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Surprising similarities? Food Market Deregulation and the Consequences of Laissez-Faire in Vienna, Paris and New York City, c. 1840–1880

In June 1860, the Gewerbefreiheit was introduced in Vienna, turning baking into a “free trade”. Around the same time, similar policies were realised in, among other urban centres, New York City and Paris. Recognising the commonality of market liberalisation, this contribution adopts a comparative approach to analyse the consequences of laissez-faire politics on the food provision of different agglomerations. Focussing on bread and meat, it compares the pathways to liberalization and its effects by looking at supply infrastructures and product qualities. The paper argues that despite the local historical, economic and political differences between Vienna, New York and Paris as well as the differences of the materiality of meat and bread, deregulation had comparable, contradictory results. It will be concluded that while the “free market” allowed for an expansion and diversification of retail geographies, it also negatively affected both food quality and the consumers’ abilities to negotiate a more complex food market. Neither in New York nor in Paris or Vienna did the “free market” succeed to generate the common good via low prices and high food quality standards for all.

Ellinor Forster

Mapping and Appropriating American Regions and Structures with “Austrian eyes”. Consuls of the Habsburg Monarchy in the United States as Intermediators in the 1820s and 1830s

In asking if and in what way regional and global approaches to history could complement one another in a meaningful and fruitful way this study concentrates on connections via diplomats. Among numerous novel consular and diplomatic stations of the Habsburg Monarchy during the “global Sattelzeit”, the example of the United States of America forms a good opportunity to show how regional comparison operated on a global scale. Austrian consuls functioned as multiple connective nodes between two state entities on two different continents as they travelled from one place to the other, wrote reports back to Vienna and received instructions from there. In this regard, they also served as intermediators of perceptions. The consuls looked more and more into the American Frontier – with Austrian interests in mind. In doing so they mentally mapped these regions according to the categories of their interests using established constructions of the different states and territories but arranged them according to their tasks. This touches upon their interest in the efficacy of the democratic structure, the diffusion of Germans on the one hand and the Catholic confession on the other hand. Concerning the seemingly most important agenda, the question of commerce and navigation, it was necessary to specify and differentiate the connections between the regions on either side according to the goods in question. When it finally came to the intended treaty of commerce between the two states, consuls had to converge the two political conglomerates, consisting of different regions and being bound together in a different way.

Jonathan Singerton

Encountering the Fields of Fire. Neapolitan Networks from Bohemia to Pennsylvania and the Transformation of Regional Study into Global Science

Regional history, of southern Italy and especially the Neapolitan volcanic plains, allowed for the cohesion of international scientific connections and facilitated a more globalized study of the world's natural systems. Using the example of a well-known volcano, Mount Vesuvius and the adjacent Phlegraean Fields, or Fields of Fire, this article considers this close interplay between regional and global history from an environmental history perspective. Dissemination of regional observations of Vesuvius and its environs across the world enabled new scientific discourses around geology and later volcanology to develop and mature. In tracing this process of transformation, the role of certain individuals and their networks in underpinning such processes becomes apparent. The global presence of volcanoes, active and extinct, as well as their absence from certain world regions, allowed comparative frameworks for intrepid explorers and proto-scientists from Athanasius Kirchner in the seventeenth century to George Julius Poulett Scrope in the nineteenth century. The works of the British envoy Sir William Hamilton, in particular, abetted the popularity of such observation around Vesuvius and helped spread the interest in volcanic locations from Bohemia to Pennsylvania.

Andrea Komlosy

Goods Chains as Connecting Links between Places and the Global Market. The Austrian Firm Semperit as a Case Study from the 19th to 21st Century

The tracing of goods chains, from raw materials through the finished product and the selling thereof, opens up the methodological possibility of bringing together the different locations involved. Via analysis of the places participating in production chains, connections emerge between entrepreneurs, business organizations, technologies, processes, work relationships, patterns of demand and consumption, and state regulatory practices. Goods chains are therefore an appropriate object for the methodological analysis of how economic locations are connected with one another and included in the global market and international division of labour. This article investigates the interaction between local, regional and global levels in the organisation of business and production by studying over the long term the history of a firm from Lower Austria, Semperit, which specializes in processed rubber products.

Klemens Kaps

Global Impetuses, Habsburg “Universal Commerce” and Translocal Interdependency. Traders’ Networks between Central Europe and the Spanish Atlantic in a Transformative Century (1713–1815)

This article investigates the extent to which translocal and supraregional integration processes within the Habsburg Monarchy were influenced and stimulated by inclusion in the Spanish transatlantic trade during the eighteenth century. To this end, the author employs the methods of historical network analysis to trace the relationships between groups of traders from the Habsburg territories of Lombardy, Bohemia, Tirol and the Adriatic Littoral who migrated to the colonial harbour of Cádiz between 1700 and 1830. The analysis of a selected sample of merchants shows that there was a notable continuity with the polycentric, composite nature of

the Habsburg Monarchy. The majority of business relationships and personal contacts, whether based on kinship or individual trust, occurred within the regional sub-groups of the Habsburg community. At the same time, the coming together of traders from the Habsburg Monarchy favoured supraregional integration processes, which were both institutional and commercial in nature. The intensification of networks between regional areas through inclusion in globalisation processes becomes more clearly visible if the local level is taken into consideration. In the case of Habsburg traders, globalisation advanced a translocal extension of networks and at the same time strengthened cross-cultural linkages within an institutional framework.

Marco Meriggi

The “Imperial Trotters” and the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. Transregional Mobility and Public Officials within the “Global” Space of the Habsburg Empire (1815–1866)

The article examines the phenomenon of transregional mobility. Specifically, the investigation focuses on public officials in the Habsburg Empire from the Vormärz period to the neoabsolutist era, concentrating on the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, which at the time was the largest of the monarchy’s Italian-speaking regions. Between 1815 and 1866, many civil servants from the German-speaking provinces carried out service in the region for longer or shorter periods of time. Risorgimento-inspired Italian historiography, which long dominated historical discussion, tended to interpret the presence of these officials in Lombardy-Venetia as evidence of Germanization, which in turn amounted to national oppression. By contrast, this article draws on the findings of the post-national historiography of recent decades and the conceptual framework suggested by the spatial turn in order to present the experience of these “imperial trotters” as a new form of mobility during the transition from traditional federative empires to modern, centralized imperial states.