

Jared N. Warren
Leibniz Institute for European History
Mainz, Germany
warren@ieg-mainz.de

Botany, Diplomacy, and State-building in Interwar East Central Europe

In December 1929, a group of botanists from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania met at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow to discuss potential projects for the protection of nature in their home states' shared Carpathian border region. The meeting was hosted by the Polish professor of botany at the Jagiellonian University Władysław Szafer and chaired by the Romanian botanist from Cluj Alexandru Borza and attended by botanists and other natural scientists from these three countries. Among the items on the agenda were discussions about the creation of national parks that would transcend the shared borders of these three states and whose administration would be shared jointly. In addition to their conservation work, Borza and Szafer were instrumental in state-building projects in these newly independent states. Szafer, for instance, built the Polish State Council for the Preservation of Nature (PROP), working to solidify conservation institutions across the territories of the three former Polish Partitions. Borza and Czech botanists viewed Szafer's Council as a model to adopt for their own countries. This paper argues that as new borders were established and stabilized in the aftermath of World War I, botanists not only played key roles as political actors in these state-building processes, but also that their scientific expertise enabled them to be particularly effective agents in international politics. Drawing from archival and printed materials in Polish, Czech, German, and Romanian, this paper presents conservation and the botanical sciences as a form of international diplomacy in interwar East Central Europe.

PAPER PROPOSAL

For the consideration of the organizing committee of 'Central European History Convention, July 17th—19th 2025, University of Vienna'

Name: Tibor Bodnár-Király, PhD

Affiliation: postdoc fellow, Ludovica University of Public Service, Thomas Molnar Institute for Advanced Studies (Budapest)

Contact: bokiti@gmail.com

Title: Statistics and the Enlightenment: A History of Political Knowledge in Habsburg Central Europe

Abstract

Through its multiple sources and manifestations, the eighteenth-century emergence of statistical studies (*Staatenkunde*) was unquestionably dependent on the number of nodes and initiatives which made the Enlightenment as formative for new scientific disciplines. In this respect, the principal aim of this paper is to shed light on the interplays between the Enlightenment and the eighteenth-century evolution of political knowledge in Habsburg Central Europe. It takes the Enlightenment not only as a set of constantly evolving values, ideas and practices that dynamically intersected and dialectically constituted one another, but also as a process of knowledge accumulation and dissemination that contributed to improve research fields in different constellations. Building up on the findings and research work conducted in various German, Austrian, Slovakian and Hungarian collections, this paper features the relevance of two perspectives (statistics and Enlightenment) in European context which in that constellation at least received less attention in recent years' scholarship, and focuses on the formation and institutionalisation of statistical gaze in Habsburg Central Europe. By discussing the local and regional experiences, it implies that the implementation of statistical knowledge in Habsburg Monarchy was due to the specific culturalization of Enlightenment scientific discourse that emphasised practical and empirical knowledge over abstract or theoretical learning. Approaching from the angle of intellectual history and history of science, this paper deals with the question what the scholarship can learn from the eighteenth-century history of *notitia rerumpublicarum* and *Staatenkunde*, while addresses two problems regarding the academisation of statistical studies within the frame of the sciences of the state (*Staatswissenschaften*). First, what gains and losses the mid-eighteenth-century descriptive statistics realised by diverging from the scholastic image of political science (*Staatsklugheit*, *prudentia politica*). Second, what political and sociocultural markers determined the adaptation of *Staatenkunde* as political knowledge in Habsburg Monarchy in the second half of the eighteenth-century.

Key words: political knowledge, Habsburg Monarchy, Enlightenment, statistics, sciences of the state

Janek Wasserman
Professor, University of Alabama
wasserman@ua.edu
617-784-5883

Creating a Human Economy: The Role of Central European Social Scientists in Post-WWI Economic Transformation

Abstract: This paper explores the pivotal role of heterodox social theorists and activists in attempting to rebuild Central European states and society after the Great War. Focusing on debates over socialization and land reform in what would become the German and Austrian republics, the paper shows how a diverse collective of actors mobilized a decades-long tradition of alternative economic and social thinking to try to create a more equitable, just, and humane socioeconomic order. Dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, Central European observers had questioned the value and morality of the emergent capitalist order. Thinkers like August Oncken, Lorenz von Stein, and Albert Schäffle demanded new solutions to the Sozialfrage that mitigated the excesses of an Adam Smithian commercial society and the violence of the Marxist alternative. Intensifying after the 1873 Gründerkrach and the Long Depression that followed, reformers such as Josef Popper, Wilhelm Neurath, Theodor Hertzka, Franz Oppenheimer, and Karlis Balodis explored programs of land reform, universal provisioning, and cooperative reorganization to distribute the bounty of the modern world better. While these ideas garnered attention in the social liberal milieux of fin-de-siècle Vienna and Berlin, the Great War opened the door to widespread implementation. Rudolf Goldscheid and Otto Neurath entered these discussions with plans for fiscal reform and centralized peacetime economies. These men ended up in government agencies and on socialization commissions at war's end, where they fought to create the "human economies" (Goldscheid's appellation) they had long envisioned. Even if this "utopian" moment was short-lived, these individuals carried their ideas into the localized experiments of the interwar era that Karl Polanyi called "the most spectacular triumphs of Western history." This paper explores the transnational connections and entanglements that saw the spread of human economy ideas and plans across the globe, from Vienna to Frankfurt, Latvia to Palestine.