

# Through the Looking Glass of the Local: Rereading Istanbul's Heterogeneous Pasts



## CONFERENCE

Hosted by “Empires of Memory: The Cultural Politics of Historicity in Former Habsburg and Ottoman Cities”

September 28-29, 2017 | Library Hall at MPI-MMG, Göttingen

Like any city of its size and longevity (but, then, is there any other city of both its size and longevity?), Istanbul can only be described by way of a series of contrasts that both demand and defy reconciliation: both palimpsest of historical strata and kaleidoscope of the contemporary; both text to be interpreted and object that frustrates interpretation; both brand commodity and site of silenced memories; both consumerist utopia and dystopian urban noir; both target of political-economic projects and uneven topography of powers past and present; both mundane lifeworld and myth; both the reflective nostalgia of lugubrious *hüzün* and the restorative nostalgia of Neo-Ottoman pomp; both May 1st and May 27th; both Gezi and Çamlıca. This list is necessarily incomplete; indeed, its incompleteness is perhaps its most suggestive characteristic. Our conference, “Through the Looking Glass of the Local: Rereading Istanbul's Pasts through Its Myriad Spaces,” foregrounds the resolute heterogeneity of Istanbul by emphasizing the formative, perspectival relationship between historical narratives of the city and spaces and places within it. How do specific spaces and sites—buildings, monuments, streets, *mahalles*—encourage certain histories and memories while silencing others? Which chronotopes now dominate broad discourses about the city as a whole? And what counter-histories and heterotopias emerge from taking the differentiated space of the city seriously? At a time when Istanbul is uniquely targeted by both ideological and political economic powers seeking to extract surplus historical value from the city's dense past, questions such as these are not only templates for scholarly endeavor, but sounding alarms urging attention.

schedule

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### Day One (Thursday, September 28)

09:30-10:15 Welcome, opening remarks

10:15-10:30 Coffee Break

#### 10:30-12:30 PANEL ONE: NEO-OTTOMAN ECHOES AND POST-OTTOMAN ERASURES

ÇİĞDEM BUĞDAYCI, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis:

“The Dead Who is Alive: The Culture of Death in the Post-Ottoman Istanbul”

JOSH CARNEY, University of South Florida:

“Channeling the Ottoman Past: Popular Television and the Medium of Burial Sites in Neo-Ottoman Istanbul”

NICK DANFORTH, Georgetown University:

“Making Ottoman Istanbul Modern”

12:30-13:30 Lunch for conference participants

#### 13:30-15:30 PANEL TWO: NARRATING TIME AND THE CITY

TIMUR HAMMOND, Syracuse University:

“The Just Lived Past: Istanbul Through the Eyes of Süheyl Ünver and Ali Saim Ülgen”

SUZAN MERYEM ROSITA, European University Institute:

“Survival, Speech and Silence: Trauma in Western Armenian Literature”

CHARLES SABATOS:

“Nostalgia for Istanbul/Constantinople in Interwar East Central Europe”

15:30-17:30 Informal exploration of Göttingen for conference participants

19:00 Dinner for conference participants

### Day Two (Friday, September 29)

10:00-12:00 Keynote Lecture, EDHEM ELDEM, Boğaziçi University

“Title .....”

12:00-13:00 Lunch for conference participants

#### 13:00-15:00 PANEL THREE: LOCATIONS OF THE PAST

AYNUR DE ROUEN, State University of New York, Binghamton:

“Community Resilience: Negotiating Space in Post-Ottoman Istanbul Neighbourhoods”

NAGIHAN HALILOĞLU, Fatih Sultan Mehmet University: “

Recasting Imperial Pasts and Palimpsest in Balat, Istanbul”

ENNO MAESSEN, University of Amsterdam:

“The City Isn't What It Used to Be! Post-imperial Beyoğlu from the Perspective of Three Local Institutions”

15:00-15:15 Coffee Break

15:15-16:00 Closing remarks and discussion

19:00 Dinner for conference participants



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