The focus of this symposium will be on empires as spheres of influence. The special characteristic of all empires throughout documented history is, in contrast to nation states, that the concept of national identity is somehow blurry—if not to say irrelevant, since every empire, starting from the Greek and Roman empires as well as the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations in the Western hemisphere and the Chinese Empire starting from the Qin Dynasty in 221 B.C. and ending in 1911 A.D. with the Qing in the East, consist of a variety of ethnic groups united within the frame of a political suprastructure. An empire, therefore, represents a multi-cultural system that imposes a set of rules every ethnic group has to follow in order for the system to sustain itself.

Empires seem to be a phenomenon of the past, though. With the rise of nation states the large empires of antiquity, the Middle Ages are relics of a lost era. Nevertheless, the twentieth century has brought back the concept of empire in a different form—the form of large superstructures such as, most prominently, the European Union (EU), The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) as empire-like suprastructures in which the various member nations with different cultural identities are embedded. Therefore, in this symposium the topic standing in the center of discussion is the transformation of empires—in ancient times as well as in their new forms in the twenty-first century—their expansion and change, and their (multi-)cultural character over the centuries and the dissolving of nation states in larger structures of inter- or trans-national unions. The burning question that arises in this context is, naturally, concerned with the consequences of the decreasing importance of nation states with
regard to national identity because one possible effect of the weakening of national identity could be the strengthening of ethnic identity and the emergence of new inter.cultural conflicts within the framework of the new politico-economic suprastructures. What role do the arts, the media and literature play in this process?

We invite original papers dealing with a wide range of topics concerning empires in general in the Eastern and Western hemispheres and acute (or systemic) problems (but also chances) that arise. Paper submissions for presentation can focus on the following topics and topics connected with them:

- Thoughts on empire(s) and history
- Modern and classical languages
- Transformation of cultural and political systems
- Cultural Semiotics
- Inter-cultural communication
- Ethnicity and identity
- Arts in the context of socio-cultural change
- Comparisons between Eastern and Western culture
- Media and cultural narratives
- General problems of globalization
- Interdisciplinary studies

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Deadline for abstract submission: February 28, 2018
(Please see format on the conference website)
Notification on abstract review results: March 23, 2018
Deadline for paper draft: August 24, 2018

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