

Call for Papers

Conference

Disrupted Identities in the light of “Post-Everything”

May 14–16, 2024

International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)

Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Germany

Referring to the Peruvian author Gustavo Gutiérrez who first used the ‘post-everything’ term, historian Herman Paul (2021:4) provides an overview of the post-concepts from a historical perspective: “‘the age of the post’, as a history of how people began to conceive of themselves, their societies or their understanding of the world as moving beyond something that no longer met demands of the time”. In the same volume, Andrew Sartori (2021:162) shows, how the meaning of ‘postcolonial’ changed from the indication of the period to the indication of the position. This conception has led to new articulations of identity, especially via the post-concepts, such as post-memory, post-migrant, post-colonial, post-Communist and so on.

Interdisciplinary ethnographer Špela Drnovšek Zorko (2021) shows how her interlocutors make sense of their experience in the present during the aftermath of past events through postcolonial and postsocialist concepts. But post-concepts do not possess only the temporal category. Even if some of them emerge as such (e.g., post-socialism), they turned out to be an instrument for critics (cf. Chari/Verdery 2009, p. 11). However, those two dimensions are not exhaustive. Post-concepts can be used for something that has not been overcome yet but is already a target of counternarratives (e.g., postmonolingualism, cf. Yildiz 2012, p. 4).

Identities that humanity has prolifically produced are never and have never been stable. Instead, they are subject to constant change, being (re)formulated in reaction to and anticipation of infinite shifts in communities, societies, and cultures. According to Clarke et al. (1976:11), “a social individual, born into a particular set of institutions and relations, is at the same moment born into a peculiar configuration of meanings, which give her access to and locate her within ‘a culture’”. Nevertheless, the concept of identity is “not an essentialist, but strategic and positional one.” (Hall 1996, 3) The sociologist Richard Jenkins defines identity as “the human capacity [...] to know ‘who’s who’ [...]”; it is simultaneously about self-identification and categorization: “Who we think we are is intimately related to who we think others are, and vice versa.” (Jenkins 2014, 6–13) However, it is not sufficient to consider identity merely as an answer to the question of who we are. It is a process “[that] operates across difference, it entails discursive work, the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries, the production of ‘frontiereffects’.” (Hall 1996, 3) Identification does not mean an acceptance of existing categories. It is rather a conscious and variable choice of an identification category that can be contested. (cf. Langenohl 2000, 83)

Struggles of individuals trying to position themselves within the cultures can cause identity shifts or even disruption. The challenge and tension during this quest and drastic events such as wars, regime change, a decline of empires, forced migration, etc. are the ones that prompt post-colonial protests, toppling of statues, creation of new spaces for identity articulation, and hybrid identities. The events and related processes are caused by/resulting in identity disruption. Another topic that is expected to be addressed during the conference is the collective and individual dimension of identities, as the changes in the identities are the processes/results of

active relationships between different actors and in many cases, individuals have a certain degree of emotional investment to make them feel part of a common unity. (cf. Melucci 1996, 70-71)

As a dynamic process, not only the identities themselves are being (re)formulated but also the way we speak about “identities” is contested. Researchers from different disciplines criticize the concept and suggest alternatives (e.g., Brubaker/Cooper 2000). Nevertheless, the concept is still actively used, especially in the political sphere or activism. Thus, the usage of the concept in the research can be useful in terms of knowledge transfer/production. Consequently, we aim to discuss not only the influence on “identities”, but also what it is and how should we call it. We take the emergence of “post”-concept as a starting point of the discussion and common ground. Eventually, we would also like to discuss if “the age of post” causes only disrupted identities or even shifts to post-identities and, if so, what are they like.

Taking the traveling notion of the concept of identity and the post-concepts into consideration this conference aims to address shifting (cultural) identities and their understanding within/via post-concepts through interdisciplinary and international contributions. Drawing on insights from fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, cultural studies, heritage and memory studies and history we welcome case studies and/or theoretical and methodological contributions that might explore questions/themes such as:

- ~ How do events that influence whole societies, such as war, migration, fall of a regime, transform identity? How do collective experiences transfer to individual identities? And vice versa?
- ~ What factors contribute to the shift or the disruption of identities?
- ~ How do people cope with shifting or disrupted identities?
- ~ How do heritage and identity relate in post-concept understandings?
- ~ What role does the intersectionality of different factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class play in identity constructions and/or expressions?
- ~ What should be considered ethically concerning the identity and the research about it?
- ~ What role does identity politics play concerning identities emerged within ‘post’-concepts?
- ~ What kind of implication do shifting identities have for issues such as social justice, human rights, and global governance?
- ~ How does memory (transgenerational trauma, collective memory, cultural memory) produce disrupted/shifted identities?
- ~ How do other concepts, such as the sense of belonging, groupness, identity building, stigma interrelate with the ‘post’-concepts?
- ~ What comes after ‘post’-concepts? Will there be ‘post’-‘post’-concepts? What are the differences between ‘post’-, ‘trans’-, ‘anti-‘ and ‘beyond’ concepts and their implications for identity shift and disruption?
- ~ What are the collective factors and the identity politics that are crucial in identity change/disruption?

The conference will feature a range of panel discussions and keynote lectures, providing ample opportunities for participants to engage with the latest research and scholarship in this exciting and rapidly evolving field. We plan the publication of the conference proceeding.

We invite abstract submissions from scholars at all stages of their careers and practitioners from a range of disciplines, addressing any of the themes outlined above. Abstracts (max. 300 words) with a short bio (max. 150 words) should be submitted by 15 January 2024 to [disruptedidentities@gcsc.uni-giessen.de](mailto:disruptedidentities@gcsc.uni-giessen.de). You will be informed whether your contribution has been accepted by 1 February 2024. Papers (max. 5,000 words) will be circulated before the conference and have to be submitted by 15 April 2024.

The Organizing Committee will cover daily lunches, coffee breaks, and a dinner. Travel and accommodation costs are covered by the participants.

The conference is organized by members of the Research Area 6 ‘Cultural Identity’, which is a part of the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC). GCSC is an interdisciplinary graduate centre at the Justus-Liebig University in Giessen, where international doctoral candidates, post-doctoral members, and visiting scholars conduct concept-based study of culture and organize events related to their work on concepts.

The Organizing Committee: Morteza Azimi, Erzhenia Dugarova, Sandra Engels, Farouk El Maarouf, Anastasiia Marsheva, Şahin Yıldız

Email: [disruptedidentities@gcsc.uni-giessen.de](mailto:disruptedidentities@gcsc.uni-giessen.de)

Website: <https://www.uni-giessen.de/en/faculties/ggk/gcsc/research/research-groups/gcsc-research-areas/research-area-6-cultural-identities/conference-disrupted-identities>

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