

Centre for Critical Inquires in Society and Culture

Research workshop

***Remembering/Forgetting Imperial Past:
Nationalism and the Making of Ethnicities around the Black Sea***

31 March 2017

Aston University,
North Wing First Floor, Room NW 104B

Background: The workshop focuses on the relatively under-researched intersections between post-imperialism (and post-colonialism) and post-socialism and their impact on cultural, political and ethno-national processes in the regions around the Black Sea. This is the world's area that had been shaped by historically contested borderlands of three Eurasian empires (the Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg). Later it was divided by the Iron Curtain as either the part of the USSR and the Soviet Bloc or the NATO allies (Turkey). After the collapse of the communist regimes and state-socialism in the region, the post-socialist transformations have often led to the inter-ethnic violence but also to the re-building of cultural ties based on the common histories. Emergence of new international frontiers has been going hand in hand with production of new citizenship regimes within which the meanings of the place, space and community acquire new meanings. The past population movement and present cross-border mobility have resulted in the establishment of diasporic communities who are also bearers of the memories and a living remainder of the rich history of the region.

Arguably in the region in questions, ethnic identities are fairly modern phenomena that intrinsically connected to emergence of the nation-state from transformation of old imperial realms at the beginning of the twentieth century when colonial periphery or remote provinces became centres of independent nations. The politics of memory – as a selective intersubjective process of remembering and forgetting collective traumatic experiences – has played instrumental role in construction of new national and ethnic identities in the region and

providing the moral authority to discursive regimes of nationalism that impose what Liisa Malkki calls 'the national order of things' as a dominant way of imagining the territory, culture, society, the self and the other. In this part of Eurasia, the heightened nationalism has not subsided with the increasing marketization of the socio-economic sphere that has been going there during last 25 years since reintegration of the region in the global economy. On the contrary, there are evidences that history and cultural heritage often become sites of a fierce competition contributing to the othering and alienation of some minority groups and feeling of cultural anxiety among the majority of population in countries around the Black Sea. Ultimately the region became an arena for reinterpreting and reimagining the past in attempt to make sense to the volatile present and to map the future trajectories.

The workshop aims to bring together the distinguished regional experts working within different disciplines (i.e. sociology, social anthropology, history and political sciences). The workshop will also provide the platform for public sector practitioners and civil society activists to present their perspectives on the politics of history, memory and identity in the region. The dialogue between researchers, practitioners and activists will take place at panel sessions, film screening and round table discussion during one-day workshop activities.

This workshop is an attempt to initiate a debate on role that memory of the imperial past play in contemporary cultural, social and economic processes in the region by asking among others the following questions:

- How are memories of the imperial past socially re-produced, maintained and / or removed from the public discourses in different national contexts of the region?
- What is the impact of politics of memory on everyday strategies and practices of ordinary people in their dealing with relatively new

citizenship and border regimes, emerging markets and shifting power relations in their localities?

What is the role of diasporic communities (both within the region and geographically remote from it) and ethnic minorities in negotiating meanings of cultural belonging and past traumas and presenting a potential for alternative interpretations of the national histories?

Programme

9.00-9.30 **Registration and coffee**

9.30-11.00 **Panel 1: Remembering and forgetting imperial past**

Kerem Öktem (University of Graz) Coming to Terms with Genocide in a Perpetrator State: Power, Denial and Recognition.

Andrea Weiss (Central European University) Remembering and Forgetting: Ottoman Legacies in Adjara and Abkhazia.

Ahmet Erdi Öztürk (University of Strasburg/University of Graz) Delectation or Hegemony: Turkey's Religious Nationalism in Bulgaria via the Diyanet.

Vladimir Kolesov (Krasnodar State Museum of History and Archaeology) Imperial Colonialism vs. Soviet Indigenization (*korenizatsia*): The Nation-building on the North Caucasus (discourses and practices).

11.15-12.45 **Panel 2: Emplacing memory and/or (dis)locating nation**

Petruța Teampău (Babeș-Bolyai University) Sulina: Reading the Urban Palimpsest.

Erol Saglam (Birkbeck, University of London) Modalities of Remembrance: Discretion, Places, and Subjectivity in Trabzon, Turkey.

Nayat Karakose (Hrant Dink Foundation) Persisting Through Time and Collective Conscience: Towards the Hrant Dink Site of Memory

Ani King-Underwood (Independent documentary film producer/director) Memories of a home, facing trauma and challenging denial

12.45-14.30 **Lunch and screening of the film directed by Ani King-Underwood**

14.30-16.00 **Ethnicities and diasporas**

Deema Kaneff (University of Birmingham) Religion, Local Customs and Identity in Rural Ukraine.

Igor Kuznetsov (Kuban State University)

Heloisa Rojas Gomez (European University Institute) Crimean Italians: Intersections between History, Memory and the Individual.

Anton Popov (Aston University) Un-making Armenian ethnicity in the Georgian town.

16.15-17.00 **Round table discussion: Memory work as politics and practice of identity in the Black Sea region and beyond** (the dialogue between practitioners, researchers and civil society activists).

17.15-17.30 **Workshop conclusion**

Workshop Organizers

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Workshop free. If you want to attend and for further information, please email

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