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ULF BRUNNBAUER



Ulf Brunnbauer

Managing Director of the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (Germany)

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Education: He has a PhD and a MA, both in history, from the University of Graz (Austria)

Ulf Brunnbauer is Managing Director of the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (Regensburg, Germany) and holds a chair for Southeast and East European History at the University of Regensburg. He is also Co-Speaker of the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies (University of Regensburg and LMU Munich).

When did you first develop an interest in Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies?

My enrollment at university concurred with the 1989 revolutions, so it was an obvious decision to transform my juvenile fascination for Eastern Europe into an academic pursuit. Being an undergraduate student in Graz - just an hour away of what was then Yugoslavia, the descent of Yugoslavia into war provided another motivation to study Eastern Europe and the Balkans. I learnt that history could really become a matter of life and death. I would not have been able to make much sense out of this were it not for Karl Kaser and his group at the University of Graz. Their stress on the history of everyday life and of social practices left a lasting imprint on my own research.

How have your interests changed since then?

My first piece of genuine research was devoted to early Soviet History (the "League of Time"), but for my PhD I shifted to the history of the Balkans (in Graz, Southeast European History is really strong). Since then, I not only moved in space but also in my areas of interests, from Bulgaria to Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. Yet, there is no change without continuity: I still consider the Balkans and Eastern Europe to be the most interesting but also most challenging parts of Europe. They offer so much room for re-interpretations of history. Unfortunately, the interest in the region, and the continuous need to study it, is based also on the sad fact that no other part of Europe is still so liable to erupt in military conflict.

What is your current research project?

Currently, I am working on a book on labor migration from Southeastern Europe in the 19th and 20th century as part of my long-standing interest in the social history of the Balkans. Coming from a country where the Balkan Gastarbeiter has become a generic concept, I always wondered what emigration meant for the sending regions. One of the major results of my research so far is the salience of emigration policies in the Balkans since the 19th century and the continuity of migration systems. I believe that migration research has also a political point to make: it can help calming the almost paranoid fears which in continental Europe usually come up when migration is debated.

What do you value about your ASEEEES membership?

ASEEEES (then AAASS) was the first academic association that I joined as a graduate student. For me, it is the most important means to keep up with current research trends in Eastern European Studies. When attending the annual convention, I continue to be impressed by its wealth of topics, atmosphere



of collegiality, and spirit of relevance. I always return with a bunch of new ideas – among them for the panel to be submitted in time for the next convention!

Besides your professional work, what other interests and/or hobbies do you enjoy?

One of the great things about Regensburg is the nice countryside. So when weather and schedule allow, I take my racing bike and train for one of the annual highlights, the Arber Biking Marathon. It goes without saying that after the race I regret the decision not having spent that particular Sunday reading the newest issue of Slavic Review.

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