

CfP: Regions of Strategic Importance: geographical spaces, cultural and political constructs, and analytical tools

Conference venue: Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Date: December 7–9, 2017

Deadline for submitting proposals: May 20, 2017

The “Regions of Strategic Importance” conference will inaugurate the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Strategic Regions and delineate its research agenda in relation to Charles University’s broader academic endeavors in the fields of social sciences and humanities.

Today, more than ever, we realize that we live in an interconnected world that is in constant motion. Within the framework of current global transformations, the end of the Cold War, intensified transborder communication, as well as the rise of new security anxieties and a redirection of economic flows, the importance of the need to reexamine the map of the world for its political, cultural, economic and other constituent parts assumes renewed pertinence. Simultaneously, there is a growing interest in the historical dimension of the processes that reconfigure real and symbolic space.

Description of the event:

The aim of this conference is to gather, showcase, and engage with a variety of different approaches that tackle the broad

concept "region" in order to demonstrate its potential to reveal how our understandings of the contemporary world are framed in historical, cultural and geopolitical terms. An important part of the discussion will thus focus on the utility of terminology and methodology beyond the traditional bounds of "regional" and "area" studies and the benefits of transdisciplinary collaboration between social sciences and humanities.

We consider "regions" not as subunits of nation states, but as areas that transcend geographical and conceptual borders. With an awareness of the fact that regions are defined by geographical, environmental, religious, ideological, political, economic, cultural, and, even, imaginary, conceptualizations that do not always demarcate identical territories, our intention is to focus on units with a certain level of coherence. One of the objectives of the conference is to deliberate on varied understandings of regions with discussions that will evaluate their historicity, the (in)evitability of geographical determinations, and the (in)flexibility of natural, historical and cultural borders, etc.

We are equally interested in the rise of "regions" and their dynamism in long-term global processes, or, phrased otherwise, in their "strategic" roles in world history. An indispensable aspect of various conceptualizations of a region are the perspectives from which it is perceived and a consideration of the different views from within and from the outside.

Apart from the obvious relevance of certain regions that are generally understood to be "strategic" for international relations and global balance, the perception of the strategic importance of certain regions varies according to the historical moment. Thus, we are also interested in the perspectives of less obvious players whose relevance might be increasing due to recent changes within the EU, namely in Central Europe (and, specifically, the Czech Republic).

Keynote speaker: Prof. Rachel Murphy (University of Oxford)

The working language of the conference will be English.

Call for papers

The organizers welcome presentations on topics relevant for one of the following panels:

1. Conceptualization of a “region,” including relevant methodologies.
2. Mechanisms through which the strategic relevance of a region arises and changes.
3. Changing landscapes of strategic regions from the perspective of contemporary Central Europe.

Guidelines for submission:

The deadline for submitting paper proposals (in English) is **May 20, 2017**. Successful applicants will be notified by June 15, 2017.

Submissions should include:

- Name of the applicant, institutional affiliation, postal and email address, a brief professional CV,
- A short statement describing the relevance of the applicant’s research to the conference topic,
- Title and outline of the proposed paper (max. 500 characters).

Proposals and inquiries should be emailed to **regions-conference2017@ff.cuni.cz**.

Organizer: Institute for the Study of Strategic Regions, Charles University

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