

Cultural Hegemonies in Spaces of Diversity: Second Annual Conference of the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies

Veranstalter: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München; Universität Regensburg

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The second annual conference of the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies took place in Regensburg, 7th – 9th of June, under the topic ‘Cultural Hegemonies in Spaces of Diversity’. Antonio Gramsci defined his concept of cultural hegemony as a way to understand the relationship between culture and power in capitalism and, in particular, to reveal and deconstruct the production of consent by the dominant „fundamental group“. This notion has become widely influential, aiding scholars to understand how legitimacy is not only produced but also how it is undermined by anti-hegemonic practices. Studying East and Southeast Europe as a world region which is characterized by substantial ruptures, this concept offers various starting points for a promising discussion, since nowhere else in Europe so many new states have emerged in the 20th century while existing ones have disappeared. At the same time, the region is characterized by cultural, linguistic, confessional, socio-political, and regional diversity which creates particular challenges. In his introduction MARTIN SCHULZE WESSEL (Munich) emphasised that hegemonies are not steady and that the cultural framing of present topics will have an influence on their future perception. Therefore, studying them as a complex is still as necessary today as it was during Gramsci’s time.

The first keynote lecture was given by IRINA POKHOROVA (Moscow). In her talk „Defying the Hegemony of Cultural Nationalism: History as Overlapping Diasporas“, she presented the concept of diaspora-studies as a critical response to the ‘grand narratives’

of the 20th century like national state histories, in particular. The approach of Diaspora-Studies is to overcome the concept of *national histories* as well as the term ‘nation’, while bringing into focus other concepts like performativity, local identities and ethnicity. In introducing the journal ‘Diaspora’, she stressed the importance of this approach, since it is the only one to focus on aspects of liminality and transition.

On Friday morning, JOHANNA BOCKMAN (Washington D.C.) gave the second keynote of the conference, „The Socialist Worlds of 1989: Galaxies against Hegemonies.“ In this paper she convincingly challenged the common idea of the Cold War taking place exclusively within the strict dichotomy of „Eastern Socialism“ versus „Western, free market Capitalism“. Instead, she introduced the concept of „social galaxies“ as a new analytic category which considers overlapping socialist groups with different trajectories. This is useful to explain that neoliberalism has its origins in transnational discussions about socialism. She exemplified her thesis with the structure of the „Center for the Study of Economic and Social Problems“ which existed from 1964 to 1988 in Milan and which, although usually being regarded as a pro-capitalist organisation, in fact opened a critique of capitalism and changed the revolution in Eastern Europe.

The first panel „Performing Counter-Hegemony in the Arts“ was chaired by ADA RAEV (Bamberg) and opened by RÜSTEM ERTUĞ ALTANAY (New York) with a paper about „Kemalism’s Dark Pleasures“, in which he traced BDSM as an aesthetic as well as anti-hegemonic practice by Kemalist women in Turkey. In his analyses of the BDSM-themed photographic work of a dominatrix, he concluded that this form of engagement provides opportunities for women to express an embodied form of cultural and political critique.

In her paper „Resisting the Hegemonic Regimes of Representation: Critical Art by ‘Roma Artists’ from Eastern Europe“, MARIA-ALINA ASAVEI (Prague) presented the artistic resistance of artists with Roma background against being labelled as ‘Roma Art’ and their wish to be seen simply as con-

temporary artists. She presented visual material from exhibitions where 'Roma-Artists' have been dealing with common stereotypes about Roma. The discussion dealt with the missing affirmative tendencies of critical 'Roma' art, its peculiar aesthetic structure and with the concept of Roma stereotypes in Eastern Europe.

LOUISA AVGITA (Thessaloniki) brought contemporary art forms from East and South-east Europe into focus. Although both mentioned examples in her paper „Activist Art and Over-Identification Artistic Strategies in Southeastern Europe: A Critical View“, the Slovenian artist collective NSK as well as the 4th Athens Biennale „AGORA – Now What“, are widely considered as „anti-hegemonic“ and critical, her paper seriously questioned the effectiveness of their criticism.

The paper „Curatorial Practice as Counter-Hegemonic Commitment“ by WIEBKE GROENEMEYER (Hamburg) outlined the counter-hegemonic commitment of curatorial practices to contemporary cultural production by articulating the relation between curatorial practices, the production of hegemony, and anti-hegemonic aspirations both in theory as well as in practice, particularly with regard to Biennials, large-scale exhibitions, and curatorial projects. The discussion of the paper dealt mostly with the economic side of exhibitions and their ties with curatorial practise.

The second panel „Creating Socialist Culture“, chaired by IRINA MOROZOVA (Regensburg), was opened by ANDRU CHIOREAN (Birmingham). His paper „A Culture of Censorship? Cultural Construction and Practices of Censorship in Post-War Communist Romania“ suggested a view of the „General Directorate for Press and Printings Materials“ (GDPPM) more as a regulatory agency, concerned with the form of the distribution and the incorporation, instead of considering official culture as the offspring of the censor pencil. Before censorship became a powerful and far-reaching tool, it implemented an infallible censoring mechanism and proved to be no less utopic than the socialist new world it was supposed to help bring about. His theses were challenged by ULF BRUNNBAUER'S (Regensburg)

questions about personal continuity and the role of Soviet councillors in the institutional practise.

In her paper „Managing Culture, Locating Consent“, ADELA HÎNCU (Budapest) analysed the development of the sociology of mass culture in 1960-1970s Socialist Romania, focusing on systems theory as a heterogeneous corpus of knowledge and language of criticism. In her conclusion, she showed that although after 1989 the sociologist's professional histories and traditions were practically wiped out, the sociology of mass culture had the potential to form a critical account of the cultural basis for consent.

In the last panel of the day – Crisis, Political Change and Ideology – three discussants presented their work: VASSILIOS BOGIATZIS (Athens) with his paper „Struggling for Cultural Hegemony in the Shadow of the Catastrophe: the Quest for *New Beginnings* during the Greek Interwar Period“; ANDREA TALABER (Florence) with the paper „National Days in Changing Regimes: Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the 20th Century“; as well as CLEMENA ANTONOVA with the title „Bolshevik Cultural Policy on Religion: A Model of Cultural Hegemony under a Dictatorship of Proletariat.“ All three dealt with cultural wars and practices of suppressing deviant ideas. In the discussion, the chair of this panel MARTIN SCHULZE WESSEL (Munich) addressed the necessary strategies and mechanisms to establish cultural hegemony. The examples given were manifold and all related to practice – like publications, institutionalisation, but also grass-root movements.

The first panel of the third day – Cultural Policies and State Domination – was chaired by PETER ZUSI (London) and opened by IVAN SABLIN (Heidelberg / St. Petersburg). In his paper „Printing Modernities: Book Culture in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Siberia“, he introduced Siberian indigenous literature which was celebrated as a big achievement of the Soviet Union. In the 1970s this literature were of scholarly interest and led to a debate about the definition of indigenous literature, including the concept of a 3rd space. This problem of finding a definition was also taken up in the discussion, leading to the conclusion that the authors themselves use 'indigenous

literature' as self-attribution.

MARIA HADJIATHANASIOU (Limassol) presented her paper „Cultural Propaganda Agencies in Colonial Cyprus and their Policies, 1946–1960“. She described the struggle and arrangements between the British and the local Greek clerical elites for independence. Several questions in the discussion were accorded to the Turks and their role in Cyprus. Furthermore there were comments on the character of the British colonisation and its ambivalence regarding the European culture of Cyprus.

JAROMÍR MRŇKA (Prague) was the first participant to begin his presentation „Hegemony of 'Dutiful Work' (Trans-) Formation of Hegemonic Discourses and Post-War Czech Society between Nationalism and Socialism, 1945-1960“ with a theoretical approach towards the idea of hegemony by referring to Antonio Gramsci's well-known theory, but also to the more dynamic concepts by Michel Foucault and Alf Lüdtke. In observing both the transformations of theoretical discourses and changes of language and debates at the time, he established a basis for an understanding of the historical situatedness of cultural hegemony. In his analysis, he came to the conclusion that changes in the usage of certain terms by social agents illustrate major reconfigurations of social order. The discussion regarded Lüdtke's criticism of Gramsci's overestimation of the purposeful use of indoctrination.

The second panel of the day – Language Policies – was chaired by BJÖRN HANSEN (Regensburg) and began with a presentation by ANDREW HODGES (Zagreb) on „Contesting Linguistic Hegemonies in the Classroom? Teaching in Croatian in Subotica/Serbia“. Presenting findings from his ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a primary school in the village of Tavankut, near the Serbian-Hungarian border, he focused on the links made between culture, identity and language by Croatian minority activists, exploring both the implications of making such links and their use in identity politics.

ANTONINA V. BEREZOVENKO (Kiev) presented her paper 'Rise and Fall of the Soviet Hegemony in the Linguistic Realm' and introduced the „New Speak' as a phenomenon

of the totalitarian system of the Soviet Union based on both morphologic and orthographic examples. The criticism in the discussion regarded the totalitarian intent and the social stratification during the Soviet period, assuming that counterexamples like youth language also existed in Ukraine.

The last panel of the conference – Youth and Subversion – was chaired by PETER BUGGE woher (Aarhus) and began with MAXIM ALJUKOV (St. Petersburg), who presented his paper „Hegemony and Heterogeneity in the 2013-2014 Crisis in Ukraine: Between National and Local Identity“. The paper explored a change in Ukrainian Nationalism, which before the Maidan protests 2013-2014 used to be an important issue only for small nationalist groups, but becoming widely relevant for the main part of the population after Maidan. The author analysed this sudden change in identity formation and suggested explaining it on the inclusive basis of emotion and experience.

Under the title „Competition and Detachment: A Case Study of Two Active Youth Groups in Sofia“ ZORNITZA DRAGANOVA (Sofia) presented first findings from her fieldwork about two Bulgarian Social Centres with regard to their activism.

MARKO ILIĆ (London) concluded this year's conference with his presentation „What is the Alternative? Ljubljana's ŠKUC (Student Culture & Art Centre)“. The paper traced the beginnings of the ŠKUC gallery as one example for the flourishing alternative art scene in Yugoslavia around 1980, concluding that it provided a forum for young and progressive individuals to impact society as a whole on a cultural and even political level.

All papers dealt with the contrast of cultural hegemony and deviant or counter cultures. Gramsci's concept was not always used convincingly. Yet, the papers and discussions addressed many different topics, questions, and perspectives, which allowed mapping the wide field of research opened up by Gramsci's concept. There is great potential for further research and there are many paths to follow.

Conference Overview:

Ulf Brunnbauer (Regensburg); Martin Schulze Wessel (Munich), Opening

Irina Prokhorova (Moscow), Keynote 1: Defying the Hegemony of Cultural Nationalism: History as Overlapping Diasporas

Johanna Bockman (Washington D.C.), Keynote 2: The Socialist Worlds of 1989: Galaxies Against Hegemonies

Performing Counter-Hegemony in the Arts

Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay (New York), Kermalism's Dark Pleasures. BDSM as Anti-Hegemonic Practice in Turkey

Maria-Alina Asavei (Prague), Resisting the Hegemonic Regimes of Representation: Critical Art by Roma Artists from Eastern Europe

Louisa Avgita (Thessaloniki), Activist Art and Over-Identification Artistic Strategies in Southeastern Europe: A Critical View

Wiebke Gronemeyer (Hamburg), Curatorial Practice as Counter-Hegemonic Commitment

Chair: Ada Raev (Bamberg)

Creating Socialist Culture

Andru Chiorean (Birmingham), A Culture of Censorship? Cultural Construction and Practices of Censorship in Post-War Communist Romania

Albert Doja; Enika Abazi (Lille), From the Communist Point of View: Cultural Hegemony and People's Cultural Manipulation in Albanian Studies under Socialism

Adela Hincu (Budapest), The Sociology of Mass Culture in Socialist Romania, 1970s–1980s

Chair: Irina Morozova (Regensburg)

Crisis, Political Change and Ideology

Vassilios Bogiatzis (Athens), Struggling for Cultural Hegemony in the Shadow of the Catastrophe: the Quest for New Beginnings during the Greek Interwar Period

Andrea Talabér (Florence), National Days in Changing Regimes: Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the 20th Century

Clemena Antonova (Vienna), Bolshevik Cultural Policy on Religion: A Model of Cultural Hegemony under a Dictatorship of Proletariat

Chair: Martin Schulze Wessel (Munich)

Cultural Policies and State Domination

Ivan Sablin (Heidelberg/ St. Petersburg), Printing Modernities: Book Culture in Late Tsarist and Early Soviet Siberia

Maria Hadjiathanasiou (Limassol), Cultural Propaganda Agencies in Colonial Cyprus and their Policies, 1946–1960

Jaromír Mrnůka (Prague), (Trans-) Formation of Hegemonic Discourses and Post-War Czech Society between Nationalism and Socialism, 1945–1960

Chair: Peter Zusi (London)

Language Policies

Andrew Hodges (Zagreb), Contesting Linguistic Hegemonies in the Classroom? Teaching in Croatian in Subotica / Serbia

Antonina V. Berezovenko (Kiev), Rise and Fall of the Soviet Hegemony in the Linguistic Realm

Chair: Björn Hansen (Regensburg)

Youth and Subversion

Maxim Alyukov (St. Petersburg), Hegemony and Heterogeneity in the 2013–2014 Crisis in Ukraine: between National and Local Identity

Zornitza Draganova (Sofia), Competition and Detachment: A Case Study of Two Active Youth Groups in Sofia

Marko Ilić (London), 'What is the Alternative?' Ljubljana's ŠKUC (Student Culture & Art Centre)

Chair: Peter Bugge (Aarhus)

Concluding Discussion

Tagungsbericht *Cultural Hegemonies in Spaces of Diversity: Second Annual Conference of the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies*. 07.05.2015–09.05.2015, Regensburg, in: H-Soz-Kult 02.10.2015.