

THE BALKANS AND GLOBALIZATION

The Second International NEXUS Conference

NEXUS, Centre for Advanced Study (Sofia)

General information:

About half of the participants will be members of the NEXUS research team and specially invited guests.

The other half will be selected by the conference steering committee on the basis of application papers. Scholars and researchers whose research fields, publications and application papers are relevant to the topics of the conference; PhD students in the final phase of their studies are also eligible.

Topics:

First section: *Balkan Legacies*;
Second section: *Regional Identities and Paradoxes of Globalization*.

Conference language is English.

Date: June 4-7, 2004.

Location: Central European Univ.,
Budapest, Hungary.

Deadline for submission: March 15,
2004.

Please, send a summary of the proposed paper (300-500 words), your CV, and a list of publications.

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Travel & Accommodation:

The accommodation in Budapest is covered by CAS. Travel costs are covered by the participants or their home institutions.

About NEXUS

The NEXUS Research Project *How to Think about the Balkans: Culture, Region, Identities* was hosted by the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia and was sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation, Germany, the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS). It is an integral part of the Blue Bird *Agenda for Civil Society in Southeastern Europe*. The project was completed between October 1, 2000 and October 1, 2003. The project was carried out by 22 Associate scholars (research period 6-10 months) and 6 Senior scholars (research period 36 months) from 7 different Southeast European countries, working in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, literary and film history, economic history, military history and cultural studies. NEXUS already organized one international conference *The Balkans: Mapping Identities (18th-21st Century)*, Sofia, October 18-20, 2002. For more details see under *programmes* on www.cas.bg

About NEXUS first conference

The Balkans: Mapping Identities (18th-21st Century) Conference took place in Sofia on October 18-20, 2002. It was organized by the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia in association with the Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia and the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski. As an integral part of NEXUS, the conference aimed at the presentation of the scientific profile of the project and its team, and also strove to provide a forum for outside scholars to broaden the Balkan perspectives that NEXUS had examined. As official guests to the conference the organizers invited scholars currently involved in the Balkan research and well known for their contribution to this field (the conference was attended by well-known scholars like Prof. Larry Wolff, Boston College, Prof. Marco Dogo, University of Trieste, Prof. John Neubauer, University of Amsterdam, scholars from Balkan universities and a considerable number of young and ambitious foreign and Bulgarian researchers). The program was arranged in six sections each examining the problem from different perspective. The NEXUS team presented papers in all six sections but the center of the conference was the NEXUS panel, presenting the general research results of the project. Sections were followed by general discussion on the presented papers. The three-day event affirmed already existing academic and personal attachments along with the establishment of new institutional and interdisciplinary contacts.

Scholarly Agenda of the Second NEXUS Conference

The Intellectual Challenge

The extent to which one can claim the existence of a regional identity in South Eastern Europe is debatable. Elegantly simple answers can hardly be accepted, as reflection on SEE identity(ies) must take into account the simultaneous co-existence of, and rivalry between various identity models, historically constructed in the region and the images enforced on it by powerful outsiders. In that sense, our initial intention was to evade the essentialising game of identifying the regional identity of SEE. Rather, the purpose of the envisaged conference is to examine the multitude of existing forms of identity-building in the region by focusing on three domains in which their interrelations, overlappings and clashes are particularly strong.

In the second NEXUS conference *The Balkans and Globalization* (Sofia, June 4-7, 2004) we will examine the ways in which various types of legacy have been inscribed in individual and collective acts of identification, as well as the conflicts and identity-splits that have resulted from legacy and tradition-based identity politics. Finally, we will turn to the paradoxical logic of what Zygmunt Bauman has termed 'glocalization', and analyze how individuals and groups from the Balkans re-define their identifications as their region becomes more and more implied in global trends.

It is hoped that the conference will offer ways to transcend the intellectual fixations of local types of identity politics exemplified, among other things, by the rhetorical pitting of national identities vs. regional or other types of »alien« identity, and promote reflection on the full range of possible forms of interrelation between the multitude of identities and identifications – religious, ethnic, minority, gender, generational etc. – that have existed or still exist in SEE.

Therefore, the general goal will be to provide stimulating analyses of the dynamic structure of overlapping or conflicting identities and acts of identification, which delineate an evasive field full of tensions: The Balkans, Southeastern Europe, the Orient in Europe, the »Other« Europe – an ever-shifting patchwork of borders, cultures and mentalities, often contested by the very ones who share them. However, the proposed approach should not be one of simple mirror reversal of the existing stigmatized »Balkan imagery«. Such an aim would remain a simplifying counter-power move in the ever more popular anti-Orientalist and anti-Balkanist intellectual trend. Instead, our approach will try to step out of the Manichean logic of opposition and exclusion, and propose cognitive paths of coming to terms with a multitude of possible identifications (in the ambivalent context of the process of globalization) that resist isolation and marginalization as much as they do one-dimensional self-glorifying regionalism, old nationalisms or irrelevant local patriotism.

This strategy will also imply the critical questioning of the key concepts of disciplinary »meta-language« – such as ›identity‹, ›space-territory‹, ›region‹, ›legacy‹ or ›globalization‹. Namely, the concepts of scholarly discourse do not necessarily transcend the power struggles they are intended to describe. Rather, they can and do play important, sometimes even crucial roles in such struggles, and therefore critical reflection on their meanings and uses should be a necessary starting point of the analyses. Out of that reason, we would like to focus on a set of key concepts and investigate their importance both for the logic of regional identity construction, re-invention, or rejection, as well as for the scholarly reflection on such processes.

First Section: Legacies in/of the Balkans

Gellner room, CEU, Budapest

Legacies are neither just metaphors nor mere facts. What we denominate as »legacies«, but also »traditions«, »heritage«, »patrimony« and sometimes even »culture«, represent forms of mediated communication between past and present, of re-evaluation and construction of the past, which are strongly inscribed into the individual and collective acts of identification. As constructions of various and conflicting, institutionally sustained Grand Narratives, legacies (continue to) perform a powerful legitimating function in the age as well as in the discourse of nationalism. The relatively young nations in the region have found in this vision a modern validation and articulation of their specific individualities and hence claims for »secession« from or »re-appropriation« of their pasts.

But legacies can also be viewed as historical phenomena, recurrent social and cultural practices, which display varying degrees of perseverance and continuous change over time. Both on the level of repetition of certain characteristics/practices (e.g., multiethnicity, patterns of social organization or political and economic behaviour, etc.) and of actual (individual or collective) memories, legacies possess an »empirical realness« that is frequently at variance with nation-state legacy constructions. Legacies can thus be seen not merely as inventions, least of all as fiction, but also as observable or traceable dynamic processes, cultural contents and modes of behaviour that define – »identify« – actual or historical spaces.

Thus, tormenting ambiguities can arise while legacies are defined, evaluated or appropriated by various social groups. Clashes between rivaling conceptions of legacy often end up as being the most ferocious battles in wars over cultural and national identity – the wars of symbols without which polities, nations and regions can hardly be imagined, let alone constituted.

Possible topics:

- On key concepts: legacy, tradition, heritage, patrimony, culture, civilization;
- Relationships between legacies and collective identities / acts of identification;
- Legacy as historical continuity and legacy as social perception;
- The Balkans as a sequence of historical legacies;
- Legacy(ies) as a special marker or Is there a common Balkan legacy?

- Imperial legacies, community memories;
- Inheritance of stereotypes;
- *Lieux de mémoire* – inheriting, preserving and contesting materialized forms of legacy;
- Territorial projections of legacies;
- The legacy of economic mentality(ies);
- Desirable legacies – the politics of memory and forgetting;
- Types of inheritance and channels of transmittance – individual, group, institutional, etc.;
- The hidden legacies of the social and cultural »Others« (problems of gender and sexuality, minorities, marginal groups);
- Education and legacy;
- Legacies and state cultural policies;
- Legacies, wars over cultural and national identity, and resulting identity splits.

Second Section: Regional Identities and the Paradoxes of Globalization – South East Europeans in the Global Village

Popper room, CEU, Budapest

We are witnessing how nowadays the intellectual elites, as well as the general public in the SEE countries (Turkey, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, Albania, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Slovenia and Croatia), are both encouraged and set under pressure by the international community to think, speak and act in regional terms. This is definitely positive, given the appeal for regional co-operation and need to overcome old and mutually hostile nationalisms with their rivaling heroes, martyrs and Grand Narratives.

However, what is the role of this new regionalization given the ambivalent processes of globalization throughout the world? Is it a trend that opposes the global processes, or is it part of them? Is the region really engaged in the global exchange of ideas, people, capital and services? How far does it partake in the shadow side of globalization – the weakening of local economies and states, the criminalization of societies and mentalities, the flourishing of narco-mafias, the Americanization of local cultures, the rising gap between generations, and the decline of traditional educational and intellectual values?

To what extent are the Balkans still a closed reservoir of old and conservative (national, religious, ethnic, tribal) identities? In the last decade, Western Europe and SEE have developed in completely different directions and have worked with completely different maps of the space and time, of territories and future. In the Western part of the continent, the process of integration has reached a critical stage with the launching of the common European currency, the Euro. This has led to fundamental reconsideration of such basic concepts as the nation state, sovereignty, the national economy, national security, human rights, and so on. At the same time, the process of disintegration in the southeastern part of the continent has brought back some of the 19th century ideas about the role of states and borders, the value of economic independence, and so on.

What is the impact of this questioning of old concepts, (national sovereignty, homogeneous national culture, and national territory) on the level of group and personal identity or acts of identification? What are the dominant practices of identification for groups and individuals in this controversial context: conservative nationalistic attitudes confronted with radical questioning of the basic conceptual categories of nationalism? What are the dominant political, cultural and public values, mediating the identity building and identity reflection; what are the ongoing regional and national debates, concerning the nationalism/regionalism/globalization?

On the other hand, the general framework of globalization also has a specific European political dimension. What are the relations between the Balkans, European integration and globalization? Is the new SEE-regionalization really part of the propagated process »Europe of the regions« or is it a new variant of old geopolitical power division of the world? Isn't there a danger of new encapsulating of the »dark Balkans« and separating it from Europe's integration?

Given all these controversies, is Zygmunt Bauman's concept of »glocalization« applicable for this region? The concept pretends to designate an ambivalent process: globalization for some people means at the same time »localization« for others – isolation from the world mobility and communication, exclusion from the contemporary information exchange, disability to be flexible and to compete, lack of professional and existential choices, decline of adequate competence and cheap labor prices, general diminishing of chances, and poverty.

How is this precious new commodity – the freedom of movement and communication – distributed on the Balkans? What are the consequences for the traditional and non-traditional cultures and cultural identities there?

There are other, even more complex questions. What will happen to the so-called »imaginary communities« in the epoch of Internet with its multitude of de-territorialized, »virtual« and »network« communities? According to Bauman the new freedom to move and the ability to communicate of trans-territorial and cosmopolitan elites destroys also the symbolic meaning of old territories and deprives some »settled« people of their traditional, territorially based, identities. Is this true for the Balkans; what is the regional specific of this supposed process there? Or are concepts such as ›region‹, ›culture‹ and ›identity‹ inadequate for the description of what was going on in the last decades? If space is an important precondition of identification acts, then what happens with the identity building process when space is relativised in the new epoch of speed, global networks, and cosmopolitanism? Is it meaningful in global context to speak about »the Balkans« and »Balkan identities« at all? Who are the subjects of »identity building« in this context, what are the typical »identity splits« in this »global/Balkan« world?

Thus, we can propose the following interdisciplinary topics for this conference:

- The new »global« organization of world's space/communication/exchange and the traditional national and regional identities;
- »Global Balkans« or Balkan perspective to globalization?
- What sort of perception do global political and media elites have of the Balkans? How do the »Balkanist« attitudes adapt to the changes in the global context?
- How does the freedom of movement and communication challenge traditional identifications in the Balkans?
- How does »glocalization« manifest itself in the Balkans?
- The dark side of globalization in the Balkans – transnational criminal and terrorist networks and new criminal mentalities;
- The Balkans, European integration and globalization;
- The Balkan economies in the perspective of EU enlargement – enriching European economic identity or vanishing of Balkan economic »uniqueness«;
- Territories, regions, cities vs. networks and diasporas;
- Regionalization, universalization, globalization, virtualization;
- Globalization and emigration;
- Filters, mediators and translators between »the Balkans« and »the world«;
- Challenges to old political values (rational sovereignty) and challenges to identities;
- Regionalization or encapsulation;
- Globalization and the Balkan youth;
- Balkan debates on globalization;
- Globalization and local cultural institutions;
- Balkan and the global media, Balkan and WWW;
- Balkans and global (symbolic) capital;
- Old identities in new global context;
- Can and should local cultures be preserved?
- Transnational popular cultures – globalization and anti-globalization.