

**NEWSLETTER OF THE POST-SOCIALIST
AND COMPARATIVE MEMORY
STUDIES WORKING GROUP**

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PoSoCoMeS NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EDITORS

Dear readers,

Welcome to the third PoSoCoMeS newsletter, and the first one since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is, therefore, also an occasion for us to reflect on the past year in the life of our working group and its members. However difficult the year has been, this has also been the time when PoSoCoMeS organized and held its first conference which included over 30 panels and 9 keynote events, and gathered 146 participants from 35 different countries. Little did we know when we were drawing up the program in early 2020 that this conference would have to take place online. The success of the conference (judging by the number of participants and attendees as well as the positive feedback the organizers received at the end) testified to the strength and diversity of the working group as well as its commitment to fostering the field of postsocialist memory studies.

In this newsletter, we are looking back at the PoSoCoMes conference and forward to the MSA annual meeting in July 2021 as well as to new activities and projects by group members. We would like to thank all who have contributed by composing texts for this edition in these straining times, in particular to Anežka Brožová, Anna Herran, Rose Smith, and Klára Žaloudková for their work on the conference report as well as their help in conference organization. We hope that by sharing information about new group members, research projects, exhibitions, and forthcoming academic events, this newsletter will create further links and possible collaborations between group members and beyond.

As always, we welcome contributions in various formats and genres for the next issue (planned for the Fall 2021). We are particularly

interested in short (review) essays, interviews, (field) notes, conference reports, and similar texts. We are considering the possibility of shifting this publication to an academic blog format in order to create greater visibility and interactivity. We are currently looking into various platforms, so if you would like to share your experience and know-how in setting up an academic blog, please get in touch with us.

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POSOCOMES 2020 CONFERENCE REPORT

**By Anežka Brožová, Anna Herran,
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Post-Socialist and Comparative Memory Studies (PoSo-CoMeS) working group of the Memory Studies Association (MSA) held its first conference between the 21st of September and the 1st of October 2020.

Initially, the event was planned to take place in Chişinău, Moldova. When choosing Moldova as the location for the conference, the working group drew from the rivalry between two grand historical narratives in the country's history. This rivalry holds great potential for conflict and violence escalation, thus making memory work in Moldova necessary from academic and practical perspectives. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was held online. However, it kept a Moldovan and Romanian focus, holding regular events related to these two countries. Also, the Institute of Oral History in Chişinău, a co-organizer of the conference, specially commissioned two video tours that touched upon local memory issues.

The conference revolved around the theme of 'Post-Socialist Memory in Global Perspective: Postcolonialism, Post-transition, Post-trauma.' Through this emphasis on the global aspect, the conference encouraged meaningful dialogue among scholars studying different geographical areas. By doing so, the working group contributed to the high scholarly standards for post-socialist memory studies across disciplines and created a global framework for an academic dialogue on post-socialist memory. Indeed, the conference paid particular attention to comparative and transnational approaches and included regions in the Global South influenced by the socialist project.

The conference switched to an online format to adapt to the circumstances of the global pandemic. It ran for two weeks. With 27 panels, five plenary lectures, two roundtable discussions, a film screening, a conversation with writers, a book presentation, a reading from a theatre play, and a presentation of an art project, it took place on four days each week, thus avoiding the need for parallel sessions. Participants sent pre-recorded videos of their presentations before the start of the event. While some of the recordings were only available to registered participants and the audience, almost half of the presentations, along with the public plenary sessions, are available on the working group's YouTube channel. The participants and audience watched the presentations in preparation for the panel discussions, which took place during live Zoom sessions. Each one-hour Zoom session started with the discussant pointing to crucial issues addressed in each paper as well as to themes that connected the individual presentations. The subsequent discussion between panelists and attendees further explored relevant themes and issues.

2. PLENARY EVENTS

The plenary events set the conference's tone by tackling some of the most significant themes. The events presented concepts such as imperialism and agonistic memory, and covered geographic areas from Central Europe to Central Asia.

Meltem Ahıska (Boğaziçi University, Turkey) delivered the first plenary lecture of the conference, chaired by Alice von Bieberstein (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany). Ahıska argued that by producing structures of feeling, imperialism and colonialism had ongoing effects on how the present time was experienced. The lecture addressed some recurring issues in Turkish politics. For example, it applied the concept of 'imperial complex' to better understand the continuing imperialism resulting from conflicting temporalities within and beyond the national framework. Ahıska expressed hope that by working through the imperial complex, the nation would open new paths of remembering for a renewed political imagination.

In her lecture, chaired by Nari Shelekpayev (European University at Saint Petersburg, Russia), **Kulshat Medeuova** (L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan) focused on the transforming nature of the commemorative landscape in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. By drawing on her fieldwork, which examined more than five hundred memory sites, Medeuova looked at the evolution of memorialization practices from the late Soviet times up to the present. She argued that there had been a widespread replacement and displacement of Soviet monuments with new ones funded by the Kazakh state. In addition, new (non-state) actors of memorialization have emerged in the country.

Vitaly Chernetsky's (University of Kansas, United States) lecture, chaired by Oksana Dovgopolova (Odessa National University, Ukraine), addressed the fundamental issue of memory wars by using Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory. Drawing on Odessa as a representation of a multicultural Eastern Europe, Chernetsky examined the conflicting narratives of the past through the lenses of the region's multiethnic inhabitants and Western observers.

The plenary lecture by **Stefan Berger** (Ruhr University Bochum, Germany), chaired by Serguei Ehrlich (*Nestor Historia* publishing house, Russia), addressed the concept of agonistic memory developed by Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen. His talk revolved around the potential for agonistic memory frames of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. Berger argued that antagonistic forms of memory had been dominant in the memory of communism in the region. They have combined in various ways and to different degrees with cosmopolitan memory regimes, favored by the European Union's memory politics. A lively discussion on post-communist agonistic memory aspects—such as everyday practices and the agonistic approach to the future—followed.

Heidi Grunebaum's (Centre for Humanities Research, South Africa) lecture examined the connections between the Holocaust and colonialism, particularly regarding the creation of Israel as a Jewish ethnonational state after World War Two. During the lecture and discussion, moderated by Ksenia Robbe (University of Groningen, Netherlands), Grunebaum looked at the legacies of European race-thinking in creating

Israel, and focused on how they continued to manifest themselves in the proposals for partition, separation, or exclusion. Drawing on the work of anti-colonial thinkers and postcolonial theorists, Grunebaum pointed at how these issues went beyond the region, noting the global rise of white ethno-nationalist right-wing populism and its followers' view of minorities as existential threats. The lecture concluded that postcolonial education from non-national or anti-national perspectives was necessary in order to rethink proposals for partition and better understand the colonial legacies.

Published works were the focus of two plenary conference events. The first plenary discussion on memory, fiction, and non-fiction offered a dynamic conversation between two writers, **Katja Petrowskaja** (Germany) and **Maria Stepanova** (Russia), moderated by Ksenia Robbe. The authors reflected on their respective novels: *Vielleicht Esther* (*Maybe Esther*) and *Pamiati pamiati* (*In Memory of Memory*). Both books present narratives of a cosmopolitan Europe based on the lives of the authors' nearly forgotten family members, which is the theme that offered several points for discussion, reflecting on the possibilities of literature to recollect erased pasts and reconnect communities and generations. The second plenary revolved around the book entitled *The Uncomfortable Past*, by **Nikolay Epplée** (Russia), dedicated to dealing with difficult pasts. A lively debate, chaired by Mischa Gabowitsch (Einstein Forum, Germany), spun around the topic of finding a national consensus with regard to complex histories. Participants discussed what factors should play a decisive role in finding consensus and whether it was possible to develop a widely accepted discourse.

The conference also included a series of **cultural and artistic events**. A screening of **Dragos Turea's** documentary, *The Soviet Garden* (2019), was hosted on the first day. The film investigated the Soviet experiments in atomic gardening in Moldova. The screening was followed by a discussion moderated by Oksana Sarkisova (Central European University, Hungary/Austria). Ending the first week of the conference, **Artiom Zavadovsky** (a queer activist and performance artist, Moldova) read a fragment of the play *Requiem for Europe* (by Nora Dorogan, Nicoleta Esinencu, Kira Semionov, Doriana Talmazan and Artiom Zavadovsky).

The session, chaired by Yan Feldman (Moldova), invited the audience to reflect on how international companies enforced their discourse, policies, and especially their interests in Moldova, and how these affected daily life in the country. Further amplifying artistic perspectives, the conference also featured the collective **Chto Delat** (Russia), a working group of artists, critics, philosophers, and writers from St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Nizhny Novgorod, merging political theory, art, and activism. The presentation of the collective's educational platform, The School of Engaged Art, informed the conference participants of the group's most recent artistic projects and events. The session was chaired by Ksenia Robbe.

3. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

The first roundtable discussion, with **Ljiljana Radonić** (Austrian Academy of Sciences) and Gruia Bădescu (University of Konstanz, Germany), and **Simina Bădică** (House of European History, Belgium) as the discussant, was dedicated to **Exhibiting Difficult Pasts in Museums and Memory Sites**. The session offered an opportunity to discuss, from scholarly and practical perspectives, current trends in showing recent pasts in the museum: the memorial museum and the forensic turn. Memorial museums serve as both memorial sites *and* museums and are often built on the locations of atrocities. Recently, however, they have moved away from the actual sites of memory. The forensic turn describes the criminalization of authoritarian pasts connected to memory sites and the role of human remains in the justice process. Visitors to the sites often look for an authentic experience and an affirmation of their presumptions; however, they should be encouraged to ask critical questions.

The second roundtable discussion brought together **Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett** (POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Poland), **Dieter Pohl** (University of Klagenfurt, Austria), and **Yana Barinova** (independent researcher, Ukraine), and was dedicated to **oBabyn Yar Memory Today—Puzzles and Troubles**. The session

addressed issues relating to the commemoration of the tragedy of Babyn Yar. Chair **Julia Skubytska** (War Childhood Museum, Ukraine) opened the roundtable with a brief overview of the developments in the memorialization of Babyn Yar. Notably, she emphasized that the Ukrainian state had not produced a comprehensive commemoration project, and pointed out private-funded plans concerning the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Complex. The latter had provoked severe criticism and erupted in various public scandals. The session continued with a fruitful exchange on what was happening around Babyn Yar and what was at stake. The speakers agreed on how complex the memory of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe was. They emphasized the importance of distinguishing between the functionality of memorials and museums in the memorialization of Babyn Yar.

4. OVERVIEW OF PANELS

I. Memories of Specific Pasts

Some of the panels focused on periods or events, including World War Two (WWII), the Holocaust, and the Soviet or post-socialist periods.

The first session, **Memories of World War II**, raised the fundamental questions of hegemonic narratives, the rightness of memory, politics of memory, and memory security. **Wulf Kansteiner** (Aarhus University, Denmark), who acted as the panel's discussant, pointed to the difficulties of working through contrasting memories of the past in highly politicized environments and observed that all presentations addressed the state's role in forming memory through the practices of commemoration. **Anastasiia Pavlovskaja** (European University at Saint Petersburg, Russia) talked about the 'Siege Bread' memorial events all around Russia, organized to commemorate the Great Patriotic War, particularly the Siege of Leningrad. Her presentation stressed that the state-supported initiatives of the 'Siege Bread' memorial action were rejected by many citizens, especially in St. Petersburg, who argued that it violated

the sacred nature of bread. **Jelena Đureinović's** (University of Vienna, Austria) presentation was devoted to the complexity of the memory of the Yugoslav partisans and the narrative of their role in WWII and its aftermath. She analyzed the changing nature of memory politics in post-Milošević Serbia, stressing how the state had securitized the national memory to protect its identity. **Alexandra Arkhipova** (Russian Presidential Academy of Public Administration) and **Anna Kirziuk** (Russian Presidential Academy of Public Administration) examined commemoration practices of the Holocaust in Russia and the formerly occupied territories of the USSR. They compared the remembrance of the Holocaust with the commemoration of the Great Patriotic War.

The panel on **Memories of the Holocaust and Nazi Concentration Camps** centered on the conflicting narratives of the Holocaust. Discussant **Vladimir Solonari** (University of Central Florida, United States) stressed that all the panelists touched on the long-discussed questions of who was to be blamed, who was to be grieved, and whether there was a functional Holocaust memory culture. By drawing on the panelists' research, this session revealed the complexity of the Holocaust memory. Based on the cases of Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora, **Robert Sommer** (DePaul University, United States) demonstrated how divergent the representation of forced sex labor in the Nazi concentration camps had been both before and after the 1990s. **Alexandra Tcherkasski** (University of Hamburg, Germany) focused on the Extraordinary State Commission of the USSR to examine the Soviet state memory politics with regard to victims of the Nazi atrocities on the Soviet territory. **Isabel Sawkins** (University of Exeter, United Kingdom) analyzed the Russian national exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to explore the main Russian state-funded narrative of the Nazi camps in Poland. **Alexandra Szczepan** (Jagiellonian University, Poland) looked into contemporary depictions of the East-Central European region, which she then linked to the long-lasting tradition of orientalizing this region.

The session on the **Global Memories of the Holocaust** showed diverse forms of remembrance as well as illuminating evidence of how varied the circulation of the Holocaust memory was. **Nevena Daković's**

(University of Arts, Belgrade) presentation on Balkan cinema and the new Holocaust memory culture analysed Balkan Holocaust-themed films in the third millennium. **Biljana Marković** (University of Vienna, Austria) presented on Milos Crnjanski's hidden Jewish portraits within the context of the rise of a global Holocaust memory and his failure to denounce anti-Semitic propaganda in his writings. **Oleksandr Pahiria** (Territory of Terror Museum, Ukraine) talked about the representation of the Janowska forced labor camp in Lviv in historical studies and about the post-Soviet memory in Ukraine. These different areas and objects of analysis led **Daniel Levy** (State University of New York at Stony Brook, United States), the panel discussant, to situate the cases in a broader context about the global reach of Holocaust memory. Levy spoke on how specific scripts had been internalized, appropriated, and instrumentalized.

The session **Understanding the Soviet Past** examined how people constructed and re-interpreted narratives of the Soviet period. **Liucija Verveckiene** (Vilnius University, Lithuania) looked at the influence of family narratives in the construction of memory by the Lithuanian youth born after the fall of the Soviet Union. **Kirill Molotov** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) examined the role of public intellectuals and social media in promoting or contesting mainstream narratives of the Stalinist terror. **Ekaterina Melnikova** (European University at St. Petersburg, Russia) used the case of the Siege of Leningrad to examine people's motivations to contribute to the promotion of historical narratives. The panelists discussed emotions as a motivation to promote and preserve family stories or personal opinions. During the discussion, led by **Galina Yankovskaya** (Perm State University, Russia), the panelists raised questions on who got to decide which narratives were relevant, especially when presenting them in museum exhibitions or social media.

Other sessions focused on specific pasts within a particular geographical region. One of them examined the **Memory of the Holocaust in Romania and Moldova**, particularly the official beginning of Holocaust memorialization and its evolution. **Ana Bărbulescu** (Elie Wiesel Institute, Romania) approached the study of the Transnistria Ghetto

from a sociological perspective, focusing on the social structures in place. **Marius Cazan** (Elie Wiesel Institute, Romania) explained the actions of the 6th V nători Regiment, during WWII, to challenge common heroism narratives and advocate for the need to study military units and the way they are memorialized further. **Irina Shikhova** (Academy of Sciences of Moldova) looked at the transformation of sites connected with the memory of the Holocaust in Moldova since the end of the war. **Claudia-Florentina Dobre** (Center for Memory and Identity Studies, Romania) analyzed the emergence of memories of the Holocaust and of the communist repression as competing memories in post-communist Romania. She focused on the role of post-communist elites in silencing narratives about Romania's role in the Holocaust. During the discussion, led by **Arkadi Zeltser** (Moshe Mirilashvili Center, Israel), the panelists tackled the issues of guilt, responsibility, and collaboration, and discussed how these contributed to the lack of coherent memorialization policies in Moldova and Romania.

The panel on the **Wars of Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and in 'the Space In-Between'** addressed contested narratives of the past events. **Aleksei Bratochkin** (European College of Liberal Arts, Belarus), the panel's discussant, underlined how antagonistic memory of strict distinction between 'us' and 'them' might perpetuate feelings of hostility towards 'the others.' He pointed out that all the papers revealed the fundamental fact that shaping narratives of the past had profound political implications. **Mikhail Nemtsev** (independent researcher, Russia) focused on the militarization of politics in present-day Russia. **Robert Latypov** (Memorial Society, Perm branch, Russia) talked about the complexity of Stalinism's memory using the Perm region's case. His presentation emphasized that while most Russians knew that Stalin's regime had initiated mass violence, neither the state nor many citizens were willing to give critical evaluations of the regime. **Oksana Dovgoplova** (Odesa National University, Ukraine) devoted her presentation to the diversity of narratives about Babyn Yar. She analyzed the evolution of the event's memory from the early post-war period, when the memory of Babyn Yar had been suppressed by the regime, to the present-day discussion on the role that the memorial of Babyn Yar should play. **Aleksey Kamenskikh** (Higher School of Economics, Perm,

Russia) examined the past's conflicting narratives in the Russian and Ukrainian discourses. Through numerous examples of the different interpretations of past events, he argued that history had been an imaginative battlefield for both countries.

Lastly, two panels looked at memories of specific pasts from a thematic perspective. The **Legacies of Mass Violence** session explored how societies with difficult pasts of conflicts and repressions coped with them. The discussant, **Lea David** (University College Dublin, Ireland), underlined the importance of distinguishing the actors involved in the memorialization of past events, considering they have different power resources at their disposal. She also pointed out that all presentations worked with similar cases but used different theoretical approaches, which revealed the clash of different worldviews (socialism vs. nationalism vs. human-rights) in memory politics. **Margaret Comer** (Tallinn University, Estonia) applied the concepts of 'grievability' and 'blameability' to identify how legacies of the Stalinist repressions manifested in four different sites of mass violence in Moscow (the Butovo firing range, the Gulag History Museum, the Wall of Grief, and the 'It Is Right Here' digital initiative). In her single-case study, **Selbi Dudiyeva** (Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University, United Kingdom) focused on the Butovo firing range, analyzing the role the Russian Orthodox Church in transitional justice. **Ana Kršinić-Lozica** (University of Zagreb, Croatia) concentrated on the Jasenovac concentration camp in the context of the politics of memory of both socialist Yugoslavia and post-socialist Croatia and Serbia.

The panel on **Traumatic Memories** drew from a specific historical period or event that had produced traumatic memories in society and looked at how memories of that period were expressed or articulated in the present. **Anastasia Nikitina's** (Higher School of Economics, Russia) presentation investigated social media posts on Dud's statement about the Great Terror that talked about fear. **Gayane Shagoyan** (National Academy of Sciences, Armenia) looked into the ethnic categorization of victims and executioners in memory narratives of the Armenian genocide. **Mila Bajić's** (Central European University, Hungary/Austria) presentation defined, with regard to their attitudes towards

the 1999 NATO bombings, five remembering groups among the Serbian youth. **Ioana-Zoia Ursu's** (Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania) presentation of her work with Dragoş-Dumitru Ursu chronologically outlined the narrative of the 'saints of the communist prisons.' Discussant **Nicolas Moll** (Memory Lab) underlined how popular traumatic memory as a topic had become and questioned how we currently defined traumatic events and trauma as such.

II. Aspects of Post-socialist Memory

Several panels touched upon complex and interconnected aspects of post-socialist memory. These included negotiating local and national memory, national and vernacular commemorative practices, the role of visual art in contemporary progressive politics, the role of literary productions in memory practices, and national oral history.

The session on **Post-socialist Memory Politics**, with **Jan Kubik** (Rutgers University, New Brunswick, United States / UCL, United Kingdom) as discussant, touched on aspects of bottom-up or top-down memory politics in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Ukraine from micro- and macro-perspectives. **Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius** (Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Finland) and **Ilana Hartikainen** (University of Helsinki, Finland) applied an engaging chronotopic approach to analyze Czech and Polish right-wing media narrative with regard to the migration crisis in 2015 and 2016. **Georgiy Kasianov** (Institute of the History of Ukraine) addressed in his presentation, on decommunization in Ukraine between 2015 and 2019, various memory-political processes such as the reworking of toponyms, the opening of archives, and the deconstructing of memory sites. He identified two types of memory politics in Ukraine: a regular politics and a crisis politics. **Andrzej Czyżewski** (University of Łódź, Poland) presented on communicative memory of the 'March events' of 1968 in Łódź and the transformation of the Polish canon regarding the 1968 events by right-wing political elites.

The panel on **Post-Socialist Perspectives on Theories of Memory** highlighted the role the nation plays in the formation of post-socialist memory. **Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper** (University of Warsaw,

Poland) asked how local and national frames of memory interplayed at Polish *lieux de mémoire*. **Elmira Nogoibaeva's** (Center Polis Asia) presentation provided an overview of memories in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. **Andreea Mironescu** (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania) discussed how post-postcommunist perspectives existed in Romania. **Patricia Manos** (Harvard University, United States) referred to historical traditions of Soviet painting and monumental sculpture in her presentation on 'Russian blues, rainbow solidarity'. Discussant **Mischa Gabowitsch** (Einstein Forum, Germany) began his reflections by asking whether we, as scholars, only applied existing theories of memory to a post-socialist context or whether we also corrected them based on our findings of their applicability. He asked whether scholars had the ambition to develop new approaches to memory based on what they saw in particular post-socialist contexts. He reminded the panel that theories in the humanities and social sciences were mostly built on the empirical study of Western societies or societies they had colonized.

The session on the **Scales of Memory in Mediations of Socialism**, discussed by **Simon Lewis** (University of Bremen, Germany), explored various memory representation strategies in the post-socialist sphere. **Barbara Markowska's** (Collegium Civitas, Poland) presentation on the post-communist memory regime in Wąchock focused on Poland's vernacular commemoration strategies. **Jan Miklas-Frankowski's** (University of Gdańsk, Poland) research looked into post-socialist memory and postcolonial resentments in the poetics of Gonzo. **Tiziana D'Amico** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy) presented her work that analyzed objects as representations of the socialist past. **Antoni Zakrzewski** (University of Warsaw / ENRS, Poland) presented a genealogy of the project of a Stalin monument in Warsaw, from the promise to unveil the monument in the early 1950s to a quiet withdrawal. From vernacular strategies to the poetics of Gonzo to the Czech book series to unbuilt monuments, the panel highlighted the interdisciplinary and diverse ways memory could be mediated and studied.

The panel on **the 1990s in Post-socialist Memory** presented various angles and approaches to analyzing this decade. The discussant

Ksenia Robbe (University of Groningen, Netherlands) highlighted, among other things, the transnational and transregional dialogues potentially generated by the panel's composition. **Artemii Plekhanov** (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, the Russian Academy of Sciences) and **Usevalad Herasimau** (Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, Russia) looked into routine, fantasy, and nostalgia in comics. **Doris Mironescu** (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania) investigated disempowerment, neurosis, and self-mockery in Romania's early transition period in literary narratives. **Elena Malaia** (European University at St. Petersburg, Russia) shed light on the Soviet and post-Soviet understanding of time by analyzing the post-socialist Crimean village of Sovkhoz. **Nona Shahnazarian** (Institute of Archeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia) explored the gender aspect of trauma and the nature of forced migration, particularly in memories of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan.

The session on **Nostalgia** introduced fascinating projects connected by the notion of a lost future. The discussant, **Otto Boele** (Leiden University, Netherlands), identified different meanings of the concept of nostalgia, underlining the need to capture all connotations of nostalgia conceptually. **Milica Popovic** (Sciences Po Paris, France / University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) presented her research on Yugoslavism as a political notion enabling an exit from traditional political cleavages, but mostly connected to anti-capitalism and anti-nationalism. The presentation by **Katharina Niemeyer** and **Maria Silina** (both Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada) introduced their project on *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the GDR) online groups and their members. **Daria Khokhlova** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) presented a range of contemporary Russian musicians using irony to critique the present, and the post-socialist memory to create a fictional past or to aestheticize it. **Kaja Kraner** (AMEU-ISH, Slovenia) examined three case studies of Slovenian conceptual theater and visual arts that dealt with mourning over the lost future.

The session **Modalities of Memory Politics** centered on questions of conflicting narratives and the state actors that promoted them. **Alexey Miller** (European University at St. Petersburg, Russia) looked at the

conflicting narratives around the end of WWII in Russia and Poland. Similarly, **Dmitry V. Efremenko** (Russian Academy of Sciences) looked at the conflicting narratives in Russia and Ukraine with regard to the Soviet period. Finally, **Olga Malinova** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) examined conflicting narratives of the 1990s within Russia. In discussion with **Daria Khlevnyuk** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia), the participants looked at the construction of narratives of national identity. They discussed how conflicting narratives of the same event reduced the possibility of dialogue and cooperation among states or groups within the same country. The panelists also looked at citizen initiatives and their impact on promoting alternative narratives and fostering dialogue.

The session on **Oral History** offered a lively debate on aspects of oral history and its position in the countries where the researchers worked. **Gelinada Grinchenko** (V.N. Karazin National University of Kharkiv, Ukraine), the discussant, pointed out that oral history could be a political tool and that it could help transition in post-socialist countries. **Barbara Christophe** (Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Germany) presented an oral history interview from post-Soviet Lithuania to explore the concept of agonistic memory as a relational one because it functions as a disruption in every memory culture. **Natalia Dushakova** (Russian Presidential Academy of Public Administration) showed how Old Believers in exile preserved their faith by sharing memories of strategies to overcome difficulties in confessing their religion. **Ute Hirsekorn** (University of Nottingham, United Kingdom) demonstrated how GDR mentalities, cultural repertoire and values prevailed and assisted with the orientation in the united Germany in a cohort of low-ranking GDR youth functionaries, and argued for a memory inclusive of voices that reflect a broader spectrum of communist experiences. **Olga Gontarska** (Polish Academy of Sciences) tackled some shortcomings of the oral history method by addressing the Ukrainian film industry's development in the transition period. The analysis of PEGIDA movement symbols and slogans by **Sabine Volk** (Jagiellonian University, Poland) demonstrated that memory functioned as a source and a constraint for social movement activism.

The session **History and Symbols in Changing Societies** focused on the use of memory to create identity in multiethnic societies. **Nika Timashkova** (Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland) analyzed the role of clothing in creating identity and tradition in Uzbekistan and the impact of imperial legacies in determining tradition. **Viacheslav Stepanov** (Orel State University named after I.S. Turgenev, Russia) examined the role of Moldovan elites in the creation of memory narratives around Transnistria and the different orientations that these elites adopted. **Alla Ostavnaia** (Taras Shevchenko Pridnestrovian State University) also looked at Moldova and Transnistria, focusing on attempts to create a civic identity. The panelists discussed how different groups dealt with elites' official impositions and how these impacted everyday life practices such as clothing. In a discussion led by **Olena Fostachuk** (Odessa National University, Ukraine), the panelists also raised questions on the viability of civic identity in multiethnic countries where the population, particularly the elites, was divided along ethnic or cultural lines.

The panel on **Post-Socialist Visual Memory Practices in Romania** showcased the diverse manifestations of Romanian visual memory. **Caterina Preda** (University of Bucharest, Romania) studied the post-socialist Romanian urban space. **Maria Alina Asavei** (Charles University, Czech Republic) explored vernacular memorials by looking into why people wanted to have tattoos with Ceaușescu, Tito, and Stalin. **Dan Drăghia** (University of Bucharest, Romania) compared monuments in several post-communist countries, while **Alexandra Oprea** (University of Bucharest, Romania) analyzed visual means used by civil society to denounce corruption. Discussant **Dana Dolghin** (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) observed that all presentations made new points of negative heritage in the contemporary age, emphasizing that this was a transnational phenomenon. The discussion also provided examples of awareness of such heritage's dangers and effects on the present and the future.

III. Memory and the Media

The conference also had several panels dealing with representations of historical narratives in the media.

The panel on **Memory, Visuality, and Popular Culture** focused on mediations of the past for present-day audiences. **Anne Pfautsch** (Kingston University, United Kingdom) analyzed the impact of media on identity by studying photographic representations of the former German Democratic Republic following the German reunification. **Aleksandr Fokin** (Tyumen State University, Russia) examined the significant themes of present-day Russian soap operas set in the 1960s to 1980s Soviet Union; his analysis focused on how they made thematic and aesthetic choices to portray romanticized versions of the period. **Boris Noordenbos** (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands) applied the concept of imperial durability to study how present-day films and TV shows represented the Chernobyl disaster and its lasting consequences. The panelists emphasized that the media productions under study were more than just representations of the past, as they conveyed a clear message promoting an agenda. During the discussion, led by **Veronika Pehe** (Czech Academy of Sciences), the panelists reflected on such statements' implications, mainly as the productions targeted people with no direct experience of the represented period.

The session on **Visual Representation and Photography as a Source** addressed many aspects of remembering the past through visual representations, mostly photographs. The presentations and the following discussion led by **Kylie Thomas** (Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Netherlands) pointed out the importance of visuality in today's society and problems of abusing photographs or lacking visual literacy. **Anna Topolska** (independent scholar, Poland) analyzed iconic photographs of Poznań during WWII, by Zbigniew Zielonacki, and determined that the author had dealt with the shared traumatic war experience by showing after-war revenge and by challenging the official narrative through grassroot narratives. **Diliara Brileva** (National Academy of Sciences, Ukraine) explored how the trauma of Kazan's conquest was visually presented in a children's magazine, in the context of the rise of nationalism and search for identity in the late Soviet Tatarstan. **Boris Stepanov** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) focused on Russian glossy historical journals' visual design and communication strategies. The presentation by **Oksana Sarkisova** (Central European University, Hungary/Austria) explored the possibilities and

limits of using Soviet-time vernacular photography for recalling and transferring memories.

The session on **Memory and Art** and its discussion by **Marko Jenko** (Moderna galerija / Museum of Modern Art, Slovenia) addressed the role of art in dealing with trauma caused by a regime transition or the experience of a non-democratic political system. **Zhijian Qian's** (City University of New York, United States) presentation on fragmentary memory focused on visual reflections on the Cultural Revolution by Chinese artists born in the 1960s. He noted that the artists had witnessed excitement or entertainment, but mostly loss, chaos, and humiliation, and had therefore chosen to represent victims of the Chinese communist regime in their work. The presentation by **Dorine Schellens** (Leiden University, Netherlands) 'I Live—I See' analysed, using network analysis, the role of Moscow Conceptualism in memory debates about the Soviet past. Finally, underpinning her studies of contemporary art with Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology, **Ksenia Zakharova** (Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia) revealed phantoms of memory of the forgotten past in selected artistic works.

The session **Politics, Ethics, and Aesthetics of Post-Transitional Time: Memory beyond Post-History** presented projects dealing with memory in literature and art and discussed common temporalities of the transition period. The panel discussant, **Boris Buden** (Bauhaus Universität Weimar, Germany), found that all the presentations tackled the processes of coming to terms with the previous regime's legacies and traumas following its downfall. **Kylie Thomas** (Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Netherlands) examined photographs and records related to crimes and brutal murders of anti-apartheid activists in South Africa in the 1970s and the role of these documents in the search for justice in present-day South Africa. **Florin Poenaru** (University of Bucharest, Romania) analyzed the trauma and reactions upon reading one's secret police files, focusing on the case study of Herta Müller's work. The presentation by **Melina Sadiković** (University of Bristol, United Kingdom) looked at the question of (dis-)continuity in public engagement of intellectuals from the former Eastern bloc and dissent legacies in the transformation period. **Ksenia Robbe** (University

of Groningen, Netherlands) reflected on how the transition period was portrayed in Russian and South African literature, specifically the similar patterns in approaching the shortcomings of transitions.

The panel on the **Mediated Memories and Affective Resonances of the Socialist Past** centered on how memories of contested pasts were presented through different memory mediations. **Ioana Luca** (National Taiwan Normal University), the discussant of this session, highlighted the complexity of remembrance of the socialist past. She pointed to the wide range of mnemonic practices presented in the case studies. She outlined common threads of all presentations: the breakups, continuities, and the politicization of socialism. **Irina Dushakova** (A.S. Griboedov Institute of International Law and Economics, Russia) examined how Russian media presented memory about Stalinism by analyzing the leading press articles on the survey of 2019 about the attitudes of the Russian citizens towards the personality of Stalin and his politics. **Emma Crowley** (University of Bristol, United Kingdom) scrutinized the most recent polyphonic work of the Belarusian Nobel-laureate Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets*. She pointed out the mnemonic practices that had already started during the late socialist times and emphasized how post-socialist affective memory subverted capitalism's status. By drawing on Venezuela's case, **Irina Troconis** (Cornell University, United States) presented how cult memorialization might be connected to socialism, and how the personality of Hugo Chavez had been inserted into the general narrative about socialism.

IV. Spaces of Memory

Finally, several panels approached the memorialization of historical events and figures in public spaces, including sites connected to the events in question as well as museums and urban areas in general.

In the session on **Museums and Memory: War, Patriotism, and Trauma**, the panelists analyzed national history portrayals in state-sanctioned exhibitions. **Ene Kõresaar** and **Kirsti Jõesalu** (University of Tartu, Estonia) studied representations of WWII and communism in

four different exhibitions in Estonia and Latvia. **Rachel Tough** (University of East Anglia, United Kingdom) looked at the case of the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City. Then, **Ekaterina V. Klimenko** (Polish Academy of Sciences) examined the representations of Stalinist repressions in the multimedia exhibition ‘Russia—My History’ in Moscow. The panelists focused on the evolution of the narratives on display and how they had become more nuanced and, in some cases, included controversial topics. The panelists examined how controversial issues were approached and how the decisions to present such topics were made. The discussion, led by **Sara Jones** (University of Birmingham, United Kingdom), further explored those points by looking at curators’ role, agency, and motivations behind the exhibition choices.

Similarly, the session **Museums and Memory. New Identities: Regional, National, Local** investigated the presence of controversial topics in exhibitions and the role of citizen initiatives in their promotion. **Marina Sokolovskaya** (Boris Yeltsin Presidential Museum, Russia) looked at how the Chechen War was represented at the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Centre. **Sofia Tchouikina** (University of Paris VIII, France) focused on the inclusion of family stories and objects in Moscow exhibits relating to the Great Terror and the Gulag. Then, **Sofia Gavrilova** (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Germany) examined patterns and similarities present in the different museums that form the Russian Network of Regional Museums, in particular with regard to the events that were represented or excluded. The panelists, also in discussion with **Sara Jones**, raised essential questions on the museums’ role and the extent to which the representation of such issues was possible. The panelists also pointed at problems: in many cases, the ‘controversial’ issues, such as the Great Terror, could be presented and silenced simultaneously.

The session **Museums and Memory Politics in Eastern Europe: Comparative and Transnational Perspectives** focused on the ethnicization of historical narratives and cultural heritage pertaining to the Soviet past. **Konstantin Pakhalyuk** (MGIMO University, Russia) looked at history museums in cities and towns in Central Russia and their transformation following the state’s centralization. **Alexandr**

Voronovici (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) analyzed the changes in WWII representations in Ukrainian and Moldovan museums following the end of the Soviet Union. Similarly, **Anastasia Felcher** (Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives, Hungary) explored the transformation of Pushkin museums outside of Russia after 1991 and Pushkin's ethnicization as a Russian figure. The discussant **Joanna Wawrzyniak** (University of Warsaw, Poland) invited the panelists to examine how post-Soviet states dealt with what they considered to be 'Russian' heritage and what this meant for these states, particularly for those with ethnic Russian minorities within their territories.

The session **Post-Socialist Heritage and Tourism** explored the reconstruction and re-interpretation of heritage and the motivations behind it. **Alena Pfoser** (Loughborough University, United Kingdom) analyzed city tours offered to Russian tourists in Tallinn, Kyiv, and Almaty. She focused on how they managed to avoid touching contested historical narratives. **Alisa Maximova** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) looked at bottom-up approaches to preserving local heritage in the two Russian villages of Maeksa and Krokhino. **Gruia Bădescu** (University of Konstanz, Germany) looked at the reconstruction of Alba Iulia's citadel; his analysis dealt with how it illustrated an unexpected clash of imperial legacies and ideas of nation-building. Participants approached the potential conflicts between top-down and bottom-up initiatives and their implications. In conversation with **Rémi Praud** (Liberation Route Europe Foundation, Belgium), the panelists homed in on what was preserved, represented, or silenced in different contexts, especially when tourism was involved.

One of the conference's panels dealt with the topic of **Urban Memory**. It investigated different aspects of reading a city and discussing the interplay between top-down processes and bottom-up agencies. **Anastasia Romanova** (Academy of Economic Studies, Moldova) explored semiotic shifts in urban toponymy in Chişinău between 1989 and 2018, which were determined by the elites, but not always accepted by the residents of Chişinău. The presentation by **Anna Vyazemtseva** (NIITAG, Russia / University Roma Tre, Italy) analyzed Russia's architectural

heritage of the 1920–1950s and contemporary approaches to its reception, interpretation, and conservation. **Ekaterina Zakrevskaya** (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) compared the online archives (and remembrance marches as their manifestations) of the *Immortal Regiment* and the *Immortal Barracks* projects and demonstrated that both were alternative discourses to official commemoration practices. During the live session, discussant **Gruia Bădescu** led an inspiring discussion offering further insights into the projects.

5. CONCLUSION

Through its virtual format, the first PoSoCoMes conference brought together scholars from across disciplines to address and exchange on crucial questions in memory studies from a comparative or transnational perspective. While most panels focused at least partially on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the broader scope of the conference allowed for the inclusion of cases beyond this region, including South Africa, Vietnam, China, and Venezuela. The topics included imperial legacies, the mediation of memory for present-day audiences, the role of emotions in creating historical narratives, and the commodification of cultural heritage. All the panelists highlighted the importance of studying memory beyond national frameworks. This conference has introduced many examples of why the work of the PoSoCoMes working group is highly relevant to the fostering of complex global discussions on post-socialist memory. It has also reinforced the necessity to propel these discussions forward. The PoSoCoMes platform understands itself as a facilitator to such scholarly exchange.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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TO READ AND WATCH: ROMANIA AND MOLDOVA IN FICTION AND CINEMA

While the PoSoCoMeS 2020 conference ran in an online format, symbolically it took place in Moldova and Romania. Our program featured panels and papers on the region as well as two fascinating guided tours. Even after the end of the conference, we continue to benefit from the expertise of our colleagues. For everyone who became inspired or wants to learn about the region, we have prepared a filmography and a bibliography. We are publishing the filmography and the non-fiction titles below. The **academic bibliography on the region** can be accessed through our [website](#).

The collections have been generously shared by Andreea Mironescu, Doris Mironescu, Gruia Badescu, and Anastasia Felcher.

Prepared by the PoSoCoMeS bibliography team: Tiziana D'Amico and Daria Khlevnyuk.

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MSA CONFERENCE 2021

For the MSA conference in July 2021, PoSoCoMeS is preparing a stream of nine events, including a plenary panel and a book discussion. The advantage of having a stream is that these panels will not be scheduled as parallel sessions, which will allow for continuity in attendance and a more focused discussion. While the MSA is preparing the program, we are sharing with you a list of these events (in alphabetical order), to give you an impression of what you can expect.

MSA plenary panel: *Bridging Memory Studies across Languages*

Convenors: Mischa Gabowitsch, Lana Lovrenčić

(Please find more information below)

Book discussion panel: *The Past Can't Heal Us: The Dangers of Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights*

by Lea David (in collaboration with the Critical Human Rights group and PoSoCoMes)

Panel: *Chernobyl Mon Amour—The Travelling Memories of Nuclear Disaster*

Convenor: Boris Noordenbos

Participants: Karena Kalmbach, Alexander Berlov, Boris Noordenbos, Maja Vodopivec, Rachael Hutchinson

Panel: *Explosive Convergences. Popular Memory Images in Current Political Conflicts (Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland)*

Convenors: Matthias Schwartz, Nina Weller, Heike Winkel

Participants: Felix Ackermann, Anika Walke, Alexey Bratochkin, Roman Dubasevych, Nina Weller, Matthias Schwartz, Heike Winkel

Panel: *Online Nostalgia – Yearning for the Past via the New Media*

Convenor: Daria Khlevnyuk

Participants: Mykola Makhortykh, Lena A. Hübner, Katharina Niemeyer, Ola Siebert and Maria Silina; Roman Abramov, Kirill Molotov, Ekaterina Klimenko, Milica Popovic

Panel: *Recalibrating the 1970–90s Transitions: Contested and Transforming Memoryscapes*

Convenor: Ksenia Robbe

Participants: Ioana Luca, Lana Lovrenčić, Kostis Kornetis, Ksenia Robbe, Gruia Badescu, Simon Lewis

Panel: *(Re-)Claiming Names: Investigations in Practices and Politics*

Convenor: Heike Winkel

Participants: Lars Breuer, Anna Furman, Alexandra Polivanova, Olga Rosenblum, Heike Winkel, Matthias Schwartz

Panel: *The Visual Analysis of History Textbooks*

Convenors: Mischa Gabowitsch, Anna Topolska

Participants: Mischa Gabowitsch, Anna Topolska, Jarema Drozdowicz, Lourdes Hurtado, Laura Galián, Luz Gómez

Panel: *Transgressions of the ‘Post’: Art Forms and Embodiments*

Convenors: Andreea Mironescu and Simona Mitroiu

Participants: Andreea Mironescu, Irene Sywenky, Katarzyna Kwapisz Williams, Justyna Tabaszewska

**POSoCoMeS PLENARY PANEL AT MSA 2021
*BRIDGING MEMORY STUDIES ACROSS LANGUAGES***

One of the MSA's aims is to bring together scholars and practitioners not only from different disciplines, but also from different linguistic backgrounds and national cultures of research. This is in line with

a broader debate in the humanities and social sciences about the effects of the increasingly monopolistic status of English as the *de facto lingua franca* in scholarly communication.

Memory studies deals with topics that are often intensely specific to a particular national, regional, or linguistic context, and involves the study of traumas, conflicts, and emotions that are frequently difficult to articulate even in one's own language, let alone in translation. Thus, our field is particularly vulnerable to three types of pressures exercised by the Anglo-globalization of academia.

The first of these is *loss in translation*. The vocabulary of memory studies has been profoundly shaped by its emergence in German, French, and English-language academia, to the detriment of pioneering conceptual contributions by, e.g., Polish or Hispanophone scholars. Case studies of important local topics tend to be noticed internationally only if they are published in English, and the distorting effects of the translation effort this involves are not always acknowledged or discussed. Meanwhile, languages such as Arabic have not even developed a terminology that would render memory studies understandable to monolingual readers of those languages.

The second effect results from the increasing *pressure to publish in English* as a requirement for career advancement and job security. Coupled with top English-language journals' refusal to consider papers already published in other languages, this means that many important publications reach their original communities with some delay and after double translation.

A third and related effect is *internal colonization*. While there has been much debate about the global inequality between Western scholars as concept producers and their Eastern and Southern colleagues as mere data providers, a similar imbalance has also emerged within many countries between multilingual, internationally connected researchers and their monolingual peers.

This plenary discussion brings together polyglot scholars from different corners of our field and at different career stages to address these

effects, provide illustrations from their own experience, and talk about practical ways of bridging memory studies in different languages.

The discussion will also serve as the inaugural event for a series of efforts to bridge memory studies in different languages, under the auspices of PoSoCoMeS and in collaboration with translation/interpretation schools and language programs, including the Faculty of Translation Studies, Linguistics and Cultural Studies of the University of Mainz at Germersheim and the Slavic Studies program at Ca' Foscari University in Venice:

- a sequence of online discussions in different languages (such as Arabic, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Russian), involving the participants in this plenary discussion among others, about books and important topics in our field. These will be made available online with professionally-produced English subtitles, culminating in a joint discussion facilitated by professional interpreters;
- practical workshops for master-level students on translation and interpretation in memory studies taught simultaneously in different language combinations at different universities, each culminating in a small conference where the students can apply their new-found interpreting skills—as a trial balloon for a larger pan-European funding application to institutionalize training in this field and build skills that could be used at future MSA conferences

PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS:

Alicia Salomone (literary and cultural scholar, University of Chile)

Kateryna Botanova (art critic and curator, Basel)

Kornelia Kończal (historian, LMU Munich)

Samer Al Nasir (legal historian and social psychologist, University of Carlos III Madrid)

CONVENORS AND CO-MODERATORS:

Mischa Gabowitsch (historian and sociologist, Einstein Forum, Potsdam)

Lana Lovrenčić (art historian, Institute of Art History, Zagreb)

POSOCOMES RESEARCHERS

MAGDALENA BUCHCZYK



Magdalena Buchczyk is an anthropologist specializing in the role of memory in the study of collections and museum ethnography. She currently holds an Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage (CARMAH), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and the Museum of European Cultures (MEK). This work follows the MEK objects through museological practices, such as collecting, documenting and exhibiting, to map the institution's tumultuous history. It evokes local memories on artefacts and cultural practices in Poland, Romania and Germany to tell the story of socialist and post-socialist transformation of craft. She is currently completing a book entitled *Weaving Europe, Crafting the Museum*, to be published by Bloomsbury Academic.

Buchczyk studied anthropology and cultural heritage at Goldsmiths and University College London (UCL), United Kingdom. Her PhD investigated the history, heritage and material culture of the Romanian objects in the Horniman Museum. This combination of archival and ethnographic methods provided a means of locating the collection in time and space, unpacking the myriad political encounters that informed their collection and the 1950s display. The project highlighted that European collections included a gamut of sensitive objects marking dramatic social change in the post-socialist context and telling stories of hardship. This research demonstrated how objects had been acquired

during collectivisation in Romania and how they had circulated beyond the Iron Curtain as part of folkloric-modernist propaganda displays. It also uncovered that seemingly timeless, 'traditional' cultural techniques had undergone divergent trajectories, some becoming embedded in new heritage infrastructures, others undergoing creative redefinition or post-socialist decline.

Buchczyk published on the topics of cultural heritage, material culture and craft in post-socialist contexts in edited volumes and journals such as *Museum Anthropology*, *Journal of American Folklore*, *Home Cultures*, *Textile: Journal of Cloth and Culture*, *MARTOR: Museum of the Romanian Peasant Anthropology Review*, and *Annuaire Roumain d'Anthropologie*. She also curated several exhibitions, including *Revisiting Romania: Dress and Identity* at the Horniman Museum, *Forging Folklore*, *Disrupting Archives* at Constance Howard Gallery, and *Polish Legions: Images of Everyday Lives* at Pilsudski Institute. Before working in Berlin, she lectured at Goldsmiths and Imperial College London, and was a senior research associate at the University of Bristol, United Kingdom. In 2021, she will join Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin as a tenure-track Junior Professor in Social Anthropology of Cultural Expressions.

KAJA KRANER

Kaja Kraner is an independent researcher based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She received her PhD in humanities (AMEU-ISH Ljubljana) in 2020. Her thesis *Geopolitics of Art: The Parallel Narrative Example* was based on the analysis of the process and context of building the narrative of contemporary art in Slovenia, and focused on the connection between the production of knowledge, value, and power in the art sphere as well as models of aesthetic education through art from



modernity onwards. Kraner's research interests include the aesthetics of visual art, memory politics and models of temporality in art, epistemology of art historiography, cultural policy, and the history of ideas in relation to art. Since 2015, she has been an editor of the *ŠUM Journal for Contemporary Art Criticism and Theory*, an associate of Museum of Modern Art and Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova, Ljubljana (exhibition *Crises and New Beginnings: Art in Slovenia 2005–2015* (2015), seminar *Theories of Contemporary Art* (2013–2015), SC-CA-Ljubljana (*World of Art—School for Curatorial Practices and Critical Writing*), Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory (research project *How Critical Is the Condition of Critical Writing?* (2016), *Parallel Systems: Establishing and Forming Media Art* (2019–2021)), and others.

Kraner's recent publications include 'Objektnost in tujost: nova problemska polja novejšje umetniške produkcije v Sloveniji' [Objecthood and Alienness: New Problem Fields in Art Production in Slovenia] (*Likovne besede*, 2020), 'The Symptomatology of a Surpassing Disaster: Narrativization and Temporality in the Work of Walid Raad' (*Maska, Performing Art Journal*, 2020), 'The Aesthetics of Relations: The Modernist, Contemporary and Post-Contemporary General Conceptualizations of Art' (*AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 2019), 'Epištemološke premene v zgodovinenju vizualne umetnosti na prehodu iz 20. v 21. Stoletje' [The Epistemological Changes in Historicizing of Visual Arts at the Turn of the 20th to the 21th Century] (*ISH Monitor*, 2019). She is currently working on her book *Chronopolitics of Art: Changes in Aesthetic Education from Modern to Contemporary Art* (Ljubljana: Založba Krtina, forthcoming in 2021) and co-editing an issue of the *ČKZ Journal for the Critique of Science* (forthcoming in 2021) focused on the historicity after 1989, ranging from presentism, left-wing melancholia and nostalgia, monetization and memorization of the past, and predominantly dystopian futurologies.

IRINA R. TROCONIS

Irina R. Troconis is an assistant professor of Latin American studies in the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell University, United States. She holds a PhD in Spanish and Portuguese languages and literatures from New York University, and an MPhil in Latin American studies from the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.



Her areas of specialization include: memory studies, Venezuelan studies, politics and performance, twenty-first century populism, and digital humanities. She is the co-editor of the digital volume *Deborah Castillo: Radical Disobedience* (HemiPress, 2019), on the performance work of Venezuelan artist Deborah Castillo. Troconis's work has been published in *Revista Iberoamericana*, *Trópico absoluto*, and *The Journal of Media Art Study and Theory*.

Troconis's current book project, *Spectral Remains: Memory, Magic, and the State in the Afterglow of Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution*, explores through the lens of spectrality the memory narratives and practices developed around the figure of Hugo Chávez in the six years following his death. It also examines how contemporary works of Venezuelan literature, film, and performance engage with and challenge the authority of the state's spectral gaze through the materiality and gender dissidence of bodies traditionally excluded from the narratives of the nation.

She is also working on two new research projects. The first examines the concept of 'nation-ness' in the performance work of Venezuelan artists in the diaspora. The second explores how digital technologies shape and intervene in narratives and practices of memory in contemporary works of Latin American fiction, film, and performance.

EXHIBITIONS

LOOKING BACK AT THE EXHIBITIONS *RUSSIA. TIMELESS* (2019) AND *POETRY & PERFORMANCE: THE EAST EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE* (2017–2021). INTERVIEW WITH CURATOR TOMÁŠ GLANC

By Ksenia Robbe

Connections and comparisons between late socialist art and works by the younger generation of artists have become the focus of two recent exhibitions. The questions of similarities and differences, inheritance and lineages at the core of these projects constitute, as such, a practice of memory: these exhibitions performatively juxtapose and place in dialogue visual and textual artefacts from different socio-historical





contexts. One of these exhibitions, *Russia. Timeless*, took place in DOX, the Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague, in October-December 2019. The other, *Poetry & Performance: The East European Perspective*, has been realized, since 2017, in six different versions in exhibition spaces at Žilina (Slovakia), Belgrade (Serbia), Zurich (Switzerland), Dresden (Germany), Wrocław (Poland), and Liberec (Czech Republic). This year, it will take place in Budapest (Hungary) and Dnipro (Ukraine). The latter exhibition was conceptualized as part of the ERC project 'Performance Art in Eastern Europe' at the University of Zurich (<http://www.performanceart.info>).

I spoke with Tomáš Glanc, professor at Zurich University, who curated both exhibitions (the first together with Anton Litvin, and the second with Sabine Hänsen and in cooperation with Agata Ciestoń, Dubravka Đurić, Daniel Grúň, Emese Kürti, Claus Löser, Pavel Novotný, Branka Stipančić, Darko Šimičić, Māra Traumane), and asked him a few questions, particularly concerning the themes that are of central interest for the PoSoCoMeS group.

KSENIA ROBBE (KR): *Reflecting on the links, inheritances and echoes across late socialist and post-socialist conceptual art, including works from the 21st century, is a principle shared by both exhibitions. Yet, their approaches seem to be different. Russia. Timeless focuses more on the continuous development of conceptual art since the 1960s, while Poetry and*

Performance *seems to be structured as a dialogue between the older and younger generations of artists and the works from the 1960–1980s and the last couple of decades. What was the rationale behind these approaches? What kind of story did you want to tell?*

Tomáš Glanc (TG): In the case of *Russia. Timeless*, we wanted to show contemporary art in the broadest sense, that is, of the entire post-Soviet period, through the optic of ‘timelessness’ and also in the context of postwar development of art practices in Russia. So, we chart a background that for contemporary artists serves as a kind of canon, however they may relate to it. Therefore, you will see the works by Popatova, Masterkova, Rabin, Bulatov, Steinberg, Zverev, Nemukhin, Kabakov, Pivovarov and Makarevich. Certainly, those who appeared on the art scene during the 1990s or in the 21st century relate to the legacy of their predecessors in very different ways—with respect, criticism, or complete indifference. Still, this legacy is present; these are genuinely existing frames, roots and contexts. It’s also important that the exhibition was taking place in Prague, where Russian postwar art had never been seen from such a historical perspective. And Czechia is a place where, since the 1960s, there has been particular interest in how the reworking of avant-garde legacies has been enacted in Russia. We wanted to show the ‘masters,’ who started the so-called contemporary art in the Soviet Union, those authors who were working in the times when there was neither serious reception of their works, nor a market or exhibitions, apart from some marginal shows in clubs and workshops.

With the *Poetry & Performance*, the situation is almost the opposite. Most of the works there are ‘historical,’ created during the 1960–1980s, when experimental art in Eastern Europe was particularly sensitive to language, its boundaries, power, and all sorts of dead-ends in which language found itself. But we didn’t want to make a historical exhibition only. We thought it was important to show that today, these aesthetic and also political problems are not only remembered, but that they re-emerge in new ways, with new urgency. This challenge—the question about the capacities of language and the treatment of language by artists, of language outside of written text—seems no less pertinent today than during those times when the Cold War was creating a somewhat

comfortable dichotomy of the 'official' and 'non-official,' 'eastern' and 'western,' etc. We question these categories, of course.

KR: *You are talking about the 'East European perspective'. The exhibition performs a wonderful work, I think, in reflecting on as well as charting international networks and connections across various parts of Eastern Europe which nowadays are often disconnected from each other. At the same time, you treat 'Eastern Europe' not as a territory (which would be a way of essentializing it) but as a viewpoint, in your words, 'to open up new horizons of reflection on what we do and on what we are able to do with language in general'. This approach resonates a lot with what we are trying to do within our working group: to create a perspective of reflecting on memory, from 'Eastern Europe', that would be in dialogue with other regional perspectives and of relevance trans-regionally. How do you think East European experiences can be linked to practices elsewhere? How can these perspectives be relevant globally?*

TG: Yes, we consciously use the term 'perspective.' Eastern Europe is for us not a clear, ultimate definition, and definitely not a geographically or geopolitically determined space, but rather a vector, a set of characteristics, which we need to understand in more detail. The artistic experience which these works contain is interesting as such. This is the experience of authors who came to performance art mostly not from the fine arts (as was usually the case in the US or Western Europe), but from literature, from the sphere of language—the border zones where other arts and verbal expression meet. This experience is still considered somehow marginal, almost secondary. Such an attitude should certainly be questioned. And this is happening gradually. A new exposition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York practically begins with the work by Ewa Partum who is a protagonist of our exhibition. We show her 'Active Poetry'—during the 1970s, in city spaces and the countryside, she was throwing around letters that were made for ideological slogans, freeing them in this way from captivity and creating Dadaist word compositions based on the principle of contingency and relationship to the environment. Works by another artist who plays an important role in the exhibition's section 'Poetry of the Body' as well as 'Poetry of Sound', Katalin Ladik, are now being purchased by Tate Modern and



Ewa Partum
Active Poetry
1971/1973

Screenshot from 8 mm film, b/w, silent, transferred to DVD 5'53"
Courtesy of the artist

also MoMA. So, the attitude to the authors who until recently remained marginal, if not forgotten, is beginning to change.

With our choice of exhibits we were not trying to build some new global hierarchies. It was important for us to select the works which reflect a consistent, serious and independent authorial position, not just a snappy joke or an elegant one-off idea. And a certain guarantee that the artists convey through their works. Because to represent a feminist position in Eastern Europe, to work with your naked body or to intervene into the public space, but also even to experiment with a typewriter or the materiality of text and letter—all this required much courage. It would be wrong to turn this fact into a sentimental fairy tale about



*Chaim Sokol
Homeland, 2011
floor cloth
400 × 200 cm
Courtesy of the artist*

resisting totalitarianism; after all, no one was putting these authors in prison for their art, as a rule. But the specificity of cultural politics in the countries of ‘real socialism’ needs to be considered, as it was markedly different from the Western European or US contexts. Differences within Eastern Europe are, of course, very interesting from this point of view: for instance, in Yugoslavia, there was practically no censorship in the cultural sphere, while in the USSR all these activities—of Prigov, Rubinstein, Collective Actions—existed in the underground.

KR: Exactly, many of the works included in both exhibitions involve an activist gesture, a clear critique of late socialist or contemporary officialdom, its language and politics. And yet, in the introduction to Russia Timeless you state that ‘the exhibition intentionally does not emphasize political topics nor the expressive means of artistic activism, and is much more an artistic reflection on historical and civilizational cycles [...]’.



Vladimir Dubosarskij
Our Gas, 2019
acrylic on canvas
190 × 140 cm, 2 parts
Courtesy of the artist

I agree that it's important to shift the view on Russian (or other East European) art away from an exclusive focus on 'political art', but at the same time, isn't it hard to exclude politics or 'the political' from the discussion of this art produced in contexts of societal crisis?

TG: Indeed, we can't exclude politics, and shouldn't. We just didn't want *Russia. Timeless* to be seen as an exhibition that shows how artists react to the fact that there is no political or civic freedom in Russia today. This would be too little. But the political dimension is definitely present. For example, we included Haim Sokol's gigantic map made of tatters—it's a metaphor powerful in its simplicity, asking a number of questions such as how 'big' is Russia? Is it soft? What is it like in a material sense? What does it consist of? How many pieces is it made of? What surrounds it? What color is it? And so on. We also showed the

well-known ‘Veteran’ with Putin’s face by Vladislav Mamyshev-Monroe, which works with the principle of mask, role, appearance, the semantics of facial expression, and at the same time with the ideologization of historical memory, with ‘appropriating’ the time of war for the benefit of the current regime... Especially for this exhibition, Vladimir Dubossarsky made the ‘Flower.’ This beautiful plant might be referring to the flower of Vladimir Yakovlev, which was also part of the exhibition, but at a closer look you can see that this flower is in fact the ‘eternal flame’ of the Russian gas, and the plant itself is a gas stove.



*Semjon Agroskin
Hangers, 2019
oil on canvas
100 × 70 cm*

Courtesy of the artist

KR: *A little more about the concept of timelessness. You refer to Ilya Kabakov’s reflection on this phenomenon, which, according to him, ‘in the Russian cultural and civilizational landscape consumes and dissolves attempts to establish order and create points of reference, stabilization, and cultivation of values.’ In this exhibition you ask how the new generation of artists approaches this ‘timeless’ problem of ‘timelessness.’ How would you answer this question?*

TG: The sense of not being able to overcome the past is shared by many artists; it concerns the spheres of history, politics, and also aesthetics. The exhibition opens with several works by Semyon Agroskin. He is an artist born in the early 1960s, not very acclaimed internationally,

who came to be outside of influential art movements and trends. But his works ask, in a very independent and concentrated manner, questions about the past and future of fine arts and about the artistic representation of life in general, and about the 'timelessness' of our times. His coat hangers and windows will trouble the viewers with their banality, ambiguity and 'eternity.'

Another dimension of timelessness is obsessiveness, vicious endlessness, perhaps the end or simply the hopelessness of time. All these individual and interconnected problems served as a conceptual frame for our exhibition. We intentionally left a broad space for our authors and viewers to interpret these problems with time; the exhibition is only a suggestion, an impulse.

KR: *Many thanks for this conversation, and I look forward to your new projects.*

PETAR DABAC AND HIS PRIVATE ARCHIVE: THE ARCHIVE TD GALLERY

By Lana Lovrenčić
(Photos by Bojan Mrdenović)

Our perception of reality, both past and present, is shaped by the communication tools we use, the ways in which we share ideas and experiences. The archive holds a special position in our communicative practices: it is the link that, in the words of Boris Groys, 'offers an assumption so that something like history might even take place at all'.*

When thinking about archives, the possibilities and ways in which they are able to shed light on our interpretation of past events, the meaning and significance of these events, one mostly thinks about

* Boris Groys, *Unter Verdacht. Eine Phänomenologie der Medien*, Munich: Hanser Verlag, 2000, p. 9.

institutional archives, with their 'rows and rows of boxes on shelves, impenetrable without the codex'.* But what if the archive is not situated in an institution, and the material it contains is not only meticulously put in boxes, but is also hidden behind doors, under beds, collected as a system that doesn't correspond to official classification norms? What if the archive shows all the inconsistencies of a life lived? At a time when the relationship between memory and remembrance is being renegotiated, and multiple voices are starting to break out of the previously uniform narrative about the past, private archives as



sources of valuable information are acquiring special importance, especially in the research of topics concerning our recent shared histories. Such archives are starting to be recognized as a valuable source of individual perspectives and voices, confirming, adding to and correcting official narratives. Through an extensive work in one such archive, the private archive of photographer Petar Dabac, contributions to the extant art history narratives, including re-writing some chapters and writings some new ones, are made possible.

Petar Dabac (b. 1942) is one of the most important artists in post-World War Two Croatia. His work and dedication have done a lot to promote and develop photography. In over fifty years of artistic work, Dabac has had an enviable number of group and solo exhibitions, won

* Sue Breakell, 'Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive', in *Tate Papers*, no. 9, Spring 2008, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/09/perspectives-negotiating-the-archive>, accessed 8 October 2019.



numerous awards and received multiple acknowledgements, and, in addition to his presence on the local scene, has also had an international artistic career. After the death of his uncle Tošo Dabac in 1970, a famous photographer of the earlier generation, Dabac took over his studio and estate and, besides creating his own art and managing a studio, dedicated his time to protecting and promoting Tošo's work. Through this endeavor he also managed to maintain social life in the studio, which already then was considered an important meeting place for artists and art historians, art critics and theoreticians.

Despite all this, and even though his 2011 retrospective exhibition at the gallery Kovićevi dvori in Zagreb, which featured over 300 works and was accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue, with the introductory text written by the exhibition curator Marina Viculin, he is not very known outside Croatia. Moreover, even in Croatia his artistic oeuvre still hasn't been properly researched, evaluated and contextualized. As a result, his important role as a culture worker and educator is often mentioned only as a biographical side note. His contribution to the development of international and regional connections between artists and culture workers, and the collection of photographs and other artworks in his possession, are not mentioned at all.

My research of his vast archive, which contains traces of his life and work and comprises numerous artworks, photographic gear, books, magazines, catalogues and invitations, private and official correspondences, notebooks and datebooks, bills and court documents, started in late 2017. From the very beginning, I decided to divide my research into

two parts: an inventarization of objects in the archive (that is a basis for a catalogue raisonné) and smaller 'manageable' research segments of lesser known parts of Petar Dabac's life and work, which would result in some public format (and raise awareness of the importance of his archive). Thus, in 2020, research dedicated to the Archive TD Gallery, managed by Dabac in the hallway of his Ilica studio, was finished. This was a specialized photography gallery established by Petar Dabac and his associates in Zagreb in 1980. In almost 20 years of its existence, around 50 exhibitions took place at the gallery. The exhibition program was devised by an informal council of the gallery, made up of Dabac's friends and colleagues, artists and culture workers who frequented the studio. Both foreign and domestic authors were equally represented, for instance Josip Klarica, Viktor Macarol, Peter Knapp, Manfred Wilman, Danny Lyon, Chris Bell and others. As a non-profit private gallery, the work that Dabac and his associates put into Archive TD Gallery was carried out on a voluntary basis, without any production funds. Each exhibition was accompanied with a poster and leaflets with a short text about the event. The exhibitions were well-documented: the opening was photographed; the promotional materials, text contributions,



announcements and associated newspaper articles were collected and archived, in addition to, in some cases, the documentation and correspondences which traced the process of setting the exhibitions up. The exhibitions were launched in cooperation with colleagues and galleries in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Graz. Some of them grew out of the connections Dabac established at international group exhibitions or were based on recommendations. This gallery was an important place where dynamic discussions on photography were held, where artists and art critics regularly gathered and where the Zagreb public could see contemporary documentary and conceptual photography, domestic and foreign photographers, as well as a selection from the oeuvre of Tošo Dabac.

With time, the gallery and its program were almost forgotten, which is in a way unbelievable, especially in a relatively small city like Zagreb. But this shows how easily we forget and how important archives like Dabac's are. Through the research of his archive I have managed to reconstruct the gallery's program, gather and group materials accompanying each exhibition, and recreate the network of associates, exposing new layers of the history of photography not only in Croatia, but also in Serbia and Slovenia and their connections to the Austrian scene of the 1980s.

The research was presented in Zagreb in November 2020 in the form of an exhibition called *Galerija Arhiv TD Petra Dabca (Petar Dabac Archive TD Gallery)*. The show presented exhibition flyers, photographs by different artists who exhibited in the gallery (and who in gratitude left one of their works to Petar Dabac), and the texts that accompanied the exhibitions. Photographs taken at the exhibition openings were also shown, depicting Zagreb's cultural life of the period as well as the public that socialized in the studio.

In the text accompanying the exhibition, I stated: 'For cultural practitioners, embarking on the "adventure" of running a private gallery sometimes seems like the only option in order to be able to operate within their community. Other times, it is the result of a synergy between their environment, a particular moment in time, opportunity

and the cultural climate in the society. Perhaps it was an amalgam of conditions between these two poles, a unique set of circumstances existing in Zagreb in the early 1980s, that led Petar Dabac, together with a group of collaborators, to launch a photographic gallery. (...) Today, at a time when the gallery is just one of the cultural spaces that have been almost forgotten, we come back to it once more. Through the exhibition organized in another private space dedicated to photography, we raise the question of what it takes for culture and the arts to develop in a particular community, how many cultural spaces we have lost, and why it is so important to remember the ones we have lost, treasure the ones we have and conquer new ones.'

The exhibition ended with interviews with Vladimir Gurac, an art historian and artist, Fedor Vučemilović, a photographer, and Bojan Radovič, also a photographer, talking about the photographic and artistic scene in Zagreb in the 1980s, the connections between Zagreb, Beograd and Graz, and of course about the gallery. The monograph on the gallery is in preparation and will be published this year by Office for Photography, with translations into English and German.

EXHIBITION ANNOUNCEMENT

KALEIDOSCOPE—CHILDREN OF THE COLD WAR

This exhibition portrays memories of children of the Cold War in contemporary contexts, inviting the audience to think and feel with childhoods, to question prevailing views of the world, and to imagine how different the present and future could be. The politics of the Cold War and the competition in international relations intensively shaped societies, affected personal lives, and reflected in children's experiences. More than thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Cold War ideology continues to partition the world, most often in new guises linked to migration, labor issues, nationalism, populism, and growing inequalities, heightening tensions and halting dialogues. The exhibition brings into focus the mundane and unexpected connections of lived childhoods across borders that existed despite geopolitical divisions. It



also brings social research to a broader public audience, inviting everyone to share their own memories and explore new connections through a kaleidoscope-like exhibition experience.

*The exhibition is a collaboration between The Finnish Labour Museum (Työväenmuseo Werstas), the **Re-Connect / Re-Collect: Crossing the Divides through Memories of Cold War Childhoods** project funded by Kone Foundation, and Tampere University. The exhibition is on display 26.2.–24.10.2021 at The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas (Työväenmuseo Werstas), Tampere Finland. Open Tue–Sun 11am–6pm. Free admission. www.tyovaenmuseo.fi*

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND GROUPS

RESEARCH PROJECT RECOLLECT / RECONNECT: CROSSING THE DIVIDES THROUGH MEMORIES OF COLD WAR CHILDHOODS

Project leaders: Zsuzsanna Millei, Nelli Piattoeva, Iveta Silova
<https://projects.tuni.fi/re-connect-collect/>

Our project explores childhood memories of scholars and artists who were brought up during the 1970s-1990s on both sides of the Iron Curtain. The overall aim is to revisit history, socio-political, and ecological childhood contexts as well as to explore the notions of childhood that shaped children's lives and narrators' representations of their childhoods against a single (Western) horizon (Rappleye, 2018). We foreground the rich and complex internal differences within the former state socialist countries, and the overlooked connections and similarities with the 'West' across different spheres of life (Silova, Millei & Piattoeva, 2017). Bridging academic research and art, the project brings into public view multiple personal histories that have the potential to disrupt the linearity of time and transfigure historical geopolitical divisions and identity constructions.

Our research uses a collective biography approach, which started as a Marxist feminist method by Frigga Haug (1987) and was subsequently retooled in a post-structural vein by Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon (2006). The method creates intimate, embodied, and generative spaces relying on trust, intellectual, and affective relationships between small groups of researchers and artists who are also simultaneously research subjects (Davies & Gannon, 2006; Haug, 1999). Integrating artistic forms of inquiry and 'scaling up' collective biography across a larger group of participants - in multiple sites and across multiple differences, with people who were often strangers to one another

- we organized [five intensive memory workshops](#) in Berlin, Riga, Helsinki, Mexico City, and online. Between 2019 and 2020, a total of 77 participants from 31 countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Oceania came together to collectively engage in exploring, creating, and writing memory stories.

Sharing childhood memories during the workshops created and splintered commonalities and differences among participants and their childhood experiences, enabling decolonial border thinking and dis-identification from internalised subjecthoods, while also opening decolonial spaces for the emergence of new identities (re-existence) (Tlostanova, 2017; Tlostanova et al., 2016). The project thus has challenged the very logics of the coloniality of knowledge in neoliberal (Western) modernity by unmaking the image of post/socialist subjects (researchers and artists as well) as exotic and invisible Others, who are forever lagging behind and striving to assimilate (Tlostanova, 2017).

The memories have been compiled into an open digital [archive](#), creating a kaleidoscopic image of identities, regions, religions, cultures, and histories. They also inspired works of art, such as a [theatre play](#), paintings, a short film, a sound installation, a visual installation, [an animation](#), and exhibitions in Budapest, Hungary and Tampere, Finland which is [opening on the 25th of February, 2021](#). A decentered satellite conference '[Spinning the Sticky Threads of Childhood Memories: From Cold War to Anthropocene](#)', which will be held on the 20st and 21nd of October 2021 at four locations (Berlin, Germany; Atlanta, USA; Tampere, Finland; and Hajdúböszörmény, Hungary) and online (with a concentrated Africa Hub), completes the funded project, but not our collaboration. Several new initiatives—both by participants and other interested researchers and artists—have sprouted from our research, carrying childhood memories of the last millenia into new spaces and times.

RESEARCH PROJECT
POST-SOCIALIST BRITAIN:
MEMORY, REPRESENTATION AND POLITICAL
IDENTITY AMONGST GERMAN AND POLISH
IMMIGRANTS IN THE UK

Post-Socialist Britain: Memory, Representation and Political Identity amongst German and Polish Immigrants in the UK is a brand-new research project launching in February 2021 and is funded by the United Kingdom's Arts and Humanities Research Council. The project leaders are Professor Sara Jones, of the Department of Modern Languages (University of Birmingham, UK) together with Dr Charlotte Galpin, of the Department of Political Science and International Studies (University of Birmingham, UK), and Dr Jenny Wüstenberg (Nottingham Trent University, UK). The project will include two postdoctoral researchers, Dr Maren Rohe and Dr Paweł Duber, from April 2021.

'Post-Socialist Britain' will explore insights of memory studies that show the link between past experience and present political identity. In doing so, the project breaks out of the national framework by asking for the first time what happens to that relationship in the process of migration—specifically migration from two post-socialist countries to the UK. The project examines the intertwining of memory, representation, inclusion, and political identity within two of the largest immigrant groups (Polish and German) living in Britain. It will explore the ways in which (post-Brexit) Britain can also be considered 'post-socialist'. Studying memory in migration, 'Post-Socialist Britain' will reveal multiple interwoven factors that contribute to political-identity building, beyond memory of authoritarianism or discourse about dictatorial pasts, exploring what the relationship between memory and political identity looks like when the individual moves from the national context, to which these memories 'belong', and relocates to a new socio-cultural and political environment. 'Post-Socialist Britain', with a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, examines how that relationship is shaped by factors such as inclusion, personal networks, and perceived social hierarchies relating to class and ethnicity. It will make a

substantial original contribution to scholarship in multiple fields: notably, memory studies with an interest in transcultural/ relational modes of remembrance; sociological work on integration/ incorporation of immigrants; and political science accounts of the relationship between past and present political behaviour or the processes of radicalisation. These insights will be of significance to scholars working in numerous contexts and disciplines and for practitioners seeking to support inclusion and community cohesion, and to intervene against radicalisation.

Apart from typical scholarly publications, the outputs of the project will include stakeholder workshops, policy briefings, a virtual and physical exhibition, a series of artistic performances, school teaching resources, and opinion pieces for the local, national and international press.

'Post-Socialist Britain' is supported by an international Advisory Board composed of leading academics from diverse disciplines alongside representatives of key non-HEI stakeholder groups: Professor Jennifer Evans (Carleton University); Dr Kathy Burrell (Reader in Human Geography at the University of Liverpool); Dr Ute Hirsekorn (Assistant Professor of German Studies at the University of Nottingham); Alicja Kaczmarek (Director of Centrala Space/Polish Expats Association); Elżbieta Kardynał (Director of European's Welfare Association); Małgorzata Skibińska (Chair of the Executive Council of the Polish Professionals in London); Cllr John Cotton (Glebe Farm and Tile Cross), Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities; Laura Alvarez (Senior Urban Planner, Nottingham City Council); Paul Stocker (British German Association Youthbridge Director and Trustee of the Dresden Trust); Sajida Carr (Director of Development and Operations, Creative Black Country). The project will also be introduced at the MSA 2021 conference, with a panel on core questions of the research and key public engagements.

RESEARCH PROJECT
RECONSTITUTING PUBLICS THROUGH
REMEMBERING TRANSITIONS: FACILITATING
CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE 1980–90S
ON LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL SCALES

Supported by the [Network of Institutes for Advanced Studies \(NETIAS\)](#) [Constructive Advanced Thinking grant](#) 2021–2024.

The team: Ksenia Robbe (PI, University of Groningen, Netherlands), Agnieszka Mrozik (Polish Academy of Sciences), Andrei Zavadski (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany), Alexander Formozov (Deutsch-Russischer Austausch e.V., Germany).

Three decades after the radical transformations of the USSR and its satellites began in the 1980s – 1990s, the topic of ‘transitioning’ from socialist states to liberal democracies remains highly contentious in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the last decade, the transitional past has been increasingly instrumentalized, particularly by nationalist-populist actors and ‘memory entrepreneurs’, and this process has been paralleled by their opponents’ construction of counter-memories. In the context of heated contestations of memory, with high political stakes, spaces for dialogue are rapidly shrinking and public spheres are becoming increasingly ‘disconnected’.

The project addresses this societal issue, drawing on our research expertise in post-socialist cultures and politics, and combining approaches of the diverse (inter)disciplinary fields we work in and our knowledge of different societies and languages. By engaging with memory practices beyond the polarized versions on theoretical and practical levels, we aim to develop strategies for facilitating more cohesive and at the same time more critical practices of remembering that have the potential to lead to dialogue and form reflective communities.

The combination of methods and approaches which we draw upon from our respective fields of research – cultural analysis of discourse and

affect, critical memory studies, public history, (digital) ethnography, intersectional study of gender and generations – forms a solid ground for achieving the project's aim. The comparative approach will allow for developing strategies and policies on a transnational (European) level based on trans-local resonances rather than top-down scripts.

The participation of the NGO DRA (German-Russian Exchange), based in Berlin, Germany, with their experience of connecting different social sectors and policy makers, and close collaboration with the European Solidarity Center in Gdańsk, Poland, and the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center in Yekaterinburg, Russia, will facilitate the execution of empirical research and its translation into concrete policy recommendations.

In 2021–24 the team will benefit from research stays at the Zukunftskolleg in Konstanz, Institute for Advanced Study CEU, Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Paris Institute for Advanced Study, and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study.

The Advisory Board: Stefan Berger (Institute for Social Movements, Germany); Alexei Bratochkin (European College of Liberal Arts, Belarus); Mischa Gabowitsch (Einstein Forum, Germany); Iwona Kurz (University of Warsaw, Poland); Olga Malinova (Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia); Joanna Wawrzyniak (University of Warsaw, Poland).

CALLS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS PERIPHERAL HISTORIES ON POST-SOVIET MUSEUMS

<https://www.peripheralhistories.co.uk/>

This year Sofia Gavrilova (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Germany) acts as a guest editor of the *Peripheral Histories* blog, a project started by a group of UK-based scholars and dedicated to the spatial histories of the post-Soviet periphery. As part of this endeavor, Gavrilova aims to collect and publish a series of essays on post-Soviet regional museums. 'I would ideally focus on their present (post-1991) state, strategies, local actors involved, and the dialogue with the official memory politics,' she says. The length of the essay is up to 1000 words, and photos are welcome. It can be an elaboration of a research article you have written or a first step towards it. If anyone is interested in participating, please do not hesitate to contact Sofia directly with a short description of your proposed topic. There is no strict deadline, but Sofia would appreciate it if you could express your potential interest by the **end of March 2021**.

CALL FOR PAPERS
METHODOLOGIES OF WORKING IN COLD WAR
ARCHIVES. FACTS, VALUES AND ARCHIVAL
ECOLOGIES

<https://www.osaarchivum.org/events/methodologies-of-working-in-cold-war-archives>

Dates: October 14–16, 2021

Place: Blinken Open Society Archives, Central European University (Budapest), Hungary

The workshop aims to contribute to the discussion on knowledge practices in times of reflexive disbelief by addressing the role of scholars with regards to different truth regimes. Michel Foucault once remarked that the analysis of ‘truth’ should go beyond the evaluation of isolated statements: truth regimes are power systems which produce and sustain certain truths in a circular way, through political and economic institutions. William Davies of *The Guardian* traced back the current popular skepticism vis-à-vis professional expertise to a paradigm shift in truth regimes: the immediacy of self-revelatory data has been replacing, through a multitude of revelations, leaks and informational wars dating as far back as the Cold War, the interpretative work by experts and journalists. It is worth re-assessing, from this point of view, how historical knowledge about the past can be used to address and carefully interpret facts and events reported or produced by those very informational wars before 1989, when the East and West were systemically opposed. In an era when individuals and academic communities are increasingly divided over matters of common concern, we consider it the duty of both historians and archivists to engage in a more reflexive manner with the problematic nature of records of the past.

In her 2015 book *Religion in Secular Archives*, Sonja Luehrmann mapped different Cold War archival ecologies and noticed that if state archives in the Soviet Union made religious practices look politically contained and embedded in complex relationships, the documents

collected by West-based human rights groups for advocacy purposes offered a binary view of religion versus communism. She concluded that the same type of document or fact could be appropriated by different discourses about dissidence depending on the archival architecture it belonged to. It is worth investigating further if archives and “counter-archives”, as Luehrmann calls the thematic, West-based records of political and humanitarian activism, can offer objective glimpses of the past, or rather shape knowledge in particular ways.

Why [at] Blinken OSA?

The Radio Free Europe and samizdat collections as well as the human rights records located at Blinken OSA fall within this dialogical architecture, of alternative record-keeping: they were created in the past [mostly in the Cold War] to counter communist propaganda and to collect evidence to counter the allegations of authoritarian and violent regimes. The Visegrad scholarship program at OSA supported researchers exploring these collections, and important individual reflections emerged on knowledge practices related to human rights, dissidence, social movements, public opinion and audience research. Despite the variety of searches, one common concern addressed the relationship between the ‘objectivity’ of the reports and the broader political frame of entire collections. A systematic and collective methodological reflection on Cold War archives therefore seems necessary. This would allow us to go beyond the rigid dualism of the period when they were created without succumbing to the relativization of truth regimes either.

Questions

The call is addressed to researchers who have been working on cultural, economic, political, social and scientific aspects of communism and the Cold War and who feel challenged by some of the suggested questions in transdisciplinary ways:

1. How to interpret the **ethnographic detail** in state, advocacy and police archives while keeping an ethical standpoint?

2. How do we position ourselves on the issue of the **political construction of issues** in / through the archives? Is it possible to assess the truth value of documents beyond the constructivist approach?

3. How to assess **scientific knowledge and expert data** on both sides of the Iron Curtain beyond the propaganda wars and the ritualized appropriations of socialist discourses?

4. How to continue accounting for the **specificities of socialist economies/ societies** while critically using Cold War conceptual schemes and still engaging with the re-emerging concerns regarding 'recurrent totalitarianism'?

5. How to assess the **cultural canon** of the past and the possibilities of professional criticism beyond ideological, memory and culture wars? How to re-assess the need for studying intellectual agency as a historically relevant perspective after decades of contesting expertise, prestige and moral authority?

6. Do (or should) **archives and memory institutions** recontextualize Cold War related collections in line with new scholarship, combining adjoining archival projects and a generalized need for authority through curation?

Scholars are therefore invited to discuss their *use* of Cold War archives for writing political, social, or cultural histories, and to reflect on their ethical, methodological and epistemic dilemmas and choices. They should turn their particular case studies into reflexive contributions about the challenges of different archives.

Prospective participants

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Visegrad program at Blinken OSA, we invite former scholarship holders and a broader range of scholars who have already done research in and on various Cold War archives to reflect on the appropriate theories and methods needed when rigorously analyzing phenomena through the *combined*

and comparative perspectives of advocacy, state or police archives and their distinct truth regimes.

The call is addressed to any students and researchers with historiographic meta-reflexive sensitivities, to artists and film directors with a broad experience with Cold War documents. So, the call particularly addresses Visegrad fellows at OSA who have already worked with the OSA collections, but it is definitely not limited to them.

Aims

The workshop aims to contribute to a **methodological debate** as well to a collective exploration of the **relationship between Cold War conceptual schemes and current topics and concerns**. We seek to establish a new scholarly network of archival and research institutions to engage in a public discussion about source literacy. The workshop will result in collective volume dedicated to Epistemologies and Tools in Cold War Archives. Discussions will take place on the basis of pre-circulated papers as drafts of future articles.

Application procedure

Please email an abstract of no more than 500 words and a short CV to Nora Ungar, at ungarn@ceu.edu by April 30, 2021. Notification of acceptance will be received within one month.

Due to the hybrid format of the workshop, partial travel grants can be provided to participants from the region on a competitive basis. Please submit a brief justification for your travel grant request along with the conference abstract, if you tentatively project to come to Budapest for the workshop.

Format

It is difficult to predict which conditions will still apply in October 2021 with regards to the Covid-19 travel restrictions and physical distance, both in Hungary and abroad. Therefore, we will prepare

for the time being a workshop in a hybrid format, allowing speakers to participate both live and online. The workshop will be organized at the Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest, on October 14–16, 2021. Scholars could visit the Blinken Open Society Archives in Budapest, take part in small group discussions, or request archival materials from the Blinken OSA's collections within short explorative queries along the thematic lines of the workshop.

**CALL FOR SUMMER SCHOOL PARTICIPATION
CONFRONTING THE CRISIS OF EXPERTISE:
HISTORICAL ROOTS AND CURRENT
CHALLENGES**

Co-funded by the [Open Society University Network](#) (OSUN), in cooperation with [Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives](#) <https://summeruniversity.ceu.edu/confronting-the-crisis-of-expertise-2021>

Date: July 26–30, 2021, online

In the post-Covid-19 world, the problems already experienced by democracies with regards to social divisions and diminishing trust in public institutions are exacerbated by a growing epistemic crisis concerning the simultaneous need and contestation of expertise for public policy purposes. The existence of uncertain statistical data, the search for past models in dealing with hidden enemies, the public attempts to translate scientific knowledge and to make sense of decision-making processes, all point to a persistent need for advanced skills for working with governance data and discourses.

Our course enhances participants' skills in analyzing the incorporation of techno and scientific knowledge into public governance and discourses. The summer school seeks to provide the tools and categories to critically assess systemic responses in times of both contested expertise and scientificization of politics.

The course will make connections between historical and current issues related to expertise by analyzing the genealogy of interventionist techniques and social inquiries. We will study the emergence of hybrid, policy sciences during the Cold War by analyzing the cases of sociology, (macro)economy, statistics, environmental sciences, and design. We analytically investigate the differences as well as convergences between East and West with regards to their data cultures and truth regimes in order to analyze the validity, intelligibility, and portability of scientific facts/ phenomena when being tested, communicated, appropriated across time and space.

Last but not least, we shall connect the past problems of communicating science along ideological divides with current concerns of conveying valid scientific claims in a post-truth era.

The summer school is offered to advanced-level undergraduate students, graduate students, junior faculty in humanities and social sciences, journalists and artists interested in writing articles or creating projects which might go beyond an academic context.

Online course format

The summer school will consist of plenary sessions, seminars, one-to-one consultations and individual work. The daily time commitment will be of approximately six hours, equally divided between short live sessions (one hour each with breaks between them) and off-line work (three hours).

A keynote lecture will open the summer school. The complex theoretical and historical problems will be taught in the format of pre-recorded (10-minute) and live plenary (20-minute) presentations. Lectures in both recorded and live format will include multimedia sources (documentary films, photos, archival materials) and will be followed by 20-minute discussions. Questions will be formulated in advance through the e-learning platform and the dialogue will be structured along the participants' written responses to them. In this way, discussions will already include the students' insights and perspectives. The

end-of-the-day seminars will consist of practical exercises and discussion of students' projects. On the basis of their individual projects, students will be guided to write a policy recommendation for a republic of 'trans-science'.

Participants will have the chance to develop their individual projects under the supervision of assigned or chosen tutors, and consultations will take place daily between seminars.

Students will be kindly asked before the beginning of the summer school to send a brief description of a topic that they would like to work on. They can include visuals in their proposals and will be guided to use a special platform (Sway). Examples of topics will also be provided in advance. Tutors and group discussions will be decided based on these preliminary drafts. Key readings will also be assigned prior to the beginning of the summer school.

**CALL FOR SUMMER SCHOOL PARTICIPATION
DISRUPTIVE NARRATIVES: RE-CONSTRUCTING
THE TRUTH IN THE AGE OF MULTIMODAL
PROPAGANDA**

Co-funded by the [Open Society University Network \(OSUN\)](https://summeruniversity.ceu.edu/disruptive-narratives-2021)
<https://summeruniversity.ceu.edu/disruptive-narratives-2021>

Date: June 12–25, 2021, online

An international group of scholars, representing three continents, and including world-renowned author Ian Buruma, proposes a five-day summer university course for advanced BA, MA and PhD students in fact-based narratives, also known as literary journalism in English language scholarship, reportage in the former Soviet area, or *crónica* in Latin America. At first glance reading like fiction, the genre, however, seeks to be informative, to give an account of reality based on epistemologically objective data, mixing the intransigence of facts with the passion of narrative.

The course is valuable, we believe, because we live in an age of multimodal propaganda and misinformation, which scholars have shown is related to political populism and resurgent authoritarianism. Research also suggests that the best way to disrupt the effects of propaganda is through the construction of disruptive narratives that give readers routes towards new understandings of the world, others in the world, and their relation to them.

Participants in the course will be introduced to i) the history, ii) the characteristics, iii) the major topics, and iv) the reality-transforming potential of the genre by surveying some of its groundbreaking representatives and achievements. To do this, we will engage with historical and contemporary examples of the genre itself, but also with theoretical and philosophical texts that explore the relationship between (accurate) representation and/of (empirical) reality. The research and the curriculum are interdisciplinary, involving literary studies, political science, journalism and media studies, international relations, and history.

Online course format

Throughout the course a variety of engaging and effective online teaching and learning methods will be employed; pre-recorded and live lectures will be used judiciously while active learning strategies will be distributed across all class sessions. Apart from classroom teaching and learning, online extracurricular activities will also be organized.

Each of the five days of the course we will have approximately three 60–80-minute synchronous activities that include i) live and pre-recorded introductory lectures by faculty; ii) small group and individual work slots; iii) class discussions; iv) Q&A sessions; v) one-on-one consultations with faculty, and vi) participant presentations. Asynchronous activities will form a crucial element of the course, both before and during it: i) readings will be made available prior to the course; ii) readings will be accompanied by specific questions formulated by faculty that are expected to be answered by participants before the given session (either in written or PPT or video format); iii) both faculty members and participants will have the chance to introduce themselves in video format,

using the platform Panopto; iv) participants will work in small groups on specific projects. (For more details see please Syllabus.)

Platforms to be used (access to platforms and constant IT help will be provided throughout the course to all participants): Microsoft Teams, Moodle, Panopto, Sway.

Participants will receive various digital packages long before the course starts, including, but not limited to a finalized, authorized, detailed syllabus that shows the exact time slots of each and every activity, digitalized readers and other learning materials, as well as guidelines on how to use technology before and during the session. IT help will also be provided to all participants.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO A SPECIAL ISSUE MUSEUM AS A RESEARCH HUB

The Garage Journal: Studies in Art, Museums & Culture

<https://thegaragejournal.org/en/announcements/call-for-submissions/1>

With the remit and scope of museum practice changing rapidly in the twenty-first century, this special issue of *The Garage Journal* interrogates the role of the museum as a research hub. Recognizing that scholarly work has underpinned museum practice for over a century, we invite submissions that address the following concerns: How is research today integrated into museums' future strategies? How do collaborations among researchers, artists, and curators work? What are the key applications of practice-based research? We also encourage submissions that share and discuss best practice examples.

Research has shaped museum practices for decades. Indeed, museums are meant to be places of reflection on contemporaneity and at the same time are expected to present a variety of perspectives that satisfy all societal groups. Museums that focus on research seem to offer a democratization of museum practices, moving away from the

'mausoleum' paradigm with a greater emphasis on a new relationship with audiences. Yet, some would argue that museums fall victim to the spectacle of entertainment industry, with research being just another form of commercialization of knowledge in the system of the attention economy.

This special issue of *The Garage Journal* recognizes that nowadays, the museum exists across many sites, in multiple times, and through a myriad of interactions. No longer just a gallery filled with objects and accompanying notes, the museum is involved in the politics of what is to be visible in the twenty-first century. We understand visibility as a form of presence in the public discourse, a form of knowing and remembering. The museum recognizes visibility as a power to build associations, networks, and communities. The special issue considers critically how these new powers are invested in curatorial practices and how they are invoked in the contemporary and historical settings. We put the visitors at the center of our consideration, including their participation in the process of re-defining the purpose and scope of research in the museum.

The **questions** that this special issue will ask include (but are not limited to):

- What are the changes that the museum's research culture has seen over the past decades? How are they transforming the museum's role in society?
- How exactly do museums, especially art museums, carry out research?
- How can we theorize the museum as research a hub?
- How do different kinds of museums—the art museum, the historical museum, the memory museum, and the museum of contemporaneity—respond to recent theoretical advances?
- What makes research in the museum 'practice-based research'?

- How do museums make research accessible?
- What are the best practices in terms of co-researching with artists, audiences, and others involved in museums?
- How can research in museums contribute to social innovation and change?
- And finally, what potential does re-conceptualizing the museum as a research hub provide?

We invite contributions from curators and other museum staff engaging in research, academics studying these practices, as well as professionals who have both scholarly and practical experience in this area. Contributions can be made in English, Russian or German in the form of articles, visual essays, data essays, interviews, and archival materials. *The Garage Journal* does not publish unsolicited artworks.

To submit a paper, please use the [online submission system](#). Papers are due on 1 May 2021. The issue is planned for publication in early autumn 2021.

Associated conference

In association with the publication of the issue, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art (Moscow, Russia) will hold, in late September 2021, an international conference. Participants will be invited to explore the following concerns:

- the role of the museum in producing and advancing knowledge
- research collaborations between museums and other institutions
- current methods of carrying out research in museums
- ethical concerns of those involved in doing research in museums

It is anticipated that the conference will be held on site (at Garage Museum, Moscow); however, online participation will be available, too. The exact format of the event—on site or online—will be confirmed in mid-summer subject to international regulation on travel during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The call for contributions to the conference will be published on The Garage Journal's website in due course.

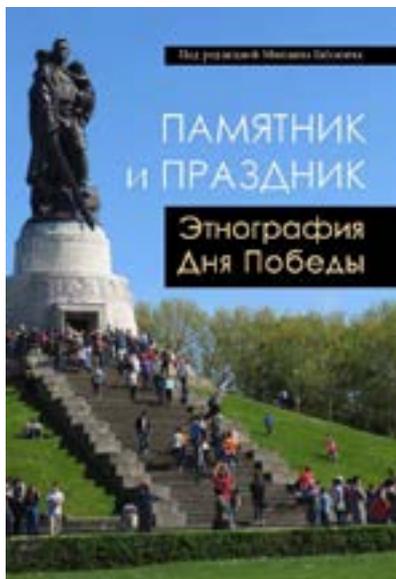
The Garage Journal: Studies in Art, Museums & Culture (thegaragejournal.org) is an independent interdisciplinary academic platform that advances critical discussions about contemporary art, culture, and museum practice in the Russian and global contexts. It publishes original empirical, theoretical, and speculative research in a variety of genres, celebrating innovative ways of presentation. Fully peer-reviewed, The Garage Journal provides a source book of ideas for an international audience.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

NEW BOOK
MISCHA GABOWITSCH (ED.)
ПАМЯТНИК И ПРАЗДНИК: ЭТНОГРАФИЯ ДНЯ
POBEDY [MONUMENT AND CELEBRATION:
ETHNOGRAPHIES OF THE VICTORY]

Saint Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2020. 416 pages,
98 color illustrations. In Russian.

The book documents a collective project of multi-sited ethnography that examined the celebration of 8 and 9 May and the interaction between Soviet war memorials and local communities throughout the former Soviet sphere of influence through observation, photography,



photography, interviews, and cartography. Chapters cover different regions of Russia (from Karelia to Chechnya) as well as Sevastopol, Minsk, Vilnius, Sofia, Vienna, and Berlin. The book costs approximately five euros and is available for purchase in printed or PDF format through the publisher's website at <https://nestorbook.ru/uCat/item/1542>. Based mostly on fieldwork from 2013, this is a companion volume to a German book that documents a follow-up project from 2017 with a slightly different geography and design (Gabowitsch, Gdaniec, Makhotina (eds.) *Kriegsgedenken als Event: Der 9. Mai 2015 im postsozialistischen*

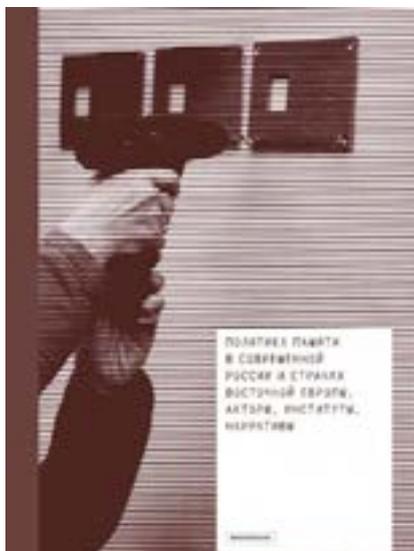
Europa. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2017). For a full list of publications and video discussions based on the two projects (including texts in English, French, German, Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian), see gabowitsch.net/victory-day-sociology.

NEW BOOK

ALEXEY MILLER AND DMITRIY EFREMENKO (EDS.)
POLITIKA PAMIATI V SOVREMENNOI ROSSII I
STRANAKH VOSTOCHNOI EVROPY. AKTORY,
INSTITUTY, NARRATIVY [POLITICS OF MEMORY
IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA AND COUNTRIES
OF EASTERN EUROPE: ACTORS, INSTITUTIONS,
NARRATIVES]

Saint Petersburg: European University at St. Petersburg, 2020.
632 pages. In Russian.

The collective monograph is focused on the transformation of the institutional landscape of memory politics in Russia and Eastern Europe. 29 chapters of the book also cover interactions of multiple mnemonic actors and their narrative strategies. Special part of the volume is devoted to unrecognized states in Transnistria and Eastern Ukraine.



NEW ARTICLE
ANDREEA MIRONESCU & SIMONA MITROIU
POETICS AND POLITICS OF REMEMBERING
CHILDHOOD IN ROMANIAN POST-COMMUNIST
FICTION

Canadian Slavonic Papers, 2020, 62:2, pp. 182–201,

DOI: [10.1080/00085006.2020.1742562](https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2020.1742562)

The authors explore the representations of the child and childhood which emerged in post-communist Romania, with a clear focus on literary works. The paper proposes a triadic typology of literary remembrance by distinguishing between the allegorical, experiential, and metamodern modes of remembering childhood. They also assess the political implications of Romanian post-communist writers' strategy of revisiting a troubled past from the child's perspective by examining the connections between the narrative point of view and the issue of political agency. Their research reveals the complex relation between remembering childhood and remembering communism, one that indicates the authors' attitude toward the past. Each mode of remembering childhood is analyzed in novels written by Romanian and Romanian-born authors: a) the fantastic and allegorical chronicle of Romanian communism, using largely the child's narratorial perspective, in Mircea Cărtărescu's and Herta Müller's works; b) the experiential mode of remembering and fictionally representing children's social roles and their traumatic experiences in Radu Pavel Gheo's and Nicolae Avram's novels; and c) the metamodern based on a violent and post-ironical view of the world in Aglaja Veteranyi's and György Dragomán's novels. Child characters often take a stand or subversively react to the system, showing the authors' critical engagement with the past.