

CfP: What Was Normalization? Czechoslovakia 1969-1989

Annual Meeting of the Collegium Carolinum in cooperation with the Ústav
hospodářských a sociálních dějin FF UK

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The term "normalization" (normalizace) became the label for the entire period between the "Prague Spring" and the "Velvet Revolution" in Czechoslovakia. To the present day, it has been associated with a difficult time marked by repression and intensified control as well as with a sense of motionlessness. The small number of opposition groups could hardly reach the apathetic majority of the Czechoslovak population. However, in recent years, a changing perception of the 1970s and 1980s including the culture of late socialism has developed. Current studies focus on the forces within the late socialist societies that both stabilized and eroded the system. In addition to the political leadership and the life and work of dissidents, they also focus on "normalized" society and the official cultural production. Questions on the relationship between individual adaptation, social pressure and repression, everyday culture and autobiographical practices are becoming increasingly important. Yet, others focus on the era through a nostalgic lens, remembering the era as a safe and stable period in Czechoslovak history.

Therefore, the aim of this interdisciplinary conference is to discuss the era of "normalization" in its various facets. It will sharpen the understanding of political, social and cultural processes of change during the years of 1969 to 1989 as well as of life's realities and plurality within the "normalized" society. Lastly, the conference will deal with political and cultural continuities since the 1960s and beyond the 1989 revolution.

Conference papers can, for example, discuss the following questions: Which practices of legitimization did the normalization-regime use and how successful were they? How did individual social groups adopt official patterns of interpretation, and what were their expectations and fears? What life models and styles have developed in Czechoslovakia since the 1970s? What phenomena emerged in the field between official culture and subversion – and how did the public read and understand them? And finally: What of all this is specific to Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s, which phenomena also occurred in neighboring socialist societies, which developments can be characterized as system-wide epochal characteristics?

We also welcome contributions on the afterlife of late socialism: Which concepts of dissident individuality and conformist personality can be found in current representations? Which aspects of "normalization" are brought up in nostalgic and retrotopic ways? What role does popular culture (daily soaps, popular music, children's films/literature) play in the memory of normalization?

The Call for Papers is addressed to scientists from all disciplines of cultural studies with a focus on Czech studies. We ask for abstracts (approx. 2000 characters) for presentations with a length of 20 minutes on the topics mentioned above. The conference languages are German and English, although abstracts can also be submitted in Czech and Slovak. The Collegium Carolinum covers travel and accommodation costs. A publication of conference proceedings is planned.

Concept for the conference by:

Prof. Dr. Anja Tippner, Universität Hamburg

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Please send your abstract with a short cover letter (academic background, research interests) by May 31, 2018 to:

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Notification of acceptance will be given by 15 June 2018.