

Call for papers

International Workshop

“Conflict and the Senses in the Global Cold War: From Propaganda to Sensory Warfare”

Berlin Center for Cold War Studies

at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History (IfZ)

in cooperation with Stiftung Luftbrückendank and Stiftung Ernst-Reuter-Archiv Berlin

15–16.10.2020 in Berlin

Although a conflict in which military strategies and weapons of mass destruction were always on the “horizon of expectation”, the Cold War was to a large degree carried out by non-lethal methods. It was also a war of culture, politics, and (visual and sonic) propaganda. Therefore, it can be understood to a great extent as a war not only on the senses, but as a war through the senses. In recent times, sensory aspects of domestic and international conflicts have become a field of interest in both sensory studies and conflict studies, with their methods and questionnaires intertwining in fruitful cooperation.(1) Historiographical approaches include the study of conflicts from the American Civil War to the Russian Revolution to both World Wars, and these examine how wars as the most extreme form of conflict were perceived—and how war changed contemporary perception.(2) The central conflict of the second half of the 20th century, though, is still a blatantly unexplored area in terms of sensory approaches.(3)

Steve Goodman has described how sound was used to carry out conflict—in propaganda, crowd control, and even in military practice and torture.(4) Extending his term “sonic warfare” to “sensory warfare”, the workshop aims to discuss sensory aspects of the global Cold War—from sonic and visual propaganda to military forms of conflict in the “hot” wars of the Cold War in Korea or Vietnam. What techniques were developed to attack the enemy with non-lethal and lethal weapons, ranging from irritation to the deadly use of chemicals aimed at the respiratory organs of the enemy? How were the senses trained to motivate the masses into a state of alert, for example, through sonic signals? What sensory methods were used to gain intelligence and information? What were the “micro politics” and affective measures used to influence people unconsciously, with the aim of dividing them into political communities of different perceptions, for example, in gustatory preferences? How did the Cold War not only use but also change perception as a result of division?

Papers may address (among other topics) aspects of:

- sonic and visual propaganda (e.g., at the borders of Germany, Korea, or Vietnam);
- cultural politics aimed at a Western/Eastern way of seeing, hearing, etc.;
- taste politics, as in “Americanized” vs. “Sovietized” and how this pertains to the global context concerning nutrition (e.g., airdrops of chocolate and chewing gum during the Berlin Airlift);
- spatial analysis of Cold War sense scapes;
- the “built view”, as in political architectures of transparency, centralism, or power;
- military measures aimed at perception organs (such as gas, and sonic and visual weapons);

- plans for “ecocide” or environmental weapons;
- sensory training and sensitization for both soldiers and civilians (altered states, e.g., by learning sonic signals);
- sensory methods of intelligence;
- the use of animal sensoria for warfare, border control and political policing;
- sensory warfare in domestic political conflicts of the Cold War (e.g., tear gas or olfactory forensics);
- sense aspects of human rights discourse, such as in detention and torture (e.g., pain, sensory deprivation);
- haptic aspects such as war toys or industrial design (from Sputnik to the red button);
- other everyday life aspects of the Cold War, such as how it affected music, gastronomy, perfumery;
- “new senses” like equilibrioception or pain control (e.g., in air force and other military training);
- transcontinental sensory aspects of the Cold War’s proxy wars (Africa, Asia, South America); or
- the Cold War and the senses in the museum.

By addressing these topics, the conference aims to apply perspectives from the internationally emerging field of sensory studies to Cold War history—and the other way around—with a clear focus on sensing. We are seeking to gain general knowledge about how to apply sensory approaches to a concrete historical phenomenon and we seek to understand the sensory aspects of the Cold War in everyday life, as well as border areas of warfare in the 20th century.

Therefore, scholars from both sensory studies and history/conflict studies are encouraged to submit proposals. While understanding perception within its intersensorial dimensions, we do welcome both multisensorial resp. intersensory papers as well as such papers limited to a single area of sensing, especially to those senses that have been studied less.

Please tender submissions in the form of short and comprehensive proposals with an emphasis on the sensory aspect of your paper. The conference language is English and our intention is to subsequently publish the proceedings.

Each proposal should include:

- the author’s name and affiliation,
- email address,
- an abstract of no more than 350 words, and
- a short biography (no more than 150 words).

Please submit proposals to Dr. Bodo Mrozek: **mrozek [at] ifz-muenchen.de** by the deadline of 31 May 2020. The program will be announced by June 2020.

(1) See, for example, Nicholas J. Saunders, Paul Cornish, *Modern Conflict and the Senses*, London/New York: Routledge, 2017.

(2) See Mark M. Smith, *The Smell of Battle, the Taste of Siege: A Sensory History of the Civil War*, Oxford: OUP, 2015; David Howes (ed.), *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Modern Age, 1920-2000*, Bloomsbury Acad., 2014; Santanu Das, “Sensuous Life in the Trenches”, 29.01.2014, Online: <https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/sensuous-life-in-the-trenches>.

(3) Michael Bull, Paul Gilroy, David Howes, Douglas Kahn, “Introducing Sensory Studies”, in: *The Senses and Society* Vol. 1, no. 1 (March 2006), pp. 5–7; David Howes, “The Expanding Field of Sensory Studies”, August 2013, Online: <http://www.sensorystudies.org/sensorial-investigations/the-expanding-field-of-sensory-studies/>.

(4) Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare. Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, Cambridge, MA/London, 2012.