

Call for Papers:
Strategies of the Temporary, Legitimation of the Permanent:
The Consolidation of the Bonner Republik in Northern Rhine-Westphalia

Organised by: „Moderne im Rheinland“/Zentrum für Rheinlandforschung, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf in Kooperation mit dem Forschungsverbund „Bonner Republik“ an der Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf

Date: 24/25 February 2023

City: Düsseldorf

Application deadline: 15 September 2022

The conference will focus on the “Bonner Republik” (i.e., post-war Germany before reunification, after which the West German capital was moved from Bonn to Berlin) as an historical period, as an incubator for the Federal Republic of Germany in North Rhine-Westphalia, and as a space of remembrance still being negotiated both in academia and in the public. In the historiography of the post-war era, it is common to refer to the seat of government and the federal capital Bonn as a provisional arrangement dictated by the post-war scarcity of undamaged buildings. In 1977, *Der Spiegel* described Bonn’s built environment as a “Provisorium in Permanenz”. The tension between permanence and transitoriness indeed opens perspectives on the entire “Bonner Republik” as both a temporal and spatial phenomenon. The conference “Strategies of the temporary, Legitimation of the Permanent: The Consolidation of the Bonner Republik in Northern Rhine-Westphalia” will focus on the period between the war and reunification, examining the many interconnected ramifications of Bonn’s adamant insistence on its own temporariness – coupled with its the shaping effect of its latent permanence. The Conference will focus on Northern Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) a new German federal state formed in 1946, three years before the proclamation of the “Bonner Republik”. Great Britain, the post-war occupying power in this part of Germany, cobbled NRW together in 1947 from the formerly autonomous provinces of North Rhine and Westphalia and the independent state of Lippe. Northern Rhine-Westphalia, which upon its creation became the most populous federal state, offers a wide spectrum of topics: The conference will examine the interdependencies and synergies between the “Bonner Republik” and the surrounding federal state, the tracing of places of remembrance, investigations of the identity of cities, specifically of architecture, art, literature, music, theatre and also of radio and television or newspaper and magazines as exemplary formative elements and catalysts. A significant example was “Neues Rheinland – Das Magazin für die Region” (“New Rhineland: The Magazine for the Region”) published from 1958 to 2003.

Regardless of which topics are addressed, they should reflect a common emphasis: the almost dialectical linkage of the intention to create a provisional solution with its manifest implementation, which culminated in an imperceptible “condensation” into permanence. The phenomenon itself raises exciting questions: Is it possible to identify targeted strategies, even if only “homeopathic” in intensity, which directly influenced the gradual transformation of the “Bonner Republik” from a preponderance of the “provisional” to a balanced double axis of provisional and permanent – and then, ultimately, to

an unquestioned structural consolidation of something which had originally been intended merely as a symbolic gesture to “just get things started”? What political, economic, cultural forces are at play when a supposed “provisional arrangement” is constituted into a consensually-established facticity? What contribution did the provisional aspects of the arrangement make to the Federal Republic, and what aspects of German life were inconceivable without the “Bonner Republik” forging a persistent, resilient foundation for itself? What gravitational force did the liberal democratic Basic Law exert during the political Armageddon of the post-war era?

If the focus of the paper is a fixed period of time and a specific location in NRW, the author may wish to introduce outside perspectives to deepen understanding. These may include, among other things, exploring the reciprocal influences of all West German states on one another. The following questions are worth considering: Which constitutive elements of the “Bonner Republik” can be found throughout all of West Germany? Which elements flow from West Germany into the “Bonner Republik”? The inclusion of an international perspective is also promising: How have commentators thought and written about the “Bonner Republik”? How did they enter into a dialogue with it, including forging a new European architecture? In this context, it is important to consider how much of the past still lives on “virulently” in the present. It further goes without saying that the former East Germany will have a prominent place in any such analysis.

The temporal reference points for the discussion were set by two preceding conferences: “Emergence of a Capital Region between Cologne, Düsseldorf and Brussels: The Bonner Republik” (*Entstehung einer Hauptstadtregion zwischen Köln, Düsseldorf und Brüssel: Die Bonner Republik*, 2019) and “End of the Bonner Republik? The Berlin Decision and its Contemporary Historical Context” (*„Ende der Bonner Republik? Der Berlin-Beschluss und sein zeithistorischer Kontext*, 2021), as well as the lecture series, held under the aegis of the “Bonner Republik” research network, on “Heimat and Longing” (*Heimat und Sehnsuchtsort*) and “Values/Transformation in the Everyday Life of the Bonner Republik” (*Werte/Wandel im Alltag der Bonner Republik*).

This Call for Papers cordially invites researchers from all disciplines of cultural studies and history to apply with a proposal for a presentation of 20-25 minutes. Speakers’ travel and accommodation costs will be covered. Please send your one-page synopsis with brief biographical information by 15 September 2022 to: grande@phil.hhu.de and melanie.lange@hhu.de.

Proposals are welcome on the following topics, among others:

1. On the temporary nature of the “Bonner Republik”
 - How much of the past is there in the present, and in the process by which the “Bonner Republik” constituted itself?
 - Where was/is the “Bonner Republik”? Where is it absent?
 - What role did the “Bonner Republik” play in NRW, and vice versa?
 - Country and city: how the “Bonner Republik” defined itself

2. The “Bonner Republik” in NRW
 - Berlin as a point of reference in the “Bonner Republik” (e.g., the “Berlin Bear” project)
 - Dramaturgy of the Bonn-Berlin axis (e.g. 1953, construction of the Berlin Wall,

reunification)

- Bonn as seat of government and capital of the “Bonner Republik” (politics, urban architecture, infrastructure, culture)
- Düsseldorf as the capital of NRW (economy, culture, politics, science)
- Cologne as the most populous city in NRW (media and cultural centre, Archbishop’s seat)
- What is the significance, for NRW and its cities (including Dortmund, Essen, Duisburg, Bergkamen, Herne, and others) of the West Germany’s industrial cities (built on coal and steel) and the structural transformation of the Ruhr region which began in the 1970s?
- 12 regions in North Rhine and Westphalia and their networked connectedness (or lack thereof) (<https://www.nrw-tourismus.de/regionen-in-nrw>: The “Bergisch Three” (*Bergische Drei*) (Wuppertal, Remscheid, and Solingen), the Bergisches Land, Bonn & Rhein-Sieg- Kreis, Düsseldorf & Neanderland, Eifel & Aachen, Köln & Rhein-Erft-Kreis, Münsterland, Niederrhein, the Ruhrgebiet, Sauerland, Siegen-Wittgenstein, and the Teutoburger Wald)
- The role of the Rhine as a central traffic artery, historical topos, and mythical place of longing
- Architecture as the iconographic figurehead of the “Bonner Republik”
- New cultural profiles (museums of contemporary art, the Museum Morsbroich in Leverkusen, est. 1951, the Gasometer in Oberhausen, est. 1994, Tanztheater Pina Bausch, Wuppertal, est. 1973, etc.)
- Radio and television / Newspaper and magazines (e.g., “Neues Rheinland - Das Magazin für die Region” published from 1958 to 2003)

3. Beyond NRW

- Federal states in comparison
- Influences from the federal states and countries
- The “Bonner Republik” and East Germany (including East German federal states) in critical coexistence (“Rhenish Republic” from a socialist point of view)
- International integration of the “Bonner Republik” (UNO, NATO, World Security Council, UNESCO)

4. The “Bonner Republik” in NRW from today’s perspective

- How much “Bonner Republik” is there in today’s “Federal Republic of Germany”?
 - Development of the “Federal Capital Bonn” into the “Federal City of Bonn”?
- Transformation from a political centre to a multicultural focus

- How does the younger generation perceive the moniker “Bonner Republik” after the fall of communism? (including the near-complete substitution of “Bonner Republik” by a reunited “Federal Republic of Germany”)

Contact:

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