OPEN CALL FOR PAPERS:

University of St Gallen (HSG),
in cooperation with the University of Neuchâtel (UniNE), Switzerland

"Samo vjeran pas?"

Workshop on Post-Yugoslav Neoliberal Academic Selves and Possibilities of Knowing the Balkans Otherwise

5.2.2020 - 7.2.2020

What are the features and the politics of knowledge production about the Balkans in contemporary academia? Are the Western Balkans a testing ground for Western intellectual hegemony? If so, how and why do we, as post-Yugoslav scholars, reproduce these dominant forms of knowledge, however inadvertently? How does the contemporary neoliberal academy foster the self-colonization and (re-)balkanization as a career strategy? Can we disrupt the uneven power geometries in which we ourselves partake? What are the ways by which to know the Balkans otherwise?

The dissolution of former Yugoslavia – as one of the particularly dramatic chapters of the implosion of real-socialism – served as an unprecedented impetus for knowledge production. The newly emerging Yugoslav republics soon turned into the object of vibrant research by scholars who, by and large from Central and Western Europe and the U.S., aimed at understanding the causes and consequences of conflicts, the processes of "transition", religious revitalization, reconciliation, gender regimes, (forced) migration, and a number of other issues.

In the years to follow, new protagonists are emerging together with the newly reorganized Balkan region. They embody different biographical configurations of im/mobility, which include decades of labour- and chain migration, as well as forced migration brought about the Yugoslav Succession Wars. At the same time, established and emerging scholars who stayed in the region produced knowledge under totalitarian conditions, which hindered transnational networks and mobility. In the course of developing critical (anti-nationalist, anti-totalitarian, feminist etc.) social science perspectives, these differently positioned scholars forged cooperation under global conditions of consolidating neoliberal academia. The increasing competition, precarity, marketization of ideas, concepts, and academic selves led to the bizarre result that it was/is precisely "profitable" to produce knowledge on former Yugoslavia as an "indigenous" (migrant) scholar already "equipped" with the core language and "cultural" competence non-native scholars have to invest significant time and effort to acquire. This, at times, created a paradoxical result of auto-balkanization in ways that perpetuated the myths and failed to offer a truly emancipatory project.

The aim of the interdisciplinary workshop is to bring together scholars across disciplines and generations to employ radical self-reflexion of experiences, epistemologies and the subjectivization of knowledge production about the Balkans under highly politicized (post-)totalitarian, neoliberal and deterritorialized conditions. The workshop will offer a challenging, productive and safe space of exchange among scholars who embody different (post-)Yugoslav experiences.

We invite both emerging and established scholars to join us in promoting the one of the core aims of the workshop – to engage with feminist postcolonial and other solidarity movements/commitments to radically transform what is considered legitimate knowledge about the Balkans. The workshop will contribute to critically envisioning possible futures of this line of scholarship both in terms of its epistemological/theoretical relevance for socio-economic and political developments in the post-Yugoslav space as well as its potential as an avenue of participating in wider global emancipatory knowledge horizons.

The **thematic clusters** revolve around the overarching aim of theorizing *from* the Balkans rather than *about* the Balkans:

1. Thematic Cluster: **Post-Ethno-national Epistemologies** – Beyond legitimizing nationalist ideology and idealizing the Balkans. Who legitimizes this knowledge, who does not, and why?

2. Thematic Cluster: **Post-Yugoslav academic selves** – disciplines, generations, attachments and embodied landscapes of neoliberal academia. What are the global politics of academic knowledge production, and what kind of (perhaps unintended) consequences they have for creating knowledge about the Balkans?

3. Thematic Cluster: **Migration and Knowledge** – the "safe distance", ambivalent belongings, commodification of knowledge, and the migrant academic self. Is there a convergence between academic migrant biographies and knowledge production?

If you would like to participate, please send the following documents to:
suncana.laketa@unine.ch, sandra.king-savic@unisg.ch, jelena.tosic@unisg.ch

by 15 July 2019:

- a 500-word detailed paper abstract that includes indication of the thematic cluster to which you would like to contribute to and your methodological approach
- a short CV (max. 300 words)

Important info:
- Selected participants will receive the final confirmation by mid-October 2019
- Venue: The University of St.Gallen (HSG) in Switzerland

- Travel and board will be covered for selected participants
- The goal of this workshop is the publication of an edited volume

Convenors:

Jelena Tošić (Transcultural Studies, HSG)
Sandra King-Savić (Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, HSG)
Sunčana Laketa (Institute of Geography, UniNE)