

CALL FOR PAPERS: Cultural Heterologies and Democracy II. Transitions and Transformations in Post-Socialist Cultures in the 1980s and 1990s

Tallinn, June 26–28, 2024

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by events around the world that radically changed the political order, people's beliefs and attitudes, and the entire cultural and intellectual orientation of much of the globe. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War stand out as the most important changes, in the shadow of which the events in Yugoslavia and important changes elsewhere are often overlooked by European commentators. These events, taken as a whole, have been seen as part of broader processes of democratization, even as, at the same time, this period was also marked by outbreaks of extreme nationalism and radical religious ferment.

While changes in the political sphere and the restructuring of an economy can be seen as transitions that might be completed in a few months or years, the span of cultural and attitudinal transformations are often measured in generations. Even as political and economic events will surely make their mark on culture, nonetheless, one hesitates to describe changes in the cultural sphere as if they were simply the result of given political and economic events, whether in correspondence or in reaction.

The ability of cultural events to reach across different social strata and resonate on different social scales transforms the social reality that impacts political and economic changes. This is especially evident in the smaller countries that were annexed to the USSR, and where cultural forms of collective self-expression (such as choral singing) played a significant role in the processes of democratization.

It was precisely during the process of regaining independence that political activism and high culture merged, and in many countries the voices of writers, artists, and scientists became some of the decisive forces motivating change. May 1, 2004, when many former Eastern Bloc countries (the Baltic states, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary) joined the European Union, is widely considered as marking the end of the direct transition period, although processes of cultural transformation continue in various forms to this day.

In this context, we are less interested in the ways that intellectuals, writers, and artists participated in political processes; instead, this conference seeks to trace how the cultural sphere itself was transformed and how one might view the specific manifestations of democratization that appeared within it: how dissensus in the face of different values, norms, and traditions surfaced and were managed, how new forms of the public sphere were created by this new, more dynamic type of culture, how the role of technological change impacted the spread of this new cultural orientation, and how various polities faced up to the challenge of minority rights as one test of democracy.

The planned conference invites participants to reflect on the following questions:

- In what ways does democracy manifest itself in the culture of the transitional period of the 1990s?
- What are the common features and differences of the transition period in different post-socialist countries?

- What different theoretical frameworks can be used to analyze the culture of this period?
- What are the new forms of cultural negotiation between different cultural traditions and elements?
- How might we describe the way cultural imaginaries and experiences of temporality have changed?
- Which transgressive tendencies arose to challenge the narrative of imaginary unity between different cultural spheres?
- How is one to describe the dynamic of the forces at play in the transition between the mentality of social collectivism and the new liberal individualism?
- How, if at all, has the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 altered understandings of the transition period and its narratives?

The conference “Cultural heterologies and democracy II” will take place at the **Estonian Academy of Arts** (Põhja puistee 7, Tallinn, Estonia). The conference will be held in English.

Confirmed **keynote speakers**: Marju Lauristin (University of Tartu, former Minister of Social Affairs, Estonia), Dorota Kołodziejczyk (University of Wrocław, Poland), Gulnaz Sharafutdinova (King's College London, UK).

To submit your proposal (250 words max) for 20-minute presentations, along with short biographical statement, please use the Oxford Abstracts submission link:

<https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/6299/submitter> (first-time users will be asked to register with Oxford Abstracts).

Deadline for submissions: January 20, 2024

Notification of acceptance: February 20, 2024

Conference fee is 100 € for waged academics and 50€ for students and the unwaged. Participation is free for scholars from Ukraine.

Organizing Committee:

Virve Sarapik, Estonian Academy of Arts

Epp Annus, Tallinn University

Luule Epner, Tallinn University

Regina-Nino Mion, Estonian Academy of Arts

Jaak Tomberg, University of Tartu

Piret Viires, Tallinn University

For further information, please contact Regina-Nino Mion, regina-nino.mion@artun.ee.