



Colloquium on the Biographies of Artifacts and Practices

Dear colleagues,

we cordially invite you to join the Biographies of Artifacts and Practices (BOAP) Research Colloquium. Based on a collaboration of researchers from the University of Edinburgh, Aalto University, and the Technical University of Berlin, this bi-monthly colloquium provides an open platform for an international network of researchers interested in BOAP and related methodological and analytical approaches. Its main goal is to contribute to strengthening the robustness of research designs in STS and the sociology of technology and innovation. Each event features the presentation and discussion of one research project that traces the biographies of complex sociotechnical systems across multiple locales and extended timeframes, often linking multiple studies and scales of analysis.

The colloquium will take place online on **March 6th, 4 pm** (CET). It will feature a talk by **Zinaida Vasilyeva** (Technical University of Munich) titled *Soviet DIY Modernity: Cultural Biographies of Skills and the Problem of Value Transformation*. Applying Kopytoff's analysis of the cultural biographies of things to skills, the talk will explore the dynamics of value regimes and the mechanisms of "moral economy" involved in the commodification and de-commodification of skills.

About the talk:

This presentation focuses on the value transformation of manual skills in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian society. Drawing on Igor Kopytoff's famous work on cultural biographies of things (Kopytoff 1986) and applying his analysis to skills, I explore the dynamics of value regimes and the mechanisms of "moral economy" involved in processes of commodification and de-commodification of skills. I approach DIY-like manual skills as constitutive of the subjective worlds of Soviet modern individuals. Following the biographies of two of my interlocutors, I show how the manual skills that they acquired in the 1960s and 1970s and that ensured their professional success were or were not mobilized after the political and economic reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s. I also show how the transformation of the economic logic changed the regimes of value that previously framed their manual skills and selves. A diachronic analysis of configurations of skills, values, economies, and different understandings of modernity will be central to my analysis.

About the speaker:

Zinaida Vasilyeva holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) and works as a post-doc at the STS Department of the Technical University of Munich. Trained in history and anthropology, she has participated in various research projects on the institutional history of scientific knowledge, scientific controversies, and subjectivities in "tech" worlds. In her doctoral dissertation entitled "From Skills to Selves: Recycling 'Soviet DIY' in



Post-Soviet Russia” she explored how meanings and values attributed to manual knowledge and skills and do-it-yourself practices in the late Soviet society shifted and changed after the dissolution of the Soviet political and economic order. Her current research project focuses on the meaning-making practices at the intersections of art, science and technologies with a particular focus on space tech.

Zoom link and contact:

<https://tu-berlin.zoom.us/j/69935202202?pwd=Zkl2RW5zTmdKam1mbmpHQ0FXRldTZz09>

Zoom PW: 099802

If you are interested in the activities of the research network, or would like to present at the colloquium, get in touch at david.seibt@tu-berlin.de .

Next dates in the BOAP Colloquium

(all colloquium sessions start at 4 pm, Berlin time)

06.03.2023, **Zinaida Vasilyeva** (Technical University of Munich): Soviet DIY Modernity: Cultural Biographies of Skills and the Problem of Value Transformation

08.05.2023, **Lisa Reutter** (Norwegian University of Science and Technology): tba