

Call for Papers

Orientation & Positioning, Connections & Continuations:

The history of knowledge in Volkskunde/Culture Studies in Europe after 1945

A conference organised by the Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde (SGV) and the Verein für Volkskunde (VFV), Vienna

Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art, Vienna, 16 to 18 November 2017

Deadline: 31 October 2016

*... and would in a few years make all Europe, or the greater part of it,
as free and as happy as Switzerland is today.*

On 19 December 1946, Winston Churchill gave his 'Europe Speech' to an academic audience in which he outlined a concept of a 'European family in a regional structure' for a continent in ruins and proclaimed an alliance beyond nationalistic tendencies. That the influential politician was speaking at the University of Zürich underscores the role and the portrayal of Switzerland as a transnational model, oft-used and variously interpreted, in the immediate postwar era. Especially for the 'small nations' (Churchill) such as Austria, in the complex processes of state and regional self-(re)discovery and identity formation after 1945, Switzerland served as an aid to orientation and positioning.

At almost the same time and with practically the same function, Richard Weiss' outline of *Volkskunde der Schweiz* (Ethnology of Switzerland – 1946) offered the discipline of Volkskunde – Folklore Studies – a starting point for an overhaul of the subject in countries corrupted by National Socialism. Those active in Swiss Volkskunde were more or less assigned the European-wide role of moderator for the discipline's realignment in terms of its epistemology, methods and self-conception. At the same time, bound up with the 'Swiss' were hopes that work would continue in existing personal and institutional networks. In this respect, the image of a 'neutral Swiss Volkskunde' reveals much about conditions within the discipline after 1945.

The conference organised by the Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde and the Verein für Volkskunde in Vienna takes these 'images of Switzerland' in their relevant social and strategic academic contexts as a starting point for cultural and historical reflections on aspects of internationalisation and Europeanisation, of national and regional conceptions of specialist knowledge in the period after the Second World War. Inscribed in such narratives were ideas about the periphery and centre of ethnological-cultural knowledge production; the conference aims to analyse these and their powerful effects. These diverse political processes can be traced through looking at the history of ethnology as a discipline, form of knowledge and institution, processes seen in Austria, for example, at the Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art in Vienna. The museum is also the location for the conference in 2017.

By analysing the strategies, practices and alliances of knowledge production, the conference seeks to focus on the question of the function of this ethnological-cultural knowledge and place it in its specific socio-historical context.

We welcome contributions with a strong empirical basis on:

- the function and workings of ethnological-cultural knowledge after 1945 (e.g. nation building, regional self-assurance, processes of social identity formation, political alignments)

- the possibilities, impacts and limits of (specialised) political models (e.g. the European idea, the Swiss model, concepts for restructuring the nation state, Richard Weiss and his works, 1945 as a 'caesura' in (academic) history, hegemonic narratives of the discipline's development)
- personal and collective positioning, connections and entanglements in academia or the field of academic policy (e.g. atlas projects, histories of collecting, biographical studies, institutional histories)
- the (in)congruence of political/ideological objectives and academic topics/methods/practices (e.g. calls for ethnological studies, the creation of inventories of regional traditions, domestic research, international/European plough research) or academic area studies (e.g. Alpine studies)

The conference is scheduled to take place from 16 to 18 November 2017 in Vienna. A published volume of the conference proceedings is also planned. We will endeavour to cover travel and accommodation costs for speakers.

Please submit an abstract (maximum 300 words) for a presentation in German or English, including a short CV, by 31 October 2016 to Birgit Johler (birgit.johler@volkskundemuseum.at) and Konrad Kuhn (konrad.kuhn@unibas.ch).

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