



*Call for papers
for the 9th Genealogies of Memory conference*

Myths, Memories and Economies: Post-Socialist Transformations in Comparison

International Conference, 28-30 October 2019, Warsaw

The year 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of political changes in former state socialist countries of Eastern Europe in 1989. Together with the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of socialist and communist states in Latin America, Africa, and Asia also began to move away from socialist forms of political organisation. The early 1990s then witnessed some of the most wide-reaching, ambitious, and at times abrupt economic transformations from planned economies to free market systems in the 20th century. These changes, however, did not take place in isolation, but rather in the context of a longer history of shifting economic paradigms in the Western world. They entailed a departure from the 1970s onwards from post-war Keynesian consensus toward a neoliberal policy. It was also largely in the spirit of the latter doctrine, with its emphasis on minimal state intervention in the economy, that new elites of formerly socialist countries sought to transform their economies.

Yet, deregulation of the market was not limited to the economic sphere. Its attendant effects could be felt within all areas of social life and produced numerous characteristic – and often problematic – phenomena of the 1990s, especially in the former Eastern Bloc. These included shop shelves being flooded with Western consumer goods and an immense demand for Western popular culture, free travel, tourism; a cultural boom, abrupt deindustrialisation, transformation of labour relations, and a steep rise in entrepreneurial activity. A number of negative effects also arose such as a sharp increase in unemployment, suicide and crime, drug use, prostitution, and various fraud schemes as part of the privatisation of state-owned property, together with organised crime and oligarchic structures. In short, this was what Václav Havel famously termed “mafia capitalism”. A recent trend in scholarship and public discourse has therefore been to retrospectively assess these economic transformations more critically. Indeed, public discourse increasingly attributes the root causes of many current social problems and political dysfunctions to this period.

The turbulent period of economic transformation has already produced abundant literature in areas of political science, economics, and sociology. Initially known as “transition studies,” this scholarship was later challenged for implying a prescriptive linear development toward a free market and liberal democracy. More recently, historians have also begun to turn to the 1990s as a time that is decidedly in the past, even if many social and political processes of this decade still affect our present. Yet, how these economic changes and their profound effects on society, its organisation and everyday practices have been remembered has been less explored. It is this particular question that this conference wishes to address, exploring both the memory of the economic transformation as embodied by specific social groups, as well as the myths that have become attached to this process in wider public discourse.

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With 30 years separating the eventful year of 1989 and the present, we find ourselves at a point with sufficient distance to retrospectively reflect upon the above described changes. At the same time, 1989 and subsequent years remain part of the living communicative memory of present societies. This conference aims to explore the still ongoing and dynamic process of memory sedimentation of the economic transformations, as well as their contradictory valences ranging from unlimited opportunities to traumatic failure. As a period actively experienced by most of today's adult generation, the post-1989 economic, political, and social changes are only now undergoing a process of historicisation. The conference seeks to explore the role that memory plays in this process, particularly at a time when this period has already produced its own popular mythology. The 1990s have become a subject of popular culture and even an object of nostalgia for their "wild" and free spirit. A central question to be addressed is the ways in which such popular narratives interact and compare with various social groups' memories and scholarly efforts to understand the processes of economic change.

The conference organisers invite presentations on economy and memory, in particular, but not limited to the context of post-socialist economic transformations in East-Central Europe, as well as their interactions with parallel economic processes in other parts of the world. They may be based on a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, including history, sociology, anthropology, economics, literary and film studies, and others. While the focal point for most economic transformations in question is the 1990s, we invite speakers to address these changes in the context of their longer histories with attention to the genealogy of shifts in economic thought through the 20th century and related memory processes.

Presentations on the following questions and topics are particularly welcome: what can memory studies bring to our understanding of economic transformation and vice versa? How do the memories of different social groups taking part in economic transformations differ and in what ways have they interacted with the increasingly critical public perception of the transformation years? Can we speak about "transformation myths" and how do these differ across the region? What were the effects of radically shifting economic paradigms on daily life and how have they been remembered? How have the economic transformations been captured in the media and how has public discourse changed over time? In what ways does scholarly discourse and popular memory of economic change diverge? What kind of memory politics are materialising in relation to the post-1989 economic transformations? In what ways have cultural representations acted as a vehicle of memory of the 1990s?

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Prof. Johanna Bockman (George Mason University)
 Prof. Adam Mrozowicki (University of Wrocław)
 Prof. Thomas Lindenberger (Hannah-Arendt-Institut)

Organisational information

The conference will take place on 28-30 October 2019 in Warsaw.

We encourage applicants to send **abstracts at a maximum of 300 words, together with a brief biographical statement and the scan of signed Consent Clause of the conference abstract provider to genealogies@enrs.eu by 15 January 2019.**

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Applicants will be notified of the results by 30 March 2019. Written draft papers (2,000- 2,500 words) should be submitted by 5 September 2019.

There will be an opportunity to publish some revised and extended papers in an edited volume or special issue.

While the organisers will fully cover accommodation expenses for all participants, reimbursement of travel expenses will be based on an application process with clear preference for early career researchers lacking support from their home institutions.

The conference language is English.

Organisers:

Conference Convenors:

Dr Veronika Pehe (Institute for Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences)

Dr Joanna Wawrzyniak (Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw)

Program Coordinators:

Dr Małgorzata Pakier (ENRS),

Dr Joanna Wawrzyniak (University of Warsaw)

Organiser: European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS)

Partners: Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw; Institute for Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

CONSENT CLAUSE OF THE CONFERENCE ABSTRACT PROVIDER:

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SIGNATURE:

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