By 2015, 30 years have passed since the beginning of transformations which have come to be known as Perestroika. It is also the year of 25th anniversary of Lithuania’s independence and 10th anniversary of EHU’s reestablishment in Vilnius. On the occasion of this triple anniversary, the organizers of the European Humanities University’s annual student conference are inviting undergraduate and graduate students majoring in various social sciences and humanities to join in an interdisciplinary discussion of Perestroika and its effects, interpreted broadly.

We invite you to examine Perestroika not only as a specific historical event which has radically transformed the present-day political and discursive landscapes, but also as a powerful conceptual resource for interdisciplinary work with changes being made to social constructs and practices under conditions of the collapse of one symbolic order and the formation of many.

From this perspective, we offer to discuss how knowledge is transformed under the influence of new technologies (communicative, cultural, scientific), how regimes of polyphony of the knowledgeable ones are connected to the democratization of traditional institutions (education, religion, laws), how the polyphony is realized through space (public, urban, virtual), and to what extent the new orders of decentralized knowledge production allow to articulate the experience of diverse social groups, including the marginal ones. Speaking of the effects of Perestroika, we invite to discuss the old/new rhetoric and intellectual affects, the change of status of theory and the knowledge economies, centrifugalism and rigidity, footprints and wounds, academic imagination and resistance, loyalties and discursive communities, new institutionalizations and deformed networks, media interventions and visualizations, interpretive frames and background practices, policies and technologies involved in creating and maintaining the present-day polyphony.

Thirty – twenty five – ten years after, the transformed and transforming worlds do not seem much simpler. Contemplating this complexification, we offer to take into account not only regimes and gains but also the risks of decentralization and polyphony, including the disenchantment of the reformers and political apathy of citizens, geopolitical instability and distrust in theory, memory wars, and the new Ice Age.
The conference will be held on **15-16 May, 2015**, in Vilnius.  
**Venue:** Campus of the European Humanities University (Valakupiu Str. 5, Vilnius, Lithuania).

**The conference languages:** English, Belarusian, and Russian.

A collection of conference papers will be published.

**Undergraduate and graduate students are welcome to submit abstracts.**

Please submit the [online application](#) no later than **March 15, 2015**. Participation in the conference is free of charge (no registration fee), but submitted abstracts will be reviewed and selected.

**Only selected applicants will be invited to participate.** Successful applicants will be notified of acceptance by **April 2, 2015**.

**Visa Support**

Students requiring visa support are to indicate their passport data in the application form. Visas are issued **free of charge**.

**Accommodation**

Accommodation is provided to all the participants **free of charge** for the period of the conference (May 15–16).

**Contact**

Contact address is **studentconference @ ehu.lt**. Please visit the conference page on [EHU’s official website](#), as well as social networks [Facebook](#).
THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS ARE PLANNED AS PART OF THE CONFERENCE:

Contemporary social theory: perspectives in the situation of conceptual polyphony

Three decades ago we saw declarations of “the end of the social,” which also meant the end of history of the knowledge that attempted to explain social life. However, this prognosis turned out to be erroneous. The social radically changes its forms, rather than disappears. In the situation when the role of technologies in social life is on the rise, the social can no longer be perceived solely as a traditional interaction between people. It is not accidentally that we are seeing more and more discussions of “the posthuman world.” Plethora of new phenomena and processes of social life need explanation, however they do not fit within the languages of classical social theory. They call for a new sociological imagination, new conceptual vocabularies. More and more such vocabularies appear today. And it becomes more complicated to bring them to agreement. Section participants are invited to discuss the models and practices of social theory development in the situation of conceptual polyphony.

History at the turn of epochs: challenges of the past / diversity of the future

The section will address a wide array of questions related to the transformation of historical knowledge in post-perestroika period, opening of archives, and usage of new methodologies. The section welcomes presentations on specific historical topics and problems, works on source studies and historiography relevant within the proposed context.

Gender turn in social knowledge: different research strategies and forms of interpreting the sociality

The section focuses on transformation of social knowledge within the context of the gender turn and reassessment of the experience of noninclusion/marginality/social injustice. We invite undergraduate and graduate students to make presentations that, on the one hand, would empirically problematize such experience and make it visible and, on the other, would attempt to comprehend, on the level of theory and reflexion, how the conception of (academic) knowledge should change toward greater openness and multifariousness.

Reconstructing the knowledge: big data, analytical platforms, visualization and other challenges of digital humanities

Over the last 50 years, transformations of knowledge have been described in categories of “scientific revolutions,” “epistemological turns,” and routine operations of “translation.” Within this section we offer to discuss present-day changes in knowledge production in social sciences and humanities, its transformation, provoked by the interventions of digital technologies and their active use. Usage of text editors and data cloud storage, creation of digital archives and the ideology of open science, the trend of visualizations and creation of virtual laboratories – all this makes science different and essentially changes research work (including the techniques of writing, problem-solving strategies, operations with data, techniques of analysis, the status of theory, notions of authorship and final result).

Popularization of urbanism and new professional identities
Today, the city is often seen as the central node of development, shaped by new types of relations between production and consumption, competitiveness and culture, social problems and political representation. Qualitative changes in the ways cities function give new meaning and new legitimacy to existing spheres of employment and also shape new professional identities of architects, social activists, municipal politicians, urban animators, cultural entrepreneurs, journalists, etc. The goal of this panel is to identify the specifics of these new jobs and professional identities that emerge together with the popularization of urbanism as a distinct practice and field of knowledge, as well as discuss the legitimacy and social goals solved by these professions and jobs. The panel welcomes both systematizing theoretical analyses and case studies of projects and approaches.

“Perestroika” and design: was there “perestroika” in design?

Perestroika is a comparatively recent period of contemporary history, hence the temptation to rely on conventional knowledge while discussing it. The section participants are invited to address the following questions: Based on what sources can we reconstruct the institutional logics of producing graphic design objects? How should we study the organization of creative process during the times of Perestroika and its reconfiguration with the collapse of the Soviet Union? To what extent is the design history synchronized with the political history? How important and revolutionary was the period of Perestroika for design (institutionally) and designers (as representatives of creative professions)? We offer to consider the objects of graphic design as the main materials for reconstruction.

Processes of “perestroika” in political and economic relations in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states

Within the panel, we will address the issues related to the transformation of the region before and after the military and political crisis in Ukraine, introduction of economic and political sanctions, development of economic and political integration processes in post-Soviet states. In this section, “Perestroika” is interpreted broadly and related to the topical internal and external political processes. Interdisciplinary presentations are welcome, on the topic of the future of the post-Soviet region, new political and social divides, paradigms of economic integration and cooperation, and also analysis of specific regional cases.

Place of the historical heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in today’s Eastern Europe

The section will discuss the role and significance of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) in self-identification and formation of the states in the Baltic-Black Sea region. We propose to consider strategies of interpreting GDL in national historiographies, as well as peculiarities of adaptation and transformation of its historical and cultural heritage by the independent post-Soviet republics.

Results of public administration reforms and new challenges for effective implementation of public policy in countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic states

The section combines the interest in reforming the system of government and public service in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the development and implementation of models of effective public policy in the process of Europeanization. The section will address the examples of transition to stable democracy, varying in effectiveness; discover similar practices of reform,
techniques and tools of overcoming the aftermath of economic, social and political transformation. The section participants are invited to discuss why knowledge (political, managerial, etc.) borrowed from the West turned out to be ineffective in post-communist world; as well as to search for ways of forming theoretical and expert knowledge, adequate for new social, political, and economic reality.

**Development perspectives of private law in the European Union and CIS countries**

The today’s processes of interaction between different legal systems and vigorous exchange between them have lead to establishing global and regional standards in law. Private law regulating private deals and commercial transactions, and most widely used by the majority of people, is not among the branches of law characterized by deep harmonization and standardization. At the same time, transformations of the national legal system—one of the key processes taking place in the CIS and Eastern European societies since the 1990s—are to a great extent related to the processes of universalization of legal principles in private law. This process allows us to speak about establishing both international and regional legal order, at the same time demonstrates the resistance of national legal systems to harmonization. The panel is a platform for discussing tendencies in development of international and European private law, as well as aspects of the current influence from international and European law on the national legal order. The section is expected to bring together students who would be able to discuss various aspects (historical, sociological, political, and economic) of the development of private law in the EU and CIS.

**Constitutionalism and Legal Instruments of Human Rights Protection in Central and Eastern European States**

Constitutionalism is one of the key legal standards providing the harmonization of public order in Europe. Institutional construction, legal provisions of public policy on different levels, state of mechanisms of human rights protection are currently the main sources for the development of constitutional law. Over the last decades, the human rights issue has ceased to be an exclusively internal affair of each state and has grown to be a factor and an attribute of international order. The section participants will discuss the current state of international and European constitutionalism, construction of constitutional institutions, formation of special bodies responsible for international control of the activities of states in the sphere of human rights protection, court advocacy institute, right to qualified legal aid, development of university legal clinics, protection of human rights within corporations and work relations, as well as focus on forms and instruments of regulating the sphere of new technologies that would allow to preserve the humanism of our civilization.

**Right to oblivion: social and legal practices and mechanisms of constructing the post-Soviet rupture**

The section will focus on the oblivion that plays an important role in the production of the social — together with memory preserving the past and norm shaping the future. Oblivion is an integral part of the process of making a rupture in history, creating possibilities for reforms and transformations. Oblivion is not negative annihilation and disappearance, but rather an active process and complex practice of constructing ruptures and rebooting the experience. Oblivion is perceived by us as a mechanism of amortization of social and legal transformations and condition for formation of new identities, basis for forgiveness and clemency, means for providing viability to new norms and dynamic existence of social structures. Oblivion necessitates repeating one and the same lesson over and over again, but it also provides sparing social dynamics. Its contribution to the implementation
of reforms and securing of silence, forming attitudes towards offences and offenders, determining punishment and setting time limitations, tabooing of the past and managing secrets makes oblivion a promising analysis object for all interested to consider legal mechanisms and practices through an interdisciplinary lens.

We invite participants to an interdisciplinary discussion of oblivion in various social practices, primarily in legal ones. Presentations could focus on oblivion as the basis for reform, oblivion as de-actualization of historical events and facts, oblivion as a factor for formation of attitudes to crime and a criminal, oblivion and pardon, oblivion and reconciliation, oblivion and repentance. We invite lawyers and representatives of other fields in social sciences and humanities to discuss how an active break from the Soviet order is implemented in contemporary law and social practices that are being formed since the early 1990s. From this perspective, Perestroika is the beginning of the rupture, the structure of which (normative, symbolic, material, institutional, practical) we suggest as an object for special analysis.

**Religion and processes of modernization in Eastern Europe**

In 1990s, modernization of sociopolitical and economic spheres in Eastern Europe was accompanied by religious renaissance. The liberalization of religious life was considered an important indicator of democratization of public life in general. Today the character of correlation between modernization in sociopolitical and religious spheres in Eastern Europe poses new questions: What is the level of participation of religious institutions and individuals in sociopolitical changes in the region? What aspects of social life are least/most affected by religious actors and why? What are the specifics of the models of interaction between sociopolitical and religious institutions in Eastern Europe? How interrelated are civic participation and religious identification? How do religious and political liberties develop? What are the peculiarities of renaissance of religious life in the region? Other questions are also welcome to be discussed within this section.

**Practical psychology in post-Soviet region: peculiarities of genealogy and development perspectives**

Social transformations, which started together with Perestroika, have led to appearance of a new expert field – practical psychology. Over the past 20 years, psychological discourse has become one of the most important (and popular) resources for constructing the post-Soviet self. Thus popularization of practical psychology, together with non-medical counseling, during Perestroika and in post-Soviet societies was a sign of liberalization of public life. The section will discuss peculiarities of the formation of this new social practice in post-Soviet countries as part of the specifics of Eastern European socio-cultural space. Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers and representatives of other fields in humanities and social sciences are welcome to participate in the section.

**Modes of working with heritage: shift of paradigms**

The objective of the section is to analyze the main trends of scholarly, academic and social life in the sphere of protection and reconstruction of tangible and intangible heritage of Belarus and Central European region, resulting from the irreversible changes that have occurred over the past 30 years in sociopolitical, cultural and academic spheres. The section welcomes presentations describing and analyzing the turning points, practices of de-Sovietization, change of paradigms of working with different forms of heritage, and also conceptual shifts in the articulation of heritage and production of knowledge about it.
Social challenges of today’s biotechnologies

The today’s biotechnological development poses a number of questions and challenges which are hard or even impossible to be addressed based on the classical understanding of a human being, moral and ethical norms, and difference between the natural and cultural. This primarily concerns scientific discoveries and technologies, courtesy of which a new field called biomedicine has emerged. Interference with the molecular and genetic constitution of a human being, change of reproductive experience, slowing the aging process, neuropharmacological correction of the self – these and other trends of contemporary “life sciences” call for a thorough examination of the social consequences of expansion of relevant scientific (biomedical) practices. Special attention should be paid to the question of principles and the decision-making procedures in the sphere of implementation of the recent biotechnologies. The analysis of the proposed problem is supposed to take into account local/regional social history of biotechnological development. The section welcomes presentations by representatives of all social sciences and humanities.

Science and technology ± bright future

The section will address the contribution of science and technological innovations to the production of social reality and its change. How, under specific historical conditions, did the technologies of the professional knowledge production merge with social programs of transforming society and the human being? How was the relationship between engineering and science redefined, as big science was turning into a significant operator of the social in the post-war period? How did research of atom and outer space form the imagination of a man in the age of late modernity? How did cinema, literature and photography help turn the imagined worlds into the worlds of the triumphant science and technology? How did social overtones get intertwined into the popular science discourse? How were the ideas of scientific and technological progress integrated into the Soviet utopias of 1950-1970’s? What happened to the scientific optimism after the collapse of the USSR? How did big science search for its niche in the conditions of new socioeconomic reality?

Art before and after Perestroika

Art is always “perestroika,” invention of the new order, revolution, rethinking the foundations of the human, and revival. Perestroika of 1985 gave rise to many consequences, including those in art. Differentiation between the official and unofficial art lost its meaning, as Soviet art ceased to exist. For Belarusian art, Perestroika was the beginning of the new contemporary stage of its development. What is Soviet art, Social Realism, Avant-garde? Is art beyond politics possible? What are the historical frameworks of Belarusian contemporary art, its forms, institutions, themes, and problems? These are some of the questions we would like to discuss.

Media culture: technological and social “perestroika”

The panel addresses the issue of transformation of the media culture over the past decades, its technological and social changes – transition from the “old” media to the “new” ones, emergence of new formats and genres of “knowledge” production in the era of media convergence, local and global social changes in their medialization and influence on the media. The proposed topics include
Soviet Perestroika of media culture and its effects (return of live television, “space bridges” blowing up the remnants of the Iron Curtain, voluminous magazines, video salons and cable TV channels, etc). The section also welcomes presentations on topics of interpretation of today’s media and media culture in the interdisciplinary context—from the vantage point of visual and cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, art, political science etc.

**Cinema in the context of digital culture: technology, esthetics and new receptive practices**

The section will address the influence of technologies on the transformation of ontological foundations of cinematographic image, cinematic esthetics, and practices of reception of cinema. The section will discuss social effects of these transformations, methods of researching the cinema under new conditions. We welcome presentations on the effect(s) of reality in cinema: from ontology of photographic image to the digital image; resetting the experience of movie watching and new cinephilia: from multiple screens to new forms of watcher’s participation; recycled cinema: e(s)th(et)ics of appropriation and ways of interaction between analogue and digital cinematic culture; territory of cinema: limits of object and research strategies.

**New look: vision as a cultural technology**

“New Thinking” is one of discursive bulwarks of Gorbachev’s reforms. This section’s organizers think that an array of psychocultural attributes and indicators of Perestroika should be expanded through “new vision.” Without it being taken into account, cultural analysis of the 30-year-old events would not be effective. We mean not only harsh visual regimes overturning the proportion of the visible and invisible that was customary for a Soviet man (chernukha), not only the new visual literacy acquired by the viewer as part of the media enlightenment (“Vzglyad” TV program), but also the cultural crisis of vision under conditions of the collapse of the old symbolic order and appearance of new repertoire of positions for post-Soviet observer. We invite section participants, not restricting oneselfs by renovations of vision in USSR, to discuss “the new look” as a rhetorical figure, optical regime, visual practice, dispositive of technologies, method of appropriation of changes – social, political, intellectual, cultural – whether it be “the new look” of Christian Dior or “the new look” of Jerome Bruner.

**Soviet project between construction and reconstruction (Perestroika)**

Construction in USSR was always something bigger than (im)perfect practical activity of erecting buildings, bridges and building roads. It simultaneously served as a source for basic metaphors and risks for communist utopia. It is not by chance that one of the most moving and talented experiences of medialization of the Soviet project was the magazine “USSR in Construction,” and the transition from socialist existence to communism was rhymed with “khrushchyovkas” and new cities. Dolgostroi (construction projects that dragged on for years) were one of the incarnations of the spirit of Zastoi (Era of stagnation), while Perestroika (reconstruction) became an effort to cope with all the crises of the Soviet system. The section will discuss a multilevel and complex system of relations between the Soviet project and “stroika” (construction) – discursive, ideological, media, institutional, material, practical, economic and other relations; and also ways for constructing and reconstructing the knowledge about the Soviet past.

The conference will also feature lectures, round table discussions, book presentations and student research project presentations.