Neighbors? Relationships and Rootedness in Eastern Europe across the 20th Century

Tuesday, June 11, 2019
09:30 - 18:00
NA Building, Fourth Floor, Room #302
Solbosch Campus
Université Libre de Bruxelles

Partly inspired by the publication of Jan Gross’s book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* more than fifteen years ago, historians, social scientists, linguists and other observers of eastern Europe have, of late, produced exciting studies about coexistence, conflict and why violence unfolds in specific spaces at precise moments. We think that these scholars are doing particularly important work. They seek to answer what is, according to historian John Connelly, the most vexing question for Poland and the entirety of east central Europe: “how (did) ethnic communities that had coexisted more or less peacefully for generations, often in fruitful cross-pollination (dissolve) in fear, hate and recrimination from the middle of the 20th century onward?” Going further, this literature also problematizes questions of rootedness and indigeneity, especially how both relate to the rise of the ethnicized-nation state in the region between Munich and Moscow. This workshop springs out our desire to better understand the range of answers to these interrelated questions over the last four generations and beyond.

To wit: how do minority populations become “othered” across time and, potentially, targets of discrimination or violence? What does “coexistence” look like and how can scholars capture new facets of societal harmony? What role does language play in studies of coexistence and it’s breakdown? How does inherited culture, literature and memory influence the experiences of neighbors in this multi-cultural region? What does it mean to be rooted to a geographical space and how does that rootedness change over time? In times of war, occupation or civil unrest how and why do neighbors become violent, empathetic, helpful and/or distant? How can we better understand societies throughout this region living in multi-national empires, states of war, frightful occupations, diasporas and aspiring mono-ethnic states?

We have assembled an interdisciplinary group of scholars to consider these questions. Bringing together experts in urban planning, political science, social anthropology and history, this intimate conference will assemble at the Université Libre de Bruxelles on June 11, 2019 and will be open to the university community as well as the broader public. We thank the Fulbright Commission for Belgium and Luxembourg, the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Université Libre de Bruxelles for their financial support.
09:00-09:30  Coffee and light breakfast

09:30-11:00  **Dr. Sarah Cramsey, Tulane University**  
“Negating the Diaspora: How the World Jewish Congress used International Norms to cast Jewish belonging away from Europe in the 1940s”

**Dr. Matthew Frank, Leeds University**  

Respondent: **Dr. Jessica Reinisch, Birkbeck, University of London**

11:00-11:30  Coffee Break

11:30-13:00  **Dr. Matthew Worsnick, Vanderbilt University**  
“Mapping the Margins: National borders, transnational networks, and images of coherence in Italy and Yugoslavia”

**Dr. Tone Bringa, Bergen University**  
“When plums become olives: Relocating Bosnian Neighborhoods to early 20th-century Turkey”

Respondent: **Dr. Dominique Reill, University of Miami**

13:00-14:00  Sandwiches and coffee

14:00-15:30  **Dr. Atina Grossmann, Cooper Union**  
“Unexpected Neighbors: Central and Eastern European Jewish Refugees Encounter the ‘Orient’ in Central Asia, Iran, and India”

**Dr. Anna Cichepek-Gajraj, Arizona State University**  
“Living Together and Apart: Polish Jews and ethnic Poles after the Holocaust (1944-48)”

Respondent: **Dr. Pieter Lagrou, Université Libre de Bruxelles**

15:30-16:00  Coffee Break

16:00-18:00  **Aysenur Korkmaz, University of Amsterdam**  
“No Place Like Home: ‘Yerkir’ and the ex-Ottoman Armenians in Soviet Armenia”

**Marko Pecak, Roma Education Fund**  
“Roma Historical and Contemporary Trauma: Social Ecology and Identity in Resilient Responses”

Respondent: **Dr. Alexandra Paulin-Booth, Université Libre de Bruxelles**

18:00  Closing Remarks: **Dr. Sarah Cramsey & Dr. Pieter Lagrou**