

### **Announcement: Establishment of a Young Scholars' Network on the „History of Societies and Socialisms“.**

With this announcement we would like to invite those interested to join us in the establishment of a Young Scholars' Network on the „History of Societies and Socialisms“ in order to use the many advantages of an informal yet organized academic network for the study of socialism in history. We intend particularly to enhance the intellectual exchange among those working on the history of socialisms in the widest sense of the word, and to enhance their ability to jointly organize and realize specific projects such as workshops, conferences, panel proposals, research projects, and publications. Such a network may also have the welcome side-effect of popularising the study of socialisms in history and to raise the public awareness for this subject, its enduring and manifold impacts on the past and present as well as its continuous relevance today and tomorrow.

It should be added that, even though we would like to target younger scholars specifically with this initiative, we most certainly welcome elder scholars in the field to join in our effort. We are pleased and honored to have the support of Marcel van der Linden (Amsterdam) and Helga Grebing (Bochum/Berlin) who agreed to become *honorary members* of our network and to support us with occasional, much appreciated intellectual and practical advice.

The thematic core of this network shall be defined by a wide understanding of the term “socialism”, which thus far has been mostly used as a summary term subsuming a number of disparate ideologies, political theories and programs, and various kinds of social and political movements. We believe that this is an inadequate simplification of the historical phenomenon. Therefore we decided to use the plural form “socialisms” in the name of the network as it underscores the plurality of possible perspectives on socialism and the need to differentiate its study as historical subject. This approach pays respect to what Helga Grebing has once described as the dual appearance of socialism in history: in principle, the term encompasses two historical phenomena as it was both, a “world of ideas” and a “social movement.”

We thus welcome scholars who deal with these historical phenomena in the widest possible sense. In order to inspire a trans- and interdisciplinary dialogue we very much hope to attract not only historians but also colleagues from other cultural and social sciences. Their research perspectives can range from global to local, the chronological focus of their projects can be somewhere between the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the end of the bipolar world after the collapse of communism in 1989/90. Of course it is possible to form thematically structured subgroups within the network in order to ensure an intensive and effective exchange between interested scholars.

We perceive ourselves as inquisitive scholars seeking to cooperate and coordinate without creating a rigid organisational structure. Neither will there be a formal founding act, nor a legal statute, nor membership fees. Most importantly, we situate ourselves outside and beyond any political party affiliations. In spite of the rather loose basic structure of the network we intend to create a certain organisational framework including a mailing list, possibly a website with an online discussion forum. The participants shall therefore nominate one or two coordinators who for a limited period of time (1-2 years) will be in charge of keeping this communicative framework running.

We believe that there is still, and especially today, a necessity to professionally address the

history of socialism eventhough the historiography on the subject is vast and has a long tradition spanning more than a century. Yet, each generation raises their own questions, applies different theories and methods, and thus finds new or alternative answers to seemingly old questions. And it must not be forgotten that the historiography of socialism and the workers' movement has long been overshadowed, sometimes even dictated, by dogmatism, ideological fervor and political interest. The "master narratives" about the origins, nature, theory and practice, the costs and consequences of socialism, which have been drafted by older generations of scholars – whatever their political-ideological motives might have been – need to be critically revisited and, if prudent, even revised. The founding of a network dedicated to the study of the "history of societies and socialisms" shall contribute to the mastering of this enormous challenge. We wish to widen and overcome our limited individual discursive spheres and to connect with others in the various fields of research involved without creating an esoteric circle of specialized freaks.

We look forward to a hopefully lively and strong feedback!

Christina Morina (Jena) – Laura Polexe (Basel) – Sebastian Schickl (Mannheim)

Contact: [soz-histsem@unibas.ch](mailto:soz-histsem@unibas.ch)