

Abstracts

Ernst Langthaler

Places in relationship: micro-history after the spatial turn

The 'spatial turn' in the social and cultural sciences has emphasized two aspects of our notion of space: firstly, space as a product of social and cultural practices (in contrast to space as a determining factor); secondly, space as an inter-related network (in contrast to space as a container). Micro-history provides a well-suited toolbox for putting praxeological and relational theories of space into research practice. From this perspective, the essay outlines a research template comprising a series of inter-connected micro-histories. The author exemplifies this 'trans-territorial micro-history' by analyzing the emergence of a globalized agro-food chain from soya-bean production to pork consumption in the twentieth century.

Angelika Epple

Global history and gender history: a relationship full of promise

The article takes as its starting point the observation that both gender and global history are based on the same theoretical assumptions: units of analysis are not viewed as closed 'containers', but as social constructs that can be examined in relational and differential terms. The author's main argument is that the two sub-disciplines have nevertheless found few meeting-points with one another for two reasons. On the one hand, gender history has not extended relational concepts to spatial units of analysis. On the other hand, global history only incorporated relational concepts into its approach as a result of the spatial turn and by way of the debate over 'Eurocentrism'; gender was marginalized as a category of historical research within approaches to global history. Hence, the article concludes with a plea for reflection on the two sub-disciplines' common theoretical foundations, so that the gender bias of global history can be redressed and gender history can be emboldened to engage with macro-structures.

Marco Meriggi

Transnational history and regional history: mobile spaces in pre-Unification Italy

One of the basic ideas of transnational history is to study historical phenomena along a spatial scale that does not coincide with the external borders or internal administrative subdivisions of a state or nation. According to these

suggestions, the ‘correct’ scale is fluid and dynamic rather than static, and changes constantly, adapting itself to the fluctuations of human agency across different spaces. Such an approach invites historians to pay renewed attention to regional spaces and their multiple – i.e., transnational or sub-national – configurations. In this article, the author shows the potential uses of such a perspective for the study of important economic, social and cultural topics in Italian history between the end of the Old Regime and national unification, outlining the features of some of the ‘mobile’ regional spaces on the peninsula.

Bernhard Krisper

Exploring and recording, enacting and refusing. A practice-oriented investigation of amateur films

Amateur films are a very well-known phenomenon: everyone has seen an imperfectly made ‘home movie’, be it a film of some long-ago Christmas Eve or the last summer holiday, whether on super-8-film or video tape. The total number of amateur films in the world is many times greater than the amount of ‘officially produced’ professional films. Up until now, however, the writing of film history has been dominated by the genre of professional film, whereas amateur film has long been neglected. Film historians have not considered amateur films made by private individuals, whose intentions were not artistic or cineastic; nor have they compared such films with ‘real’ films produced by professional filmmakers. Fortunately, a number of film archives and academic institutes around the world have changed their view and have started to collect amateur films and to acknowledge their immanent historical value. The current article examines the different reasons as to why a person makes a film of something, both generally and in specific everyday situations. In this respect, a distinction needs to be made between spontaneous and prepared film recordings. Likewise important is the analysis of people’s reactions: some refuse to be filmed, some act in a ‘controlled’ way, others act as if the camera was not present, and some even pose for the camera. There are also various roles that the person behind the camera might step into. Moreover, when watching amateur films, there are many previously unnoticed details to be discovered, which makes their study so thrilling and full of surprises.

Helmut Alexander

A film says more than a thousand words – how much do amateur films tell us?

Amateur films are testimonies from and about history. They convey information and provide insights about past happenings and encounters, in the same

way as visual sources specifically made for the purpose of documenting the past. The eyes – the lenses – of amateur film-makers offer subjective views and frequently notice objects and occurrences, which professional film-makers do not – or rarely – focus their cameras on. As with other sources, a critical interpretation of amateur films is necessary, along with a clearly defined formulation of the research questions which amateur films may be able to answer, where other documents are silent.

Reiner Ziegler

The world seen through the eyes of the amateur film-makers. The development of the analogue format and amateur films

The beginnings of film lie more than hundred years in the past. Then, as now, amateur film-makers documented their everyday lives, private fortunes, and the most important events of their time. In doing so, they always convey a piece of contemporary history. The history of amateur film is closely connected to the development of the medium itself, because the needs of film-makers provided important impulses to technological and other improvements, such as the reduction of costs, the easier use of equipment, and the reliability of film material. In this way, film came to the masses and increasingly penetrated the realm of private life too. The value of amateur films as an historical resource has been recognized for some time and is only increasing in importance in the current day, with its flood of visual images. For such reasons, the State Film Collection in Baden-Württemberg has devoted itself to the conservation of this cultural resource over the last ten years.

Ilaria Genovese

The amateur films of Nicolò La Colla. Evidence from a conformist coming to grips with the revolution of cinéma chez soi

Amateur films constitute a new element in Italian cultural debate. Although some historians still show reservations about the potential value of this private source, work on the conservation and evaluation of amateur films shows their great richness as historical documents. Home movies contain numerous reference points, but also give back something that is not immediately tangible. As documentary texts, they are somewhat detached: it is necessary to learn their audiovisual language and to compare them with other sources to avoid their remaining mysterious moving images. Taking the stock of films left by Nicolò La Colla as a case study, it is possible to reflect on the nature of home movies and their possible use for historical research, taking account of their advantages and defects.

Fabian Brändle

“The old days revived”. On the personal testimony of Anton Molling, a Ladin farmer’s son, coachman, soldier and hotel porter (1901–1987)

Anton Molling from Untermoi in the Ladin-speaking Gader valley in South Tyrol lived from 1901 to 1987. He was the son of a wealthy farmer, but became indebted and bankrupt. Thereafter, Molling had to stand on his own two feet, working as a farmhand, coachman, and hotel porter. Molling’s fascinating autobiography recounts his difficult life, but without losing his sense of humour (an important asset in the hotel business, if tips were to be gained). Molling directly experienced the darkest periods of the twentieth century, including the global economic crisis, fascism and National Socialism, the referendum on opting to stay in Italy or move to Germany (*die Option*), and the Second World War. Nevertheless, he learnt to keep an even temperament in hard times, maintaining his zest for life and cheerfulness. This makes his text interesting reading in a new period of crisis.

Martin Korenjak

How Tyrol became ‘the land in the mountains’. A search for traces in the early modern period

The present article aims to demonstrate when, how, and for what reasons the image of Tyrol came to be closely associated with the mountains that cover most of its surface. After a short sketch of the situation up to the early sixteenth century, when traces of an alpine image of Tyrol are few and far between, the author documents the emergence of the concept between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth century through a survey of the most important source material, including texts, maps, and pictures. The article assesses key factors in the formation of the idea of Tyrol as the ‘land in the mountains’ during this period, and concludes with a brief look at its subsequent development.