

Call for Papers

The Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

cordially invites you to participate in the conference entitled

Modern Capitals and Historical Peripheries *Central Europe from the Perspective of Contested Modernities*

There is no such thing as *modernity*. There are different *modernities*: Weimarian modernity, Viennese modernity, etc. Max Weber defined modernity as a process of overall modernization of life from the institution to that of individual life strategies. The ‘Great Transformation’, borrowing the title of Karl Manneim’s famous book, i.e. the passage from the premodern era to modernity took place in concrete places and at concrete times: there was a great array of local variations. Novelty and tradition had to live with each other in an uneasy co-tenancy: the tensions generated by this situation were different from region to region, from country to country but the modernization process nowhere run in an entirely smooth way. The conflicts were embodied in spatial form: primarily, in the opposition of the upwardly mobile capital and the downgraded countryside, which slipped into a peripheral position. On the cultural scene, it frequently appeared as an antithesis of *ratio* and *custom*, the opposition of the alienated way of life in the Metropolitan stone desert based upon cold, uprooted, calculative thinking and the supposedly authentic human existence in the countryside (see, for instance, the ideas of Tönnies or Simmel). This dichotomy was especially conspicuous in the Central European context but it appeared almost everywhere in in a more or less pronounced fashion.

The main analytical problem is one of continuities and discontinuities: was Jacob Burckhardt right that the early modern situation is a break with the medieval past, or should we rather go with Huizinga, who stressed continuity between these epochs? What is the impact of the industrial revolution in Europe: does the ancient regime survive it, or does it simply mean the collapse of the old ways of life?

But there is a further question of continuity: between modernity and its aftermath. Certainly with the rather uneasy consequences of a self-critical attitude growing out in the heart of modernity since the sixties, labelled as post-modernism, post-structuralism or deconstruction, alternatively, by now even the progressivist account of the global village, envisaged in the wake of modernity, is haunted by rather serious dilemmas. Universalist globalism seems to represent therefore an uneasy victory over a long forgotten past, in opposition to the alternative vision of particular localisms.

In order to explore the city and its peripheries in Western modernity, we need to address the question of continuities and discontinuities. Does the emergence of the modern metropolis, closely linked to the figure of the “flaneur” in Walter Benjamin’s writings, already point towards the crisis of modernity? Can we regard the postmodern as a radical break with, and profound impasse of, *the modern*? Though postmodern theories have attempted to foreground the particular as well as questions concerning gender, class and race, paradoxically, they often erase local differences, which is clearly visible from an East-Central European perspective. Therefore, the study of cities and peripheries in this region would not only shed light on the blind spots of Western modernity, but might also help us reconceptualise the postmodern metropolis (Edward Soja, etc.)

The planned conference is going to deal with the philosophical, historical, literary and visual representations of the classical cultural dichotomy of urban centre versus the forgotten countryside in twentieth century art, culture and the humanities within an interdisciplinary framework. The invited contributors offer divergent analyses of this complex phenomenon; capitals (and other urban centres) will appear both as the *subjects* of philosophical discussion, historiography, literature and fine arts, and as the *scene, public sphere and battlefield* of the development of intellectual life. The planned presentations will offer partly case studies about concrete issues of concrete capitals or particular regional affairs, and partly theoretical discussions and comparisons concerning the abovementioned questions. The historical epoch in the focus of our research is *modernity* in the widest possible sense, from the early modern period till the 1960s and even further, up to the dilemmas of the present moment.

We invite submission of abstracts for 20-minute talks. Papers on the following themes will be particularly welcomed:

- Representations of the city and the countryside in 20th century Central European literature and visual culture
- Central Europe as the “Other” of Western modernity
- The role of continuities and discontinuities in the history of modern metropolises
- The cultural geography of Central European cities and peripheries
- Flanerie, walking and the Central European space
- The portrayal of women, gender, and Central European cities
- The city as a battlefield of intellectual life
- The postmillennial metropolis and the waning of affect

Venue:

Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
4. Tóth Kálmán st., Budapest, 1097

20–21 October, 2017.

There is no conference fee.

Applications must contain the title of the presentation and an abstract up to 1000 characters; and the name of the author with titles and affiliation.

Deadline for abstract submission: 31 July, 2017.

Please, send the applications to the e-mail: FI.Titkarsag@btk.mta.hu