

Call for Abstracts:

“Migration and Everyday life of (post-) Soviet diaspora nationalities.” (3-5 February 2022 in Lüneburg, Germany)

First conference of the research network "Ambivalences of the Soviet: Diaspora Nationalities between Collective Experiences of Discrimination and Individual Normalization, 1953-2023"

Soviet diaspora nationalities, including Russian Germans and Soviet Jews, are often considered as collectives constituted by the common experience of repression and discrimination. As individuals, however, they followed personal paths towards normalization of their existence in the years after Stalin's death and became a part of the culturally and nationally diverse Soviet society. For them, complex affiliations and loyalties negotiated between family, neighborhood, their own ethnic group, broader Soviet society, and the so-called external homelands were characteristic and became particularly visible in the period of perestroika and glasnost. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, many became further confronted with questions about their own belonging, which often resulted in their emigration to places like Germany, to which they allegedly belonged. Attempting to make new places their home, they, however, continue experiencing conflicting relationships and identifications, complicated further through broader societal processes that largely marginalize and homogenize them as “others”, as non-belonging “Russians” with a seemingly common Soviet “baggage”.

The research network "Ambivalences of the Soviet: Diaspora Nationalities between Collective Experiences of Discrimination and Individual Normalization, 1953-2023" (funded by the Ministry of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony and the VW Foundation within the framework of the Niedersächsisches Vorab) departs from a narrative that tells the history of Russian Germans, Soviet Jews, and other Soviet diaspora nationalities in very narrow terms – as a mere story of discrimination and repression, dissent and resistance. Rather, we seek to explore people’s complex everyday experiences, practices and discourses of “normalization” and “Sovietization” in the late Soviet period as well as their long-term influence beyond temporal and spatial confines of the Soviet Union.

At the conference, taking place in Lüneburg on 3-5 February 2022, we seek to discuss related topics of life in the late Soviet Union, everyday life in the rural and urban Soviet peripheries, themes of repression and “normalization”, intergenerational and transnational multiple affiliations, migration as well as the current situation of those who remained in the Soviet successor states. We welcome contributions especially from young scholars working in the above-mentioned fields and ready to critically reflect on container terms such as “identity”, “ethnic group” or “diaspora”. A focus on Russian Germans and/or Soviet Jews is desired, but we are also interested in contributions on other nationalities, comparative approaches, etc.

In particular we are keen to receive works on the following topics, but relevant projects on areas not listed here will also be considered:

1. Rural and Urban Life-Worlds.

What aspects came to define everyday life in the late Soviet Union? In what ways did lives develop in the successor states and in Germany? What role did/do different spaces, different familial constellations, processes of rural to urban resettlement, personal networks as well as identifications play in the constitution of people’s life-worlds?

2. Migration networks.

In what ways do networks define the migratory process, the process of re-settlement in the country of arrival as well as the decision to stay? In what ways do these networks develop and change over time?

3. Transgenerational experiences.

How are experiences, affiliations, values and stigma, passed on and/or transformed across generations? What role do spatial or political ruptures play in shaping the experiences of communities?

If you are interested in submitting a paper, we would ask you to send us an abstract (max. 400 words) by October 19th, 2021. Working language of the conference is English and a publication of the contributions is planned. The travel and accommodation costs will be covered by the organizers.

Abstracts as well as any questions should be sent to Dr. Kerstin Bischl (kerstin.bischl@uni-goettingen.de) and Dr. Alina Jašina-Schäfer (alina.jasinaschaefer@bkge.uni-oldenburg.de)

Overview of dates:

Deadline for submission of an abstract of max. 400 words: 19 October 2021.

Notification: 1 November 2021

Submission of finished contributions: 20 January 2022

Conference: 3-5 February, 2022.