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"Double transformations:" nation formation and democratization in interwar East Central Europe

Heidi Hein-Kircher [a]* and Steffen Kailitz [b]

aHerder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe, Institute of the Leibniz Association, Marburg, Germany; bHannah-Arendt-Institute for Totalitarianism Studies, Technical University of Dresden, Dresden, Germany

Following the collapse of empires and the subsequent founding of self-determined nation-states, East Central Europe experienced a turning point after World War I. The new states had to transform themselves from branches of a multi-ethnic empire to independent nation-states, as well as from a system of monarchy to democracy at the same time. We argue that one cannot really understand why democracy failed in almost all East Central European states after World War I if one does not take into account the extreme challenges of this "double transformation" consisting of the interactions of the two tightly interwoven processes of nation formation and democratization. Therefore, we deem it necessary to develop a broader research program that addresses the complex interlacement of these two fundamental transformations of politics and society.

Keywords: nation formation; democratization; East Central Europe

Introduction

In this short essay, we outline a new research perspective addressing the fact that, in East Central Europe after World War I, the processes of democratization and nation formation were tightly interwoven. The period of post-imperial state formation in East Central Europe was part and parcel of a global outbreak of democracy at a "liberal moment" (Green 1999; see also Taylor 1963). From the ashes of the collapsing continental empires at the end of World War I, new nation-states emerged in East Central Europe, all claiming to be democracies. These countries had to transform themselves from branches of a multi-ethnic empire to self-determined nation-states *and*, at the same time, from monarchical states, with either limited or no participation rights, into democracies. De-imperialization in East Central Europe, hence, consisted of two tightly interwoven sides of states' and societies' development (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2010), which we characterize as "double transformations:"[1] nation formation and democratization. These "double transformations" took place across all of the new East Central European states, although they differed in their intensities. The claim for democracy became an inherent, unquestioned part of the claim for new self-determined nations in East Central Europe. Democratization, therefore, meant a fundamental transformation from corporate and strictly hierarchically organized societies into societies with equal rights for all ethnic and social groups to a

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*Corresponding author. Email: heidi.hein-kircher@herder-institut.de

formal extent. However, these transitions were not always successful: for example, the First Hungarian Republic only survived from late 1918 until mid-1919 and was not able to establish democratic institutions.

In our article, we define "nation formation" as the broad process through which nation-states come into being (James 1996, 2006), whose essential characteristic is using the power of the state to construct a national identity (nation building). In stark contrast are newly self-determined countries, which tend to define the populace with regard to the titular nation and, hence, to ethnic and often religious boundaries: they tend towards nationalizing politics. "Nationalizing" states (Brubaker 1996a, 1996b, 2011) are defined with reference to Rogers Brubaker as "new or newly reconfigured states that are 'ethnically heterogeneous yet conceived as nation-states, whose dominant elites promote (to varying degrees) the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the nominally state-bearing nation'" (Brubaker 1996a, 57). Hence, national minorities are in-between two hostile nationalisms: of the nationalizing state in which they live and of the "external national homeland" (Brubaker 1996a, 5). This "triadic nexus" is accelerated by the fact that national groups – more or less – corresponded to social groups in the mostly agrarian societies because, roughly speaking, one social stratum consisted mainly of one particular, dominating ethnic group, e.g. the Ruthenians (and Jews) formed the lower strata in Galician cities, while the Poles dominated the middle and upper strata. Hence, national conflicts also involved an important social aspect.

Democratization refers to the implementation of democratic principles and practices with regard to the state, as well as to public life and all societal branches under the principle of participation. This implies the conceptualization of democratic principles within society and its subgroups. These groups may understand the democratic principles differently and derive diverse conclusions based on their own interests and their political attitudes towards the state and society. For example, national minorities often demanded influence in the state, while new dominant national groups interpreted democratic participation in a way that would exclude minorities from it.[2] Stroschein (2012, 1) pointed out rightfully that "ethnic or religious divisions in society can hinder governance and decision-making in even long-standing democracies." Such divisions are an even bigger problem for newly self-determined states still searching for their national identity.

We see the dilemmas related to a "double transformation" as the main reason why democracy was not able to put down societal roots in East Central Europe. "National" values were prioritized over "democratic" values and, hence, nationalizing politics undermined or even impeded democratic consolidation. Hopes for democratic consolidation in East Central Europe were quickly dashed as a massive authoritarian backlash followed the wave of democratization. By 1939, all the states of East Central Europe,[3] with the exception of Czechoslovakia (until 1938), had fallen into various forms of autocratic rule.

One of the most specific problems of East Central Europe was that all new nation-states were created within multi-ethnic territories. Hence, in all of the new nation-states, large parts of the population were suddenly defined as "minorities," which had to integrate into the culture of the ethnic majority. Conflicts over minority rights rose. All these problems burdened the highly complex process of democratization in territories where democratic ideas and civil society had not yet taken root. Conflicts between ethnic groups were not at all brought to an end by the Paris peace negotiations, which established minority rights and protection. The main principles of the peace treaties were perceived by the newly emerging states and their respective dominant nations as being imposed on them by the victors in World War I. Nationalism became a kind of state doctrine, which deeply influenced internal politics and eventually derailed the ongoing efforts of

democratization. In addition, it caused the "triadic nexus" (Brubaker 1996a, 5) regarding the relations of neighboring states. To put it sharply, the post-imperial states were both "defective nation-states" (Kusber 2014, 245) and defective democracies from the moment of their formation.

Research on post-WW1 democratization and nation formation

The processes of democratization between the two world wars from a comparative view are, in historical science, as opposed to political science, still understudied (Laba and Wojtczak 2015, 170). In particular, the complex, interlaced relationship between nation formation and democratization in East Central Europe is an academic void in historical as well as political science research (Henschel and Stach 2013, 166; one exception is Thompson 2002), since research in the past has focused on either nation formation or democratization. The few studies addressing the processes of nation formation in East Central Europe after World War I (e.g. Zurcher 1933; Graham 1967) or the failure of democracy and the establishment of authoritarian regimes (Oberländer 1995) are merely descriptive[4] in nature. Even if one does not focus on the interwar period and East Central Europe, one has to acknowledge that, at least until the mid-1990s, the bulk of the literature on transitions to democracy has ignored the interlacement of processes of democratization on the one hand and nation formation on the other.

In his famous speech of 8 January 1918, Woodrow Wilson confirmed the right of nations to self-determination and proclaimed the spread of democracy. Wilsonian claims resonated strongly in East Central Europe and led to a longing for independence and democracy. Wilson's speech had a strong impact on East Central Europe's national movements. However, the claims for self-determination and democracy in Eastern Europe were not at all a straightforward resonance of the "Wilsonian Moment" (Manela 2007). The processes of nation formation and democratization in East Central Europe mainly had their roots in regional developments in prewar times, and especially in the last phase of World War I.

Before 1914, national movements in East Central Europe had made a claim for national emancipation, or at least for cultural and – in a certain regard – political autonomy (Kusber 2014). During the war, particularly in its second half, these claims turned into a strong yearning for independence. The discourse on national self-determination moved to the center in international relations, involving multiple actors and not just Wilson. Self-determination was one of the main topics at the Brest-Litovsk peace conference, where it was debated by the Austro-German and Russian delegations. It was less of a "Wilsonian moment" than a "Brest-Litovsk moment" (Chernev 2011), which bolstered the national aspirations of Poles and Ukrainians.

The growing claim for national self-determination in international relations was supported by attendant political emigrations, which had started to improve their lobbying work concerning independence in the capitals of the Allies. Since then, one could only imagine national sovereignty together with democratic rule: nationalism and democracy have not been perceived as contradictions, but as "twins of the idea of the sovereignty of the people" (Jahn 2014, 75).

That said, research in this area has not yet sufficiently taken into account the fact that there were some former democratic sparks before the fire of democracy was finally lit in East Central Europe. As such, the diverse sparks and small flames of rudimentary democratic practices and participation within the late empires also formed an important starting point, even though they were obscured by nation-state formation and the consequences of

war. Generally, experiences with democracy differed considerably from state to state. While the Duma elections after the revolution of 1905 were, more or less, the only democratic experience in Russia, there were different experiences in Germany and Austria. While neither Imperial Germany nor the Habsburg Monarchy were democracies, this should not blind us to the importance of their democratic institutions, in particular, the parliaments. The parliamentary tradition in Germany started with the "Parliament in St. Paul's Church" in Frankfurt as a result of the "spring of nations," also known as the revolution of 1848/1849. Imperial Germany practiced lessons in democracy and got better at it (Anderson 2000).

In the Habsburg Monarchy, the general and equal universal male right to vote was already established in 1907. However, democratic parliamentarian experiences were mostly limited to the western part (Cisleithania) of the Habsburg Monarchy. Nevertheless, as with parts of the population of the German Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, large parts of the population in several East Central European states, especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia, had already had their first experiences with democracy. Since Poland united Polish regions in the former Austrian-Hungarian, German, and Russian Empires, people in these three regions had very different amounts of previous experience with democracy in the past.

Nevertheless, all East Central European countries had politicians who had been members of parliament in former times and could build on these experiences. However, in general, early democratic experiences in the empires were, more or less, only available to the urban, upper classes and not to the lower working and peasant classes. To sum up, since the middle of the nineteenth century up to 1914, national movements had democratic aspirations, given that only democratic principles could provide these movements with the right to political participation and a hope for eventual self-governance.

As the actors within national liberation movements developed territorial concepts of nation-states, democratization was strongly connected with such states (Sugar and Lederer 1969). Even multinational states, such as the (ultimately failed) Polish federal "Jagiellonian" state (Dziewanowski 1969) and Czechoslovakia, presented here in certain respects by Sebastian Paul and Ota Konrád, referred to a hegemonic national group. As Dieter Langewiesche puts it sharply: "Nationalism […] sets both free: participation and aggression" (Langewiesche 1994, 10). Hence, the claim for national self-determination also had a "dark side" (Ther 2016). Nationalizing politics brought forward, along the political spectrum, more or less aggressive ideas about the ethnic homogeneity of the nation and the politics of (political) exclusion towards "minorities." Among the political elites of the dominant nationalities in the East Central European states, this led to a bias, in which fundamental democratic principles were disregarded in order to elevate national principles and defend the nation from outside and inside dangers.

Coming to a new evaluation of the interwar states

Traditionally, with the exceptions of Finland and Czechoslovakia, all new East Central European states were considered to have been failing democracies in scholarly works (e.g. Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell 2002; Kailitz 2015a, 2015b, 2017). Usually, these verdicts are only based on evaluating the political regime, including the weak, fragmented parliaments and the political and economic crises (Seegert 2002, 33; Møller and Skaaning 2015; also see Hein-Kircher 2015 regarding the absence of Poland's consolidation). Furthermore, many of these verdicts were derived from the interpretation of the failure of the Weimar Republic (Bracher 1960; Lepsius 1978), focusing, in particular, on the

rise of fascist parties in Germany and Italy (Farnetti 1978; Fritzsche 1998; Lyttelton 2000), while largely ignoring the fact that the main problems of the new democracies in East Central Europe and their path to failure were fundamentally different from these cases (Żarnowski 1983). Although the rise of authoritarian regimes has attracted interest as a research topic in recent times (Oberländer 1995; Ennker and Hein-Kircher 2010; Bauerkämper 2017), a deeper analysis of the reasons why these democracies failed is still lacking.

Conditions for the new democracies in East Central Europe varied vigorously. While Bohemia in Czechoslovakia was an industrialized and urbanized region (Komlos 1980), most other parts of East Central Europe still had agrarian structures with some sectors of industry concentrated in a few cities. In addition, within Polish territory, these industries were intensely destroyed during World War I and the following border wars (Rothschild 1999, 15). Under the auspices of nationalism, the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional demographic structures of East Central Europe led to the segregation and confrontation of ethnic groups from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The structural problems, as well as the inter-ethnic and social conflicts, which came into being in both prewar and wartime periods, made the new nation-states in East Central Europe somewhat crisis-prone (Ennker 2010, 349). Local acceptance and implementation of democratic principles are requirements for democracy to grow roots in society and truly shape public life. However, the appreciation and acceptance of democratic principles, especially among the rural population, was quite low. Democratic principles were insufficiently implemented in societal life, as well as at the lower levels of the state administration. For instance, Poland only accomplished a reform of local government in 1933/1934, when it was already ruled by an authoritarian regime.

Even the bigger cities in East Central Europe, less industrially established than in the European West, and with a lower percentage of industrial workers, were perceived as "peripheral" and "backward" (Gerschenkron 1965; Janos 1989; Chirot 1991). A high rate of illiteracy within poor rural societies was one of the main challenges for the intertwined societal modernization projects of nation formation and democratization. The countryside was still characterized by the traditional corporatist system and large-scale landed properties. In addition, the almost exclusively noble landowners differed with regard to nationality from the peasants, who themselves were perceived as "locals"[5] in some regions, such as the Carpathian Basin or Polesia.

Social and ethnic borders were almost congruent, particularly in the border regions of the new states. Hence, after 1918, equal democratic participation and intentions to give the national "other" the right to take part in political decision-making existed nearly everywhere. Sebastian Paul shows in his contribution to this special issue, regarding the example of the Ruthenians in Czechoslovak Subcarpathia, that the state used different national groups as a tool to "calm down" other nationalities.

Altogether, the processes of consolidating the new states and developing civil societies were closely linked to issues of nationality. One of our main observations – with regard to East Central Europe's multi-ethnic and post-imperial contexts – is that the democratic transformation of postwar societies and their states led to the legitimation of nationalizing politics. This resulted in ongoing discrimination against national minorities. Hence, nationalizing politics eventually achieved priority over democratizing politics. Another related observation is that democratic consolidation failed in all societal spheres. By this, we mean that democratic principles did not become socially and politically integrated and accepted. Instead, democracy stayed, more or less, at the surface and was only realized with regard to the parliamentary system. In addition, as Klaus Richter shows in his article, the different legacies of war and empire overburdened the states and societies (Böhler,

Borodziej, and von Puttkamer 2014). Richter argues that property redistribution was a major tool of both democratization and nationalization in Poland and the Baltics. It provided governments with a means to give peasants a stake in the new democratic states, while, at the same time, empowering new titular nations and marginalizing former elites. As such, the goals of integration were generally missed.

The consolidation of the new democracies and the new social order was also prevented by conflicting national groups. The relationship between national groups within a state had become "more violent than ever before" (Biondich 2014; von Puttkamer 2014, 23). Already during World War I and the border and independence wars after 1918, national conflicts escalated violently (for Polish and Ukrainian examples, see Mick 2010, 69–282; Amar 2015, 30–37) and shaped the later relationship between national majorities and minorities. Almost each step taken in order to consolidate the young states was tied up with the nationality question, such that securitizing discourses emerged on both sides. The dominant group interpreted the measures with a view to securing the state (not democracy) and thus tried to exclude "national minorities" from power, while non-dominant ethnic groups construed them as a threat to their nationality. One example in this regard concerns the failed elections of 1920 in Czechoslovak Subcarpathia (for details, see Paul in this issue). The postponement of parliamentary elections in Poland after enacting the constitution in 1921 was due to the prevalent fear that certain minorities could gain unexpected influence in parliament (Schenke 2004, 44; Hein-Kircher 2015, 111). These discourses were reflected in exclusionary measures, such as nationalizing education and cultural politics, by securing the "achievement" of national independence (Rothschild 1999, 12). One of the most oppressive forms against minorities can be found in the violent "pacification," which took place in 1930, against the Ukrainian national movement in Poland in order to prevent its uprising and (violent) acts against the Polish state. As a general result of the nationalizing politics against national minorities, a vicious circle developed, in which minorities were located within securitizing discourses as a threat to the nation-state, which legitimized the oppression of minority rights. These attitudes and practices, in turn, provoked political and/or violent protest against them. Hence, such securitizing discourses and practices mutually and dynamically reinforced each other. In addition, democratic principles and subsequent societal transformation were perceived as (societal and national) threats to the new nation-state. Oppressive nationalizing politics were established by parts of the ethnic majority to counter this perceived threat from national minorities towards the nation-state. Securing the nation-state was the main task of the political elites. Aspects of democratization, such as equal rights for national minorities and especially their involvement in national politics, were perceived as a highly destructive threat to the recently hard-won nation-state (Zloch 2010, 510–519; Hein-Kircher 2015, 98).

In a comparative sense, the argument that other actors – usually labeled as extremist – represent a severe threat to the security of the state and the nation is the most common legitimation for the executive and/or the military toppling democracy (Kailitz 2015c). In this respect, discourses claiming that national minorities were endangering the security of the nation gave legitimation to coups d'état in East Central Europe and the subsequent establishment of authoritarian regimes (such as in Poland). Even in Czechoslovakia, which had a more stable parliamentary regime, such discourses circulated (Haslinger 2010, 291; see also Paul in this issue). It could well be that the common view on Czechoslovakia is too positive. While intolerant nationalism and discrimination against minorities by Czech authorities did not lead to the collapse of democracy, they may have helped to pave the way for the breakdown of the nation-state, which was not merely a result of the "betrayal" of Western democracies at the Munich conference (Olivová 1972; Heimann 2009; Orzoff 2011). The Sudeten

Germans brought forward the claim to national self-determination, arguing that Czechoslovakia was a country controlled by the Czechs, who largely ignored minority rights. While this claim was, of course, only instrumentalized by Nazi Germany and the Sudeten Germans, it was hard for Western democracies to systematically argue against it.

Contributions of the special issue

This special issue, therefore, aims to contribute to a renewed and deeper understanding of the interwar societies of East Central Europe and the failure of democracy in the interwar period. The contributions identify fundamental processes and problems caused by the "double transformation" that existed beyond the parliamentary systems. All the papers show that politicians and the state administration interwove nationalizing with democratizing politics, often prioritizing the "security" of the new nation at the cost of the process of democratization. In response to these policies, national "minorities" enforced the processes by strengthening their national coherence. By revealing that these processes were multilayered, the papers deal with fundamental problems resulting from this "double transformation."

One basic achievement of the democratization processes, alongside equal suffrage for men, was female suffrage (with the exception of Hungary), which had been postulated by activists since the turn of the twentieth century, but which not all parties welcomed. In her contribution, Angelique Leszczawski-Schwerk shows that even the introduction of female suffrage as a fundamental aspect of democratization was nationalized. Women's suffrage was used to enforce national thinking within national groups. The female actors were involved in the framing of national thinking and acted accordingly. Concentrating on female members of the Polish Sejm, Leszczawski-Schwerk points to the impact they had on nationalizing female fields of interest, such as the social question.

All political movements had their centers in urban contexts. The proclamation of equal political rights led to the integration of formerly politically indifferent and inexperienced groups, especially in rural regions. Sebastian Paul discusses the example of Subcarpathian Rus against this background. He shows that emerging states tried to develop local or regional forms of democratic participation, which were, however, always based on national orientation. He concludes that, through democratization, political diversification was accelerated by national orientation. This assumption is quite important to any further evaluation of the "double transformation" because the political mobilization of the rural population in all of East Central Europe was fostered by nationalizing politics, especially the redistribution of land by the state. The political mobilization of the rural population under the auspices of property redistribution led to a national mobilization, while this process was ambivalent to the process of democratization.

A key experience for citizens of the new democracies in East Central Europe was the long period of wartime violence and the often anarchic and violent aftermath, which brutalized the societies involved. East Central Europe was not only the location of important battles and changing front lines. After November 1918, many of the regions there were also scenes, as well as objectives, of wars for independence, civil wars, and paramilitary insurrections or riots (Gerwarth 2014). The ethnically divided populations were traumatized by violence, and it was especially hard to integrate the veterans, who mainly consisted of a young generation facing overwhelming difficulties on returning to civil life and entering democratic structures. In addition to nationally motivated violence against the "national other," the violence during World War I, the independence and border wars (Böhler, Borodziej, and von Puttkamer 2014; Conrad 2014), and the wars against Soviet expansion

attempts until 1921 (Eichenberg 2014) challenged the re-pacification of the population, as the violence experienced in wartime made it easier to use violence after the war in order to solve conflicts and assert political claims, as happened, for example, during the Silesian riots and violence used by paramilitary groups (Gerwarth and Horne 2012; Haslinger and Petronis 2013; Balkelis 2014). The integration of former soldiers into a civil postwar society was a key task for the new states, which took different steps in this regard. For example, to win support from former – mostly uneducated – soldiers for the new system, agrarian reforms were intended to be a central measure (see Richter in this issue and also Benecke 1999).

Not only did the pogroms, such as those of November 1918 in L'viv (Mick 2010, 232–256; Wróbel 2014), but also the descent from political demonstrations into violence highlight the problems of transforming societies (Gerwarth and Horne 2012). Ota Konrád points out, in his paper, that internal peace is an important precondition for democracy, which was not fulfilled in the new democracies in East Central Europe. He exemplifies this challenge with regard to local famine riots in Czechoslovakia and Austria just after the war, concluding that only under the conditions of the failing Habsburg Empire could national animosities on Czech lands break up under a national sign and, hence, help to integrate society. In contrast, riots taking place in Austria were socially motivated, crying out for social equality. In fact, the Czech riots became an invitation to other national groups to participate in the Czechoslovak culture of victory over the Habsburgs. This example shows, as with the memory of Polish legions (Henschel 2010; Eichenberg 2011), that the nationalized violence served as a kind of founding narrative for new societies. The article also reveals the coeval misunderstanding of democracy (and personal equality in rights) as a justification to take violent action against the former elites due to the need to depose them from their former status and make them equal. While the riots had "only" a social impact in Austria, they were clearly connoted with national questions in Czechoslovakia (Reulecke 1995).

A second key experience was the replacement of former social and political elites who, in most cases, were also of a different nationality. The nationalizing politics outlined by the new elites were made for "their" national dominating ethnic group, excluding the old elites and other ethnic groups. Many expected that democracy would solve all social problems that were rooted in traditional prewar structures and that the destruction of war and postwar economic crises could be overcome. Particularly with regard to social questions, the expectations of the people were quite high and diverse, as the contributions of Ota Konrád and Klaus Richter demonstrate (Stegmann and Boekh 2010). Hence, democracy was burdened by unrealistic expectations about a bright socioeconomic future, which was dashed for great swathes of society.

Nationally established social elite exchanges developed into a pillar of democratizing states, while nationally justified exclusion and inequality in everyday life became key problems for all new democracies. Social questions were the main issues in the evaluation of achievements of the democratic regime by the coevals, as the welfare state had been tied up with the vision of democracy since the first social interventions by states or cities at the end of the nineteenth century.

The access to social rights was, in the context of the time, a fundamental participatory right, such that, for example, Róża Pomeranc, member of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) and the Committee for Social Welfare and Invalidism, claimed it for Jewish orphans and their social care, as Angelique Leszczawski-Schwerk points out in her contribution. That said, it would be too easy to claim that national minorities were generally denied those rights. On the contrary, access to social goods could have helped legitimize the new order, even in the eyes of national minorities; but their exclusion from them provoked disintegrational

attitudes, as the agrarian reforms all over Eastern Europe show. The elite exchanges were an inherently necessary expectation – even if not a promise of democracy – in the eyes of the coevals. One important aspect of that issue is the widening of land possession in order to win favor among the lower, mostly peasant, social strata and to settle former soldiers who would defend their land and state (Benecke 1999). Hence, Klaus Richter's contribution comparatively deals with an important social challenge facing all new states. Property distribution had been an important social and national issue before 1918 and became a key problem and a practical test of power for the new states and their elites afterwards, especially with regard to a necessary ideological demarcation from Bolshevik agrarian politics. Richter shows how deeply property distribution was tied up with nationalization politics, such that only members of the nationally dominant group had the opportunity to participate.

To sum up, all contributions to this issue clarify the insecurity that resulted from transition, radicalized nationalizing politics, and ultimately damaged democratizing politics – not only with regard to violence, but also to the insecurity of national achievements. For the non-dominant groups, the democratization of societies went hand in hand with their signified discrimination, their loss of property and the loss of social significance. On the other side, the new dominant groups had to fight to consolidate their newly gained position.

All post-imperial states, therefore, had to cope with the "double transformation" problems, given that the transformation processes were multidimensional. Democratization was thus *a* means of legitimizing power gained through or after revolutionary acts or wars of independence against empires. But, it was not implemented as a leading principle in all parts of society, nor was it established in the political consciousness of the people. In contrast, the democratic legitimization of the new nation-states was finally used to impose nationalizing politics and, in terms of securing the nation-state, became an argument for discriminating against non-dominant national groups. Rather than becoming a solution to contentions over nationality, democracy increased this problem. Along with the process of democratization, there was an extensive societal discussion about the concepts of democracy, which included an extremely difficult attempt to consolidate the newborn democratic statehood and to prevent further contentions over nationality. Ethnic heterogeneity was a key issue in the debates about democracy right from the start. Democratic and national transitions were interwoven challenges for the new societies. Under these particular conditions, the "double transformation" was a *differentia specifica* in East Central European states compared to Western democratizing states, particularly Germany and Austria.

We argue that one cannot really understand why democracy failed in almost every East Central European state after World War I if one does not take into account the extreme challenges of a "double transformation" for societies. Based on the contributions to this special issue, we consider it necessary to develop a research program, which adds new aspects to the history of democracy in East Central Europe. As such, it is most important to go beyond and extend former research topics that only deal with the parliamentary system itself.[6] New methodological approaches, such as the "cultural history of politics," which have developed since the start of the twenty-first century (Frevert 2002; Mergel 2002; Stollberg-Rilinger 2005), enable us to deepen the analysis of the driving forces beyond political and constitutional structures. The analysis of the lower levels of states and of their different spheres could, hence, contribute to the understanding of why societies were not deeply leavened by democratic thinking; rather, they were in favor of abandoning democracy.

To conclude, we claim that there is a need for a comprehensive history of the intertwined processes of nation formation and democratization in East Central Europe, that is, of their "double transformations." In cases such as East Central European countries after

World War I, where democracy and nation formation were historically entwined processes, we should therefore not separate these processes artificially for analytical purposes, as doing so would run the risk of misrepresenting the available facts. It is part and parcel of our research program that we deem it necessary to look beyond limiting national narratives in historiography, as well as the centers of power, and instead pursue bottom-up approaches, which investigate local communities in order to truly understand such complex processes as democratization and nation formation.

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Notes

1. Our approach is inspired by the ongoing debate in political science about whether the transitions in post-Communist states were double (Elster 1990), triple (Offe 1991), or even quadruple (Kuzio 2001). The phrase "double transformation" was originally coined by Jon Elster to address the simultaneous transition from a Communist regime to democracy, and from a planned economy to a market economy. He was the first to address the fact that, during a simultaneous political and economic transition, tensions, and contradictions between these two processes could block each other under the conditions of transformation crisis (Elster 1990).
2. See the attempts of the Polish National Democrats in the early 1920s (Zloch 2010, 35–76; Hein-Kircher 2015, 110–111), whereas Haslinger (2010, 289) shows that minorities' parties were excluded in the early stages of the Czechoslovak state as well. A similar phenomenon after 1989 became the focus of more research on "ethnic democracy" (Smooha and Järve 2005; Haklai 2013).
3. The term "East Central Europe" has been somewhat intensely and controversially discussed in recent historiography. Even so, one can find a kind of consensus, which we are following in this special issue. Thus, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary form the core of East Central Europe, while the three Baltic States, as well as Romania, Croatia, and Slovenia, belong to its border and overlapping (with Northeast or Southeast European) areas. The distinction between East Central Europe and East Europe (mainly Russia) follows the criterion of the Roman Catholic influence on this area (in contrast to the Orthodox influence in Eastern European areas) as well as the tradition of Oskar Haleckis' common traits, structuring the region via specific characteristics of multi-ethnicity and cooperative liberty and the belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or the Habsburg Empire in early modern times (Augustinowicz 2014, 9–32; Hackmann 2015; von Puttkamer 2015). In contrast to historiography, social sciences subsume, almost indisputably, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania under the term "Central East Europe," while more disputes arise when it comes to the classification of Germany, Austria, and Finland.

4. The historiography was influenced by the findings on German development and by the concentration on failing parliamentary systems and the extreme fragmentation of their parties.
5. Especially in Poland's eastern territories ("kresy") and in the Carpathian Basin, the "locals" only started to develop a national consciousness through political mobilization processes at the end of the nineteenth century (see, e.g. Ackermann 2010, 91–92).
6. Further research on this topic will be conducted in the framework of a new project by Steffen Kailitz and the contributors Angelique Leszczawski-Schwerk and Sebastian Paul (2018–2020). It will explore the "double transformation" of Central Europe using the example of the transnational border triangle between Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia after World War I (1918–1923), with a focus on developments in rural areas. It will highlight the interrelations between top-down and bottom-up processes of democratization and nationalization.

ORCID

Heidi Hein-Kircher ⓘ http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3455-5410
Steffen Kailitz ⓘ http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7251-3265

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