

Tackling Cold War Student Organisations through Social History

The history of students has been approached through two overlapping frameworks: chronological and thematic. There is a historiography that covers the long 19th century up to the Second World War, in which historians were mainly interested in this social group through the study of its social characteristics, venues, and rituals - in a word, its identity. The approach used for this period, i.e. looking at the institutions created and governed by students, their ways of identifying themselves and organising their lives, has been overlooked in the study of student life during the Cold War. For this early period, such methods such as comparison (Dubois, 2021; Levsen, 2008) or global, imperial and/or postcolonial history (Laqua, 2011; Löhr, 2021; Legrandjacques, 2021) have proved their worth in studies focusing on the early 19th century and could be further analysed in the relation to the post-1945 period.

When studying the second half of the twentieth century, historians have mainly focused on students as a fundamental driving force to explain major protest movements (Katsakioris & Blum, 2016), the emergence of a globalised mass culture, especially in the context of the “long 1960s” (Mrozek, 2019; Mark, Kalinovsky & Marung, 2020), or to illustrate the evolution of development policies through scholarship programmes and the growth of academic mobility.

This conference aims to explore the history of students through their regional, religious, national and international organisations in the second half of the twentieth century, using certain approaches commonly used for the previous period. The aim is not to study the official discourses and organisational structures but rather to examine the student agency through the analysis of their social profile, the forms of material or symbolic compensation for their commitment, and the circulation of knowledge about the economic and social situation of the students. Taking into account the geopolitical context of the Cold War and the youth movements of the 1960s, we want to pay more attention to the emergence of the mass university on the one hand and to decolonisation on the other. This conference will provide a more detailed overview of student practices and actions, with less focus on discourse.

We therefore give priority to the papers on:

- East-West or North-South comparison in the history of international and national student organisations;

- The participation of students, through their local, national or international organisations, in 'development' policies (literacy campaigns, support for the democratisation of studies);
- Local commitment to global, progressive or reactionary causes (anti-/feminism, anti-/racism, anti-/colonialism, inter-/nationalism).

The conference focuses on the second half of the twentieth century, but diachronic comparisons are also welcome, as are sociological approaches to the present with a historical dimension.

The conference is part of the project [From Student Internationalism to Erasmus](#) (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Czech Science Foundation) whose members form the scientific committee. It will take place on 20-21 November at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland).

Please send a summary of your paper (up to 500 words) and a short CV to Dr Lidia Lesnykh (lidia.lesnykh@unifr.ch) by 1st of May 2025. Applicants will be notified on the 1st of June.

Travel and accommodation costs are, in principle, at the participants' own expense. Where necessary, we will do our best to help colleagues without financial support.

Information: Prof. Matthieu Gillibert (matthieu.gillibert@unifr.ch)

Cited works

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- DUBOIS Antonin, *Organiser les étudiants. Socio-histoire d'un groupe social (Allemagne et France, 1880-1914)*, Paris, Le pupitre, 2021.
- LAQUA Daniel (eds.), *Internationalism reconfigured: transnational ideas and movements between the World Wars*, London, I.B.Tauris, 2011.
- LEGRANDJACQUES Sara, *Voies étudiantes : pour une histoire globale des mobilités étudiantes en Asie (Inde britannique - Indochine française, années 1850-1940)*, PhD Dissertation, Paris 1, 2021.
- LEVSEN Sonja, « Constructing Elite Identities: University Students, Military Masculinity and the Consequences of the Great War in Britain and Germany », *Past & Present* (198), 2008, pp. 147-183.
- LÖHR Isabella, *Globale Bildungsmobilität 1850-1930: von der Bekehrung der Welt zur globalen studentischen Gemeinschaft*, Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2021.
- MARK James, KALINOVSKY Artemy M. et MARUNG Steffi (eds), *Alternative globalizations Eastern Europe and the postcolonial world*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2020.
- MROZEK Bodo, *Jugend, Pop, Kultur: eine transnationale Geschichte*, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2019.