

The University of Sussex, Brighton, and the University of Hamburg cordially invite papers for their conference on

Settlement Fantasies: The *Generalplan Ost* in Transnational Perspective (20/21. February 2014)

The *Generalplan Ost* has become one of the most chilling manifestations of the National Socialist regime. Envisaging a Nazi colonial empire after a victorious war, ethnocrats produced ever more far-reaching plans to radically and violently re-model occupied Europe into German *Lebensraum*. Murderous demographic interventions to produce a *völkisch* and racial homogenous German population went hand-in-hand with a total re-configuration of the occupied territories' economy, administration, patterns of settlement, infrastructure, and landscape.

Ironically it seems to have been the monstrosity of these fantasies which helps to explain why they were not taken seriously for decades – neither in Nuremberg and nor by the historiography at large. This changed only from the 1990s onwards as a shift of emphasis away from the pre-war period towards the war and German occupation policies encouraged integrative accounts taking the Nazi notion of *Lebensraum* seriously. Various mass crimes that hitherto were analysed separately like the systematic killing of Jews, of mentally handicapped or so-called asocials, or of Soviet Prisoners of War were now linked to large Germanisation and settlements campaigns aiming at turning the occupied east into German land. In light of this a reassessment of the *Generalplan Ost* seems necessary.

Misguided as Helmut Heiber's assessment of the *Generalplan Ost* in the 1950s as "daydreams" of triumphant German bureaucrats was, his comments inadvertently point to a crucial element in all those dystopian visions: their fantastic core. At the conference we will ask about the origins of those fantasies and explore the extent to which these plans mobilised mass violence and shaped the policies of German authorities in occupied Europe. To what extent did the planning departments in the various SS main offices, the ministry for food and agriculture, or the Institute for Labour Research, to name just a few, dictate German violence at the periphery? Detailed analyses of regional occupation policies in territories highlighted in the *Generalplan Ost* like the annexed Polish territories, Lithuania, the Ukraine, and the Crimea will be of particular importance. Equally important, we want to ask a question not addressed before: Were these fantasies peculiar to National Socialism or do they stem from a potential inherent to the modern nation state? Or do they represent yet another if particular brutal dystopian vision of the re-shaping of colonial space? What do we gain if we contrast Nazi settlement phantasies both with contemporary *Lebensraum* projects like Japan in Manchuria and Korea, and Italy in Ethiopia, as well as with other cases of settler imperialism like France in Algeria or frontier societies like the US or Brazil thus situating them in a wider context of the consolidating nation state and its imperial imaginary?

We invite abstracts around the following topics:

- Generalplan Ost and the shaping of German occupation policies
- Exterminatory warfare and occupation policies
- The transnational origins of settlement fantasies
- Utopias of race and space in history

The Deadline for the submission of proposals is 30 September 2013. Applicants will be contacted by the end of October 2013. Subject to available funding, travel costs may be reimbursed.

Please email a proposal of 300 words and any further questions to:

generalplanost.transnational@gmail.com.

Organizers:

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