YCIE

annual conference

Y-Conference

EMPIRES

May 21–23, 2027
Yerevan, Armenia

Open Panels

Y-Conference: EMPIRES

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OP 01. Deimperiality and Its Discontents

Panel organizers: David Leupold and Lilit Dabagian

The anthropologist Jeremy Walton's recent formulation of deimperiality has opened a prospective new pathway for rethinking the afterlives of empire beyond the established frameworks of postcolonialism and decoloniality. Rather than positing a clean break with imperial formations, deimperiality invites attention to the contradictions and ambiguous temporalities through which imperial legacies persist. Deimperiality thus raises fundamental questions: Is it a political project, an ethical orientation, or an analytical lens? What does it mean to move beyond empire when imperial inheritances are congealed in language, urban space, institutions, material culture, and everyday life? Rather than assuming a linear transition from imperial pasts to post-imperial futures, we want on this panel examine the ambiguities, contradictions, and unintended consequences that accompany efforts to negotiate imperial inheritances. Deimperial gestures may coexist with renewed imperial imaginaries and/or aggressive form(s) of nationalism, while projects of rupture often reveal the resilience of inherited social, material, and symbolic orders. Bringing together perspectives from the former socialist and broader post-imperial world, the panel examines how deimperiality is enacted, contested, deferred, or reconfigured across different domains of social life. It asks how actors negotiate competing temporalities and imperial legacies through everyday practices and cultural forms, and what epistemic tools are needed to understand the uneven and paradoxical ways empires, their lingering presence and spectral absence, continue to shape the present. In doing so, we invite potential speakers to both develop and critically interrogate deimperiality as an emerging framework for understanding post- and neo-imperial worlds.

OP 03. Singing the Empire: Music and the Sonic Politics of Imperial Belonging

Panel organizers: Ekaterina Ganskaya and Magdalena Marija Meašić

This panel examines music as a primary site through which empires imagine, stage, legitimise, and question the political order. Rather than treating music simply as an addendum to imperial history, it asks how musical genres, institutions, and listening practices contributed to the making of imperial identities and forms of belonging. By bringing together research on both classical and popular genres, from empires' peak in the nineteenth century to its afterlives in the twenty-first, the panel analyses how empires historically constructed their identities through sound. Across different eras, music has provided influential frameworks for representing conquest, civilization, ethnicity, loyalty, and the imperial borderland. For instance, nineteenth-century opera still carries the connotation of the pinnacle imperial form also playing a key role in the national awakening. Soviet mass song transformed collective singing into a tool for affective mobilisation, rendering the political language of the imperial centre into accessible musical forms. The panel explores the relationship between music and empire across Eurasia and beyond, tracing how sonic practices structured hierarchies between centre and periphery. It investigates how ethnic, religious, or national differences were articulated and managed through sound, and how musical institutions contributed to imperial knowledge production. Furthermore, the panel addresses the long afterlives of empire, examining how music continues to illuminate modern dynamics of nostalgia, de-imperialisation, and neo-imperial imaginaries. By focusing on the intersection of music and ideology, this panel offers a critical space for understanding how imperial power is not only enacted through state policy, but heard, felt, and negotiated through artistic production.

OP 05. Navigating Imperial Borderlands

Panel organizer: Aikaterini Lykoudi

This panel invites papers that explore the complex intersections of identity, diplomacy, and minority status within the geopolitical landscape of Russian-Ottoman relations. At the heart of this inquiry lies my research project on the "Karaite Question", a complex historical phenomenon that places this community at the crossroads of imperial administrative policies, shifting nationalisms, and broader regional power dynamics. Building upon this focus, the panel welcomes broader contributions that examine how various minority groups navigated the competing influences of the Russian and Ottoman Empires, seeking to deconstruct the ways in which imperial borderlands were defined, contested, and managed. Submissions from comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives that address the archival and social dimensions of these experiences, including communal legal and political status, the evolution of ethnic and religious identities, the impact of imperial modernization, and the role of minority communities in mediating diplomatic and cultural exchange are encouraged. Through these diverse contributions, the panel aims to illuminate how small, localized communities shaped, and were shaped by, the structural forces of two colliding empires.

OP 09. Images of the Southern Frontier: Central Asia on the Screen of Transforming Empire

Panel organizers: Jan Levchenko and Valérie Pozner

Central Asia was first demonstrated on screen shortly after the advent of cinema — as a subject of ethnographic interest. At the same time with Russia, which controlled the so-called Turkestan Region by that time, a local film industry emerged, for example, in Khiva. However, due to uneven development outside the borders of modern Uzbekistan, cinema of the further Central Asia was discreet as well. The colonial policies of the Russian Empire and, later, the USSR were far from identical, but in terms of the growth of cinema, the results were similar. These included a weak technical and human resources base, dependence on external managing centers, effects of (self)-exoticization, and a bit later the cultivation of distinctiveness in the struggle for identity within the framework of the Soviet national project. The announcing panel is to be dedicated to cinema related to Central Asia — both as a subject of representation, a setting for films and television productions, an institutional platform for film production, and a cultural context that shapes the ideology, politics, content, and style of cinematic output. In this sense, the panel is open to both specialists in the region's cinema and scholars for whom it serves as research material in the fields of cultural anthropology, history, sociology, and political science. The organizers welcome proposals on such topics as the history of Central Asian cinema in a broader context of the Russian Empire, the USSR, as well as neighbouring and/or contesting countries; film analysis, including case studies of specific regional genres (Eastern film, fairy tales, and cinematic epics); institutional reforms of republican/regional cinemas; cinema and Soviet national policy; cinema and (post)imperial multi-ethnicity. The organisers kindly ask the submitters to indicate their main sources / literature and to specify what method(s) / approach(es) will be applied.

OP 10. (Counter)imperial Narratives and Vernacular Religion: The Russian Case

Panel organizer: Alexander Panchenko

Most often, scholars writing about religions and empires concentrate on how imperial elites attempt to establish a unified spiritual, moral, and ritual order over territories, cultures, and ethnic minorities. This approach results in analytical focus on missions, conversions, and administrative networks that enforce imperial religious order or on colonial imaginaries absorbing and transforming indigenous ontologies and ritual practices (see, for example, Etherington 2005; Chidester 2014; Rüpke, Biran & Pines 2024). Historians of religions in the Russian Empire often followed the same pattern discussing particular cases in terms of colonialism and resistance (Geracy & Hodarkovsky 2001; Breyfogle 2005). However, studies of grassroots or vernacular religion in the Russian Empire, USSR, and post-Soviet societies reveal more complex ideological dynamics, where various religious groups or movements can easily and equally adopt, employ, and transform both imperial and counter-imperial narratives of power for their own need. This panel will look at how vernacular religious cultures in Russia from the 18th century to present day supported and resisted specific forms of imperial imagination to create their own spiritual and moral worlds and whether their social and cultural logics can be interpreted within or beyond (post)colonial analytical perspective. We will discuss how political ideas and themes associated with imperial power can be employed by perennial, messianic, apocalyptic, and other forms of religious imagination. The panel is expected to address diverse forms of vernacular religious culture, from “mainstream” confessions officially recognized by imperial and Soviet authorities to underground groups of religious dissidents and post-Soviet new religious movements. It will be also possible to compare political aspects of popular religious imagination with secular mythologies and rituals of the Soviet era.

OP 19. Imperial Visualisation of Empires

Panel organizer: Sergey Troitskiy

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by intense rivalry between empires, the redrawing of spheres of influence, and struggles over the legacy of declining imperial powers (Nguyen 2025; Vogler 2022). Competing empires not only pursued their own ambitions but also adopted and adapted one another's practices (Adelman 2015; Suzuki 2005). Public opinion became an important arena of imperial competition, and satire often proved as influential as political journalism. Satirical images accompanied military and diplomatic conflicts, functioning both as a weapon of information warfare and as a tool of propaganda (Hünig 2004; Norris 2006; Antonova 2024; Kutsenko 2020; Bryant 2008). Cartoonists and satirists across the world responded to international events in newspapers, magazines, posters, and postcards, commenting on both rival empires and colonial territories (Scully, Varnava 2020). Their works shaped a parallel visual history of imperial competition (Douglas 1994; Kemnitz 1973). Empires could appear as triumphant in their own media and as weak or vulnerable in those of others. To convey such messages, artists employed a wide range of visual metaphors, including anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and botanical imagery (Rezvukhina et al. 2023). Recent scholarship has further highlighted the close connections between representations of nature and imperial ideologies (Beattie 2012; Tobin 1996; Mackenzie 1988). This panel invites contributions on the visual representation of empires across the full span of their existence, rather than solely in the years preceding the First World War. We welcome studies of visual strategies used to construct imperial images in both mass-circulation media and personal archives, including diaries, letters, notebooks, sketches, and other materials created by professional and amateur artists alike.

OP 20. When Expertise Crosses Borders: Professionalism and the Afterlives of Empire

Panel organizers: Ekaterina Khodzhaeva, Aryna Dzmitryieva, and Kirill Titaev

Empires leave behind more than borders and political hierarchies. Their institutional legacies persist in systems of professional education, credentials, occupational status, expertise, and the recognition of knowledge. Migration makes these structures particularly visible: professionals crossing borders often discover that knowledge, qualifications, and status acquired in one institutional setting are only partially portable to another.

This open panel explores what happens to professional knowledge, identities, and careers when experts move across post-imperial and transnational spaces. We are particularly interested in how professional capital is transferred, devalued, reconstructed, or transformed through migration, and how these processes reproduce or challenge longer histories of imperial and post-imperial hierarchy.

The panel already brings together research on Russian human rights lawyers in exile, transformations of professional knowledge among Belarusian lawyers abroad, and highly educated Russian-speaking migrants in the Western Balkans. These cases address the portability of professional expertise and credentials, changing professional identities outside national institutions, and the effects of skilled migration on receiving societies.

We invite papers examining professional and expert mobility in other occupational, geographical, or historical contexts. Possible topics include recognition and non-recognition of qualifications; professional devaluation and reprofessionalization; professional identities in exile; transnational professional networks; knowledge transfer; skilled migration and local labor markets; and the relationship between professional mobility and imperial or post-imperial institutional legacies.

The panel welcomes contributions from different disciplines, methodological approaches, professions, and regional contexts, particularly those that use professional mobility to examine broader questions of expertise, institutional continuity, and the afterlives of empire.

OP 21. Re-Ordering Post-Imperial Spaces: Institutional Architectures, Spatial Governance, and Power Dynamics in the Caucasus (1917–1936)

Panel organizer: Tamta Tkhelidze

The collapse of continental empires in the early twentieth century transformed the Caucasus into a contested laboratory of political, spatial, and administrative re-engineering. Between the fall of the Romanov monarchy in 1917 and the dissolution of the Transcaucasian SFSR under the 1936 Soviet Constitution, the region moved through fragile post-imperial arrangements—the Transcaucasian Seim, the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, and an increasingly centralized Soviet federation—each promising self-determination while consolidating new forms of dependency. This trajectory exemplifies what Ronald Suny has called the "self-denying empire" and what Terry Martin identified as the Soviet "affirmative action empire": governance structured around the formal language of national voluntarism while substantively subordinating peripheries to the center.

Yet the vocabulary of empire and colonialism in this period was never the monopoly of the center. Regional actors deployed anti-colonial critique against one another as readily as against Moscow, exposing how such language could be mobilized by any actor, in any direction, to legitimize competing claims to sovereignty. This panel therefore treats imperial and colonial categories not as settled analytical labels but as contested political instruments.

This open panel asks how post-imperial space, statehood, and institutional authority were conceptualized, contested, and re-engineered across the Caucasus during this transitional era—treating space not as a passive backdrop but as an active site of political production. We invite interdisciplinary proposals on:

- **Imperial Continuities & Colonial Vocabularies** — how imperial, colonial, and anti-colonial categories were claimed, contested, and instrumentalized by centers and peripheries alike;
- **Institutional Architectures & Political Experiments** — interim governance bodies, federative models, party-state frictions, and center-periphery conflict (e.g., "national deviationism");
- **Infrastructure & Economic Control** — railway and currency unification, resource extraction, and fiscal centralization as instruments of political subordination;
- **Spatial Governance & Border-Making** — territorial re-demarcation (razmezhevanie), phantom borders, and the status of autonomous entities;
- **Knowledge Production & Epistemic Regimes** — language policy, administrative cartography, and ideological narratives of space.

By positioning the Caucasus as a critical site of imperial re-alignment, the panel fosters comparative dialogue on the structural legacies of empire and the realities of early Soviet state-building.

OP 22. Post-Imperial Professionals on the Move

Panel organizers: Julia Lerner and Ted Gerber

This panel foregrounds professionals as important actors and subjects of modern empires and their post-imperial transformations. Historians of empire have shown how imperial expansion was intertwined with the production, circulation and institutionalization of professional knowledge and expertise, and how professional fields such as medicine, engineering and law became embedded in the making of imperial social orders. The studies suggest that professionals not only serve but participate in the making of imperial relations and attitudes. Doctors, lawyers, scientists, journalists, engineers and other occupational elites are not merely producers or carriers of knowledge. Professional socialization, ethos and practices organize social relations, foster universalist forms of inclusion while producing and legitimizing hierarchies, shape relationships to political authority, and cultivate particular habitus, identities and dispositions. What happens to such professional identities when imperial and national political orders are jointly transformed? How do professionals negotiate the tension between universalist professional identities and increasingly nationalized, ethnicized, polarized and violent contexts? Professionals who migrate within and across such post-imperial contexts represent are a particularly suitable object of research addressing these questions because they often personally experience challenges and opportunities relating to precisely such tensions between universalist and nationalist ethos and attitudes. The panel therefore invites contributions examining professionals who have migrated across and within Eurasian, post-Soviet and other post-imperial contexts. It welcomes studies focused solely on professional migrants or work also on non-migrant professionals who also experience profound transformations of their professional, cultural, and political environments.

OP 29. The (After)life of the Soviet Arctic Empire

Panel organizer: Nikolai Vakhtin

Much of what social researchers observe today in the Far North of Russia is rooted in the Soviet past. These temporal connections are evident not only in urban layouts, the siting of industrial facilities, or infrastructure (whether operational or abandoned), but also in social relations, stereotypes, and expectations of the population. This session is dedicated to examining the "traces of the past in the present" (regardless of when that "past" is thought to have begun): to exploring the continuity of time wherein the material and social aspects of the past continue to shape our everyday lives. “In a sense we are all historians nowadays” (Robin George Collingwood); so preference will be given to presentations based on archival materials or fieldwork from previous years.

OP 33. Epics and Epic Heroes for Empires: Imperial Management through Epic Traditions in Modern Eurasia

Panel organizer: Takehiro Okabe

This panel invites papers examining the roles of epics and epic heroes—including performers, authors, collectors, and others involved in their creation and transmission—in the making, legitimization, management, and destabilization of empires in modern Eurasia. Folklore and epics traditions became important resources for building nations and nation-states. Yet, many epics emerged and circulated within imperial settings, generating tensions between imperial authorities, national movements, and post-imperial states over their ownership, interpretation, and political meaning. Empires could appropriate, institutionalize, reinterpret, and promote epics traditions to manage cultural difference, legitimize imperial rule, and influence neighboring societies. These interventions often survived the empires themselves, continuing to shape post-imperial identities and political conflicts. The Kalevala illustrates these dynamics. Since the nineteenth century, it has been a central symbol of Finnish national identity. Yet the Soviet Union and Russia have also claimed the epic, as many of its poems were collected from Finnish and Karelian communities in the Finnish-Russian borderlands. More recently, Karelian actors have challenged Finnish ownership, arguing that the tradition originated among Karelian performers. The resulting controversy demonstrates how epic traditions can become sites where imperial legacies, national identities, indigenous claims, and contemporary geopolitics intersect. Comparable struggles surround the Armenian Daredevils of Sassoun, Buryat Geser, Tatar Idegei, and Persian Shahnameh. The panel approaches epics not merely as repositories of national memory, but as sites and instruments of imperial power. We ask how empires nurtured, classified, appropriated, and manipulated epic traditions; how imperial, national, and non-state actors contested their ownership and meaning; and how these interventions continue to shape cultural and political life after empire.

OP 38. If You Were Destined to Be Born in the Empire: 'The Centre' as Seen from the Arctic

Panel organizer: Elena Liarskaya

Those who live in the Far North of Russia have lived through at least two empires: the Russian and the Soviet. In both cases, they remained on the periphery. Their marginal position presupposes a specific view of the Centre, their relationship with it, as well as a specific perception of how they themselves may be viewed from the Centre. This view of the Empire from the North has never been static and has not only changed, but also entailed the formation and shift of various formal and informal practices in their relations with the Centre and its representatives. While the Centre’s view of the "northern periphery" has become a subject of study, the numerous variations of the Northern perspective require further exploration and conceptualization. In this section, we will compare and summarize specific examples collected over the past few years on Russia's northern (Arctic) peripheries. Preference will be given to presentations based on recent fieldwork materials.

OP 39. Peripheral Regimes: Property, Knowledge, and Accumulation in the Russian Empire

Panel organizer: Luka Nakhutsrishvili

This panel takes as its object what we tentatively call peripheral regimes — the arrangements of property, and economic, intellectual, or other forms of value that took shape not simply as variants of a metropolitan norm extended outward, but as configurations specific to the conditions of the different peripheries of the Russian Empire in the long nineteenth century: overlapping jurisdictions and uneven administrative reach; negotiations between metropolitan and local actors; shifting frontiers of extraction, or the circulation of value between global centres, the metropole of a "peripheral empire", and its borderlands, themselves characterized by various modes and degrees of peripherality. We ask what made such regimes peripheral in kind rather than merely in location: how they were negotiated between groups with different ethnic affiliations and national commitments, and between metropolitan and local actors and institutions; how they travelled toward the centre as often as outward from it; what becomes visible when we take them, rather than metropolitan law or policy, as the primary object of analysis; and how might peripherality itself be related to, or distinguished from, the question of coloniality? We expect individual cases to provide qualitatively different answers to any of these questions, depending on the domain, region, or scale of inquiry. We welcome papers addressing peripheral regimes of property, extraction, accumulation, economic and intellectual production and circulation across different borderlands of the Russian Empire, and particularly encourage comparative approaches.

OP 41. Empire in the Museum: Curating Imperial Pasts after Empire

Panel organizer: Svetlana Gorshenina

Museums did not merely represent empires; they served as infrastructures of imperial knowledge and power. By collecting objects and classifying and visualizing territories and peoples, they constructed the past and naturalized imperial hierarchies through systems of knowledge. Collections, categories, museum architecture, display practices, photographs, maps, and labels produced fields of visibility and silence. These material and epistemic structures outlived the empires that created them: institutional inertia determines what may be preserved, named, and displayed. This panel examines the post-imperial museum not as a simple shift from an imperial to a national narrative, but as a space of conflict and negotiation between inherited regimes of knowledge and new politics of history. It welcomes contributions on the formation, displacement, and reclassification of collections; regimes of ownership and attribution; exhibition architecture and spatial organization; labels, photographs, maps, dioramas, reconstructions, and digital technologies; curatorial choices and institutional constraints. The panel foregrounds the politicization of museums. Imperial histories may be incorporated into national genealogies, condemned as histories of conquest and violence, selectively appropriated, aestheticized, silenced, or excluded. The rejection of recent imperial pasts may coexist with nostalgia for ancient empires, recast as prestigious origins of the nation. Decolonizing the museum therefore cannot be reduced to replacing one narrative with another: national museums may contest empire while continuing to reproduce its categories, visual regimes, and professional practices. Focusing on the Caucasus and Central Asia while inviting broader comparisons, the panel asks how museums reproduce, transform, or overcome imperial forms within post-imperial projects of sovereignty, memory, belonging, and historical justice.

OP 42. Empire of Heritage: Nationalizing the Past in the Soviet Union

Panel organizer: Ekaterina Melnikova

Heritage governance provides a revealing lens on the relationship between imperial power and national difference. The Soviet heritage regime sought to establish common criteria for identifying, classifying and protecting historically valuable objects across the USSR (Bendix et al. 2013, Gantner, Geering 2021, Geering 2019, Donovan 2019, Deschepper 2024; Melnikova 2026). Yet these criteria were not simply implemented from the center. In national republics and regions, state institutions, experts, museums, local historians and civic actors appropriated, translated and contested them, producing particular claims about what pasts were worth preserving and representing.

This panel approaches heritage-making as a process of nationalization of the past. We examine how nationally specific regimes of value emerged within, rather than simply outside, Soviet institutions and practices. How did objects, sites, landscapes and narratives acquire the status of "national heritage"? Who gained the authority to define them as such? How were Union-wide, republican, regional and local understandings of historical value negotiated, and where did they conflict or remain disconnected?

We invite papers examining these processes across institutional and grassroots settings: from republican heritage agencies, expert communities and monument lists to museums, restoration, archaeology and tourism, as well as local history initiatives and campaigns to protect particular places. We are particularly interested in cases that reveal not only resistance to central policies, but also their appropriation and transformation by actors operating within Soviet institutional frameworks.

The panel thus shifts attention from the familiar question of how Soviet power homogenized the past to how its universalizing heritage regime simultaneously enabled the production of nationally differentiated pasts. We propose that heritage offers a productive perspective on imperial governance precisely because it reveals how systems of power can not only regulate difference, but also make it legible, material and claimable.

Without setting strict chronological boundaries, we invite contributions ranging from the early Soviet period to perestroika and especially welcome comparisons across regions or periods and analyses of how heritage-making practices evolved over time.

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OP 43. Imperial Connections, Contested Landscapes

Panel organizers: Abigail Karas and Laurent Dissard

Imperial formations relied on material and technical systems such as roads, railways, dams, grids, planned cities, and practices of survey, measurement, and expertise, which shaped territorial relations and everyday life (Hélène Blais). These systems frequently outlive the political orders that produced them. Embedded in landscapes, institutions, and routines, they continue to organize mobility and immobility, visibility and erasure, prosperity and dispossession. Yet infrastructure is not simply an imperial residue. New projects reactivate, bypass, repair, submerge, or repurpose inherited networks, creating relations that exceed a linear passage from empire to nation-state. Building on scholarship that understands infrastructure as imperial debris (Ann Laura Stoler), as material arrangements enabling circulation and collective life (Brian Larkin), as networks sustained through people themselves (AbdouMaliq Simone), as a site of power and struggle (Deborah Cowen), and as a medium of imperial connection and governance (Rebecca Bryant), this panel approaches connectivity as an uneven and contested historical process rather than a self-evident good. Who and what is connected, at whose expense, and who is displaced, stranded, or rendered peripheral? How do infrastructures preserve imperial geographies while producing new centres, dependencies, and alignments? How are their meanings renegotiated through planning, heritage-making, memory, maintenance, breakdown, and everyday use? When do infrastructures become archives through which disavowed histories can be recovered or contested? We invite historical and ethnographic papers on transport, energy, water, urban planning, architecture, communications, and heritage across the Caucasus and Eurasia and in comparative perspective. Contributions may move from built environments and local landscapes to transregional corridors. By considering processes of interruption, ruination, adaptation, and refusal, alongside connection, the panel explores how infrastructures carry imperial relations forward, transform them, and make them contestable.

OP 47. Touching the Ground: Infrastructure, Rule, and the Physical Spaces of Crypto

Panel organizers: Olga Bychkova and Lidia Yatluk

Crypto-organizations (DAOs, protocol communities, foundations) are extensively studied as business models and governance formats. Across this literature they appear as bodiless entities in the cloud. Yet they convene mass in-person events, run temporary co-livings – popup cities and hacker houses, and build permanent hubs: Network School in Kazakhstan; Próspera in Honduras. Proponents describe these places through concepts of network state, charter city and free city. The emergence of such places was widely criticized in the media as a vehicle of neocolonialism or simply a new channel of money laundering. However, studies of this phenomenon are still rare. It is on the ground, not in the cloud, that questions of infrastructure and imperial afterlives arise at all. The panel asks one question from two ends. What do these organizations build when they land, and who is thereby governed, since a site brings with it people the organization did not enroll? The physical configuration decides who is drawn in, on what terms and at whose cost. Firms hold those they govern by contract, states by citizenship, associations by membership; these organizations hold them by none of these, and the chartered enclave is one available answer. Whether this is an imperial form, a rethinking of the nation-state, or else is what papers might argue. We propose four layers of analysis.

- Political: what crypto-libertarian and crypto-communalist ideologies claim once grounded, and what they practice.
- Infrastructural: which layers arriving organizations choose to build, and which they ignore.
- Physical and digital: how digitally native organizations structure space, and how sites reshape their technologies.
- Financial: which flows events and hubs create, who is paid, and whether public-goods claims hold. We welcome papers on popup cities, hacker houses and permanent hubs, and on the flows they generate.

OP 52. Empires at the Summit: What Mountain Areas Can Tell Us About the Empires That Studied, Named, or 'Conquered' Them?

Panel organizer: Francesco Stuffer

This panel aims to explore how the historical dynamics of Empires and mountain spaces interact. Since the construction of an imaginary related to mountain spaces between the XVIIIth and the XIXth century, this natural element acquired new meanings. As mountains became a scientific and artistic object, their rediscovery also triggered profound political and social implications, from the development of mountaineering practices to the appropriation of these spaces from political actors. The correlation between these phenomena is particularly interesting in imperial contests, where the interactions between actors and the activities related to the mountains multiply – their ascent (or “conquest”), the (re)naming of summits by officials or alpinists, and the development of a specific imaginary around it, often charged with deep cultural and political meaning.

Studies about the political use of the mountain areas have been conducted primarily using national lenses and focusing on the European Alpine space – the intention of this panel is to expand the scope both thematically and geographically, focusing on the actual research by giving more importance to the imperial framework in exploring the dynamics of politicization of mountain areas. On the other hand, research that focuses on Empires could benefit from a regard coming from these peculiar spaces, allowing it to see how in the high regions cooperation or competition between empires or imperial allegiances confirm or confute themselves, or how they recompose when imperial actors collapse or transform.

With the Ararat looking in the foreground, a mountain that carries a heavy symbolism and that is today at the very centre of questions that mix national, imperial, political, and mountain imagery, this panel welcomes contributions from social sciences and humanities reflecting on the relation between summits and empires.

OP 54. Age of Sexual Discovery: Resisting the Erotization of Imperial Literature

Panel organizer: Elena Petrova-Libgober

Within the scholarly dialogue on colonial expansion, one could see a consensus that those who are deemed to be within the scope of imperial geographic extension are also subjected to sexualization. The "Othering" of women who belong to the colonized nations and representing them as creatures of sexual passion, juxtaposed with the “European” cold reserve, was analyzed by Reina Lewis, Rana Kabbani, Meyda Yegenoglu, Edward Said, Ulrike Brunotte, Jeffrey Cass, among others. At the same time, Stephanie Sandler, Joe Andrew, Susan Layton, and Katya Hokanson have explored the related dynamics in the context of the Russian Empire. The merging of the geographical “discovery” with sexual adventure became a cliché that promoted the objectification of the “Others” within the public agenda of the Empire. This panel proposes to explore narratives where the notion of sexual and geographical expansion is rewritten, mocked, and subverted. We propose reading the reorientation of cultural stereotypes, literary clichés, and the refusal to follow the desires of the males who represent the metropole as acts of active resistance to colonization, and as central to this panel. We call on presenters to highlight the overlooked texts that show the ways “Othered” women, instead of demonstrating unlimited sensual passion towards the agents of Imperial domination, resist the expansion by not participating in intercourse with the invader; subverting Orientalist and gender stereotypes; refusing to submit to Imperial dominance; and practicing other forms of subversion of the clichés. We welcome papers addressing representations of women subjected to Russian imperial expansion in the Caucasus, Ukraine, Poland, Bessarabia, Siberia, the Balkans, Lithuania, and other imperial borderlands.

OP 57. Lives Across Political Worlds: Belonging through Times of Change

Panel organizers: Weronika Zmiejewski and Tamar Haupt-Khutsishvili

Belonging can persist, shift, or acquire new meanings as people move across borders and as social and political conditions change. Migration, war, and the dissolution of states and empires may profoundly alter people's relationships to places and communities. Yet when traced through individual and family lives, such changes do not always correspond to historical and political boundaries.

Taking biography as a point of departure allows us to follow belonging across such divides. It draws attention to how people experience social and political change over the course of their lives. Following Alisse Waterston's notion of "intimate ethnography" (2019), individual lives can be read in relation to the larger historical worlds of which they are part, without reducing one to the other. Political orders may shape, recognize, regulate, or deny belonging without determining it.

The panel brings this approach to the Caucasus and its entangled imperial histories. We invite contributions that explore how historical and political processes unfold through individual lives. We are particularly interested in the temporalities of belonging: how belonging is lived and understood over time, and how relationships to political worlds are carried across generations and acquire new meanings under changed conditions. What can a biographical perspective reveal about the persistence, disappearance, and re-emergence of imperial worlds?

OP 58. Science Communication in a (Post-)Imperial World: Historical and Contemporary Accounts

Panel organizers: Natalia A. Lyapugina and Vladislava Bobrova

This panel explores science communication in a (post-)imperial world, bringing together historical and contemporary perspectives on the relationship between knowledge, power, and publics. It addresses empires and their afterlives in science communication practices and considers how decolonial approaches can contribute to more plural and reflexive forms of communicating science.

A growing body of scholarship shows that empires shaped infrastructures of scientific knowledge production and circulation (Goss, Chakrabarti). By treating colonies as sources of data and sites of experimentation while marginalizing non-Western knowledge, imperial systems contributed to epistemic injustice (Fricker). They also constructed non-Western publics as passive recipients of expertise, reproducing assumptions later embedded in early science communication models of a single uninformed public, critically challenged within science and technology studies (e.g. Wynne). Contemporary science communication can continue to reproduce imperial hierarchies by privileging Western institutions, languages, and discoveries. However, the shift from the deficit model and the public understanding of science (PUS) toward dialogue, participation, and public engagement with science (PES) (Bucchi, Trench), has nevertheless opened up space for the "decolonization of science communication" (Guevara), including novel practices of communication and research. At the same time, past and present practices of science communication and knowledge production require analytical tools that move beyond reductionist accounts, such as the "deficit vs dialogue" approach, to study them within the context of broader societal processes while accounting for their complexity.

We invite contributions from STS, philosophy, history, communication, and the social sciences to explore questions such as:

- How have science communication practices historically reproduced or challenged imperial power relations?
- How can dialogue, participation, and public engagement contribute to more plural and decolonial forms of communicating science?
- What methodological and conceptual approaches from the social sciences and humanities can capture the complexity of science communication in (post-)imperial contexts?

OP 59. The Imperialism of the Sciences: Fields of Expansion

Panel organizers: Lada Shipovalova and Karen Mirzoev

This panel treats disciplinary boundaries not as natural units, but as effects of an imperial technique (annexation, protectorate, indirect rule) used to conquer neighbouring fields and police dissent within. A discipline rarely represents its expansion as conquest: it arrives as explanation or a more precise method, and gradually displaces the language of description it replaces. Psychology annexes history, politics, religion; sociology annexes taste, the body, self-knowledge; economics annexes the family, crime, law; neuroscience annexes morality and culture. The same technique works inward: behaviorism's claim on cognition, or quantitative sociology's claim on qualitative, repeat the imperial gesture, in miniature. This competition for interpretive authority is a recurring plot of social theory. Weber's value-spheres lay ground for a sociology of hidden motives; Bourdieu's theory of the scientific field as a struggle for symbolic capital is itself a sociological conquest of religion, taste, photography, sport. Gieryn's boundary-work names the same mechanism as a feature of science, entangled with empire as a historical formation through which power and knowledge were hegemonized, but also contested: Gigerenzer shows probability growing out of state and colonial administration; Tilley shows colonial Africa used as a laboratory; Steinmetz and Go trace how sociology was shaped by empire. We invite papers on the rhetoric of disciplinary expansion as boundary-work; on empire as a condition of scientific method, including imperial knowledge production and digital regimes of knowledge; on internal imperialism, schools claiming final authority within their own science; and on resistance to colonization (anti-psychologism, anti-psychiatry).

OP 61. Empire in the Machine? Digital Dependence, Sovereignty, and Agency in Eurasia

Panel organizer: Yousie Sophie-Emma Kim

The infrastructure, platforms, and technical standards underpinning contemporary digital life can produce transnational dependencies and asymmetric power relations. These issues have fueled debates around dependence, digital empire, neocolonialism, and sovereignty. Governments across Eurasia have long relied on foreign-supplied digital and telecommunications hardware and services, as well as networks built, financed, or operated with foreign involvement. While many of these relationships are asymmetric, states can adapt imported technologies for domestic purposes such as state-building and surveillance, negotiate with suppliers, regulate foreign technologies, and require data localization. To better understand the conditions and limits of this agency, this panel asks whether and under what conditions technological dependence produces imperial relations and how states and other actors contest, negotiate, reshape, or resist them. The panel welcomes papers on digital dependence and sovereignty across the Caucasus, Central Asia, and broader Eurasia, including cyberspace governance, data governance, digital platforms, surveillance, telecommunications, and technical standards. Papers that challenge imperial frameworks or help distinguish technological dependence from political subordination are also encouraged.

OP 65. After Byzantium: Imperial Inheritance, Loyalty, and Contestation

Panel organizer: Andrei Papin

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 made Byzantine heritage a newly contested political resource. Dynastic claims, ecclesiastical networks, intellectual expertise, ceremonial forms, and symbolic resources could strengthen emerging imperial orders, while the same trans-imperial connections could sustain rival claims and provoke suspicions of betrayal. Byzantine heritage therefore had to be selectively appropriated, transformed, and politically managed rather than merely claimed. The panel explores this double-edged dynamic across Muscovite, Ottoman, and other post-Byzantine settings. Mehmed II's selective use of Greek intellectuals and Orthodox ecclesiastical institutions, for example, demonstrates how resources inherited from the conquered empire could become instruments of a new imperial order. In Muscovy, Byzantine ceremonial and symbolic forms enhanced claims to imperial dignity, while ties to the Greek world could also expose individuals to accusations of divided loyalty or treason. Rather than treating Byzantine legacy primarily as a question of succession or cultural continuity, the panel examines the political management of inherited resources whose usefulness was inseparable from their potentially trans-imperial character. We ask how post-Byzantine states converted people, practices, symbols, and networks associated with Byzantium into resources of legitimate rule while containing the alternative loyalties those same connections could sustain. The panel welcomes papers on political loyalty, dynastic claims, ecclesiastical networks, migration, expertise, ritual, and symbolic appropriation across the post-Byzantine world.

OP 66. Post-Soviet Transitions as (Per)mutations of Empire: Recollection and Prefiguration in Arts and Media

Panel organizer: Ksenia Robbe

Studies of empire have seldom focused on the post-Soviet 'transitions' as periods significant for understanding imperial transformations in the making, as a complex of old structures persisting and new emerging. Such an understanding requires scrutiny of not only what happened but also how change was imagined, experienced, and made sense of. Questions regarding imperialism asked about the political transformations of the 1990s have typically engaged with macro-level change while decolonial approaches have tended to treat the transitions as a tragic 'void' (Tlostanova 2017), in contrast to the hopeful narratives of democratic change. Whether emplotting transitions in romantic or tragic modes (White 1973), such accounts miss not only the complexity of post-Soviet transformations but also their role as resources for (re)imagining post-imperial transformation and its failures. This panel examines narratives and representations of the Russian/Soviet imperial structures that zoom in on the late 1980s and 1990s experiences – lived, recollected, and projected. Such representations may be diagnosing the enduring presence of the empire and its disavowed vestiges, depicting resistance or accommodation, revealing clashes between empires, or imagining how imperiality can be reckoned with. The discussion aims to focus on the interplay between prospective and retrospective imaginations as mediated by archives and memories of transformation. 'Prefiguration' is thereby considered as inhering in both past imaginations of how the present may unfold and in remembering past futures (Rigney 2024). This approach regards the post-Soviet transformations not simply as a historical threshold but a time of reconfiguration with a longue durée (Fürst et al 2025) that produces memories and impinges on the present, e.g. through crisis imaginaries (Robbe 2023). The panel invites contributions that engage with fiction and non-fiction, film, visual and performing arts, historiography and archiving.

OP 68. Fieldwork and Empire: Producing Knowledge, Negotiating Authority, and Representing Communities

Panel organizer: Mare Kõiva

The panel explores how knowledge is produced through fieldwork in imperial and post-imperial contexts. It examines relationships between researchers, local experts, minority communities, and academic institutions, focusing on the ways authority, legitimacy, and representation are negotiated in the creation of ethnographic, folkloristic, and historical knowledge. Drawing on diverse theoretical approaches, we explore how local and community-based knowledge is transformed into scholarly knowledge and examine the roles played by imperial structures, academic institutions, archives, and fieldwork practices in this process. How have empires, research institutions, and scholarly networks shaped the collection, interpretation, and circulation of knowledge? What effects has fieldwork had on the communities being studied, on their identities, and on processes of cultural change? How archival materials, incl. photographs, films, linguistic records, and field notes continue to influence contemporary understandings of the past? Possible topics include also, but are not limited to:

- Local experts and knowledge holders in fieldwork;
- Translation and mediation. Archives as instruments of authority and power;
- Ethics of fieldwork and representation;
- Restitution and the return of knowledge to communities;
- Digital decolonisation and new forms of access to cultural heritage.

The panel welcomes contributions from folklore studies, anthropology, ethnology, history, linguistics, religious studies, media studies, heritage studies, and related disciplines.

OP 69. The Afterlife of Victory: Military Imaginations of the Post-Imperial Spaces

Panel organizer: Arseniy Kumankov

What happens to military victories when empires disappear? The dissolution of the USSR did not bring an end to the political lives of the wars through which the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union had constituted their political spaces. Military campaigns, heroic figures, victories and defeats, and commemorative rituals continued to circulate. They became resources for competing projects of nation-building, political legitimation, and imperial revival. This panel explores victory as an imperial afterlife – a mechanism through which the political and cultural legacies of empire are reproduced long after the formal disappearance of imperial institutions. We are particularly interested in tracing what happens when the military heritage of one empire is incorporated into another empire's political mythology, and in asking whether military memories sustain political cultures and enforce imperial imagination.

In post-imperial spaces, the same conflict can be cast as liberation, occupation, collective sacrifice, or national pride. These contradictory narratives produce different visions of the region's history and political self-identifications – or become instruments of renewed hierarchy and domination. The panel also invites attention to the material infrastructures of military memory: museums, monuments, and memorial complexes. We are equally interested in how victory is discussed in art, including in film, where cinematic and artistic representations often do the work of rehabilitating imperial wars, staging heroic sacrifice, or contesting official memory. These processes are not confined to Russia. We therefore welcome cases from Ottoman, Habsburg, British, French, and other post-imperial contexts, alongside post-Soviet ones. We welcome contributions that investigate, among other questions:

- How do cults of victory function as post-imperial legitimation, and how are imperial wars rehabilitated into contemporary narratives?
- What happens when former imperial wars are reinterpreted within new national projects, and how do different post-imperial states use shared military memory differently?
- Can the recovery or rejection of imperial military histories contribute to de-imperialization and decolonization?
- How is victory represented in art, film, and material culture, and what role do these representations play in sustaining or contesting imperial memory?
- How can we study the relation between memory and imperial structure – methodologically and theoretically – beyond individual case studies?

OP 70. European Neighbourhood Policy and Domestic Politics in the Eastern Partnership: Reflections and Perspectives

Panel organizer: Iurii Agafonov

The panel aims to critically examine the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) by reflecting on its achievements, challenges, and the shifting political, economic, and geopolitical dynamics in the European neighbourhood. In 2027, as the ENP marks its 23rd anniversary, the discussion will explore its transformative impact on partner countries, the role of domestic actors in fostering political change, the influence of international factors, its limitations, and the implications of new EU strategies in the context of changing geopolitical realities. The discussion will also address these dynamics in the context of Armenia's potential application for EU membership.

The panel also examines the ENP and the Eastern Partnership in the context of the political legacies of empire and their continuing influence on contemporary politics. The political trajectories of Eastern Partnership countries remain shaped by the legacies of the Russian and Soviet empires, competing spheres of influence, contested borders, and competing visions of regional order. The panel invites contributions that examine how these legacies interact with domestic political processes, foreign policy choices, and relations with the EU and other external actors.

The panel welcomes contributions from researchers whose research engages with the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership, European integration, domestic and foreign policy in the EU's eastern neighbourhood, and the broader political and geopolitical dynamics shaping the region.

OP 72. Empires in the Age of Their Mechanical Reproducibility

Panel organizers: Maria Gourieva and Friedrich Tietjen

Empires need images to generate their stories of origin, to present themselves as united and homogeneous and to paper over any cracks and inconsistencies that make them appear as heterogeneous and full of contradictions. For these images repetitive iconographies are often used, sometimes borrowed from preceding empires: idealized portraits, heroic animals such as lions and eagles or heraldic symbols. And the images are often mass produced - think for instance of coins, which Walter Benjamin cites among the earliest forms of mechanical reproduction. And to stay with the coins, these images are often used with media that are essential for everyday life of virtually all the population; after the coins, later media were the illustrated press and postage stamps, portrait photography, posters, ID's, schoolbooks, newspapers, radio, and TV, all becoming apparatuses for producing a unified imperial image that stages cohesion. At the same time however, these mass produced images are among the empires' vulnerabilities. Because they are everywhere, and everyone knows them, accidents, unauthorized applications and outright satire can have much impact, rendering the intended message into its opposite.

This panel invites papers on the visual technologies through which empires (im)materialize and stabilize – or are destabilized. What role do the varying and changing means of distributing, displaying or otherwise using these images play within the infrastructure of empires? Which iconographies are common to empires and how do they persist across changes of medium and period? Through which media and objects, and under what state privileges, do such images circulate? How does mechanical, and later industrial, reproduction change the scale, speed, or authority of imperial imagery? What happens when this apparatus is inherited, repurposed, or resisted? How can the images and media be productively misused and undermine an empire with its own visual means, and how is this misuse persecuted? We welcome papers from visual and material culture studies, photography and media studies, and the history of technology, addressing any imperial formation or period.

OP 73. Jewish Afterlives of Empire: Belonging, Mobility, and Memory in Imperial Borderlands

Panel organizers: Yulia Oreshina and Giorgi Zazunishvili

What happens to Jewish lives and communities when empires disappear? The dissolution of the empire is often narrated as a transition from imperial rule to the nation-state, yet political and social transformations rarely constitute a clear rupture. This panel explores the Jewish afterlives of empire by examining how belonging, mobility, political agency, and collective memory were transformed as imperial spaces were reorganized along national lines—and how imperial formations continued to shape the worlds that followed.

Building on Miroslav Hroch and Rogers Brubaker's approaches to nationalization and political belonging, Ann Laura Stoler's work on the durability of imperial formations, and Omer Bartov's concept of "shatterzones," the panel asks what persisted beyond the formal end of empire. Jewish communities offer a particularly revealing perspective on this question: their histories often crossed political and territorial boundaries, connecting imperial and national spaces through migration, family, commerce, religious institutions, and cultural networks.

We are particularly interested in imperial borderlands as spaces where political orders, identities, and territorial boundaries overlapped, fractured, and endured beyond their formal historical contexts. How did Jewish communities negotiate the transition from imperial subjects to national minorities or other forms of political belonging? How did changing borders reshape Jewish mobility and transregional connections? Which imperial institutions, categories, and practices survived, and how were they appropriated, contested, or transformed? How have imperial pasts been remembered and mobilized in post-imperial societies? And how did Jewish actors themselves participate in negotiating and remaking the worlds that followed the empire?

The panel welcomes historically grounded and comparative contributions examining Jewish communities and actors across imperial and post-imperial contexts, with particular attention to nationalization, de-imperialization, mobility, minority agency, and memory.

OP 79. Imperial Mobilities and Immobilities in Geographical and Social Spaces: Lessons of Eurasia

Panel organizers: Laure Delcour, Caroline Dufy, and Olga Gille-Belova

In international relations, the concept of empire has long been overlooked, as the political project of IR, is to produce knowledge in order to control and maintain dominance over peripheral societies and territories. Various schools of thought have contributed to this reflection. The ongoing imperialistic turn in IR seeks to address this gap. Other approaches have also drawn on these frameworks for theoretical inquiry, such as border studies, security studies, or world-systems theories which examine forms of domination through the construction of economic and commercial relations between centers, peripheries, and semi-peripheries. More recently, the economic geography of communications and trade networks has expanded this perspective.

This panel call aligns with this approach. It aims to explore the relationship between empire, borders, and territory by examining mobilities—not only of people but also of capital, goods, techniques, knowledge, and ideas. In some cases, these mobilities may be accelerated or, conversely, slowed. This line of research will give significant space to geography, seeking to distinguish what is mobile from what is not, according to which criteria, and which discourses of legitimization underpin them. The panel thus aims to help understand the forms of sovereignty associated with imperial structures by showing how mobilities contribute to strengthening control over territory. It may therefore address trade, migration, and other related phenomena such as the spread of technologies and innovations.

Several themes may emerge from this exploration: first, the channels of circulation and their forms, including both transportation and the technologies that enable mobility. A second focus will be placed on actors' strategies and the narratives that underpin these mobilities. Finally, a third theme may address the production of hierarchies with peripheries and the public policies that sustain them.

OP 81. Leisure Across Imperial Transformations: Space, Hierarchy, and Everyday Life

Panel organizers: Elizaveta Zhdankova and Nataliya Puchenkina

The collapse of empires, revolutions, decolonization, and shifting borders can redraw political maps overnight, yet the spaces and practices of everyday life change more slowly. Successor regimes inherit resorts, theatres, cinemas, museums, parks, entertainment venues, and tourist routes, together with their infrastructure, commercial models, professional practices, and audience habits. Political rupture thus coexists with material and everyday continuity: older forms of leisure persist while taking on new functions and political meanings. Yet the remaking of leisure goes beyond resignifying what is inherited. New cinemas, clubs, museums, stadiums, resorts, and itineraries expand the geography of recreation. They create ways to regulate free time, consumption, and everyday conduct, becoming instruments for claiming space, materially as well as symbolically. Electrification, cinema, museum networks, tourism, and organized rest serve as markers of “modernity” and civilization: their spread integrates peripheries into a common cultural space, but also reinforces hierarchies between centers imagined as sources of “modernity” and peripheries positioned as its recipients. Leisure can thus bind heterogeneous territories into a shared space, yet produce and reinforce differences within it. Who gains access to the infrastructure of modern leisure, and who is excluded? How do class, ethnicity, gender, and spatial hierarchy shape access to resorts, parks, museums, cinemas, or tourist routes? How do new borders reshape patterns of rest and mobility? How are normative models of leisure used to standardize diverse populations - and how do local actors negotiate, transform, circumvent, or reject them? Comparing imperial and post-imperial transitions, the panel asks two interconnected questions: how are inherited practices and spaces of leisure reassembled within new political orders, and under what conditions does this process acquire a distinctly imperial character?

OP 82. The Imperial Gaze: Visual Media and Cultural Memory

Panel organizer: Olga Blackledge

Visual media have long functioned as a primary instrument for constructing, maintaining, and contesting imperial power. From fine arts, colonial photography, and maps to contemporary prestige television, news media, and digital games, visual representation does not merely reflect imperial structures—it actively produces the ideological frameworks that make empire imaginable, legible, and justifiable. This panel will examine the visual construction of empire across different historical epochs, mediums, and geopolitical sites. By analyzing how visual texts construct geographic space, categorize subaltern subjects, and romanticize or sanitize imperial expansion, this panel will attempt to trace aesthetic strategies of colonial power. The panel will also potentially address decolonial media interventions that dismantle imperial structures of representation. Among the questions this panel would be interested to address are:

- What are the strategies employed by imperial entities in their visual construction and reproduction?
- How do visual media translate imperial ideologies into popular media products?
- How does mediated empire becomes cultural memory?

OP 83. Civil Wars and Power Struggles in Imperial and Post-Imperial Russia

Panel organizer: Boris Kolonitskii and Naira Sahakyan

World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the armed conflicts that followed the collapse of the Russian Empire had profound consequences for the political trajectories, historiographies, and memory politics of Russia and its former imperial borderlands. Rather than a single confrontation between the Bolsheviks and their opponents, these conflicts involved multiple and overlapping struggles among political, social, religious, and ethnic groups, as well as competing projects for the reorganization, dissolution, or reconstruction of imperial and national political orders.

Recent scholarship has challenged interpretations focused primarily on the center and emphasized the importance of the imperial periphery. Some scholars have characterized the revolution in the borderlands as “anti-colonial” (J. Sanborn) or the emerging Soviet state as an “anti-imperial empire” (I. Gerasimov, M. Mogilner, A. Semenov). M. Buttino, for example, has described the upheavals in Central Asia as a “colonial revolution,” while S. N. Abashin has questioned such interpretations by emphasizing conflicts within, rather than simply between, ethnic and religious communities. J. Smele has likewise highlighted the multiplicity and uneven chronology of civil wars across the former Russian Empire between 1916 and 1926.

Other scholars have examined national projects, Bolshevik ideology, alliances between Bolsheviks and local nationalists, and the role of pre-revolutionary specialists in implementing Soviet policies. Yet the relationship between the dynamics of civil war and the emergence of new political languages and state-building practices remains insufficiently explored.

This panel examines how civil war and political struggles shaped competing understandings of nation, empire, class, religion, and political legitimacy. It asks how actors adapted their political projects and language to conditions of armed conflict and how national, imperial, and socialist projects interacted with one another. Particular attention is given to the widespread influence of socialist political language, which provided a common vocabulary through which diverse projects—including national liberation, anti-colonialism, social revolution, and the reconstruction of political authority—could be articulated.

The panel welcomes papers addressing different regions and actors of imperial and post-imperial Russia and exploring military conflicts, political movements, national projects, religious actors, political language, and processes of state formation.