Conference Report Generation P in the Tundra 8–10 October 2004, Tartu, Estonia

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The conference, 'Generation P in the Tundra' (8–10 October 2004) was organised by the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. The topic of the conference was the young generation in Siberia in all of its facets. The title for the conference was inspired by the cult book *Generation P* by the Russian writer Victor Pelevin, who describes what he believes is the young, commercialised Pepsi generation in Russia, which has assimilated post-socialist consumerist culture.

Using the title of the Pelevin's book, I invited participants to address the issue of youth in changing post-socialist Russian society. Youth are still rather marginal on the Siberian research agenda. The other highlighted topic, not very popular among Siberianists, was native people in the urban environment and the influence of commercial culture on their lifestyles and worldviews. In this sense, Siberian studies need to catch up to Arctic research in North American communities, but also anthropology generally, where urban anthropology and the analysis of social roles and the changing world of youth is already a well developed field.

Although there are some works focusing on youth and youth subcultures in the Russian context, this research is carried out west of Ural Mountains in European Russia (Omel'chenko and Bliudina, 2002; Pilkington, 1994, 1999; Puuronen *et al.*, 2000; Yurchak, 2005), or south in the post-Soviet central Asian republics (Kuehnast, 2000). The conference in Tartu built upon the conference at the Siberian Studies Centre of Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany the year before to further this agenda of a framework for Siberian anthropology of youth. Diverging from the Halle conference, the Tartu meeting focused on urban environments, and village communities or young people in the tundra and taiga were not the dominating issue in Tartu.

Participants of the conference came from various countries; represented were Russia, Estonia, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, and the USA; institutionally, among others, were the University of Tartu, Scott Polar Institute at Cambridge University, European University of St Petersburg, University of Aberdeen, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, and the Russian Academy of Sciences. Presentation topics varied from the issue of the popular music and ethnicity in Komi and Sakha (Kuznetsov, Ventsel) and role of the native intelligentsia (Stammler, Liarskaia, Bulgakova) to more theoretical approaches about creative traditions or the influences of modern media (King, Barkalaia). Looking at this variety, the conference fulfilled its initial goal to bring together people who want to tackle issues of the younger generations within Siberian studies and initiate discussions among different approaches.

This conference raised more questions than it answered, and during the final discussion participants agreed that youth in the Siberian context is a particularly complex research topic. The lack of a separate research agenda focusing on the younger generations complicates the business of distinguishing youth-specific fields from general themes. When we talk about governmental sport policies connected to nation building, where does the domain of youth start where young people make their own choices (Krist)? Or among the tundra Nenets, is it possible to define alienation from traditional culture along generational lines (Stammler)? How total is the impact of soap operas on the 'obscure' behaviour of young Khanty girls and how much does it reflect collectivisation and enculturation of their parent generation (Wigget and Balalaeva)? The fact that ethnicity plays an important role in the meaning and social significance of commercial urban culture and youth subcultures is a world wide phenomenon, but where is the borderline between teenagers' vernacular strategies and life trajectories directed by the 'national' policy of regional ministries of culture and/or youth affairs (Dugarova, Ventsel, Ulturgasheva)? We agreed that there are several topics researchers do not feel confident to speak about, either because of patchy data or local sensitivities, including sexuality, violence, suicide, alcoholism, urbanisation, and generational rifts to mention few.

Alternatively, discussing new topics in Siberian studies and enlarging 'traditional' fields are a good basis to build bridges with other fields of anthropology. Siberian studies are only recently integrated into modern anthropology, and need better comparison with other regions of the world, as well as more theoretical input. Conference papers will be published in a special issue of the journal of the Estonian Literary Museum, *Folklore*. It is hoped they can contribute to the discussion of the social roles and the choices of the younger generation, and show what a specifically Siberian perspective on the issue, and show where general tendencies lie. The conference 'Generation P in the Tundra' was not supposed to define the category of the younger generation or all research fields linked to it. This conference demonstrated that not only is there an interest to broaden the notion of Siberian anthropology but there are also new scholars on the 'scene' willing to deal with these issues.

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