CALL FOR PAPERS

Cities and river environments – a versatile relationship.
Conflicts between local, national and transnational patterns of governance in East Central Europe and beyond

Annual Conference of the Leibniz Graduate School
History, Knowledge, Media in East Central Europe

20-21 November 2014

Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe –
Institute of the Leibniz Association, Gisonenweg 5-7, D-35037 Marburg, Germany

Organizers: Dr Eszter Gantner, Dr Christian Lotz

Deadline for submission of proposals: 31 July 2014

Taking the manifold entanglements between large cities and their river environments as examples, the conference seeks to explore the conflicts between local, national and transnational patterns of governance. The 19th and 20th centuries saw an increasing impact of cities upon rivers in terms of more efficient use of water flows and increasing regulation and pollution. At the same time, rivers highlighted the limits to these regulations, particularly through floods and desiccation, polluted drinking water, etc. Local, national and transnational attempts of governance were instituted in order to manage these problems.

Thus far, the history of rivers has mainly been written either as a history of modernization and increasing efficiency, or as a history of destruction and deformation. The conference aims to overcome these contrasting perspectives by historicizing conflicting attempts and scales at managing environmental issues of cities and rivers, i.e., cities on the banks of rivers. At the same time, the conference tries to strengthen the links between urban history and river (environmental) history by focussing on four aspects:

1) How did different experts influence patterns of governance concerning environmental issues, e.g., municipal staff, civil service, technical engineers and expert groups at national and international levels? How did they mobilize different sources of knowledge (local, traditional, academic, etc.) in order to tackle environmental issues?

2) What kind of actors at local (municipal), national and transnational levels were engaged in managing the environmental problems of cities and “their” rivers? What kind of conflicts occurred between local, national and transnational attempts? This question applies in particular to efforts of internationalization of inland navigation (as in the case of the Danube and Vistula, but also Rhine, Elbe, etc.), national and imperial attempts to regulate transnational influences upon cities on the banks of rivers, as well as to harbour cities hosting free ports or free trade zones.

3) What different spatial and temporal scales of governing environmental issues did actors suggest and set into practice? Where did actors identify “local”, “national” or “transnational” aspects of environmental issues? How did they perceive and manage entanglements between these aspects?

4) Where are the differences and similarities between these patterns of governance along border-crossing rivers, between nation states and empires in Eastern and Western, Northern and Southern Europe? To what extent did patterns circulate among cities throughout Europe?
The conference organizers welcome proposals covering one or more of these aspects. The proposal should include the project title, an abstract (max. 600 words), a short CV (max. 200 words, mentioning one or two important publications) and contact details. Proposals must be submitted by 31 July 2014. The organizers will inform successful applicants about the conference programme by 31 August 2014.

The conference participants will be asked to hand in a short paper of 3000-7000 words by 31 October 2014. These papers will be circulated among the participants in advance. At the conference, the participants will have the chance to highlight key aspects of their papers in 5-10 minutes in order to prepare a lively discussion.

The conference will be hosted by the Herder Institute in Marburg/Germany. The Herder Institute will cover the travel and accommodation costs of the invited participants.

The language of the conference is English.

Please send your proposals no later than 31 July 2014 to:
forum@herder-institut.de