

PhD-topic Tatsiana Astrouskaya

From Historical to Cultural Borderlands: The Cartography of Intellectual Discourse in Belarus (1990-2010)

The research project aims to map the intellectuals at the cultural landscape of post-soviet Belarus. It considers intellectuals as *per se* existing at the mental and cultural borderlands and therefore easier crossing every kind of borders. At the same time Belarus because of the multiplicity of cultural contexts and discourses of power exerted influence on its territory can be treated as borderland area.

I conjecture that in spite of exile of intellectuals (both forced and voluntary) as well as adverse conditions (such as limitation of public speaking, authorized and unauthorized research topics, lack of independent academic institutions) intellectual activity in post-soviet Belarus possesses a significant potential for influence and resistance within and outside of the community.

On the one hand it is determined by specific historic borderland context demanded from intellectuals a kind of partisan activity in a struggle for reason and culture, manoeuvring between different overlapping and conflicting discourses. *On the other hand* the location of intellectuals at the border (they are at the same time inside and outside society) allows them to be more attentive to the local and regional peculiarities but also take interest in the going out the measures of own community, what makes them more sensible to the changes and be prepared for actions. Following and reflecting the logics of space intellectuals are successful in their resistance to the power, as soon as products of their activity are adopted by the discourse of power.

The object of the study is text as main product of intellectual activity. The text in a situation of restriction of public speaking and public meeting rights occurs to be the most important tool of the struggle for reality as well as medium for communication between intellectuals themselves, and between intellectuals and the society.

Within the research project I am covering three aspects of intellectual activity in Belarus: the history of development of intellectual movement in Belarus since the end of 1980-s to 2010; the mechanisms of reciprocal influence between intellectual and the power

discourses and formation of common but multi-layer cultural context; the phenomena of redefinition of cultural borders by Belarusian intellectual projects arising in Belarus and abroad.