

25. Berliner Colloquium zur Zeitgeschichte

Trans-Bloc Knowledge Circulation in the Cold War

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Agenda

In recent years, research has made clear just how closely science and politics were intermeshed during the Cold War. Studies on »Cold War science« have demonstrated that researchers chose their topics on their own initiative while adopting for themselves the Cold War's systems of thinking. Meanwhile, new studies have also shown that, in fields including aerospace research, information technology and futures research, knowledge circulated through the Cold War's bloc frontiers. As yet, however, systematic thinking on this aspect hardly exists. We therefore wish to turn our focus to contacts, acquisitions and transfers of knowledge in the Cold War that spanned the rival blocs. The goal is to take measure of knowledge circulation in the Cold War as a field of research, discuss methods and approaches and collate individual results. We wish to determine in what fields and along what paths bloc-spanning contacts, citations and knowledge acquisitions took place, what institutions and individuals became nodes of communication and what effects the collision and combination of various orders of knowledge and experiences of modernity had on science, politics and society. We will base our work on an extended grasp of knowledge to integrate the non-scientific and everyday, e.g. in the fields of environmentalism, historical preservation and peacekeeping.

Questionnaire

Section 1: Measuring the Field

Introduction: Elke Seefried (Institute of Contemporary History Munich-Berlin)

Chair: Bernd Greiner (Hamburg Institute for Social Research)

- What do we know – and what do we not know – about bloc-spanning contacts and exchange of knowledge in the Cold War?

- What methods and approaches has research used to date?
- What motives were the contacts and exchange based on?
- In what phases did contacts intensify, and when did they diminish? Did the period of détente represent the high water mark on knowledge circulation and acquisition, or did researchers seek to establish contacts more specifically during phases of direct confrontation in the Cold War?
- What relevance – scientific and otherwise – did the contacts and exchange processes have? Did they help make frontiers more permeable (in science, society and politics) and thereby help end the Cold War? What relationships existed between overall political developments and scientific discourses?

Section 2: Contact Zones

Introduction: Malte Rolf (University of Bamberg)

Chair: Klaus Gestwa (University of Tübingen)

- How did East-West contacts emerge in fields of knowledge?
- Who were the mediators and border crossers? Were those who initiated exchanges scientific/social outsiders, prominent figures in their disciplines or political actors?
- Did specific networks become established?
- To what extent did the exchanges take place publicly (e.g. at conferences) or covertly (concealed from politicians/intelligence)? Who obstructed exchange?
- What role did the media play in establishing contacts and disseminating and producing knowledge?
- What relationships were there between political influence and thinking that was intrinsic to the sciences?

Section 3: Knowledge in Exchange

Introduction: Benno Nietzel (University of Bielefeld)

Chair: Elke Seefried (Institute of Contemporary History Munich-Berlin)

- What forms did exchange take? What relationships were there between indirect references and direct contacts/exchange processes?
- Where did the respective sides agree on methodology and content, and where did differences emerge, including ideological ones?
- In what disciplines/knowledge fields did people benefit from one another, and in what ways? In other words, where did acquisition of knowledge and ideas actually take place, and where not?
- What epistemic effects did exchange have? To what extent did new insights result from contacts, and was new knowledge generated?
- What non-scientific relevance did the generated knowledge have? To what extent did it affect other fields and everyday spheres of communication?

Section 4: »One earth«? West-East and the Global South

Introduction: Marc Frey (University of the German Armed Forces, Munich)

Chair: Melanie Arndt (University of Regensburg)

- When (really beginning in the 1970s?) and to what extent did new, globally conceived themes and problems gain prominence (demographics, the environment, securing resources, development)?
- What role and significance did the Global South have for the exchange of knowledge? To what extent did the South's representatives act as mediators and moderators, or produce new conflicts and thereby bring East and West together? How much did they put new themes, issues and methods on the agenda?
- During exchanges, to what extent were prevailing modernization theories and development strategies questioned?

Suggested Readings

Session 1:

- *Gestwa, Klaus/Rohdewald, Stefan*: Verflechtungsstudien. Naturwissenschaft und Technik im Kalten Krieg: in: Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens 59 (2009) 10, S. 5-14.
- *Keynan, Alexander*: The Political Impact of Scientific Cooperation on Nations in Conflict: An Overview, in: Allison L. C. de Cerreño/Alexander Keynan (Hrsg.): Scientific Cooperation, State Conflict: The Role of Scientists in Mitigating International Discord, New York 1998, S. 1-54, hier S. 1-44.

Session 2:

- *Niederhut, Jens*: Grenzenlose Gemeinschaft? Die scientific community im Kalten Krieg, in: Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens 59 (2009) 10, S. 57-68.
- *Subok, Wladislaw*: Sowjetische Westexperten, in: Bernd Greiner/Tim B. Müller/Claudia Weber (Hrsg.): Macht und Geist im Kalten Krieg, Hamburg 2011, S. 108-135.

Session 3:

- *Donig, Simon*: Vorbild und Klassenfeind. Die USA und die DDR-Informatik, in: Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens 59 (2009) 10, S. 89-100.
- *Gerovitch, Slawa*: Die Beherrschung der Welt. Die Kybernetik im Kalten Krieg, in: Osteuropa. Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des Ostens 59 (2009) 10, S. 43-56.

Session 4:

- *Rindzevičiūte, Egle*: Toward a Joint Future beyond the Iron Curtain. East-West Politics of Global Modelling, in: Dies./Jenny Andersson (Hrsg.): The Struggle for the Long-Term in Transnational Science and Politics, New York/London 2015, S. 115-143.
- *Josephson, Paul/Dronin, Nicolai/Mnatsakanian, Ruben/Cherp, Aleh/Efremenko, Dmitry/ Larin, Vladislav*: An Environmental History of Russia, New York 2013, S. 189-197.