Late Soviet Village: People, Institutions, and Objects Between “Rural” and “Urban” Life Styles

International Conference
Moscow
May 30 – June 2, 2018
German Historical Institute/ University of Zurich

Call for Papers

The dynamics of rural society during the last Soviet decades have hitherto been largely neglected, yet they are crucial for understanding the late Soviet Union. The current debate on the texture of late Soviet society – on privatization and diversification of Soviet rituals and symbols on a local level, on self-identifications, on subcultures and subversion, on social and ideological cohesion and disintegration - has left the rural population out. Previous research on transformations of late Soviet rural society has reproduced a narrative of decline, described as „de-peasantization” or “erosion of the village” and “ruralisation of cities”.

The aim of the conference is to reassess the developments in the rural Soviet Union not merely as a decline and disappearance of “traditional” rural life but as a specific modus of entanglement between the city and the countryside, and as a product of simultaneous “ruralisation” of urban life styles and “urbanisation” of rural life styles.
By addressing fundamental issues of late Soviet society from a rural point of view we are opening up a discussion about the revision of the disintegration process attested to Soviet society either by dichotomous conceptualisations of the submissive or indifferent „Homo Sovieticus“ or by performative practices that eroded the sense of ideological commitment.

We welcome contributions by historians, anthropologists, ethnographers, and social scientists addressing the issues of late Soviet rural developments, but in particular on rural subjectivities in discourses and practices, focusing on:

- Family networks and structures/Generations/Gender
- Work/leisure divide
- Consumption
- TV and other media
- High/popular culture
- Materiality and objects
- Late Soviet rituals
- Youth sub-cultures
- Rural/urban networks
- Religiosity
- Ideology and propaganda/representations in arts
- Party and state institutions in rural areas
- Expert’s projects/ discussions on rural development

Conference languages will be English and Russian. Travel costs and accommodation will be covered by the convenors. The conference is part of the research project “Late Soviet Village: People, Institutions, and Things between the socialist cult of urbanity and ruralisation of urban life styles” at the History Department of the University of Zurich. We plan to publish a volume of collected essays based on conference presentations. Please submit paper proposals of 300-500 words and academic bio information to ekaterina.emeliantseva@uzh.ch by January, 15th, 2018.

Convenors:
Prof. Dr. Nikolaus Katzer, DHI Moscow
Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Emeliantseva Koller, University of Zurich