

Concepts in sociocultural space: The Balkans and the Caucasus in focus.

VIENNA, AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 10-13 MAY 2023

“A human occupies a physical space of comparable complexity, but [...] we live also in an intricate space of obligations, duties, entitlements, prohibitions, [...] allies, contracts, enemies, infatuations, compromises, mutual love, legitimate expectations, and collective ideals. Learning the structure of this social space [...], is at least as important to any human as learning the counterpart skills for purely physical space.”

Churchland (1996, 123)

Human interaction is always imbedded in a number of social and cultural frameworks that function within the sociocultural space – the pendant to the physical world of human interaction and the space where the cognitive content gets its shape in form of conceptions and attitudes. Our interest pertains to both sides of this process: the conceptual content realized in various social and cultural frameworks, and the context-specific instantiation of presumably basic concepts, like belonging, loyalty, reciprocity, etc., in sociocultural patterns and practices.

By (re-)evaluating anthropological, linguistic, but also socioeconomic, historical, and other evidence we seek insights into the ways social constructs, networks, interdependences, and developments – contemporary and past – are conceived and conceptualized in the Balkans and the Caucasus.

Both areas provide one of the richest sources of the empirical data on diverse manifestations of human interaction and a promising grass-root input for cognitive analyses. Both show exceptionally entangled linguistic, cultural, ethnic and confessional diversity and exhibit parallels in (1) ecology and topography, hence, in common ways of sustainment, traditional family structures, etc.; (2) in their pan-regional cultural and historical development shaping the collective memory and the image of oneself vs. the others; (3) in multifaceted demographic (ethnic, religious, etc.) composition providing context for sustained intercultural and interlinguistic exchange.

We invite papers from various disciplines (including transdisciplinary approaches) introducing new perspectives, as well as bringing or contrasting conclusive factual evidence to address issues, such as:

- Cultural and religious codes, their cognitive content, and manifestations in space and time
- Patterns and networks of close social interaction and their conceptualization, as well as the interplay of the factual and conceptual changes of these
- Linguistic or other semiotic evidence of conceptual shifts within a given sociocultural framework
- Linguistic (or other semiotic) evidence of the ongoing or former multicultural exchange, such as, e.g., the concepts of continuity and sustainability in contexts of forced cultural contact as realized in legal practices, systems of values and/or reflected in linguistic codes
- Impacts of changing socioeconomic conditions and/or demographic or other challenges on the conceptual processing, e.g., the conceptual content of continuity vs. discontinuity

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Biliarsky, I. et al. (eds.). 2012. *The Balkans and the Caucasus: Parallel Processes on the Opposite Sides of the Black Sea*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Buttimer, A. 1969. Social Space in interdisciplinary perspective. *The Geographical Review*, LIX/3.
- Churchland, P. M. 1996. *The Engine of Reason, the Seat of the Soul. A Philosophical Journey into the Brain*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT-Press.
- Darieva, T., Kahl, T. & S. Toncheva (eds.). 2017. *Sakralität und Mobilität im Kaukasus und in Südosteuropa*. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

- Darieva, T., Mühlfried, F. 2015. Kontaktraum Kaukasus: Sprachen, Religionen, Völker und Kulturen. In: *Osteuropa Zeitschrift* 65/7-10, 45-70.
- Enfield, N.J. & Levinson, S.C. 2006. *Roots of Human Sociality. Culture, Cognition and Interaction*. London: Routledge.
- Grant, B. & L. Yalcin-Heckmann (eds.). 2008. *Caucasus Paradigms: Anthropologies, Histories and the Making of a World Area*. Berlin: LIT Verlag.
- Kahl, T. 2014. Ethnische, sprachliche und konfessionelle Struktur der Balkanhalbinsel. In: Himstedt-Vaid, P., Hinrichs, U. & T. Kahl (eds.). *Handbuch Balkan*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 87-134.
- Tuite, K. 1998. Representations of social space in South Caucasian and Indo-European ideology. In: *Cosmos* 14/ 1, 9-20.

KEYNOTES

Nick Enfield (The University of Sydney)
Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm (Stockholm University)
Kevin Tuite (University of Montreal)
Irina Babich (Moscow)
Brian Joseph (Ohio State University)
Victor Friedman (Chicago University)

VENUE:

Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna (hybrid format)

DATES AND DEADLINES:

Conference dates: **10-13 May 2023** (including talks and cultural program)
Anonymized abstracts of 600 words are welcome to submission via [EasyChair](#) before **31 December 2022**
Extended submission deadline 22 January 2023

Notification of acceptance **15 February 2023**
Registration will open in **February 2023**
Final drafts of accepted papers for the collective volume are expected before **31 August 2023**

Contact the organizers for further information via ciss-2023@oeaw.ac.at or look for updates at the conference website.

In view of travel difficulties in many parts of the world the conference will take place in hybrid format allowing online access to all events except for the cultural program.

We look forward to an exciting interdisciplinary event and welcome you in Vienna,

THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Katsiaryna Ackermann
Joachim Matzinger
Robert Pichler