

Researching (in) the Mountains: Transcultural Perspectives on Knowledge Production in the Eastern Carpathians

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“Among the mountain ranges of Europe, the line that makes up the Carpathians has had the fate of being the least traveled by naturalists; everything that has happened has been of little importance, and has mostly extended only to the foothills. However, partly the wildness of the inhabitants of these mountains, partly the difficult progress in the same, partly the little benefit that has been obtained from the attempts made now and then, may have been to blame for the fact that naturalists so rarely decided to do so.”

Balthasar Hacquet, 1790¹

When Balthasar Hacquet conducted his well-documented research travels through the Eastern Carpathians, he did so on a mission for Austria, to serve the state that had just annexed eastern Galicia after the first partition of Poland. His journey was a means of generating knowledge on the states' new periphery, which was previously largely unknown. He disparaged the efforts of former travelers, while describing the inhabitants of the mountains using orientalist stereotypes that aimed to justify the empire's civilizing mission for the region. However, Hacquet's "discovery" of the Eastern Carpathians, as extensive as his reports were, was not the last attempt to appropriate the mountains through the production of knowledge and cultural imaginary. As Patrice Dabrowski has shown, Polish and Ukrainian national movements "discovered" the Eastern Galician Carpathians for themselves in the late nineteenth century, a period when they intensified their nation-building efforts.² Especially in the interwar period, soon after the Habsburg Empire's successor states annexed their respective parts of the Eastern Carpathians, they began to re-discover the mountains and adjust knowledge formations to the needs of their new states, re-making their idea of the landscape and its inhabitants.

The Carpathians form a long mountain arc that historically separated different regions and states in Eastern and Central Europe. As a peripheral border region, distinctive in its multi-ethnic character, the Carpathians presented a challenging area both for the Habsburg Empire and its interwar successor states. Since the late eighteenth century, individual parts of the mountain range and its populations had been put on to the mental maps of different, often competing actors, who claimed the region as part of their imagined national territories. Since 1918/19, the Carpathians had been split between the new East Central European states, which inherited not only the pre-existing borders, but also the legal, administrative, and physical infrastructures in place. As an important part of the surrounding national territories, different sections of the

1 BALTHASAR HACQUET: Hacquet's neueste physikalisch-politische Reisen in den Jahren 1788 und 1789 durch die Dacischen und Sarmatischen oder Nördlichen Karpathen: Erster Theil, Nürnberg 1790, cited after: KURT SCHARR (ed.): Die Karpaten: Balthasar Hacquet und das "vergessene" Gebirge in Europa, Innsbruck 2004, p. 39.

2 PATRICE M. DABROWSKI: The Carpathians: Discovering the Highlands of Poland and Ukraine, Ithaca, NY 2021.



Fig. 1: Contemporary geographic map of Carpathian mountains, Ikonact, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Geographic_map_of_Carpathian_mountains.svg (2025-05-20)

Carpathians were considered crucial parts of national histories.³ Most recently, the Carpathians have been studied more comparatively as a landscape appropriated by different states and national movements,⁴ with some authors emphasizing the benefits of transnational approaches to the entangled histories of related macro- and micro-regions.⁵ European mountain regions in general have

3 Paradigmatic: PAUL R. MAGOCSI: *The People from Nowhere: An Illustrated History of Carpatho-Rusyns*, Uzhhorod 2006.

4 Bohemia 54 (2014), 1, special issue: *Alpen und Karpaten*, <https://www.bohemia-online.de/index.php/bohemia/issue/view/196> (2025-07-10); *Danubiana Carpathica* 8 (2014), special issue: *Die Erschließung der Karpaten*.

5 DABROWSKI; FILIP HERZA: *Colonial Czechoslovakia? Overseas and Internal Colonization in the Interwar Czechoslovak Republic*, in: *Interventions* 26 (2024), 2, pp. 338–361; BIANCA HOENIG: *Geteilte Berge: Eine Konfliktgeschichte der Naturnutzung in der Tatra*, Göttingen 2018; MARTIN ROHDE: *Eine wissenschaftliche Perspektive auf die ukrainisch-polnische Konkurrenz um die Ostkarpaten im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, in: *Spiegelungen* 16 (2021), 1, pp. 35–45; VLADYSLAVA MOSKALETS: *The Roads of Baal Shem Tov: Reimagining the Carpathians as a Jewish Space in the 20th Century*, in: *Euxeinos* 14 (2024), pp. 76–94, <https://doi.org/10.55337/36/VIBI3332>; JAGODA WIE-

been studied for their symbolic meanings in national discourses, which helped to transform them into political landscapes loaded with cultural imagination in national as well as transnational settings.⁶

In this special issue, we suggest reframing the perspective on the Carpathians and its inhabitants by building on recent research discussing 1918/19 not as a sharp break, but as the beginning of a transitional period in which the Habsburg successor states were challenged with administering the imperial legacies, as diverse as the respective regional histories. Thereby, despite their efforts to “nationalize”⁷ themselves, they remain “difficult to label for the historian, and even more difficult to see as ideal-type nation-states.”⁸ As the successor states still encompassed the same pluricultural regions of the Habsburg Empire, recent approaches have justifiably pointed out that the new nationalizing states had to act as “small empires”⁹ in governing their minorities. Simultaneously, the “Wilsonian moment,” an anti-imperial yet at the same time colonial gesture, did not necessarily cause representatives of dominant nations and imperial elites to abandon their colonial gaze on various groups.¹⁰ Quite the contrary, the ideas and practices of imperial dominance were transcribed into the new world order, including the post-Habsburg territories. On the basis of the recent impulses of new imperial history and postcolonial scholarship, in particular Mary Louise Pratt’s framework of the “contact zone,”¹¹ we consider the nationally and linguistically diverse Eastern Carpathians a space of trans-cultural interactions, mobility, and exchange. In the interwar period they were shaped by shifting power relations, attempts at domination and appropriation by surrounding states and nations. We are particularly interested in studying the various constellations of knowledge production employed by different state-building agents in order to understand, (un)make, and manage difference. Building on that, this approach allows us to trace how top-down initiatives at-

RZEJSKA: Była wschodnia Galicja w Polsce, Polska w byłej wschodniej Galicji: Obraz (wielonarodowej) prowincji w międzywojennej literaturze polskiej [The Former Eastern Galicia in Poland, Poland in the Former Eastern Galicia: The Image of a (Multi)national Province in Interwar Polish Literature], Warszawa 2023.

- 6 RAINER GULDIN: Politische Landschaften: Zum Verhältnis von Raum und nationaler Identität, Bielefeld 2014; EDUARD MAUR: Paměť hor [The Memory of the Mountains]: Šumava—Říp—Blaník—Hostýn—Radhošť, Praha 2006; DABROWSKI.
- 7 ROGERS BRUBAKER: Nationalizing States in the Old “New Europe”—and the New, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19 (1996), 2, pp. 411–437.
- 8 GÁBOR EGRY et al.: *Momentous Times and Ordinary People: Life on the Ruins of Austria-Hungary*, Budapest 2023, p. 136.
- 9 PIETER M. JUDSON: *The Habsburg Empire: A New History*, London 2016, p. 484.
- 10 EREZ MANELA: *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford et al. 2007.
- 11 The concept was coined by: MARY LOUISE PRATT: *Arts of the Contact Zone*, in: *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40. For the application to Central Europe, cf.: MARTIN ROHDE, GUALTIERO BOAGLIO (eds.): *Kontaktzonen in Zentraleuropa*, Innsbruck—Wien 2022 (*Geschichte und Region / Storia e regione* 31, 2); MARTIN ROHDE, GUALTIERO BOAGLIO: Editorial/Editoriale, *ibid.*, pp. 5–20; BOHDAN SHUMYLOVYCH, JOSHUA FIRST: Editorial, in: *Euxeinos* 14 (2024), pp. 3–9, <https://doi.org/10.55337/36/KXML2420>.

tempted to involve locals, and respectively locate the relevance (or impossibility) of counter-narratives or bottom-up practices as means of performing auto-ethnography in the contact zone. We review these through the lens of imperial legacies as well as new agendas set by the emerging states. While we acknowledge that the complicated diversity and plurality of the Eastern Carpathians will not allow us to cover the whole region comprehensively in this special issue, we aim to introduce a methodological approach for the study of the Carpathians and other transcultural mountain regions that will transcend the presented spatial applications.



Fig. 2: Bacon's Standard Map of Europe, 1923, 1:5,500,000 (W 52°–E 80°/N 60°–N 30°), public domain, for the whole map in high resolution, see: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Europe_in_1923.jpg (2025-09-23)

The establishment of firm state borders was the result not only of World War I and the break-up of the Habsburg Empire, but also of international negotiations, violence in the successor wars, and attempts at self-representation by the locals.¹² We therefore suggest re-examining these “small empires” from their

12 WŁODZIMIERZ BORODZIEJ, MACIEJ GÓRNY: *Der vergessene Weltkrieg: Europas Osten 1912–1923*, vol. II: Nationen, Darmstadt 2018; JOCHEN BÖHLER: *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921: The Reconstruction of Poland*, Oxford 2018; TOMASZ PUDŁOCKI, KAMIL RUSZALA (eds.): *Postwar Continuity and New Challenges in Central Europe, 1918–1923: The War That Never Ended*, New York—London 2022. On national councils in the territory of former northeastern Hungary, cf.: SEBASTIAN RAMISCH-PAUL:

margins by taking a close look at their interaction with groups which were located in their borderlands—Ruthenians in Podkarpatská Rus, Hutsuls between Poland and Czechoslovakia—or even outside their recently shifted borders, as in the case of Hungary and the Szeklers. The highlands are a specific location, as the strata of local elites was genuinely thin due to the absence of institutions and career perspectives for them in the mountains. The few local elites—and this shows crucial imperial elements in regional politics—were largely oppressed. Czechoslovakia dismissed Hungarian officials, whom the state considered not trustworthy, and replaced them mostly with Czechs. Poland surveilled and persecuted local clerics in the Hutsul lands, yet did not constrain its arsenal to symbolic violence, but used physical violence to oppress the only strata that contributed to local self-organization. To a large extent, Poland therefore made the locals speechless. Czechoslovakia, by contrast, did not persecute Ruthenians, yet never realized the promised regional autonomy and thereby constrained the formation of local political representatives.

Yet the mountain dwellers were also considered peculiar in themselves. As all the contributions point out on the basis of extensive source materials, the predominant imaginaries, often institutionalized by governmental institutions, saw the highlanders as “archaic,” “backward,” “primordial” or “unspoiled.” These problematic framings often served as a justification for pursuing modernizing projects on the regional level, which were often accompanied by cultural expressions of the “civilizing mission,” that in turn was meant to justify political domination in general and modernization projects in particular. Simultaneously, ethnographers persistently associated the highlands with a culture that was “dying” or which threatened to vanish in the wake of ongoing modernization. These presumptions frequently prompted state and non-state actors to pursue conservation movements particularly relevant for the Carpathians, such as nature conservation, ethnography, and a steadily increasing number of regional museums. As Jagoda Wierzejska demonstrates in her contribution regarding the intersection of nature protection discourses, ethnography, and modernization in the Polish Hutsul region, the Polish state and its representatives put a lot of effort into reconciling these conflicting projects and agendas.

Various state-describing (collective) works have inscribed the mountains in the Habsburg Empire and its regions. Examples include the popular encyclopedia *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild*, its Hungarian translation, a counterproject prepared on the occasion of the 1896 millennial

Fremde Peripherie—Peripherie der Unsicherheit? Sicherheitsdiskurse über die tschechoslowakische Provinz Podkarpatská Rus (1918–1938), Marburg 2021, pp. 25–32; on the Lemko in the former Eastern Galicia, cf.: KAMIL RUSZAŁA: Three Nations at the Crossroads: Poles, Jews and Lemkos between 1918 and 1919, in: PUDEŁOCKI/RUSZAŁA, pp. 235–256, here pp. 243–249; on the short-lived so-called Hutsul Republic, cf.: NATALIYA NECHAYEVA-YURICHUK: National Identity and Its Role in State Building: The Example of the Hutsul Republic, in: ANGELA ILIĆ, FLORIAN KÜHRER-WIELACH et al. (eds.): Blick ins Ungewisse: Visionen und Utopien im Donau-Karpaten-Raum. 1917 und danach, Regensburg 2019, pp. 33–50.

celebration (*Magyarország vármegyéi és városai*), the volume *Unsere Monarchie* in recognition of Franz Joseph's 50th throne anniversary, or the last example of such projects, *Mein Österreich, mein Heimatland*, which was published during World War I.¹³ These are widely recognized works that integrated regional and ethnographic studies with illustrative material, thereby developing enduring depictions of the respective regions. This integration of specific imperial narratives and visual representations is a notable aspect of the artistic approach. Nevertheless, these very images and platforms have also been employed by national movements to shape counter-discourses. In the interwar period, nationalizing states sought to redefine dominant images and discourses that had come to dominate public consciousness, as Martin Rohde's paper argues based on folk-type photography. However, despite all efforts to remake those images, borrowings from Habsburg and German ethnography (*Volkskunde*) and derivations from the German *Heimatschutzbewegung* became some of the most influential impulses to approach (national) landscapes.¹⁴ This ethnographic heritage bore the potential to transform a peripheral mountain region into an elemental national landscape, as, for example, the story of the Tatra mountains and the ethnographic discourses and practices in nineteenth century Zakopane demonstrate in the Polish case.¹⁵ In the context of ethnographic depictions, images and, in particular, photographs appear not only as iconographic depictions, wherein they can be studied in the framework of vis-

13 SIEGMUND SCHNEIDER, BENNO IMENDÖRFFER (eds.): *Mein Österreich, mein Heimatland: Illustrierte Volks- und Vaterlandskunde des Österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, vol. 1–2, Wien 1914–1916. On *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild*, cf.: JURIJ FIKFAK, REINHARD JOHLER (eds.): *Ethnographie in Serie: Zu Produktion und Rezeption der „österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie in Wort und Bild“*, Wien 2008; on the Galicia-volume as a medium for Ukrainians to implement their national discourse on local language and culture, cf.: MARTIN ROHDE: *Huculska pieśń ludowa dla Austrii: Ukraińsko-austriacka współpraca naukowa u schyłku monarchii Habsburgów* [A Hutsul Folk Song for Austria: Ukrainian-Austrian Scholarly Cooperation in the Late Habsburg Monarchy], in: JAGODA WIERZEJSKA, DANUTA SOSNOWSKA et al. (eds.): *Galicja: Niezakończony projekt*, Kraków 2022, pp. 83–114; MARTIN ROHDE: *Ethnographie in transkulturellen Kontaktzonen: Imperiale Kooperationen und regionales Wissen über den ostgalizischen Raum*, in: ROHDE/BOAGLIO, pp. 21–44; On the re-negotiation of photographic images, cf.: MARTIN ROHDE, HERBERT JUSTNIK: *Habsburg Imperial Image-Space: Negotiating Belonging through Photography*, in: *Euxeinos* 14 (2024), pp. 44–75, <https://doi.org/10.55337/36/IYH2750>.

14 On the relevance of German *Heimatschutzbewegung* for Czech nature conservation discourses and practices, cf.: JANA PIŇOSOVÁ: *Inspiration Natur: Naturschutz in den böhmischen Ländern bis 1933*, Marburg 2017.

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ual history,¹⁶ but also as “little tools of knowledge”¹⁷ that may be used to construct or even challenge hegemonial discourse on space and people.¹⁸

Changes of state borders seriously affected the national “imagined territory.”¹⁹ Czechoslovakia had to seek a way of squaring the circle in order to integrate newly annexed Podkarpatská Rus into its territorial understanding. Poland’s expansion to the east allowed it to annex a certain part of the *kresy* it desired, but forced the state to integrate—economically, socially, and culturally—many diverse “minorities.” New territories on the periphery of the “small empires” figured as sources of uncertainty and insecurity, which were encountered with orientalizing discourses, civilizing missions, intensified knowledge production as well as military and non-military attempts at securitizing the borderlands.²⁰ Ukrainians—alongside Jews—were the largest group in East Central Europe which did not obtain a sovereign state, due to the failed attempts at defending the Western Ukrainian People’s Republic. Therefore, the Ukrainian national movement—as well as Russophile and regionalist movements, attempting to represent the East Slavic locals—posed a potential threat to the new territorial order of the Eastern Slavs in the Czechoslovak-Polish(-Romanian) Carpathian borderlands. Conflicts, selective cooperation or ignorance were amongst the manifold responses to their efforts by the states in question.

Hungary’s state territory, by contrast, dramatically decreased, with the Szeklers, an integral part of the national imagination, now living outside of the proclaimed nation-state. Therefore, the Hungarian situation after Trianon in relation to the Szeklers is much more comparable to the situation of Germany and Austria and the constructions of the “borderland Germans” and Southern

16 On the “iconic turn” respectively “visualistic turn” in cultural studies, cf.: DORIS BACHMANN-MEDICK: *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 5th ed., Reinbek bei Hamburg 2014, pp. 329–380; on visual history, cf.: GERHARD PAUL: *BilderMACHT: Studien zur Visual History des 20. und beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 2013; GERHARD PAUL: *Visual History: Ein Studienbuch*, Göttingen 2006.

17 This metaphor is used to describe bureaucratic and academic means for the presentation of knowledge, such as the statistical table or index cards, in: PETER BECKER, WILLIAM CLARK (eds.): *Little Tools of Knowledge: Historical Essays on Academic and Bureaucratic Practices*, Ann Arbor 2001. In both academic and popular approaches, we can extend this understanding to photographs and other images, which were supposed to order space and people through the combination of a picture and its caption or description.

18 Possibilities of this approach in the application to concrete regions were recently discussed at the conference “(Re-) Branding Regions in East Central Europe: Space and Spatial Representations in Transition after World War I & II,” co-organized by Martin Rohde and Jagoda Wierzejska at the University of Vienna, 13–14 February 2025. Cf. the report: FELICIA RITTERSBERGER: *Tagungsbericht: (Re-)Branding Regions in East Central Europe*, in: *H-Soz-Kult*, 02.05.2025, <https://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/fdkn-154709> (2025-06-06).

19 PETER HASLINGER: *Nation und Territorium im tschechischen politischen Diskurs: 1880–1938*, München 2010.

20 RAMISCH-PAUL; KATHRYN CIANCIA: *On Civilization’s Edge: A Polish Borderland in the Interwar World*, Oxford 2020.

Tyroleans. Gergely Romsics demonstrates that these are not just issues in parallel, and he showcases a concrete transfer from the German approach of *Volkstumsforschung*²¹ to Hungarian scholarship. His contribution focuses on international knowledge transfer in the research on “mountain people.” Romsics looks at the Hungarian claims to the Szeklers through the lens of interwar German *Volkstumsforschung* considered with the “borderland Germans.” On the basis of a brief review of interwar German academic output, he asks to what extent this German scholarship and *völkisch* thought influenced the (re)construction of the Szekler in Hungary as representing a threatened—but all the more “pure”—reserve of ethnic vigor, fighting and surviving in the Eastern Carpathians. After a survey of the ascent of the idealized image of the Szekler in Hungarian public speech and the press, the paper turns to a discussion of agents of cultural transfer in interwar academia and literature, tracing how Hungary’s “engaged academia” contributed to the cause of territorial and political revision.

Not only Hungary, but all the states in question had the task of reappropriating and remaking political maps according to national viewpoints, making sense of contested areas and explaining the uncertainty according to national epistemology. Therefore, all of them relied increasingly on “frontier science.”²² By this term we mean approaches that use scientific discourse to organize contested frontiers. This often set in motion processes of exchange beyond the national scientific elites, each of which can be examined separately. That does not necessarily mean that they seriously questioned the national belonging of the highlanders, which was all too often considered an objective truth in national epistemology. Yet the production of knowledge according to the state’s ideological framework was a crucial enterprise not only for policy making, but also for its communication and public justification, which increasingly relied on scholarly and scientific objectivity. During World War I and the aftermath of the peace conferences, the knowledge they produced became integral to political discourses.²³ Ethnography, anthropology, and geography were “frontier sciences” par excellence, although the specific gaze of these disciplines at ethnic (sub-)groups operated far outside of narrow scholarly or scientific realms.

21 On *Volkstumsforschung*, cf.: MICHAEL FAHLBUSCH: Wissenschaft im Dienst der nationalsozialistischen Politik? Die “Volksdeutschen Forschungsgemeinschaften” 1931–1945, Baden-Baden 1999; on its transnational roots in the Habsburg Empire, cf.: NORMAN HENNIGES: “Naturgesetze der Kultur”: Die Wiener Geographen und die Ursprünge der “Volks- und Kulturbodentheorie,” in: ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies 14 (2015), 4, pp. 1309–1351, <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1076/1146> (2025-05-06).

22 MARTIN ROHDE: Ukrainian “National Science” from a Spatial Perspective: How the Hutsul Lands Were Mapped, in: Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 23 (2022), 4, pp. 773–801, here pp. 780–781.

23 MACIEJ GÓRNY: Science Embattled: Eastern European Intellectuals and the Great War, Paderborn 2019; MACIEJ GÓRNY: Vaterlandszeichner: Geografen und Grenzen im Zwischenkriegseuropa, Osnabrück 2019.

The presumption of the highlanders' simultaneous difference and proximity presupposes forms of ethnographic thinking which are in themselves necessarily historicized, as these are deeply subjective processes, created by national, political, and individual ideologies. Especially when it comes to visual sources, the "ethnographic gaze" is to be understood as a "disciplined and peculiar way of looking," which itself has a history.²⁴ In order to understand the transition that began after World War I, it is furthermore crucial to understand to what extent "ethnic boxes"²⁵ produced by the Habsburg Empire prevailed, survived, or were remade.

As the issue demonstrates, the appropriation of the Eastern Carpathians was not only a process featuring multiple perspectives, but also featuring multimedia. The sources utilized by the contributions include scholarly and popular scientific texts, newspaper articles and literary texts, and photographs and film. Visual material and artistic products made equally important contributions to popular discourse about space, often much more accessible to the public than scientific elaborations yet shaped by the latter. Therefore, visual and literary contributions played a role in producing, circulating and hence shaping knowledge—in other words, they are representations of what James Secord refers to as "knowledge in transit."²⁶

The rapid development of new media and reproduction technologies provided a crucial backdrop for the visual appropriation of the highlands. While the medium of photography and its use in the Carpathians dates to the second half of the nineteenth century, the technological developments of the first half of the twentieth century made it far more accessible for a wider public. More amateurs were now able to tour the mountains with cameras, and the medium was also much more frequently used in periodicals and postcard collections. Furthermore, photography became more accessible to locals. These arguments are of a considerably spatial character: they must be seen in the context of relatively poor regions in East Central Europe, distant not only from the imperial or national capitals, but also from urban centers in general.²⁷

Pavlo Leno introduces bottom-up, auto-ethnographic photography as a new source into historical and ethnological research. In regions with relatively low rates of literacy, suffering from poverty, the reconstruction of the self-image of the local population as a counter-narrative often poses challenges to historians due to a lack of sources. In this respect, photography produced by locals presents a novel source. As his contribution demonstrates through comparing top-

24 RAYMOND MADDEN: *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, Los Angeles et al. 2010, p. 99.

25 ROK STERGAR, TAMARA SCHEER: *Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification*, in: *Nationalities Papers* 46 (2018), 4, pp. 575–591.

26 JAMES A. SECORD: *Knowledge in Transit*, in: *Isis* 95 (2004), 4 pp. 654–672. A similar point on popular science films has been made by: OLIVER GAYCKEN: *Devices of Curiosity: Early Cinema and Popular Science*, Oxford et al. 2015, p. 2.

27 On the institutionalization of photography in L'viv as a cultural center of the larger region, cf.: ALEKSANDER ŻAKOWICZ: *Dawna fotografia lwowska: 1839–1939* [Old L'viv Photography: 1839–1939], Lwów 2004.

down images of the region and its inhabitants in contrast to autoethnographic photography of the local population in Podkarpatská Rus, these representations had barely anything in common. The latter often demonstrated the self-modernization of individuals or families, contradicting the image of the supposedly “backward,” “savage” or “original,” as well as standing aloof from the state’s narrative of modernization in the region. Such photographs are furthermore a source for the history of the local population in the region, which often did not leave written traces. Although they may not provide an average social history of the whole region, in conclusive contrast to ethnographic photography, these autoethnographic testimonies allow the locals’ subjectivity to be restored.

Rohde develops the visual knowledge production theme by paying attention to transregional circulation of images. In contrast to Leno, he focuses on type photos as a postimperial phenomenon transcending states and regions. His paper argues, based on a comparison of Czechoslovak and Polish photography of the Hutsul region, that both of these approaches bear witness to the ideological backdrop of photography in Habsburg ethnography (*Volkskunde*), as these national visual cultures participated in the imperial enterprises of the pre-war period. Yet throughout the interwar period, both nationalizing states walked individual paths in their efforts to integrate their new borderlands into their “imagined territories,” leading to new visual approaches. They presented challenges to the Ukrainian movement, which did not reconsider its approaches towards the Hutsuls, but saw an opportunity to appropriate it through photography as a modern, visual media which allowed them to represent Hutsuls as a source of the richness and ancientness of Ukrainian culture.

Jagoda Wierzejska’s discussion of the Polish approach to Hutsuls in the framework of “nature protection” shows how Hutsuls were essentially considered a part of the landscape, to be “protected” from influences of modernity on the one hand, while simultaneously being subjected to a Polish civilizing mission and tourism development projects. Literary texts and popular films aimed to convey this juxtaposition, shaped by scholars, to a larger public, while planning to school the locals on protecting the landscape. With the promoted concept of local peculiarities’ protection, the purported need for Polish aid to the Hutsuls in preserving their farming and natural surroundings was conveyed. Education was ultimately meant to encourage local, state, and national patriotism. In such a discourse, knowledge production and protection of the Eastern Carpathians intertwined with the manifestations of power over the region, while attempting to incorporate the locals in specific ways—as loyal citizens and active representatives of the region—into the related projects.

The mountain landscapes under investigation proved to be a specific kind of in-between space, a contact zone, transnational frontier, characterized by, among other things, their remoteness from national movements and state-building processes, the great relevance of intermediary actors, and the question of how landscape shapes the contact zone beyond any deterministic understanding. Scholarly discourses prevailed at various levels and went well beyond the academic sphere. The central media types involved were popular travel litera-

ture and other forms of (illustrated) guidebooks, photography and, last but not least, film. They penetrated broad areas of society, and not only aimed at national revanchism, but also included seemingly modern discourses on environmental protection or regional politics. There are further related central questions which deal with the comparison and interdependence of different spaces in greater depth, question the development of further discourse formations in exchange with the image of border landscapes, and examine other media genres. As well as further studies on film, further studies should also consider here music and performance.

As this special issue demonstrates, ethnographic and ethnographically influenced knowledge and image production, in their broadest sense, experienced a reorganization of their geographies of power and actors, which also transformed the symbolically charged Carpathian discourses. The influence of ethnography on visual cultures expanded significantly following the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire. Nevertheless, the influence of both German and Habsburg cultures persisted in the outlined geographical regions and visual cultures.

While the present contributions have their geographic focus particularly in the Eastern Carpathians, the methodological concept bears broader implications for the study of transnational mountain regions. They should be understood not only as contact zones between highlanders and lowlanders, but as spaces of exploration, experimentation, and exploitation of various actors and ideologies, many of which transcended the mountains and their adjacent valleys. Similarly, geographies of knowledge production did not necessarily follow a clear and distinctive center-periphery model. Quite the opposite, due to the plurality of actors' interest in the mountain regions, new provincial centers of activism emerged according to political, technological, and infrastructural possibilities, based on a number of innovations and borrowings, which are situating the stories told in a global framework of knowledge production and image-circulation.

This can be demonstrated conclusively by contrasting the biography and mission of Balthasar Hacquet, quoted at the beginning, with the geographic spectra of the articles in the volume. Hacquet studied the mountains in an imperial mission to produce knowledge about the lesser-known peripheries, beginning with the Alps and moving on to the Eastern Carpathians. His reports had been published in German, as the dominant language of the empire. This volume, in contrast, presents case studies on knowledge-production of a similar space, which was conducted by actors in widely spread geolocations, related to the new nationalizing states—or concurring national movements—and in a variety of languages. These mountain landscapes became central locations for state-building, nation-building, and related practices of knowledge-production during the interwar period. Yet due to a plurality of actors, authors, and artists, as well as numerous bottom-up practices of image-making—as demonstrated by Leno's paper—that emerged, there was no single, hegemonial voice like Hacquet's, but rather a plurality of (counter-)narratives.

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