treat the “global – local” issue across time and space, from a diversity of thematic and intellectual perspectives. The methodological and contextual opportunities and challenges of global history will also be addressed at the conference, and from the vantage points of both the historical discipline and the wider intellectual community of a networked world.

Periods, places, and sub-fields

Across epochs and regions, people have repeatedly striven to break down local barriers, while also seeking to preserve local autonomy. Cooperative and oppositional responses have clashed, reinforced each other, reshaped priorities, and opened new opportunities. This has catalyzed the formation of new social structures, often complex in form and worldwide in implication. Interrelations between such developments, and across geographic and cultural boundaries, can also be traced historically, and the *Geschichtstage* 2013 will serve as a forum for the presentation and discussion of relevant case studies. It will also spotlight many of the diverse interactions and connections (economic, religious, political, technological, etc.) that are associated with “globalization.” In this sense, “globalization” can also be examined for epochs preceding that of traditionally-studied colonialism (as it emerged in the 16th century and was expanded in more recent periods), for example, “archaic globalization” (C. A. Bayly).

“Globalization” has and has had diverse local manifestations. A main goal of the third Swiss *Geschichtstage* will be to explore the spectrum of inter-relations between such local specificities. Of interest will be the local impacts of global processes, countervailing resurgence of local particularities, local challenges of global narratives, histories of “glocalization,” and the issue of how globalization attenuates and solidifies desires for local cultural autonomy (Arif Dirlik). An important set of related issues concern the recognition and overcoming (or at other times, reinforcement) of differences -in language, religion, economic production, political organization, and value-systems- provoking and being provoked by both antagonistic and cooperative forces. Other relevant topics include relations between majorities and minorities, local effects of broader social and legal structures, regional integration of locally shaped decision-making, and local diversion from or repudiation of wider norms and traditions. From a Swiss perspective, the federal model is a particular example that has gained increased currency in political debates due to the development of new “world regions.” Even traditionally centralized states have responded favorably, leading to new perceptions and strategies that were practically unthinkable until relatively recently (Olivier Beaud, Edgar Morin). The roles played by various actors in

various global-local constellations, are a further fruitful object of inquiry, along with identities, identity-politics, and new tendencies towards a politics of “belonging” (Peter Geschiere).

Historiography, Eurocentricism, Multiple Perspectives

Histories treating the entire (known) world are nothing new. How the “world” itself is defined, however, has shifted according to varying perspectives of the observers: from the dawn of historiography (Herodot, Polybios in Antiquity), to the medieval travel chronicle, to the “discovery of the New World” and the age of European expansion (Ramusio, Hakluyt und De Bry). The “universal history” of the Enlightenment saw history as a process aimed at the progress and improvement of society. Europe was the largely undisputed center of such processes throughout the historiography up through the modernization theories of the 1960s (Hanna Schissler). The *Geschichtstage* 2013 will also explore the history of this historiography, including the conceptualization and promotion of local particularities in periods without strong global linkages. Divergence from a European perspective also deserves special attention, examples including the historicization of Eurocentricity and the incorporation of non-Western perspectives into world history. In addition to global and world history generally, new concepts such as “geo-history” (Christian Grataloup), “connected history”, transnational history, or transcultural history, should also be theoretically explicated and empirically developed. Diverse approaches and examples will enhance the multiple facets of global-local connections.

Fields of inquiry and points of departure

“Global – local” themes are ripe for investigation through a range of different lenses: the history of demography, business, technology, religion, culture, politics, the media, law, ideas and science. Intersections with gender, intellectual, literary and social history can be readily developed as well.

The tensions and interdependencies between “global” and “local” are also a productive topic within the historical discipline itself. Methodological issues related to diverging terminologies and culturally contingent approaches are suitable for critical inquiry. The fundamental question of how the “global-local” interface may transform underlying methodologies is also begged. Can terms such as politics, discourse, society be applied directly here, or will reconceptualization prove necessary? The spread of the internet has furthered the development of networks, global forums, and intellectual exchanges, although questions of access to intellectual resources remain significant. In addition to virtual transfers of knowledge, improved communication links have strengthened the dissemination of research findings and helped internationalize the history profession, further transforming perspectives and implications of local historical developments.

For Switzerland, the theme is of central importance to both historical and contemporary discussions. The city of Fribourg, and the History Department in particular, with a long if perhaps somewhat “invented” tradition of linguistic and cultural diversity, and the readiness to cooperatively foster this diversity, offer a suitable and inspiring venue.

Organization

Conference location

The third Swiss *Geschichtstage* conference will take place February 7 – 9, 2013 at the University of Fribourg. It is being organized by the History Department of the University of Fribourg in coordination with the Swiss Historical Society.

Conference structure

The conference will feature:

- Panels of 3 to 5 presentations relating to the conference theme, “global – local” (2½ hours in length)
- Keynote speeches
- Roundtable discussions on topics in history and/or the history profession

Panel proposals, selection, and submission of individual presentations

Proposals for panels can be submitted through the website www.geschichtstage.ch. The submission deadline for panel proposals is **November 30, 2011**. Please note that panels, once finalized, cannot exceed a maximum of five presenters (including co-presenters), although an additional person acting as commenter may be included in the proposal, if desired. In order to allow a limited number of individual presenters the opportunity to join panels after those panels have been approved, a panel proposal should, however, not consist of more than four presentations. That will then leave a place on the panel open for further interested presenters to approach particular panels once the panels have been approved and announced. Panels will be selected by the conference committee of the Swiss Historical Society, (<http://www.sgg-ssh.ch/de/abteilungen/tagungen/>), on which all Swiss university history departments are represented. The panels chosen will be announced on the conference website. The submission deadline for additional individual presentations will be April 30, 2012. The final proposals (with any such revision to the composition of presenters) must be submitted no later than June 30, 2012.

Additional information for panel proposals

- Among the panel presenters, a balanced mixture of languages, academic levels, and genders is encouraged.
- For organizational reasons, no individual may present on more than two panels.
- Where justified, two panels on the same topic may be proposed (as a double-panel). Please contact the General Secretariat of the Conference (see below) before submitting such a proposal.
- The conference languages will be German and French. Presentations may also be delivered in Italian or English. Presentation abstracts will not be translated by the conference.
- Costs: All panel participants will have travel costs reimbursed, and pay a heavily discounted conference fee.

Contact

For further information, contact the General Secretariat of the Swiss Historical Society generalsekretariat@sgg-ssh.ch and Tel. 031 381 38 21.