

Call for Papers

Generations of Change: Understanding Post Socialism and Transition Processes from a Generational Perspective

Location: Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology (BGHS), Bielefeld,
Germany, November 25th to 27th 2010

Deadline CFP: August 15th 2010

Conference Announcement / Call for Papers

1989 marks a break of historical continuity: a big part of the “socialist world” disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet regime. Quickly the academic and political field invented new terms (re-)creating national and regional boundaries such as “the Baltics”, “Central Eastern Europe”, “South Eastern Europe. In fact, when social scientists deal with (transition) societies they usually engage with nation states. We aim to enhance this geopolitical determination in favour of a social generational perspective.

It is undisputed that generation must not be equated with cohort. However, a closer look at cohorts often indicates useful hints to the formation of cultural/social generations. This analytical distinction between generation and cohort was one of the essential achievements of Karl Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge as elaborated in “The Problem of Generations”.

In the Mannheimian sense generation is no concrete social group, rather generation is a social location that has the potential to affect an individual’s consciousness alike social class. (Mannheim 1970) The question of how different generations on the one hand experience and on the other hand have fostered system change will mark the point of departure in our interdisciplinary conference:

To what extent are transition processes in the economic, political, cultural and familiar field embedded in the succession of generations? Which generations have become the mainsprings of new world views and ways of life? Which generations still struggle with “the burdens” of the transition? Are there generation-specific differences of experiencing social change? How do social actors mark and articulate these differences regarding social, political, economic practices? What distinguishes one “post socialist” society from another? What do these societies have in common? And finally, which implications can be drawn from this generational approach regarding the concepts of “transition societies” and “post socialism”?

Strongly encouraged to apply are projects on socialist and post-socialist states other than the former Soviet bloc e.g. Yemen, China or Vietnam etc. Also applicable are studies focussing on the experience of people from the “West” with regard to system change after socialism e.g. returnees to their country of origin after 1989 etc.

The aforementioned questions will be discussed in plenary sessions, where research projects will be pair wisely presented and mutually commented. We welcome papers of up-and-coming scholars that are able to link a generational perspective to the researchers' own empirical data. The major fields of interest include but are not limited to:

- **Mobility and Migration:** internal and international migration, commuter migration, labour migration, national integration processes, European integration processes, etc.
- **Strategies to make a living:** subsistence economy, micro enterprise, retail trade, black marketing, farming, self-employment and freelance work, etc.
- **Public action and political participation:** new political parties, revival of Socialist political concepts, "new patriotism", Human rights associations, democratization, empowerment, etc.
- **History writing and intellectual and national remapping:** literature on the change-over, invoking of pre-Socialist cultural heritage, commemoration/reinterpretations of Socialism, etc.
- **Boundary-crossing associations:** pro-European integration associations, bi-lateral associations as the German-Russian-exchange, Esperanto clubs, economical partnerships and interest groups such as CENTROPE, etc.
- **Religion, ritual and religious conflicts:** continuous popularity of Socialist rituals such as "Jugendweihe", revitalization of religious communities, renaissance of religious practices, pre-socialist customs and the appearance of religious cults etc.

The keynote speech to the conference will be held by Professor Chris Hann, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale. Invitation of further internationally recognized experts in the field of post socialism and / or generational studies is in progress.

The outcome of the conference and selected papers may be invited for inclusion in an international journal. Please submit abstracts of less than 500 words, a CV and your contact details to generations@uni-bielefeld.de by 15 August 2010. The organizers will inform participants of the acceptance of their papers by 1 September 2010. Presenters will be expected to circulate their papers among conference participants prior to the event in order to ensure lively discussion.

Depending on availability of funds travel expenses and / or accommodation of presenters may be covered in some cases. In general participants are requested to coordinate the covering of travel and accommodation costs with their home institution. An application for the covering of travel funds by the BGHS shall be submitted with the proposal.

The conveners are Jeannette Prochnow, M.A. and Caterina Rohde, M.A. (Bielefeld University, BGHS)

For further information, a full outline of the conference and updates please visit: http://wwwhomes.uni-bielefeld.de/bghs/dokumente/Outline_Generations_of_Change.pdf or contact us via: generations@uni-bielefeld.de