Northeast China first became the focus of global attention in the early twentieth century, when Japanese and Russian imperialism made it the crossroads of expansions and for commercial trade between Asia, Europe, and North America. Exploited by its powerful neighbors, Russia and Japan, this peripheral area was transformed by the construction of major railways as well as the contests waged over its mineral and agricultural resources by the Soviet Union, Imperial Japan, the United States and other countries. This region, known to Western historiography as Manchuria, is thus a rich example of “glocalization”, a phenomenon in which global and local interests converge. These interests are rarely if ever harmoniously balanced or static. On the contrary, their interactions are both dynamic and complex, and it is this ongoing negotiation that is the theme of our conference.

Research questions to be addressed could include: How was the transfer of commodities connected with migrations, and how did those migrations in turn lead to processes of cultural and social exchange in strategic cities such as Harbin? In what ways did the diversity of nations, cultures, and ethnicities shape the space and its global character? What effects did the heterogeneous population have on these manifold processes? And, what contribution the global political negotiations had on the area? Analyses of the asymmetric power relations and economic oppression in this area are welcome.

The conference organizers are also interested in studies of how Western technologies, practices, and customs were transmitted and adapted locally. How did exposure to cosmopolitan ideas and new political philosophies affect Northeast China? What internal forces may have promoted the globalization of this region? What influence did Manchuria exert on the West as a result of these global entanglements?

We especially encourage methodological approaches that do not rely on ethnic, cultural, or national narratives and which instead concentrate on the numerous interdependencies and reciprocities that existed in Manchuria during the first half of the twentieth century. It is of our interest to combine
theories of transculturality with empirically substantiated research. By doing so this conference should make a contribution to the international academic discussion on the validity and practicability of existing concepts and terminologies such as “glocalization”, “cosmopolitanism”, “bordercity”, “global city”, “culture’s in-between”, or “beyond culture”.