



40th Conference of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde (dgv)*

Zurich, July 22 to 25, 2015

The 40th Conference of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde upon invitation of the ISEK (Institute for Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies), Popular Culture Studies, will take place from the July 22 to 25, 2015 in Zurich, making it the first of the organization's conventions to be held outside of Germany. Inspired by the convention's host, the board of directors and management committee have decided upon the following topic:

Cultures of Sense

Approaches to the Sensuality of the Social World

Call for Papers

Members of the dgv, along with any other interested parties, are warmly invited to aid in the design and development of the convention, and provide articles for the recommendation of presentations and panels.

The Topic

In the framework of sociality, perception and action are simultaneously corporeal and cultural entities. The use of the senses, the "sensual," is thus an elementary component of that, which we commonly understand to be culture. As self-evident as such an understanding seems it nonetheless demands explanation, even in academia; this may in part be because it is so readily manifest, or indeed, because the dominant concepts of cultures have left only contingent space for the sensual and often relegated them to the realm of nature. A similar paradox is evident in ethnological traditions of thought. While the canon of studies, in keeping with its holistic standard, has included image, music, food, dance, clothing, and belief in its representation of the sensual – and extrasensory – dimensions of daily life, yet has done so without conceptualizing the associated sensual processes and their meanings.

In contrast, recent anthropological attention to the plurality of sensual experience and system has positioned the senses at the discursive center of a variety of disciplines. In recent years, it is at this space between disciplines, with its open borders and increasingly fluid paradigms, that a "sensory turn" has been established. This stems from the growing skepticism of modern conceptual standards, which presume a supposedly increasing sensory overload that necessarily leads and is leading to sensual loss. For a long period of time, the social and cultural situation of such assumptions in the knowledge systems of modernity itself have remained unrecognized. Within the examination of the senses in cultural and social sciences, this positioning functions as a prerequisite for accesses, which emerge from descriptions of sensually experienced objects to the analysis of sensory practices and thus must in turn make themselves sensible.

The conference will provide a platform by which this current and broadly discussed (both in and outside of academia), "return of the senses," is made the object of cultural studies analysis and in which the expertise, which lies in the tradition of the subject's research, may be uncovered. The themes and queries of the congress will join this complex conceptual space, which has expanded without opposition in recent years. In addition to the general presumption of a sensual shift, the

congress will primarily focus on “sensual/sensory anthropology” in the fields of cultural and social anthropology, which is not simply based on an understanding of “sensual culture,” (D. Howes) but on an accessible form of “sensuous scholarship”(P. Stoller). This also marks the specifics of historical and anthropologically –based cultural research, for which the study of sensual practices may additionally lead to forms of knowledge that have thus far remained outside of rational and ocular centric perceptual methodologies (C. Classen). Thus, in recent years, epistemic reflection and discussions regarding a methodological expansion have gained ground, while a broadening of traditional ethnography to “sensory ethnography,” (S. Pink) has been enabled.

Articles and discussions contributed to the congress may address the problems or thematic foci listed below. They ought not to be considered exclusive; rather, they serve as propositional guidelines to thematize the theoretical base of a culture of senses in its variability, rather than separating it into empirical process and methodological reflection.

Sensual Use: Practice, History

Possible themes:

- Historicity of sensual perception and experience: How is the historical shaping of perception and feeling accommodated in historico-anthropological terms? How do habituated emotional styles frame experience and action?
- Multi-sensuality – multimodality: What do we know about the culturally molded relationship of the senses and synesthetic and kinesthetic practices? What are the consequences of multimodal sensory stimulus for concrete empirical work?

Sensual Culture: Representation/ Popular Understanding

Possible themes:

- Sensory culture and cultural memory: What and in what way do museums and archives narrate historical sensual practices and with what meaning is sensory heritage imbued in these institutions of memory?
- Gender of the senses: What role do historical understandings of sensory hierarchy play in the negotiation of gender structures and where and in what way does cultural research of the senses contribute to overcoming dichotomous concepts and power relations?

The Ethnography of Multisensory Daily Lives

Possible themes:

- Culture of the senses – sensory scholarship: How does attention to the sensual dimensions of social life alter self-conception and scholastic method, and how does a reflective field of cultural studies react to the therein-lying methodological challenges?
- Technogenic sense – mediated experience: Where and in what way does the cultural study of technology and media contribute to sensory anthropology and how may ethnographic accesses to mediatized practices and experience, especially in digitally augmented environments, be understood?

Sensory Understanding

Possible themes:

- Sensual epistemology – knowledge of objects: What consequences does interest in a culture of the senses have for concepts of cognition and emotion, and what meaning does corporeal experience of the material have for the development and mediation of knowledge?



- Senses, knowledge, and power: How does a hierarchy of the senses stand in relation to powerful modern constructions and categorical creations of boundary (nature/culture), and how do they effect the production and perception of alterity?
- Investigation of sensuality and overcoming the “two cultures:” How does the multidisciplinary field of sensory culture organize itself and thereby, how does the relationship between science and the humanities, and the position of academic knowledge in lieu of its global and increasingly boundless nature, change?

As in the past, the Zurich conference will be made up of plenary and workshop presentations, and panels. In addition, workshops for Master’s degree candidates and student projects will take place. Panels two hours in length will cover the range of these workshops. The convenor of each panel will conceptualize a topic and present this to the dgv in the form of an abstract. This will also include a list of speaker’s names and short abstracts of their presentations. Provided it remains within the allocated time frame, the concrete design of the panel (form of introduction, number of presentations, commentary) is at the panel convenor’s discretion. However, innovative formats, which inspire discussion, are strongly requested.

During abstract submission, please pay particular attention to the following guidelines:

- In addition to a brief summary of content, the abstract should include information on the questions at hand and the empirical foundation upon which the work rests. In certain cases, information on the context in which the work exists/ took place and information on existing publications, the state of the work, or primary research results are required.
- The abstract must pertain to new and unpublished research.
- Contributions may be made in German or English.
- The abstract should include information on the applicant’s professional background and current employment.
- In the case of panel recommendations, please provide accurate postal and e-mail addresses to the responsible organizer as well as all participating parties.
- Abstracts for individual presentations should not exceed one standard DIN A4 page (max. 2,500 signs including spaces) while abstracts for panels should not exceed two standard DIN A4 pages (5,000 signs including spaces).
- For submission, please use .rtf or .doc formats (not .pdf). Please compile the entire submission into a single document. Name the document as follows: “your name_proposal_dgvzuerich2015.doc” or,
- “name of panel organizer_panel recommendation_dgvzuerich2015.rtf”
- Please submit by **15.08.2014 (August 15, 2014)** via e-mail to: **geschaefsstelle@d-g-v.de**

To allow for a smooth and transparent selection process, it is urgently requested that the above listed requirements be precisely followed. The board of directors and management committee will establish the final program during their joint meeting in September 2014; decisions will be made public as soon as possible thereafter.