

Call for Papers

Dis-/Connecting the World: Subjectivities, Networks and Transcultural Encounters across Cold War Boundaries

Bielefeld University (Germany)

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Abstract:

The workshop will explore multiple Cold War encounters, subjectivities, and networks that dis-/connected the world during this global conflict, from the perspective of entangled and cultural history. To go beyond the analytical binary of the USA-USSR confrontation, we are eager to investigate the polycentricity of the Cold War by exploring the web of transcultural exchanges, contacts, and solidarities of people, institutions, ideas, emotions, and materialities across the so-called ‘First’, ‘Second’, and ‘Third Worlds’.

Full version:

Traditional avenues of research, such as political, military, and diplomatic history, have long dominated ‘Cold War’ studies, obscuring the significance of the individual in this global conflict. Current re-evaluations of ‘Cold War’ scholarship, which treat the conflict as a dynamic space of transnational communication, put actors who were marginal or invisible to previous historiography at centre stage. The present *state of the art* in the field indicates that *ordinary people* played a crucial role in making the global conflict part of their daily life by constructing hybrid identities, flexible belongings, and multiple lifestyles, and by developing communities of experience that were interconnected through a web of ideological, intellectual, professional, gender, and emotional codes of solidarities.

The workshop aims to explore models, spaces, and practices of the formation of transcultural subjectivities, networks, and spaces during the Cold War. The ways *ordinary people* understood themselves and their environment were, on the one hand, anchored within the framework of the global confrontation of capitalism and communism. On the other hand, however, they resulted from expanding opportunities for mobility, communication, and access to diverse information and media. The lives of most actors who crossed nation-state, cultural, and symbolic boundaries— various kinds of professionals, academics, physicians, religious activists, athletes, artists, musicians, journalists, sailors, tourists—personify the global conflict. First, we intend to understand the different ways in which the ‘Cold War’ may have shaped the modalities of individual biographical vectors. Second, we aim to explore how border-crossers (re-)defined, used, manipulated, lived, and practiced ‘Cold War circumstances’ in their lives. Third, with the Soviet Union as our starting point, we will explore transnational subjectivities in their global entanglements, networks, and transcultural encounters across different geographic areas.

Methodologically, our aim is to develop a *global microhistory of the ‘Cold War’* by combining the approach of *entangled history* with a *‘Cold War’ history from below*. Using traditional institutional sources along with newly declassified KGB files, oral history interviews, private archives, and ego-documents, our workshop aims to reconstruct the dynamics of transnational networks and subjectivities, by taking several ‘Cold War’ biographies as representative case studies. Putting transnational spaces of subjectivity formation at the centre of our attention, enables us to overcome the limits of the national dimension of subjectivity and enrich our understanding of how different ‘Cold War cultures’ functioned. By exploring the individual dimensions of transcultural communication, spaces of agency, and networks—that is, the dynamic interrelationships of subjects with (and in opposition to) different people, cultures, languages, knowledge, objects and ideas about world orders—we intend to help develop a better understanding of the entanglements between the private, the public, the national, and the global which became a driving force of historical change.

Proposal submission deadline: 15 February 2023

Date: 5-6 October 2023

Location: Bielefeld University (Germany)

Conference language: English

We are looking for original, not published papers. Please send a proposal of no more than 300 words and a short CV (no more than 1 page) in a single PDF document by February 15, 2023 to coldwar-2023@uni-bielefeld.de Put ‘Cold War Workshop’ in the subject line.

We will reimburse your expenses for travel and accommodation of up to 3 nights in Bielefeld (Germany).

Participants will be notified by the end of February 2023. The workshop will be based on discussion of pre-circulated papers of between 3,000 and 5,000 words. The deadline for submitting papers is September 18, 2023. The workshop will be organized around a series of panels. On each panel, the participants will have 15 minutes to present the main points of their papers. These presentations will be followed by commentary and discussion. Our goal is to produce a highly original, peer-reviewed edited volume for an internationally acclaimed publishing house.