

Call for Papers

Capitalism and Socialism in Russia

Concept Formation and the (Post-)Soviet Experience

22-24 September 2021

Freie Universität Berlin

WORKSHOP

Conveners | Prof. Dr. Katharina Bluhm | Sociology, FU Berlin
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The year 2021 marks the anniversary of two pivotal junctures in Russian and Soviet history - the 30th anniversary of the Soviet collapse and the 100th anniversary of the New Economic Policy (NEP). While the first stands for the downfall of socialism, the unravelling of the planned economy and the attempt to make Russia capitalist again, the introduction of NEP represented the first, albeit temporary and gradual, opening of a state-socialist order to capitalist elements. The Soviet and post-Soviet experience of capitalism and socialism speaks to vibrant debates in the humanities and social sciences, where both categories remain foundational to much of Political Economy, Historical Sociology and Political Theory. Recently, the social and economic consequences of the financial crisis of 2007-9 or the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 have given new currency to critiques of capitalism, bringing back the contested concepts of capitalism and socialism into the scholarly – and public - debate.

Our workshop proposes to analyse the contestation of capitalism and socialism through the prism of Russian and Soviet history, to enrich the scholarly debate about the historically diverse formation of the two concepts. The history of the Soviet Union, which, after all, promised nothing less than the “negation of capitalism” (S. Kotkin), encapsulates the violent and transformative power of this contestation like no other, offering ample ground to investigate associated conceptual and empirical questions. The workshop aims to provide an interdisciplinary venue to examine the contexts and mechanisms of capitalism and socialism in the Russian case and discuss the contestations between them throughout transformative episodes in the history of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

Our workshop departs from the methodological premise that the concepts socialism and capitalism, at once categories of analysis and categories of practice (Bourdieu), can only meaningfully be employed if understood in their geographic and historical particularity. Therefore, the workshop proposes to conceive of capitalism and socialism as *processual categories* rather than ideal types. In viewing the concepts through the prism of Soviet and post-Soviet Russian history, we seek to subject them to a critical, historically informed and

interdisciplinary revision. In particular, we are looking for contributions discussing the following topics and their implications for concept formation:

- I) The Soviet Union pursued an alternative socio-economic order to capitalism arguably more radically than any other power before. Its early years – e.g. War Communism, New Economic Policy (NEP) and the “Great Break” (1917-1934) – invite inquiries into the relationship between capitalism – as a social formation coordinated via decentralized markets – and the centralizing impetus of socialism in the name of the exploited and oppressed.
- II) Conversely, the political and social transformation of 1985-1993 can be interpreted as a radical negation of socialism – an attempt to re-create a capitalist system. However, the form in which this attempt actually built capitalism in post-Soviet Russia and the specific social and power relations that have emerged from this transformation remain subject to heated debate.
- III) Finally, the Soviet experience remains a discursive resource both in the politics and scholarship on post-Soviet Russia as well as in contemporary processes of deliberation in various arenas of global governance, such as international organisations, national party politics and transnational NGO networks.

To discuss these and related issues, we invite scholars from the fields of sociology, history, political science, cultural studies, economics and the bridging disciplines of political economy and historical sociology, to participate in an interdisciplinary dialogue.

All interested researchers are invited to send their **paper proposals to sebastian.hoppe@fu-berlin.de**. Proposals should contain an **abstract of 300 to 600 words** and information on the researcher’s current affiliation and position. **The application deadline is 11 December 2020.** Notifications about acceptance will be circulated by January 2021. Accepted participants will have to submit their **final papers (in English) by 10 September 2021.**

We plan to publish selected contributions to the workshop in a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal or an edited volume with an internationally renowned publisher.

We have applied for funding of the workshop by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung. In case of a grant approval, the organisers will cover all basic expenses, including travel, accommodation, transfers, and meals.

If you have further questions, please contact the organisers of the event:

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Friedrich Asschenfeldt (figa@princeton.edu).