Section a: Extended Synopsis of the scientific proposal (max. 5 pages)

Negotiating post-imperial transitions: from remobilization to nation-state consolidation. A comparative study of local and regional transitions in post-Habsburg Europe

What does the following have in common: a Romanian military band playing Hungarian irredentist songs in Brasov around 1930; waiters in a mid-Slovakian town courting the sole Hungarian officer in President Masaryk's entourage, the military attaché; the slow demise of gypsy bands in interwar Slovakia's fashionable spas and their flourishing in Romania's caffés; Romanian members of the chamber of public notaries of Timisoara providing non-Romanian fellow notaries with fake positive inspection reports on how they use Romanian? A closer look and a refined analyses reveals that, together with dozens of other possible examples, they are manifestations of a past full of commonalities, an imperial legacy, just as it highlights the often similar and still diverse trajectories of nation-state building on the ruins of the Habsburg Empire after 1918. They also exemplify a variety of post-1918 trajectories for local societies within and across the successor states.

Why it is important to register this phenomenon? Nation-states has a tendency to homogenize institutions, people, spaces, culture and economics, therefore it is often assumed that local societies within have to face the same challenges and they will soon become identical at least as much as the state and its institutions, their goals, working and relationship with society, reproduce themselves from one place to another due to their nationalizing tendency. Is it possible that if a nation-state fails to achieve its nationalizing goals at one place, then it is ready to accept the resulting uneven character of the state? Is it justified to look at these nation-states as patchworks, consisting of many different local settlements whose configurations were dependent on factors like a common imperial legacy and the configuration of local society? How would it transform our image of these nation-states or states if it would be their systemic trait? These are the question this project, based on extensive preliminary research, ultimately attempts to answer.

State of the field: empires, nation-states, local societies, WWI

WWI was always seen as a major turning point in history, the source of a new European order based on nation states instead of empires. The East and Southeast of the continent became laboratories of nation-state building, for most of the contemporaries the final destination of human progress. National historiographies eagerly reproduced this view for many decades. The analyses of social processes during the transition period usually aimed at the demonstration of popular support for what came after.

Recent historiography did much for the **re-evaluation of empires, of social aspects of WWI and the nature of states and transitions**, laying the preconditions for a reconsideration of imperial collapse and nation state building. (1) Contrary to earlier perception (Cohen 2007, King 2001), **empires and nation states are not seen anymore as mutually exclusive forms of statehood**. Beyond rivalry they have influenced each other (Kumar 2010, Leonhard-Hirschhausen 2011a, b, Cohen 2007), empires have learnt from nation-states (universal suffrage, conscripted army, modern weapons etc.) and vice versa (for example the idea of colonialism in nation states), and empires often created better conditions for the development of rival nationalist political movements than nation states. (Judson 2016, Berger–Miller 2015)

(2) Empires adapted and adjusted to a changing world enhancing their persistence. Imperial symbolic and structures mobilized loyalty to the ruler, dynasty or the empire (Deák 1990, Cole-Unowsky 2007, Judson 2016). Differentiated rule and co-optation of regional elites (important characteristics of empires, cf Burbank-Cooper 2010, Leonhard–Hirschhausen 2011a) made imperial rule acceptable. They were often agents of modernization (Rolf 2014, Hirschhausen 2015), and they often contributed to preserving diversity in the face of nationalizing tendencies. A growing civil society influenced politics, even without complete democratization of the political system. (Cohen 2007)

(3) Distinction between Western (colonial) and Eastern (continental, dynastic) empires is problematic. Instead of taking the first one as modern and the second as a relic of the past, their comparison could reveal the structural logic of imperial domination, especially if internal diversity is considered. (Gammerl 2010, Leonhard – Hirschhausen 2011a, b, Hirschhausen 2015) Therefore, **the transition from empires to nation-states** around 1918 **is not the result of belated progress, rather a phenomenon that deserves consideration on its own right**.

Some of the characteristic qualities associated with Empires in Eastern Europe, most notably national indifference (Judson 2006, Zahra 2008, Zahra 2010, Judson-Zahra 2012) and ethnicity were analysed transcending the chronological boundaries of WWI. (Mychalczik 2010, Bjork 2008, Zahra 2008, King 2002) These works have already demonstrated that the empires had a legacy (norms, practices, structures etc.) for the successor states. (Leonhard–Hirschhausen 2011a, b)

 The intense work since two decades on WWI in Eastern Europe has altered our understanding of the social history of the war and the reasons of imperial collapse too. (1) The **war has significantly reconfigured state-society relationships** (Sanborn 2014, Horne 2002, Zahra 2008, Beneš 2017). The state both expanded (suppression of civic rights, economic redistribution, military interference with administration) and withdrew itself, leaving new tasks for society that often fostered the nationalization of associational life and policy making. (Lohr 2014, Zahra 2008) Some social groups became indispensable (skilled labour) and favoured by the state. (Kučera 2016, Healy 2004) Waves of migration posed significant challenges for states favouring sedanterism, and people had to deal with physical (migration) or symbolic (occupation, change of sovereignty) displacement (Baron-Gatrell 2003, Baron and Gatrell 2004)

(2) **Occupation regimes significantly contributed to the realigning of social groups** (Liulevicius 2003, Chernev 2014) **or disruption of existing social relations through deliberate policies, violence and exploitation** (for Serbia see Gumz 2009, Galicia Hagen 2007, Ukraine Dornik ed. 2015.). Out of these. often colonial, endeavours emerged warlordism, revolutionary and paramilitary violence (Gerwarth–Horne 2012, Gerwarth 2016, Sammartino 2012, Eichenberg–Newman 2010). Taken together with similar characteristics of the Balkan Wars they can constitute a long WWI from 1912 to around 1923, presaging already during its preliminary phase the transformation of the state and the international system, (Böhler–Borodziej–Puttkamer 2014), while case studies of paramilitary violence (Beneš 2015, Gerwarth – Horne 2012) revealed the complex motifs of social conflicts and their violent outcomes.

(3) Relocation of the analytical focus from national to the regional level since the mid-1990s (Tooley 1997, Michalczyk 2010, Hausleitner 2001) based on insights borrowed from nationalism studies highlighted the internal diversity of and the resulting conflicts within the new nation states. (Livezeanu 1995, Haslinger 2012, Ward 2014). Some works (Ferhadbegović 2008) went further than registering centre-periphery struggles and looked at diversity within the state, how alternative ethnic or regional elites used regional administration to negotiate their relationship with the centre. Others shifted the focus even further towards detailed studies of complex social relations. (Koeltzsch 2012, the forthcoming dissertation of Joh. Flor. Kontny), but some of these either end or start at 1918. (Kuzmany 2013, Hrstić 2016, Koeltzsch 2012, Engemann 2012) (4) Finally, there are important works on local transitions (Duin, 2009; Švorc–Heppner 2012), but these either focus on one aspect of the transition (politics, organized labour etc.), or were devised as a starting point for further research evaluating the analytical value of the local scale and bringing together often disparate perspectives.

Objectives

Based on extensive preliminary research including a pilot project on a dozen localities from pre-WWI Hungary, **we aim at constructing a new narrative of the emergence of modern Eastern Europe after 1918**. The focus lies at the relationship of the state (empire and nation-states) with society, the latter studied at local and regional scale, in order to reveal the diversity of the paths toward nation-states, and

the variations of trajectories within those entities. Earlier narratives concentrated mainly on national societies or were limited to the confines of the successor states. (See for example Lampe 2000, Heimann 2009, Hitchins 2014.)

Regrading state-society relations, social changes and politics, the expected results will support conclusions beyond the geographic confines of this respective geographic area (successor states of Austria-Hungary) and tackle the issue how **to better understand the social phenomena of transition and transformation** in general. The geographic area of the Habsburg lands is especially suited for such an attempt as it consists of a series of diverse regions which all has its analogous counterparts elsewhere in Eastern Europe, while the initial context (the empire) and the outcome of transition (the nation state) is similar enough to justify a comparison. We will also use our results to re-evaluate existing works on other localities and regions, and pose new questions or connect them with the ones we analysed. Thus, we will not just complement our existing knowledge, but provide **a new, comprehensive portrayal of the transition from the Habsburg Monarchy to its successor states**.

The **first theme** we focus on is **the state**, more precisely state building as an ongoing and never ending process, "describing long-term structural changes in temporal power". (Deak 2015 1-2.) It is primarily creating institutions and bureaucracy. But **states are never homogeneous, they are also a sphere where different actors contest its nature and meaning**. (Jessop 1990, Sheehan 2006) Thus, differences within the emerging structures and among those involved in this permanent contestation are of special importance. The state and its representatives were rather differentiable in their interactions with the people. Local trajectories were related to this internal diversity, through its analyses we aim at broadening our understanding of how states were constructed into those more homogeneous entities we used to understand them. We are interested in rupture and continuity of personnel, administrative culture, concepts of the state) at local and regional level and how it affected the emerging states.

The **second theme** is **elites and their challengers**. We understand elites as groups dominating certain social fields or institutional settings, and sort them accordingly: political, administrative, economic, cultural, military elites. Recruitment, connection with the region, mechanisms of co-optation, networks, various forms of capital are in the focus, while institutions are subject of study only to the extend they were important for these elites.

Challengers were also numerous ranging from new states and their representatives to hitherto disadvantaged or disenfranchised groups, like workers, peasants. How these groups could gain in significance and exert influence on the state through politics? (Kučera 2016, 6.) For every such elite and challenger group the questions arise whether and how they were instrumental to managing centre-periphery relations, what kind of customs, norms, experiences shaped their understanding of polity, empire, nation-state, region and locality, how these were reflected in social practices before and after 1918. Violence is of special importance in this regard, not only as the utmost form of challenging rival groups, but as the utmost challenge to the parliamentary political system of the pre-WWI era.

The **third theme** is **identities**. It includes **ethnicity**, but our question is **how it was situated within the relational system of other forms of identification and groupness**, i. e. local, regional, class, gender, religious etc. Identification is inextricable from centre-periphery relation, and from its institutionalization and praxes. Praxes are especially important as a crucial element of the social construction of these identities, not only in public and during dedicated moments, but also in everyday settings. (Billig 1995, Edensor 2002, Brubaker et. al. 2006, Fox-Miller-Idriss 2008, Egry 2015) Finally, as identity and identification is always manifested in relation to outgroups, it is the theme that includes migration, how local societies dealt with sedanterism, itineracy and the two types of displacement. (Baron-Gatrell 2003)

The **fourth theme** is **discourses**, especially those that reflected upon the momentous changes these societies underwent. Our focus is the contemporary interpretations of empire, revolution, democracy, nation, and especially how these localities were situated within these broader frameworks. Therefore, **we do not aim at analysing the whole discoursive landscape, only the local ones** as they unfolded since

the last period of the war until the seeming consolidation of the successor states. It is easier to bring those local discourses into relation with national ones since discursive aspects of nation building at the state level are addressed by a rich secondary literature. (For example Orzoff 2008, Müller 2005, Haslinger 2012, Romsics 2010)

Why the local scale? Methodology, work packages

The theoretical framework starts with **New Imperial History**, its observations concerning **nationalizing empires and imperialising nation states**. (Hirschhausen 2015, Judson 2016) The project asks whether disparities and centre-periphery relations within nation states, and **the existence of knowledge and experience for their imperial management created "imperial" forms and methods of differentiated rule**. We hypothesize that depending on the symbolic significance of localities for the nationalizing project, the state builders accepted some or most of the tools proven by imperial practice, and we pay attention to the role of imperial figures and their post-imperial biographies in bringing about such accommodations. (Rolf 2014, Hirschhausen 2015)

Another inspiring approach is the idea of **phantom boundaries** (*Phantomgrenzen*), lasting differences of norms, practices, behaviour on opposite sides of the erstwhile imperial borders. (B. Hirschhausen et. al. 2015, Müller 2015) While it easily highlights the legacy of pervious statehood, its most important shortcoming is the creation of an image of homogeneous regions within the new states as if imperial legacy would have been identical everywhere on the territory inherited from empires, without local or regional variations. Our project goes further, and asks how and **why regions and localities that seem homogeneous within a „phantom space" and from the perspective of a phantom boundary differ** if seen from a local perspective?

For the analyses of local contexts, the project builds on insights from **integrated urban history** (*integrierte Stadtgeschichte*, Wendland 2004, Koeltzsch 2012). Instead of assuming the existence of parallel national societies, living alongside in the urban space, it shows urban societies enlivened by the interactions of smaller groups, institutions, social fields, the boundaries amongst them being defined by different cleavages (like geographical or social ones) than ethnic ones.

Ethnicity is crucial for understanding the transformations of a multi-ethnic empire after 1918. The project asks **how and why it gained significance or remained unimportant in different local contexts**. Registering the tendency of the concept of national indifference to create a binary opposition of national and non-national groups (Egry 2016) we apply insights deriving from the concepts of everyday ethnicity (Brubaker et al. 2006, Fox-Miller-Idriss 2008) and identificaticon (Brubaker-Cooper 2000) that focus on the individual interactions, has the potential to recover individual agency in the face of groupness and its methodology is applicable to non-ethnic forms of social identifications too.

The project is basic research, discovering new sources and connecting them with existing literature, its methodological core is a (partly asymmetrical) **comparison of the transition** and its parallel social transformation processes. The former is situated at the local level, the latter is more general phenomenon, while the general reference point (*tertium comparationis*) is two concepts of statehood: empire and natio-state, and its conceptualization by contemporaries. (Kocka–Haupt 2009).

Notwithstanding the debates around the concept of transition, for the aim of this project we understand it as a conscious and deliberate attempt to create a new, stable configuration of state and society in terms of structures, institutions, norms and hierarchies. It is related to two reference points, the „old regime", the one the actors try to depart from and replace with the new one, the other reference point. Transformation, on the other hand, is a lasting and significant social change, reflected in norms, structures and institutions that affect society deeply and usually happens over a long period. (Kührer-Wielach–Lemmen 2016)

These processes did not necessarily overlap or point to the same direction. **The dynamics of accommodations and the tension between the goals of transition and the transformation generated variations among transition processes, "soft" or „hard" ones**. This distinction is based on (a) the pace

of changes, speed of adjustment; (b) coercion, the compulsory or voluntary nature of accepting the centre's will, and (c) the actors, whether they are locals or from the centre. Identifying the configurations leading to different versions of transition help to understand the underlying factors that fostered these alternative trajectories. It follows that the successor states will not be considered only as homogenizing entities, but as entities that were ready to accept, at least provisory, the limits of their efficiency.

Given the limited space and time, unusual for comparison, another analytical perspective provides additional leverage on the subject: *historie croisée*. (Werner–Zimmermann 2006) Designed to overcome the limitations of comparative history, it is suited for grasping moments of radical changes in their complexity. Its object is the intercorssing, „a point of intersection where events may occur that are capable of affecting […] the elements present depending on their resistance, permeability, malleability and on their environment". (Werner–Zimmermann 2006, 31.) A crossing can be an object of analyses itself, one that is not possible to grasp with comparative methods alone, and it involves the processes leading to and from it. **The transition at local level serves as a crossing**, because multiple structures, institutions, processes, discourses, identities, networks, customs, cultures became entangled. But the project goes beyond the analyses of crossings in isolation. **Their comparison as individual units of analyses offers** not only a broader understanding of how nation-states came into being, but **rich material for generalizing the results** with a typology of transitions and of the successor states according to which types of transitions appeared within their boundaries.

The project consists of 8 WPs, out of which 6 cover research activity. WPs 2-5 are identical with the 4 themes (see above). WP 1 is a preliminary survey of archival material in countryside archives. and WP 6 is a final monograph summing up the results and presenting a new overall narrative of post-Habsburg transition. WP 7-8 deal with communication and dissemination.

Sources

Histoire croisée **is a toolbox** for us, and the project combines approaches and insights from different disciplines: political and social history, cultural history, historical anthropology, urban history, labour history, political science, political sociology, nationalism studies, everyday ethnicity, sociology of networks.

 The sources are that of the administration, the police and security organs, the associations, religious and professional organizations, companies, and private material like correspondence or diaries. It is crucial to locate as many documents as possible during the first phase of the project, and also to locate relevant material in the central archives too. (Ministries, central administrative organs, higher religious institutions etc.) A large part of the press is already accessible online and it will certainly help to start the research quickly. Nevertheless, especially the local press is often not easy to find and its evelution needs an effort. It is essential to organize a series of research trips to countryside collections for locating new sources.

During the project, each team member is responsible for one region and the selected localities within, and some senior members for overall themes as well. The selection is based on geographic, social and economic characteristics to entail industrial, agrarian, and commercial cities, situated in mountainous areas, at plains and on the seaside, mono- and multi-ethnic, mono- and multireligious societies, border zones and internal mainlands. These localities had an administrative role and, just as every city, they had served as a central locality for an agrarian hinterland. The selected regions are: Southern Banat, Northern Transylvania – Maramures, Croatian Litoral, Silesian–Western Galician mining districts, Southern Moravia-Northern Lower Austria, Outskirts of Budapest, Bucovina – Eastern Galicia, Prekmurje-Zala, Tyrolia.

Human resources

The team consist of the PI, two senior members, three post-doctoral researchers and three PhD candidates. Everyone is responsible for a geographic region and should work on all the themes (WP 2-6). I have

prospective candidates for the senior positions and the post-doctoral ones. The three PhD candidates will be selected with an open call.

I will devote 70% of my working time to this project, work on the Southern Banat geographic region and ensure overall coherence and consistency. The senior members are already acknowledged specialist and experts of the history of their regions, while the post-doctoral researchers are at the end of their doctoral research on their own regions. The PhD candidates will be hired for four years, they should be multilingual and familiar with the history of the respective regions and with social history.

The team is helped by an Advisory Board, consisting of Holly Case (Brown University), Catherine Horel (Paris 1 – Panthéone – Sorbonne), Joachim von Puttkamer (Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena). The advisory board assists the research with evaluating research proposals, progress, reviewing the results. It is supposed to meet once a year.

Ground breaking nature, challenges and impact

The project is a first attempt to bring together, analyse and typologize a broad range of transitions from the Habsburg Empire to its successor states, to reconsider statehood and nation-state in the light of its results. The research attempts to facilitate symmetric and asymmetric comparison and **combines comparative history with** *histoire croisée* **a novel way**. Given the number of different countries and contexts only a multilingual team, working in ten languages and composed of experts familiar with different fields of history (social, political, cultural, historical sociology etc.) can deal with the task successfully. The most important challenges are keeping the timing of WPs, they are put in a logical sequence to support each other, and combining the results of sub-projects. Team members were and will be selected accordingly, all of them with necessary language skills and professional experience, to help each other with their experience including archival research in countryside archives, while the PI's professional experience with project coordination promises a solid basis for cooperative work. The summarizing of the results and their generalization will be helped by the advisory board too.

The project is interdisciplinary as far as it is based on insights and methodology borrowed from several disciplines and fields of history: sociology of networks, sociology of ethnicity, historical anthropology, political, social, cultural, labour history, nationalism studies, electoral studies. It has the potential to contribute to larger discussions and debates, most notably on transition and transformation, empires and nation-states, regionalism and its components, national indifference and everyday ethnicity, social identities.

Beyond these academic disciplines, it is designed to have an impact on politics of memory and social memory. **At the anniversary, it deliberately attempts to influence how societies remember**. It offers an alternative to the commemorative practices and public discourses and promotes a different understanding of East European and European history while directly engaging society. Presenting this 'transformation from below' and connecting for the first time what has remained scattered both in historiography and in the social representations, the project aims to write a new history of modern Eastern Europe as a common legacy for an integrated European history.

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