



Trans^Formations

From 2012 to 2015, with the IASH as the leading institute, the Philosophical-Historical Faculty of the University of Bern organizes four international Winter Schools of one week each. Under the thematic umbrella “TransFormations”, the Winter School explores local and global processes of change at the intersections of knowledge, history, culture and society.

Bernese Winter School 2012–2015

Call for Applications Winter School 2014

Application deadline: 5 October 2013

When: 9 – 15 February 2014

Where: Schloss Münchenwiler near Berne, Switzerland

Languages: English (main), German, French

ECTS: 6 | **Costs:** 500.- Swiss francs (travel and accommodation [double room] covered by organizer)

Cultural Transfer – Culture as Transfer

In a literal sense, “cultural transfer” refers to the “cultural mobility of objects” (Stephen Greenblatt): the global flow of commodities, concepts, words, images, persons, animals, money, weapons, drugs etc. Such a pragmatic notion may be the starting point for an interdisciplinary debate on alternative theories of “culture” in the humanities and social sciences.

Yet, “cultural transfer” implies not only the flow of things but also the fluidity of those who are engaged in their exchange. Every attempt to map landscapes of cultural transfer has to bear in mind that these landscapes are highly unstable and that places and borders, however imaginary they may be, are constantly ‘on the move’. It has become increasingly difficult to identify origins and ends or even signposts and directions of cultural processes. Thus, culture itself may be read as transfer (Lutz Musner), as an ongoing negotiation. It is eternally becoming rather than being.

Demarcations of borders, however, are very real. Definitions of “cultures” prove highly effective and “imaginary communities” (Benedict Anderson) are potent political agents. This is why we cannot stop short at an abstract diagnosis of a rhizomatic game (Gilles Deleuze) of endless *différance* (Jacques Derrida). The analysis of cultural transfer and culture as transfer has to take into account the dramatic situations of contact zones, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as well as the conditions of selection, translation, adaption or mutation within unequal power relations. Furthermore, the analysis of cultural mobility has to acknowledge that the anthropocentric notion of the human as prime mover of objects and creator of meaning might be undermined by the agency of nonhuman life, inorganic matter and the various idiosyncrasies of the objects themselves.

The Winter School addresses a twofold question:

- How can we reconstruct and conceptualize concrete examples of cultural transfer?
- And how can we, with such examples in mind, reconsider culture as transfer?

Invited guests and the probable focus of their lecture

Anil Bhatti ([German Studies, School of Language, Literature & Culture Stud., Jawaharlal Nehru Univ. New Delhi](#))
Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Transfer (India-Germany), Polyglotism, Similarity/Diversity

Hans Peter Hahn ([Social Anthropology/Ethnology, Goethe University, Frankfurt](#))

Transforming Objects, Itineraries of the Material, Urban Anthropology, Museology, Migration, Globalization, Africa (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo) and beyond

Helga Mitterbauer ([Austrian and German Lit., Dep. of Modern Languages and Cultural Stud., Univ. of Alberta](#))

Transcultural Studies, Cultural Transfers, Postcolonial Theory and Cultural Transfer, Relations between Austrian und (Central) European Literature, Migration in Literature

Marianne Sommer ([History of Science/Cultural Studies, Dep. of Cultural and Science Studies, Univ. of Lucerne](#))

Biographies of Objects, Museology, Human Population Genetics, Imagined Communities, Evolution

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Format

Each morning session begins with a lecture given by one of the four international scholars, followed by responses and plenary discussions. These sessions prepare the ground for the parallel workshops in the afternoon which focus on key concepts and core texts the participants suggested in advance of the Winter School as particularly relevant to their own research. Posters visualize the participants' projects and foster informal exchange throughout the week.

Programme overview

Week	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Sun	Arrival (or afternoon)	Welcome / Introduction	Poster viewing
Mon	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	
Tues	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	Film
Wed	Excursion	Excursion	Fondue dinner
Thurs	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	
Fri	Lecture, response, discussion	Reports and lessons learned	
Sat	Departure		

Application Procedures

The Winter School offers young doctoral and postdoctoral scholars a unique opportunity to contribute to a broader discussion with their own research and ideas. We particularly encourage applications from researchers from the humanities and the social sciences with a strong interest in theoretical debates in an interdisciplinary setting.

How to apply?

Please provide us with the following application material:

- a letter of motivation, indicating how you expect to profit from participating in this Winter School and how you can contribute, in turn, to the discussions (mentioning your specific interest in the topic)
- a CV of max. two pages
- an abstract (500 words) of your current research project
- two referees we might contact

What do we offer?

IASH will cover your travel expenses as well as accommodation and meals at Schloss Münchenwiler. You will receive an e-reader with preparatory material and have the opportunity to present your research on the Winter School homepage and blog (<http://wsblog.iash.unibe.ch>). Most important of all, you are offered a stimulating environment conducive to state-of-the-art discussion of pressing scientific and societal questions. You will enter into exchange with senior scholars and peers, which will hopefully prove fruitful beyond the Winter School, not least by connecting you to an international network of like-minded scholars.

Contact

Please apply electronically (PDF) to Michael Toggweiler who is happy to answer your questions:

michael.toggweiler@iash.unibe.ch

The project team

Prof. Dr. Oliver Lubrich (Director IASH)

Dr. Manuela Rossini (Coordinator IASH)

Dr. Michael Toggweiler (Coordinator Winter School)