

**Workshop “Moving Away from ‘Post-socialism’: Reconceptualizing Scholarly Approaches to Contemporary Eastern Europe and Eurasia through Feminist and Queer Theory Lenses”**

Central European University, Budapest, 23-25 September 2022.

**Call for Papers**

In most Eastern European countries socialism lasted for less than 50 years. Yet today, 30 years after the collapse of state socialist regimes in Europe, we still cling to the term ‘post-socialism,’ in order to address what was, and still is, a very diverse region. What does this imply: does it mean that we still think of socialism as being a powerful and active political ideology in the region? Or do we simply resort to this framing in order to scapegoat our socialist past for the failures of the transition to liberal democracy, or the failures of liberal democracy as such? Finally, what kind of power relations within the region the notion of ‘post-socialism’ might gloss over, particularly in the very recent context of the invasion of Ukraine?

The goal of this workshop is to critically account for the strong grip this concept has for the scholarly work engaging with contemporary Eastern Europe and Eurasia, as well as to offer potential alternatives. More specifically, we are interested in the ways through which comparative analyses based on the interdisciplinary body of work developed within gender studies and queer theory, can help us in this process. In other words, we believe that rather than just adding the categories of gender and queer to the post-socialist context, postsocialism - both as a concept and as a field of inquiry - can benefit immensely from the engagement with contemporary feminist and queer scholarly work on the fundamentally theoretical level. We understand this body of scholarly work in the broadest sense, i.e., we take it to also include approaches coming from affect theory, new materialism, postcolonial theory, posthumanism, critical disability studies, performance and embodiment studies, etc.

Following this, we envision this workshop to be structured around two central questions: (1) How to rethink the region of Eastern Europe and Eurasia outside of the limiting category of post-socialism, with the help of contemporary feminist, queer, postcolonial, affect... theory?; and (2) How to rethink socialism today, outside of linear temporality that situates it necessarily

in the past, equating it with state socialisms of the last half of the 20th century? We invite both conceptual engagements with the categories of socialism and post-socialism, as well as historical and social sciences research that already, more or less explicitly, works against this 'grip of postsocialism.'

**Submission requirements:**

The workshop is aimed at post/graduate students and young scholars that are invited to send their short papers. What follows are two clusters of questions that aim to suggest, but certainly not limit, potential topics of submitted papers:

Beyond the homogeneity of the concept of 'post-socialism':

- How to account for the persistence of the notion of post-socialism, 30 years after the fall of state socialism in Eastern Europe and Eurasia?
- What are the possible alternative conceptualizations of the region? What can contemporary feminist and queer theory bring to the perspective?
- What are we potentially losing in abandoning the unifying concept in our analysis? Alternatively, what are the gains of this attempt to move away from the homogenizing analysis?
- How can comparative analysis with currently existing state socialist or postsocialist regimes outside of Europe and Eurasia enrich our understanding of the region?
- Does gender perspective challenge or reinforce the homogeneity of the postsocialist region? And how does the concept of post-socialism inform the current feminist struggles in the region?

Beyond the linear temporality of post/socialism:

- What are the effects of material remnants of state socialism and socialist ideology still present in Eastern Europe and Eurasia?
- What are the threats of 'spectral,' 'ghostly' presences of socialism in contemporary Eastern Europe and Eurasia? How do they complicate linear historical narratives that confine socialism to the past?
- How to account for the affective presences of socialism in contemporary Eastern Europe and Eurasia?

· In what ways can the body of scholarly work on queer temporalities help us to rethink the teleological imperative of linear temporality framed through the formula of socialism → postsocialist transition → (liberal) capitalist democracy?

· Finally, is the critique of historical teleology necessarily at odds with the Marxist view of the socialist project?

**Invited keynote speakers:**

**Bogdan Popa**, Senior Researcher, Literature and Cultural Studies, University Transilvania Braşov.

**Kateřina Kolářová**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Graduate Program in Gender Studies, School of Humanities, Charles University in Prague & Researcher at Gender and Science, Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

**Invited experts:**

**Elissa Helms**, Associate Professor, Department of Gender Studies, CEU.

**Eszter Timár**, Assistant Professor, Department of Gender Studies, CEU.

**Hadley Renkin**, Assistant Professor, Department of Gender Studies, CEU. **Andrea Krizsan**, Professor, Department of Gender Studies, Department of Public Policy, CEU.

**Format:**

The workshop will be paper-based. Participants' papers (up to 2500 words) should be sent in advance. This way, colleagues and invited experts will be able to read the papers in advance and prepare their feedback, allowing more time for on-site discussions. The workshop will last for 3 days. It will include public lectures and discussions, as well as short presentations by the participants.

**Deadlines:**

If you want to participate, please send an abstract (up to 500 words) and a short bio that includes your institutional affiliation, by **July 5, 2022**, to **all the following three contacts**:

[Odak Petar@phd.ceu.edu](mailto:Odak_Petar@phd.ceu.edu) (Petar Odak)

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The deadline for the submission of papers will be **August 29, 2022**.

Travel expenses will not be covered. There is no participation fee.