



ÓΛΩΖΟ

Conference

**Leisure in Central and
Eastern Europe: A Century
of Political, Social, and
Cultural Crises**

GWZO, 23 May 2024

Leisure in Central and Eastern Europe: A Century of Political, Social, and Cultural Crises

What the history of the twentieth century in Central and Eastern Europe shows is that leisure is a resilient aspect of life that persists even in times of severe crises and demonstrates the will of people to survive and build a life. Living testimony to such crises is the legacy of leisure – historical artefacts that transport the observer to the context. For example, how the bandura, a musical instrument secretly brought by Ukrainians during the forced deportation to Soviet Siberia, serves as a reminder of a lost home. Or what handwritten posters or poorly printed tickets to censored films shown semi-secretly in socialist countries tell us about underground resistance. Personal diaries, musical instruments, hand-made sewn or knitted toys – these are all artefacts of leisure that emerge, adapt, and reappear even in the most difficult times.

This workshop explores the impact of political regimes and ideologies on leisure, and the shifting perceptions and discourses surrounding leisure time throughout the 20th century in Central and Eastern Europe: What can we learn about the changing practices of leisure in CEE by considering the effects of war(s), revolution(s), deportation(s), and shifting ideologies on leisure in the region? How leisure activities and associated artefacts served as a form of resistance or resilience during challenging times? What is the role of leisure in maintaining cultural identity and providing a sense of normalcy during crises?



Image: Leisure in deportation: Mykola Tsvyk (third from the right) is playing accordion for his friends in Tomsk, 1950s. Source: Private archive of Vira Tsvyk (Borovets), After Silence ©

Thursday, May 23, 2024

09.40–10.00

Welcome and Introduction

10.00–11.30

Everyday Leisure Under Totalitarian Regimes

Chair: Daria Rezyk (GWZO)

Andrea Nowicka (University of Warsaw):
Social Aspects of Polish »Official« Culture in the
General Government, 1939–1945

Maria Shevchenko, PhD (Dnipro University of
Technology):
Organization of Leisure by Forced Laborers in Germany
(1942–1943): Example of Camps in Leipzig

Jacub Machek, PhD (Metropolitan University Prague):
A Voucher for a Holiday or a Car: A Shift in Emphasis
from Collective to Individual Leisure in Film Production
in Socialist Czechoslovakia

11.30–11.45 Coffee break

11.45–13.10

**Desperate Times Call for Desperate Fun.
Leisure Strategies During Occupation**

Chair: Polina Gundarina (GWZO)

Anastasia Arefieva, PhD (Independent Researcher):
Theatres in Besieged Leningrad (1941–1944)

Haykuhi Muradyan, PhD (Yerevan State University):
The Soviet Palaces of Culture and Houses of Culture
as Centers of Leisure or State Propaganda: Soviet and
National Discourses (the case of Soviet Armenia)

Sondre Nerland (Volda University College):
Leisure in Norway Under German Occupation during
the Second World War

13.10–13.50 Lunch break

14.00–15.30

Keynote Lecture

»Coffehouses Mean Fun, Coffeehouses Mean Work: Leisure as Labor in the late Habsburg Empire«

by Dr. Lea Horvat (Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Department of Cultural History)

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, coffeehouses served as a prime example of emerging intellectual, political, and artistic groups (not only) in Central and Eastern Europe. However, when discussing such places—considered the epitome of leisure—most scholarly work focuses on the experiences of visitors and consumers, with less attention given to employees.

The lecture delves into the cultural history of the service industry in the late Habsburg Empire—a workplace significantly shaped by capitalism, labor struggles, intensified consumer culture, and patriarchal laws. First, the lecture offers theoretical reflections on the intersection of leisure, labor, and gender, paired with the everyday and labor history of service and leisure industry. How do we think together leisure and labor? How did service and leisure workers spend their free time? What does it mean to work in a place where everyone comes to have fun? How did gender disparities manifest in the service and entertainment industry during this period?

Second, lecture explores the hierarchies of coffee-spaces on the southern Habsburg semiperiphery. This examination considers their relation to the spatial and gustatory traditions of the neighboring Ottoman Empire, as well as their connection with the Vienna prototypes.

The Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) carries out comparative historical and cultural research on the region bordering the Baltic, the Black, and the Adriatic Seas from the Early Middle Ages to the present. There are currently around 50 research scholars associated with the Institute conducting work both in Germany and abroad from across the range of humanities disciplines. In its activities, the Institute relies on a dense network of cooperative partnerships with Eastern and Central European as well as international research organizations.

www.leibniz-gwzo.de

Venue

GWZO, Specks Hof (Entrance A), 4th floor
Reichsstraße 4, 04109 Leipzig

Concept

Polina Gundarina and Daria Rezyk
(GWZO Junior Research Group
»Contrasting East Central Europe«)

Guest and Event Management

Ines Rößler and Julia Kuhre (GWZO)
ines.roessler@leibniz-gwzo.de
julia.kuhre@leibniz-gwzo.de

Follow us on



Facebook



X



YouTube



Instagram



This measure is co-financed by tax revenues as set out in the adopted budget of the Landtag of Saxony.