



Technische Universität Dresden, 01062 Dresden

Contact: Steffen Heidrich  
Phone: 0351 463-37865 (Sekretariat)  
Fax: 0351 463-37769  
E-mail: [oberschl@tu-dresden.de](mailto:oberschl@tu-dresden.de)

Conference / Call for Papers

**Industrialization in Upper Silesia in the 'Age of Extremes' A Cultural History of Economics, ca. 1890-1950**

Dresden, June 1-2, 2023

No process shaped the "Transformation of the World" in the 19th century more than the industrialization of Europe, which initially only took place in individual regions of textile or heavy industry. Upper Silesia was a pioneer region of industrialization, where rapidly growing industrial production transformed the previously predominantly agricultural landscape through the construction of mines and smelters, workers' settlements and their connection with railroad lines. The borderlands of the German, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires shaped the ethnic composition of the workforce as well as the economic practices of the Upper Silesian entrepreneurial dynasties that emerged from the large landowning aristocracy.

In the first half of the 20th century, the region was pivotal for heavy industry and arms production. With the partition that became effective in 1922 as a result of the First World War, Upper Silesia became a subject of dispute between Germany and Poland. After the invasion of Poland in 1939, National Socialist Germany annexed the eastern part and turned it into another site of its population policy and, at the same time, into an "armory" of the German Reich. After the Second World War, the entire region became part of the socialist Polish People's Republic, which nationalized the industrial companies. A large part of the German-speaking population was expelled or deported, including most of the people who until then had belonged to the circle of the owners and managers of the coal and steel industry.

Since October 2021, the Center for Central and Eastern Europe at the Technical University of Dresden has been researching the history of the Ballestrem corporation as a case study of Upper Silesian heavy industry as part of a BKM-funded project. The project focuses on the communicative, representative, educational and traditional dimensions of workers' welfare, church and settlement architecture, as well as the economic strategies for coping with crises and upheavals in the first half of the 20th century and the culture of remembrance of the work of Upper Silesian mining and forestry entrepreneurs.

The aim of the planned conference, to be held at the TU Dresden on June 1-2, 2023, is to present research to date and to inquire into broader cultural, economic, and political contexts in which the Ballestrem concern and Upper Silesian industry operated.

We welcome contributions that take comparative and broader perspectives on a microhistory of the Ballestrem concern and address issues related to economic, social, religious, political, constructional, and philanthropic activities of Upper Silesian industrial magnats from the late 19th century to the 1950s. Contributions to economic network research, macro-historical perspectives on the development of international sales markets of Upper Silesian heavy industry production and comparisons with other regions of coal and heavy industry are very welcome.

All interested persons are invited to send proposals for conference contributions in a short abstract (max. 3000 characters) and a short CV to [oberschl@tu-dresden.de](mailto:oberschl@tu-dresden.de) by March 15, 2023. The conference languages are German and English. All participants will be informed by March 30, 2023. It is planned to publish individual contributions of the conference in an anthology. Editing of papers intended for publication will be rewarded.

For submissions and queries please contact.

Steffen Heidrich

e-mail: [oberschl@tu-dresden.de](mailto:oberschl@tu-dresden.de)

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