



# Book of Abstracts

**Third Annual RUCARR Conference**  
**Malmö University, 8-9 November 2018**

On the everpresent and global struggle between ideas of democracy and authoritarianism, and how this battle unfolds in Russia and the Caucasus area.

**Keynote address 1: Prof. Ghia Nodia (Ilia State University, Tbilisi):**

*Common Past and Divergent Futures: Democracy and Autocracy in the Post-Communist Area*

Thirty years ago, formerly Communist countries shared the same or similar political institutions; having rejected the Communist system, all of them at least notionally embraced ideas of democracy and free market. However, already in the 1990s it became clear that transformations of their political regimes took dramatically different trajectories. What explains these differences? Political scientists tend to avoid asking that question. It appears that culture and geography are the decisive factors in explaining the difference but these variables should not be taken uncritically as well.

**Keynote address 2: Prof. Madina Tlostanova (Linköping University):**

*“Democracy” - “Authoritarianism” – “Decoloniality” : A Decolonial Reflection on the Post-Truth World*

Democracy and authoritarianism as many other seemingly clear-cut contrasting concepts, tend to turn into empty signifiers today, both separately and within a binary opposition. As a result authoritarianism does not become more democratic whereas democracy loses its advantage of choices and often becomes an instrument of exclusion (Krstev). In the post-truth world in which the public attention is diverted from real problems to highly politicized and excessively emotional constructed issues democracy and authoritarianism are at times mingled and forcefully reconciled in various hybrid regimes. The missing agent that can help understand the present situation in a more complex and less occidentalist way is Decoloniality (Walsh, Mignolo). This concept emerges at the moment of the Socialist modernity’s defeat reflecting on the shift in the global ontological design from the colonial difference (Quijano). From this perspective the present negative side of neoliberal globalization and a shift to right-wing nationalism essentially leaves the colonial matrix of power intact though signalizes the crisis of the “end of history” chant and the bankruptcy of the unipolar world, adding new dispensable lives to the cohorts of the “anthropos” who are left with a futureless ontology. The talk will address how in today’s situation of the systemic crisis of modernity is it possible to prevent authoritarianism from spreading all over the world and the remaining democratic institutions from shrinking and emasculation? On which grounds can we attempt to build the deep transversal coalitions in order to give the world back its future dimension.

## Session 1

**Dr. Alexander Osipov (International Centre for Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity Studies Flensburg, Germany / Prague, the Czech Republic):**

*The Soviet legacies in diversity policies vs European standards of minority protection – is there a dichotomy?*

The author addresses the ideas and institutional setting inherited by ex-Soviet countries in the framework of diversity policies from the communist rule and examines their compatibility with the so-called European standards of minority protection, which include principles and requirements enshrined in the relevant international instruments and practices. The Soviet ‘nationalities policy’ is routinely and correctly perceived as part of the repressive machinery, and its remnants are respectively viewed as something alien or even hostile to the post-communist transitions aimed at following institutional settings offered by ‘old’ democracies (Prina 2016).

One can point out the continuity of the major Soviet ideological schemata in the area of diversity policy, such as the approaches to territorial autonomy, framing of equality on ethnic grounds, and binding language with ethnicity. Some institutional patterns also survived the Soviet Union’s dissolution, and this continuity is particularly obvious in numerous constitutional provisions and pieces of legislation, which were elaborated or enacted in the late 1980s.

Concurrently, the major frames of diversity policies employed by the European institutions resemble the basics of the Soviet approach to the ‘nationalities question’ including tacit acceptance of ethno-national statehood, linking of language with ethnicity, and framing ethnic issues in terms of culture. Ethnicity-related instruments of the European organizations eschew the language of group-differentiated rights or group entitlements and leave the governments with broad margins of appreciation (Deets and Stroschein 2005: 290).

The major European human rights and security organizations in fact refrain from addressing the major challenges to stability and national consolidation in Eastern Europe, that are multi-dimensional ‘nationalizing policies’ (Brubaker 1996) leading to alienation and marginalization of large population segments. Along with this, the post-Soviet diversity policies manifest themselves primarily in symbolic domain, result in a weak institutionalization of diversity, and provide multi-ethnic citizenry with multiple opportunities for social adaptation (Biaspamyatnukh et al 2014).

The current diversity policies in the post-communist countries serve as a device for channelling potentially destabilising activities in a safe direction and for generating eclectic and thus socially acceptable agendas and narratives. The European principles and standards of minority protection and non-discrimination in fact pursue the same goals. One may acknowledge the compatibility of both traditions and their common origin, that is nationalism embedded in high modernity.

**Svetlana L'nyavskiy (Center for Central and Eastern European Studies, Lund University):**

*Battle for Language Rights: the case of Russian speakers in Ukrainian social network's discussion*

This paper presents a case study of a number of customer service disputes caused by refusal of Russian-speaking personnel to accommodate the language needs of Ukrainian-speaking clients and focuses on the image of Russia and its politics circulating in Ukraine projected onto the Russian-speaking participants of the discussions, as they are taken to social network groups.

This social network exchange study relies on the framework of Nexus and Mediated Discourse Analysis (Scollon & Scollon, 2002, 2004, 2007), followed by Corpus Assisted Discourse study of a small specialized corpus. At the site of engagement, a real-time confrontations are often registered on a video or narrated and consequently presented to the general audience using the mediational power of the social network for a discussion of public policies. This paper focuses on an interpretive analysis of social actions that triggered extensive public discussions, unfolding in real time, which in their turn reproduced social groups, their complex history, conflicting political views, and identities (Scollon, 2002, pp. 3-4).

The preliminary results of the case study reveal the current mood among Ukrainian and Russian-speaking discussants towards the imperial legacy of Russian language in Ukraine and the inconsistent use of national language in all spheres of official communication. Moreover, Russian military aggression appears to cause anxiety and overestimation of the 'quantity and quality' of "Russianness" and anti-Ukrainian sentiment that really exist among Ukrainian speakers of Russian. Finally, the case study reveals the tension, mistrust and misunderstanding between the language rights activists and the general public revived by the events of 2014 and exacerbated by the refusal of the government to cut all ties and break away from the imperial legacies and the "Russian World" (Kulyk, 2017).

**Karli Storm (University of Eastern Finland):**

*“‘Who are We and Where Do We Belong?’ Contesting Labels, Landscapes, and Memory in the Georgian Region of Kvemo Kartli”*

The labels—be they self-ascriptive or externally prescribed—used in reference to members of a particular collective are indicative of intricate webs of power relations within particular spatial-temporal contexts. Such labels are central to processes of (b)ordering and have important implications for what it means to "belong" in a given context. In this paper, I examine the labels commonly conferred upon members of Georgia's largest minority group—'Azeris', 'Azerbaijanis', '(Borchali) Turks', etc.—as well as group members' attitudes and perceptions of these labels. In so doing, I seek to highlight the ways in which members of the community in question negotiate their own collective identities vis-à-vis official memory and identity narratives. Given the spatially embedded nature of identity and the propensity of actors to shape their physical surroundings to suit particular narratives of public memory and identity, the physical landscape is treated here as an arena for identity negotiation. The physical environs of the Kvemo Kartli region—particularly with regard to those falling within the districts of Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Gardabani—act as sites of encounter, differentiation, and contestation of local, regional, and 'national' identities. Data obtained from interviews with politicians, NGO-representatives, and young social activists, attitudinal surveys, participant observation, and landscape- and social media analysis provide the basis for this study of the reception of state-propagated memory/identity narratives and their manifestations in the physical environment among minority communities in Kvemo Kartli.

## Session 2

**Natia Gamkrelidze (Linnaeus University, Sweden):**

*Georgia's transition from ENP to EaP and the challenges associated with Georgia becoming a candidate State*

Since Georgia's Independence, Georgia and the European Union started active cooperating, but this cooperation grew into close relations following the establishment of the (European Neighborhood Policy) ENP. After the European Neighborhood Policy on Georgia came into force, Georgia–EU relations acquired new qualitative perspectives because it offered privileged relations with other European Neighborhood Policy countries based on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Since then, the EU's guidelines can be considered as important for Georgia. The implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy was jointly developed through Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) and was a key document for the progress achieved by the country. Five years after Georgia's involvement in the EU's Eastern partnership (EaP) initiative which, is the eastern dimension of ENP, Georgia-EU relations have moved to a new stage.

This paper aims to scrutinize the transition of Georgia from ENP to EaP, her current cooperation with the EU and the limiting factors to Georgia becoming a candidate state. From this research, It became clear that Georgia and EU's cooperation is going in line with the EaP framework. Georgia, like other eastern partnership countries has committed to demonstrating and delivering tangible benefits to the daily lives of citizens across the region. This is achieved mainly by focusing on achieving 20 deliverables for 2020 in four key priority areas, including stronger economy, stronger governance, stronger connectivity, and a stronger society.

This paper reached a conclusion that there are three major challenges tied to Georgia becoming a candidate state and these are beyond Georgia's internal progress recorded due to the EaP. 1) Russia is today way more active and hostile to the EU's enlargement. This is a hindrance for the EU and Georgia. 2) The EU has internal challenges of potential disintegration and this makes member-states less interested in enlargement. 3) The EU has had major problems in increasing the social status of the Balkan states with EU member-states. In other words, there are external factors that still serve as impediments for Georgia's progress towards EU membership and Georgia itself has no or very limited control over these impediments.

**Arpi Muradyan (Political Science, Yerevan University):**

*Russia's South Caucasian Structural Policy in the Context of Democratization Tendencies from 1991 to 2018*

There is a plethora of literature on Russia's foreign policy in the South Caucasus since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Much has been said about Russia's motives to embark on revival of relations with the former Soviet republics of the region, as well as much is being discussed today related to Russia's engagement in current events taking place there. However, the following paper stands out from previous researches in that it analyzes Russia's regional policy in light of structural foreign policy notion and democratization tendencies increasingly grounding in the South Caucasus.

The purpose of this paper is to show the impact of democratization tendencies on realization of Russia's *regional-level* structural foreign policy plan designated for the South Caucasus since 1991 when the three states, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, gained independence. It is argued in the paper that although a number of factors limited the realization of Russia's structural policy plan, right the democratization tendencies - while not penetrating into all the three South Caucasian states - appeared to be the main factor predetermining the outcomes of Russia's structural policy in the region. The main idea set forth here is that democratization tendencies even more deepened controversies in already diverging perceptions regarding subsequent international conduct of the three states, and made it impossible for Russia to have the South Caucasus as a homogeneous entity through installation of a single structure.

In order to support the thesis, we have studied:

- the peculiarities of Russia's structural foreign policy in the South Caucasus during the first decade following the independence
- democratic tendencies in each of the three states 1991-2018

Since much depends on success in state-level structural policy, we have also carried out case studies on Russia's structural policies in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan 1991-2018 and analyzed Russia's regional-level structural foreign policy with regards to the outcomes of Russia's state-level structural foreign policies.

The conclusion focuses on the assumption that Russia failed in its structural policy first at state level (mainly due to Georgia's pivot to the West), and then on regional level, which was the direct result of the latter. The importance of the following research lies in the fact that due to the analysis of the transformations and the outcomes Russia's South Caucasian structural foreign policy strategy it allows to explain its current differentiation approach towards the region.

**Klaudia Koscińska (Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences):**

*Participatory budget in Georgia between democracy and authoritarianism – discourse analysis*

The proposed paper analyzes a development project carried out in 2015-2017 in the Georgian province of Marneuli. The project, financed by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and implemented by a Warsaw-based foundation, was a key-element of the program called 'Support for democracy'. Its goal was to persuade the local government to carry out internal changes in management so as to bring residents closer to the local administration, and vice versa. Indeed, it aimed at ensuring that their needs and decisions be heard and realized. During the project, the ethnic diversity of the inhabitants, together with the location of the area (on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan), turned out to be a significant factor informing different political aspects. The project-driven changes consisted in separating a part of the local budget and allocating it to individual projects proposed by the residents. The method used, known in Poland as the 'participatory budget', in Georgia was to be appropriately processed and adapted to the local context. However, this local context implied various levels of consideration. It extended from the ethnic and religious inhomogeneity of the region, to the lack of knowledge of the official state language (sometimes Russian as well), including problems with transportation between different villages, unemployment, ambiguity of local power systems, plots to maintain positions between Georgian and ethnic Azerbaijani authorities and other issues revealed in subsequent stages. Importantly, the local practices of project implementation observed by the writer featured a unique involvement of both development and democracy discourses as well as infrastructural and urbanization policies. In my work, I will try to highlight the nexus between the voices of some inhabitants, demanding the construction of certain types of infrastructure (e.g. roads, streetlights and irrigation systems), and the requests of others - paying more attention to the ordering, tampering and customization of spaces. Through my presentation, I'll explore how the struggle for 'winning' a given project often led to conflicts in the focused area, and how the inhabitants' involvement was sometimes reduced to an inadequate choice between different categories of needs. Finally, I intend to discuss the divergence between the declarative content of project discourses and their effects.



### Session 3

**Aneta Strzemzalska (Department of Anthropology, The European University, St. Petersburg):**

*Traditional Music and Nationalism. Dual Nature of Contemporary Azerbaijani Meykhana*

*Meykhana* (Azerbaijani *meyxana*) is a musical poetry trend and recitative improvisation that originated in Absheron, and in the last two decades, gained popularity in contemporary Azerbaijan.

During Soviet times, *meykhana* was considered a lesser-known, somewhat underground trend, with a “low” genre reputation. However, between the XX and XXI centuries, along with the birth of the market economy, it became popular among many Azerbaijani. The name, origin, content, way and form of *meykhana* performance began to be a part of mass media and intellectual discussion in Baku.

When following the gain of popularity of verbal recitations, we can ask a question: what do they represent? On one hand, they are simply improvisations, a kind of art and a way of entertainment. On the other hand, they are a subject of acute discussion of which, the main topic is defining *meykhana* for modern Azerbaijan. The goal of discussion is to include verbal recitatives in the folk genre as well as in the folklore, which is filled with strictly fixed meanings.

There are abstract discussions as well as some actions with the aim of using *meykhana* in the process building the nation. The genre is not completely controlled by the government and blossoms in Azerbaijani *kends* (urban-type settlement), which are located close to Baku, but have a very different cultural outlook than the city. Moreover, local *kend* elites have their opinion on the role of verbal improvisations in the lives of local population. They actively bring those ideas to life, trying, when possible, to ignore the national ideology. Consequently, we can talk about some hidden resistance to the government creating a national ideology for the verbal recitatives. Speaking about resistance, I do not mean a political opposition. This refers to a way of nationalization of a genre but not by means of the government elites, but by the means of local Absheron elites.

Material used in this article is the result of my field work, which took place in Baku and its surrounding *kends* from April 2012 until November 2016 (9 months total). The main methods used are participant observation as well as interviews with representatives of the musical society of Azerbaijan’s capital: *meykhana* performers and audience, scientists, publicists, employees of cafés in which the performances take place as well as government workers who are responsible for cultural development programs in the country.

**Turkay Gasimova (Dept. of History and Civilization, European University Institute, Firenze):**

*Transmission of the democratic ideas from Europe through Russia to the Caucasus: Nineteenth century Muslim intellectuals in South Caucasus.*

This paper will examine the emergence of democratic ideas in the Southern peripheries of the Russian Empire- more precisely in the South Caucasus in mid-nineteenth century. The principal purpose of this paper is to look deep into the intellectual life in Tbilisi during the late decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a particular focus on how the West European ideas were perceived by the new group of local intellectuals who represented hybridized version of both Western and Eastern intellectual traditions.

Due to its importance both as cultural and administrative center of the Caucasus region, Tbilisi after the Russian invasion, took a rapid development path and had become a cultural center of the Caucasus. With the transformation of Tbilisi into a political, commercial and cultural center of the Caucasus region, the city has become a frequent visiting place for travelers, writers, and even politicians who brought new ideas that revived the intellectual environment. At that time, Tbilisi, in generally the whole Caucasus region was the destination of political exiles and final stop for almost all “unwanted” groups who fled the Russian Empire. These group of “unruled” members of society had, in fact, considerable impact on the life of Caucasian people. After the failed revolt by Decembrists which took place in 1825, members of the movements were suppressed, and many revolutionaries were deported to far away peripheries of the Empire such as Siberia and the Caucasus. In Tbilisi, there was a fascinating synthesis of political atmosphere filled with revolutionaries, libertarian constitutionalists, reactionaries and several other members of various inclinations. This unique environment deeply affected the milieu of intellectuals who lived in Tbilisi. In other word, the intellectuals in Tbilisi were indirectly connected to Europe and any ideas and innovations took place in Europe, or Russia spread rapidly and soon reached the doors of Tbilisi. The new generation of local intellectuals learning Russian began to recognize and learn European civilization with the help of literary circles in Tbilisi. Above all, the ideas of liberty, democracy, and populism that emerged in Europe after the French Revolution had a greater influence on these young intellectuals.

The arguments mentioned above are currently developing into more detailed analysis and will constitute a separate chapter in the doctoral project that is under preparation.

## Session 4

**Dr. Eleonora Narvselius (Department of Global Political Studies, Malmö University):**

*Bandera Debate II: Scrutinizing Lessons of the Authoritarian Past in Post-Maidan Ukraine*

One of the most interesting outcomes of Euromaidan has been a new round of debates about the past of Ukraine. It was sparked among others by the package of the so-called “de-communisation laws” adopted in 2015. The laws ban propaganda and symbols of both the Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes, but also prescribe commemoration of the fighters for independence of Ukraine in the 20th century, which might open the door for rehabilitation of those anti-communist actors who were allied with the Nazis. No wonder that the laws met a contradictory response both in Ukraine and beyond and led to stormy debates. Critics pointed out the contradictions in the Ukrainian memory politics that, on the one hand, declares its willingness to adopt the frames inspired by the normative conditionality of the EU, but, on the other hand, continues to repeat nationalistic clichés. Critical voices have also been raised against ideological dictate imbedded in legislating about how the past should be rightfully approached. Nevertheless, the crux of the de-communisation laws is that while they intend to re-shape public commemorations, they do not prescribe a radical re-writing of academic historical narratives. As the case of popular symbolic politics in post-1991 Ukraine, they exemplify a belated product of “learning of history” and “learning from history” in the situation of warfare and economic crisis.

To scrutinize the impact of the de-communization laws one needs to tackle a broader national and transnational context due to which this type of legislation gives a carte blanche for various actors. This study focuses on different lessons that have been so far learned by different audiences in Ukraine from figures of Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, the most loaded personalities of the Ukrainian symbolic politics who embody the problematic entanglement of the integral Ukrainian nationalism, Nazism and Stalinism. The author draws attention to complexity of the debate around these figures, the debate that is underpinned by several conflicting but conflated normative assumptions targeting the problematic of learning history, learning about history, learning from history and learning history in history.

**Ekaterina Markovich (Faculty of Law, University of Turku, Finland):**

*The Special Path or censorship in a name of protection?*

Alongside with unprecedented flow of information, the Internet provides a unique opportunity to gather enormous amounts of private data of every user all over the world. It is only logical to expect of States to seek to take part in this process and gain control over cyberspace. Russia is no exception. Moreover, it is one of the world's leaders in introducing rather invasive measures in order to obtain control over the data of its citizens.

In the light of the political situation, the new laws provide state with rather broad opportunities to target whistleblowers, journalists, opposition and human rights defenders. Thus, Russian Personal Data Act obliges all service providers, including major social media services to store personal data of Russian citizens in specially build data centres within the country's borders. In practice this law taken into account in conjunction with several other acts makes it possible for the State to block social media channels as it has happened in case of LinkedIn which as some argue might be as effective as censorship.

However, the country is binded by its human rights obligations, therefore there is still a need for a proper justifications for such actions. Hence certain political rhetoric comes into agenda. Russia leans on combating crimes, security measures, fighting terrorism, and even on an obligation to protect rights of individuals, as a justification while drafting and implementing new laws. Simultaneously, national research focuses on a positive impact of new laws. Scholars support imposing state control over media, as media are meant to serve the state interests, restricting information flow for protection of the rights and minds of people against so-called 'western propaganda', or initiatives to abandon privacy and anonymity in order to protect interests of citizens, and prevent crimes against the public order.

In this paper I argue that Russia now is rapidly going towards the recreation of the infamous Foucauldian Panopticon in cyber realms while using different arguments for general public and international tribunals in order to justify its actions. It invests heavily into the acceptance of such control by individuals by making them adhere to self-censorship in political discussions, or cease voicing negative comments on state politics all together.

**Dr Natalia Paulovich (Independent researcher, Warsaw):**

*A breadwinner or a housewife: Agency in everyday image of the Georgian woman*

For a long time, women in Georgia were involved in bringing up children and caring for families while men were the main breadwinners and performed only a supportive role in bringing up children and keeping domestic economy. Now many women are actually breadwinners in all meanings of this term. Such position of contemporary Georgian women is largely dependent on the current socio-economic situation in the country caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the civil war during this period. It is women who began to earn money for all of their families while men were unable to deal with the 'post-war syndrome' and lost their jobs. These problems from the early 1990s combined with high unemployment levels in the country again affected mainly on men. Given these circumstances, women work hard to support their families outside of home but also put a lot of energy in caring for the members of the family at home. They thus place their career and taking care of other members of their family at the center of their identity, claiming that these two spheres allow them to express themselves. This allows me to state that these women possess agency. Activities of women (at home and outside) are becoming a key point of cultural production and social reproduction that allow these women to move between the household and the public sphere. These issues will be subject of analysis of the presentation based on field work which was conducted in the town of Ozurgeti in western Georgia during the period from 2010 to 2015. The stories of women I heard give the idea of the multidimensionality of female agency manifested at the time when the country was plunged in crisis. It was precisely women who became those actors who defied the system, did not agree with the conditions created by it which had upset the functioning of the family, and began looking for sources to support their families employing the resources available to them. This paper is an attempt to analyse the changes in the woman's position in Georgia influenced by the political and socio-economic transformations in society entailing the transformation of mutual relations in the family sphere which turned out to be able to go beyond its conceptual framework and take the key place in the processes of socio-cultural reproduction of society.

**Dr. Yulia Gradszkova (Dept. of History, Stockholm University):**

*“Where all the rights for women are embodied in laws”. Soviet “emancipation of woman of the East” and WIDF’s work for rights of women in the Third World*

The presentation is dedicated to the activities of the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF, founded in Paris 1945) – the organization for women’s rights that struggled against authoritarianism and colonialism. The WIDF, however, enjoyed strong support of the Soviet Union and was identified by the CIA as the “Communist organization”. Using WIDF’s official publications and materials from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF in Moscow) I will show the contradictory role of WIDF with respect to anti-colonial movements and “Third World” countries. My presentation is centered around the WIDF’s use of the examples of the Soviet “emancipation of the woman of the East” in Central Asia and Caucasus for its work aimed for women from Asia, Africa and Latin America. In particular, I explore what kinds of the Soviet experiences of “emancipation” were shown to the guests as examples to follow (during meetings with the delegations from the “Third World” and in the documents) and what stories and problems were silenced. Finally I discuss reception of the demonstration of the Soviet achievements by the WIDF’s members from Asia, Africa and Latin America.