

AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA AND IDENTITY IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Institute for Music, Martin Luther University (Halle-Wittenberg)

Date: April 8-10, 2010.

Venue: Martin Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

Deadline: June 30, 2009.

Contributors addressing these and any other related issues on photography, (ethno)musicology, oral history or medial (self-)representation in Southeastern Europe are invited to send an abstract of ca. 300 words and a short CV to: Andreas Hemming (andreas.hemming@musikwiss.uni-halle.de)

and Eckehard Pistrick (eckehard.pistrick@musikwiss.uni-halle.de). Abstracts and papers will be accepted in English and German.

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For more information feel free to contact the conference conveners or see: http://www.musikwiss.uni-halle.de/forschung/projekte/visuelle_und_aurale_repraesentati/.

Issues of identity in Southeastern Europe have received a great deal of attention from different perspectives since the collapse of the totalitarian regimes in 1991. What the greatest part of this research has in common is a concept of identity that is not primordialist or essentialist in its approach but sees the phenomenon of identity as a product of processes of human interaction. This paradigm can be seen above all in the use of performative concepts (i.e., discursivity) and an understanding of culture not as a Weberian »web of meaning« but as daily practice. In this context identity becomes »situational« or »constructed«. Identity becomes identities and we arrive at a point where we may speak of an individualised construction of identity.

This research has nevertheless remained implicitly textual or text-based in its nature. A predilection, that has reinforced the social sciences' tendency to essentialism, excessive formalism as well as the representation of all meaning as linguistic. Text-based research has thus focused on historical, geographical and economic issues at the expense of how these issues were communicated. This has resulted in an incomplete view of the construction of identity.

The conference is a first attempt to meet the challenges of text-based scholarship, to break this medial one-dimensionality dictated by textuality and to shift the focus to the aural and visual dimensions of identity. The objective of this endeavour is to examine identity in Southeastern Europe by means of its media of communication, specifically that of the photographic image and the sound recording. Brought to a point, the primary issue is one of how people perceive themselves and their environment on the basis of communication media, or, as Kelly Askew put it in her introduction to an *Anthropology of Media*, the question is one of »what meanings people construct out of mass mediated images and sounds.«

We understand the term »media« in its original Aristotelian sense as media of sensory perception – i.e., sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. The conference intends to examine this neglected level of sensory perception and communication of histories, identities and cultural forms of expression. The aim is not only to approach the question of how identities are communicated but also to examine them in how they are performed and made physically perceptible. More concretely, the role of photography and the photograph on the one hand and the audio recording and the recording process on the other will be examined in the conscious and unconscious construction and interpretation of identity in Southeastern Europe. Invited speakers are not limited to the discussion of the contemporary media landscape but are challenged to take a historical perspective, this discussion being explicitly historical – it necessarily includes the integration of media representations from the socialist and pre-socialist periods into contemporary identity concepts. The local perspective is of particular interest in the discussion of these forms of representation and the associated impact on the local self-image. How do these representations affect various Southeastern European self-images? What effect do they have on how the past is understood? What role do medialised representations play in ambitions to preserve or – alternatively – to transform local cultural heritage?