Call for Papers

BERLINER BLÄTTER – *Ethnographische und Ethnologische Beiträge*

**Living in the post -
Ethnographic Perspectives on Postsocialism and Memory**

The concept of ‘postsocialism’ has been developed in the 1990s from a scientific perspective in order to explore and describe the transformations of former socialist countries and their ramifications. Now, 30 years after the so-called ‘Wende’ (transition), we would like to take up this debate and ask in which moments this category still has analytical and political value and allows for specific insights that would not be possible otherwise (cf. Ringel 2016: 399).

On the one hand, the concept subsumes an ‘after’, a certain set of similarities between the former socialist countries (cf. Humphrey 2002: 12). The emphasis on these similarities homogenizes the region to a certain degree and veils important differences. On the other hand, it denotes a plurality of places, times and phenomena and approaches the transformation from a critical perspective on power. It assumes that the different experiences, stories, imaginations and systems of belief of the time of ‘real existing socialism’ as well as their institutional embeddedness continue to have an effect until today (cf. Humphrey 2002: 12; cf. Hann 2002: 11). Thereby scholars try to denaturalize the transformation from socialism to capitalism and to broaden the view in order to avoid taking only economic aspects into account; but rather to bring political, social, and cultural practices into focus (cf. Buchowski 2012: 69). The transregional context is thus linked to local practices in a specific way.

Questions of the meaning of postsocialism are as well deeply connected to questions of remembering, since the concept of postsocialism is based on the fact that something that once existed does no longer in its known shape. Thus the past is not detached from the present, since the past and recollections of what happened are constantly reconfigured within present contexts and by current agents. These actors and contexts, in turn, are co-constituted through interdependent acts and discursive practices (cf. Buchowski 2012: 80). In fact, the past seems alterable: according to the context certain events are emphasized or covered up. On the other hand, the future is made through everyday practices which are relating to the past and reactions to it (cf. Ringel 2016: 406; cf. MacDonald 2013: 27). How can the study of postsocialism broaden our perspective on present and future configurations and political processes? How can dealing with the apparently ‘terminated’ foster our understanding of the ongoing political, social or economic contexts?

This volume of the Berliner Blätter would like to focus on studies that analyze and interpret ethnographic observations from this specific viewpoint. Likewise texts might approach these
topics in a different way. The ambivalences and complexities of referring to and recalling the past of the former socialist countries is meant to be in the focus. In which kind of situations of the everyday life do people allude to the past? Which practices of remembering of and referring to can be observed? What is the relevance of the concept of postsocialism in all this? Due to the conceptual reference the past always appears as a comparative figure. An ethnographic view may explore these entanglements which emerge due to the invocation and reification of the concept.

The articles can be located in different regions and address diverse contexts. Thematically they might deal with the gendering of the sociopolitical transition, the changes of working conditions or the effects on notions of migration and border regimes. An intersectional perspective on the process of sociopolitical transition and its relevance for social dynamics of power today seem to be of particular interest for this issue. Meanwhile, a generation is growing up that only knows the past events by hearsay even though the past oftentimes still inheres in cultural practices or the material texture of the surroundings and continues to have an effect as part of these.

These questions seem to become increasingly relevant due to the current anniversaries and festivities that are taking place. The conjunction of reflections on memory and postsocialism thus appears to be a possibility to approach them.

Information regarding the submission

Please send your abstracts by 31 March 2020 to the following address: klara.nagel@hu-berlin.de

You will then receive feedback as soon as possible. The abstracts (German or English) should not exceed 4,000 characters (including spaces) and, in addition to a short summary, should provide information on the central issue, empirical basis and the status of your own research.

The final articles should not exceed 35,000 characters (including spaces). We request the articles by 31 August 2020. This volume will be published online and Open Access.

We look forward to your contributions!