



Call for papers

Swiss Sociological Society, 2009 Conference
September 7-9, 2009, Geneva University

Identity and lifestyles transformations

The last three annual conferences of the Swiss Sociological Society were centred around current debates, discourses, or social issues such as: *Triumph and misery of Neoliberalism* (Zürich, 2003), *Switzerland: A specific case* (St. Gall, 2005) and *War* (Bâle, 2007). Once again, the 2009 edition, that will take place in Geneva, will focus on a central topic to the understanding of the modern world: identity and lifestyles in societies undergoing rapid and continuous transformations. The conference aims to put in perspective, first, how identities are constructed and emerge in the context of lifestyle transformations, and, second, the impact of social changes on identity or identities.

In the social world, only some of these "images of the self" bring about something one could call "claims for identity": to assert oneself as a woman or man, Jew or Muslim, gay or lesbian, victim of a catastrophe or of a terrorist attack, physically handicapped, etc. Identity claims mean several things: to obtain public recognition, to defend one's rights, to claim the legitimacy of one's difference, or a shared dignity. It should be obvious that negotiations of identities can also take place in less formalised contexts, including families or peer groups. Moreover, these identity claims can either be desired by individuals or imposed on to them by various actors.

Which words do we have to construct a narrative about ourselves, in which contexts do we feel the need to do so? Do we define ourselves through our economic wealth (rich/poor), our culture (cultivated/ignorant, Swiss or not), our sexual identity (man/woman), or any other classification or distinction mechanism, be they public or intimate? As sociologists keep on looking for identity-related mechanisms, they can find them everywhere. Yet, only at certain times, on some occasions, for specific groups or individuals, does the question "Who are we" or "Who am I" become an issue. As a matter of fact, one can belong to a group or possess an attribute and not "define oneself" through this belonging or this attribute. This is why this conference will explore the idea that to understand identity claims it is necessary to recognize the *transformation* processes which individuals or groups take part in or are

submitted to, or even the impact of these transformations on the *lifestyles* shared by these individuals.

It therefore becomes interesting to observe how such issues are actualised in fields of practices as diverse as family, school, work, man/woman relationships, science or politics. Approached through theories ranging from symbolic interactionism to structuralism or phenomenology, the concept of identity nevertheless always refers to how, in practice, individuals live their lives and organize their daily activities. Moreover, situational dramaturgies, life histories, biographies, objective trajectories, as well as the potential actualizations of identities are linked with the transformations undergone and still under way by organizations and institutions. Proposals for the 2009 conference should address the links between identity and lifestyle in the context of social change, from either a theoretical, empirical, or methodological point of view.

The following plenary sessions are in the works:

Plenary 1: Identity and Work

Plenary 2: Identity and Migration

Plenary 3: Theories and Methods on Identity

Plenary 4: Identity and social policy

Plenary 5: Identity, Gender and Social Differences

Plenary 6: Identity, Consumption and Lifestyles

Plenary 7: Identity and Medias

Plenary 8: Identity and life courses

Plenary 9: N.N.

Plenary 10: N.N.

With this call for papers, we invite all sociologists, as well as researchers from other disciplines, to participate to this conference, either by contributing a presentation (in a plenary or in a workshop session), or organizing a workshop, including those already planned by the Committees of the Swiss Sociological Society.

Call for papers for plenary sessions

Please send in a full paper or detailed summary (2-3 pages) before March 15, 2009 (by e-mail to: call@socio09.org).

Call for organizers

Should you wish to organize a workshop (3-6 papers) related to the subject of the conference, please send a proposal accompanied by a specific call for contributions, before the end of February 2009 (by e-mail to: call@socio09.org).

Informations

For additional information about the next steps in the organization of this conference, visit our website: www.socio09.org.

Organization committee

Board of the Swiss Sociological Society
Prof. Christoph Maeder (President)
Prof. Kurt Imhof (Vice-president)
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Prof. Max Bergman
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In collaboration with the Department of Sociology of the University of Geneva