



6th Conference of the Centre for Study of Popular Culture

Exploration of Class, Distinction, and Habitus in Popular Culture of Central and Eastern Europe

Conference organised by the Centre for the Study of Popular Culture, Charles University in Prague and the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, 27–29 October 2023, Prague, Czech Republic

Class, distinction, and habitus have a contested position in the political and social sciences. No less controversial are the concepts in the humanities, even though the study of class in cultural studies seems to be long past its prime. Since the 1960s, Western youth and working class popular and urban cultures have received wide scholarly attention. Minority groups and people on the margins ridiculed and stigmatised by popular culture experienced a research boom several decades ago and a renewed interest owing to research into reality TV shows. Representations of white upper-class heterosexual male domination in popular culture has been interrogated with the finest critical tools in the last years.

The research agenda of Central and Eastern European popular culture looks a bit different. Due to the allegedly different path to modernity, exploration of class, distinction, and habitus in popular culture offers interesting stimuli even today. A closer look at the political and socioeconomic changes that the region has undergone shows that these phenomena were closely linked to the development of industrial capitalism and the rise of the bourgeois society in the 19th century on the one hand. On the other, class often dissolved into nationalist and even racist ideology. Unique group's distinctions were melted into the cult of the common people. A specific habitus was suppressed by the all-encompassing folksiness. Mass movements in the interwar period placed the removal of the enemy class and distinction at the centre of their politics.

The socialist dictatorship after the Second World War declared that it had done away with class and group-specific distinctions; differing habitus was to be replaced by uniformity. However, in the post-Stalin period, even the mildest proclamations concerning a classless society had to be revised. New social differentiations and subtle distinctions among people became more visible and found not infrequent reflection in literature, film, music, and visual arts. In late socialism, power elites gradually abandoned the banner of egalitarianism and the new class manifested in a showy manner its distinctions and habitus.

The conference asks what the (dis)continuities between late socialism and post-socialism in terms of class, distinction, and habitus in the popular culture were. It seeks to answer how class, distinction, and habitus have been represented in popular culture in the “long durée” perspective. In what ways have these representations been transformed? What were the causes and consequences of these transformations, if any? Did these representations affect their recipients and in what manner?

There are numerous issues that can be addressed along these lines. The following list should not by any means be understood as exhaustive:

- “Class” as an emic concept in national and post-national discourse
- re-drawing class in long-term transformations of Central and Eastern Europe
- class differentiation in popular cultures of Central and Eastern Europe
- habitus and taste as an analytical category in modern societies of Central and Eastern Europe
- distinctions made by gender, work, housing, leisure, culture consumption, aesthetic-tastes
- representations of upper, middle, working and under-class in literature, film, TV, press, visual arts

Papers exploring the mentioned topics are especially encouraged. Please send your abstract of no more than 350 words and a short biographical note by 31 May 2023 to conference@cspk.eu

The conference will take place on 27–29 October 2023, in Prague, Czech Republic. In case of travel restrictions due to the pandemic, the conference will be held in a hybrid or online format.

The organizers intend to put together a themed monograph, in which selected papers will be published as full-length chapters.

Conference Fee

- 10 Euro – Early Bird (until 15th July 2023)
- 20 Euro – Main Registration (until 30th August 2023)
- 30 Euro – Late Registration (until 30th September 2023)

Contacts

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