

Call for Papers: Workshop “Between Fragmentation and Solidarity: Memory and Identity in Post-Communist Central Europe”

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Workshop Description

Central Europe remains a key arena for debates over memory, identity, and the meaning of Europe. Positioned at the intersection of empires, ideologies, and shifting borders, the region has a layered historical experience that continues to shape contemporary political, social, and cultural trajectories. As Milan Kundera observed, Central Europe is more than geography—it is a cultural and historical phenomenon central to understanding Europe as a whole.

One defining feature of the region is its memory of communism and post-communism. The collapse of state socialism in 1989 brought political freedom, yet the legacies of communist regimes—authoritarian practices, centrally planned economies, surveillance, and censorship—remain visible in public debates, institutions, and political culture. Post-communist decades have also generated their own narratives, myths, and disillusionments, ranging from triumphalist accounts of democratization to skepticism about European integration. Memory of communism thus functions both as a burden of the past and a resource mobilized in contemporary political and cultural struggles.

Equally central is the question of regional identities. Central Europe is far from homogeneous: the experiences of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, or the Czech Republic differ significantly, as do those of regions such as Silesia, Galicia, or Transylvania. Local and regional identities, often shaped by layered memories of empire, migration, and minority cultures, interact with national and European frameworks. In some cases, they challenge national narratives; in others, they enrich them. Understanding these negotiations is crucial for assessing the region’s position within the EU and its relations with both Western Europe and Eastern neighbors.

This workshop aims to explore the intersection of memory, regional identity, and European belonging, reconceptualizing Central Europe not as a peripheral space but as a formative arena where Europe’s most pressing cultural and political debates unfold.

Possible Paper Topics

We welcome contributions on, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Memory of communism: nostalgia, trauma, and generational change.
- Post-communist transformations: contested legacies of 1989 and their impact on political culture.
- Regional identities (Silesia, Transylvania, Galicia, Visegrád space) as counter-narratives to national frameworks.
- Memory politics in the V4 states: convergence, divergence, or fragmentation?
- Interactions between local/regional memories and national/European narratives.
- Commemorative practices: monuments, museums, anniversaries of 1989 and 2004 (EU accession).
- Comparative perspectives on post-communist memory in Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Baltic states.
- Literature, film, and art as sites for negotiating post-communist memory.
- The war in Ukraine and the revival of Cold War-era frames in Central European identity politics.

Participants

The workshop is open to historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, and cultural studies scholars working on Central Europe. Contributions from researchers in memory studies, post-communism, and regional identities are especially welcome.