

## **Madeleine Herren, Main characteristics of research and teaching**

In research as well as in teaching, I focus on elements of transgression, the emancipation of new actors, the negotiation between established and new forces, and the development of identities in changing societies. This approach goes beyond national entities, but includes the significance of states by focusing on the historical development of transnational *networks*. Networks/Netzwerke/ réseaux - a term already known before World War I - should be seen as a keyword in the history of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Co-operation with different disciplines is a main characteristic of my understanding of how scientific work should be done. With a strong methodological foundation in the traditional academic discipline of history, I facilitate interactions among disciplines and support comparative studies. My research projects follow a transdisciplinary approach too, since work beyond the limits of a discipline comes closer to the concerns of contemporary society. However, transdisciplinarity is not limited to co-operation with other disciplines and is not only a question of new themes. Transdisciplinarity includes careful reflection on methods and theories of comparative history. In addition, this approach commits one to teaching historical methods carefully.

### *Past and present research*

*Internationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries:* In my postdoctoral thesis as well as in a book published recently (Herren/Zala, *Netzwerk Aussenpolitik, 2002*) research focuses on international congresses and organizations and their significance in foreign politics and international relations by comparing the situation in different states (Switzerland, Belgium, the United States). My publications in this area are centered around the importance of international networks in international relations between 1865 and 1945. This approach shows the political significance of semiofficial congresses of all kinds, the existence of multilateral co-operation in technological and scientific questions, and the political importance of a first generation of IGOs regulating information transfer globally. This part of my research also discusses the interactions between an international civil society and foreign politics, by asking how information and communication went beyond national borders. The findings reveal increasingly growing networks in the 19th century, their stability in times of crisis and political tensions - and their susceptibility to totalitarian control. In addition to demonstrating national socialist interests in the control of international congresses and organizations, my current research in this field will continue to elucidate the dark side of globalization by investigating the completely unknown internationalist activities of fascist Italy. A further discovery is that women played an important role in the development of an international

civil society; their entrance into international relations can be seen as a result of these networks.

In October 2002 I began with two colleagues, a professor in German literature and an expert in museology a research project on *general knowledge and society*. Sponsored by a major Swiss research foundation (Gebert Rűf Foundation), this project focuses on the question of how an encyclopaedia, as a specifically shaped container of knowledge, influences knowledge and constructs chains of connotations important to the daily life of a knowledge society. After consideration of the origin and tradition of ordering principles of knowledge, the project asks whether this form of knowledge transfer dominates globally and how various cultures have handled the encyclopedic form of information transfer in different times and cultures. In addition, special attention will be paid to the questions of censorship and areas of difference (concerning structure, content, consumers, producers) in encyclopaedias edited in totalitarian states.

*Zoonoses and newly emerging diseases:* Zoonoses are diseases which can be transmitted from animals to humans. The definition of a disease as a zoonosis can thus be seen as a decision which involves scientific as well as political and cultural considerations, as experienced recently in the case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The idea of a collaboration between veterinary medicine and history goes back to the first international transdisciplinary conference in Zurich in January 2000 (publication of a paper on brucellosis in the interwar period). The project developed after the conference is supported as transdisciplinary research by the research department of the rectorate of the University of Zurich. At the moment, I share the direction of this project with a colleague, who teaches at the faculty of veterinary medicine.

#### *Future research interests*

The projects on zoonoses and on general knowledge and society go beyond traditional academic disciplines. Therefore, more research can be done in an institutional framework that facilitates interaction among the disciplines. In both projects financial support should be seen as seed capital with which to facilitate further funding.

At the moment, the scientific community is discussing new modes of biographical research. With the director of the archives of the University of Bern, I am planning a publication on «several lives - history and transgressive biographies». This publication will focus on biographies of people born at the end of the 19th century, who changed career, religious denomination, political orientation, nationality, and continent several times and who regarded themselves as internationalists. In fact, for historical research, people who continuously restart their lives are a methodological challenge, since the information collected by using registration processes (birth certificates, e.g.) is missing.

However, transgressive biographies bring to light the varieties of cultural orientation, and the historical possibilities of identity beyond territorial orientation.