

[CFP: Workshop “Transnational relations between Eastern Europe/Russia-USSR and the Middle East, late 19th century to 1991”](#)

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10-11 February 2017

Princeton University

Part of a Université de Genève/Princeton University partnership grant co-directed by Sandrine Kott (UNIGE) and Cyrus Schayegh (PU).

Application: Send a paper title, an abstract of max. 300 words, and a brief CV by 15 September 2016 to schayegh@princeton.edu.

Description: Histories of Eastern Europe [EE]/Russia - Middle East [ME] transnational relations form a relative lacuna in the scholarship on both regions; most extant work centers on Russia/USSR, and/or the Cold War, and/or state actors; and few scholars of various subfields are in conversation. Moreover, such relations are a useful laboratory to explore conceptual questions for studying transnational history.

A principal reason concerns space.

This is the case, centrally, because EE/Russia-USSR and the ME are, broadly speaking, neighbors. To be sure, especially in the globally interconnected modern period geographical distance is not directly correlated with sociopolitical distance. Even so, proximity still matters in some ways and some fields - doubly because crucial pre-World War I imperial realities complicated it in fascinating ways.

We may ask: (How) has the fact that both bits of Eastern Europe and of the Middle East were Ottoman mattered even after the late 19th century? What about the modern echoes and effects of long-standing Russian interest in, and contacts with, ‘the Middle East’ (think as far back as early medieval Russophone Scandinavian

visits to Constantinople and, more famously, of Moscow as 'the Third Rome' after Constantinople's fall)? Do twentieth-century transnational ties take on (a) particular form(s) and meaning(s) in such historically deeply grounded 'neighborly' realities?

Related, could parallel, linked, or overlapping EE/Russian-Soviet-ME trajectories allow new interpretations of modern developments that touched both (bits of) EE/Russia-USSR and of the ME? Think, for example, of the non-aligned movement of the 1950s/60s - could one see its (south) EE members (Yugoslavia) and ME members as (re)-creating a Eastern Mediterranean space?

Lastly, and to add one more layer: (how) does it matter that in some sense both the terms 'Eastern Europe' and 'the Middle East' - though not their complex reality tout court - were constructed relative to one and the same third region, (Western) Europe? Could one see them, jointly, as a double - or even linked up - periphery? What would such a view mean, both from the linked ME/EE-Russian-Soviet and from Western European perspectives? What is certain is that for the latter, the two were and continue to be both close and - only seemingly a paradox - an 'other:' Eastern Europe/Russia and the Middle East were two of the "three borders ... identified" during Europe's cultural construction (Bo Stråth, "Insiders and Outsiders," in Stefan Berger, *Companion to 19th-Century Europe*, 4]).

We are interested in applications that have a firm empirical grounding and make a clear conceptual contribution, taking into questions of space such as those outlined above. Historians, as well as other scholars in the humanities, are encouraged to apply.