

# DECOLONIZATION STRATEGIES AND MEMORY WORK IN POPULAR CULTURE

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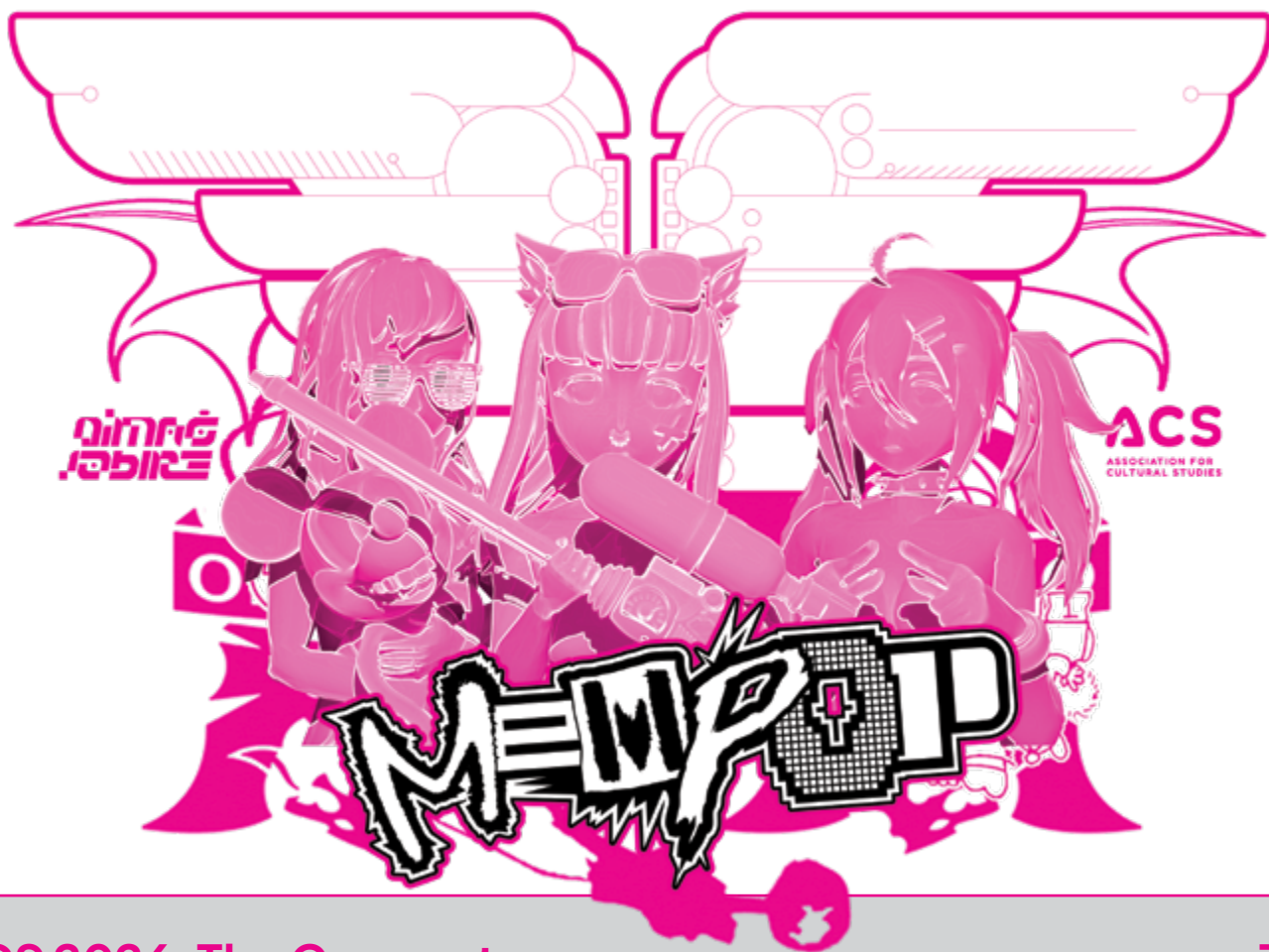
DECOLONIZATION STRATEGIES AND  
MEMORY WORK IN POPULAR CULTURE

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2026 ACS Institute and  
MEMPOP Final Conference

Faculty of Social Sciences,  
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

April 20–25, 2026



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# ACS 2026: The Concept

Hosted by the Centre for Cultural and Religious Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, the 2026 ACS Institute is designed to offer a platform for developing new perspectives on the impact of contemporary popular culture as a generator of transmedia imaginaries that are entangled with different – and often competing – positionalities, inequalities, struggles, and perceptions of time, space, and place. More specifically, the 2026 ACS Institute addresses popular culture as a vibrant site of decolonial practices, many of which are inextricably linked to memory work – conscious, but non-essentializing engagement with collective and individual memory as an impactful dimension of individual and collective identification and agency.

Echoing the starting points of the 2023 ACS Summer Institute in Taiwan, the Institute is designed to interrogate the significance of popular culture today by looking at how it is positioned within the complex web of correlations between the material, affective, discursive, technological, and political facets of global, international, regional, and local, as well as transcultural and transnational conjunctures. Considering contemporary popular culture as a site of meaning and feeling contestation, negotiation, and transformation, the ACS Institute in Ljubljana contributes to the ongoing project of epistemic decolonization. By epistemic decolonization, we refer to the articulation of both the diversity of cultural practices, forms, processes, and regimes of production, circulation, and consumption, and their complex entanglements with the (neo)colonial economic, political, epistemological, and cultural paradigms that contribute to the proliferation of injustice, inequality, and violence. The 2026 ACS Institute also aims to re-think epistemic decolonization in relation to the current geopolitical struggles between the US and China, Europe and Russia, as well as the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

In the 21st century, the processes of popular-cultural production, distribution, circulation, and reception are complicated by the multiplication of platforms, algorithms, and media on the one hand, and by the diversity of their affordances and the practices they enable on the other. Over the past several decades, the expansion, relative global accessibility, and accelerated hybridization of the diverse cultural and creative industries – from Bollywood and Nollywood to K-Pop, to Balkan turbofolk, and Polish video games on the one hand, to various transcultural and antihegemonic (feminist, queer, minoritarian) expressions on the other – have contributed to shifts in people's experience and understanding of identities, communities, history, and power relations.

The proposed Institute program addresses the relationship between decolonization, memory work, and popular culture in the 21st century, by offering lectures, panel discussions, workshops, fieldwork sessions, and a rich (popular)cultural program, focusing on the following topics: (1) Remembering as Resistance, (2) Decolonization Strategies and Research Methodologies; (3) Inter- and Transmedia Memory Work.

The 2026 ACS Institute offers fresh interdisciplinary research and pedagogical approaches related to the above thematic issues and relevant sociopolitical phenomena. The Institute is envisioned as a 5-day event, comprising a 2-day international scientific conference, 3 days of intensive thematic and methodology-focused workshops, and a rich accompanying cultural program designed in collaboration with the Slovenian Cinematheque, the Nimaš Izbire collective, and benefitting from Ljubljana's vibrant and dynamic public graffitiscap.

# Logistics and Practicalities



## Dates

Full duration of the event: **April 20-25, 2026**.

**April 20-21:** Decolonization Strategies and Memory Work in Popular Culture: International Scientific Conference (Final MEMPOP Conference)

**April 22-24:** ACSI workshops and cultural program (tailor-made graffiti tour, film screenings at the Slovenian Cinemathèque, Final Party Nimaš Izbire X MEMPOP: Ljubljanacore at Channel Zero (Metelkova))

**April 25:** informal hangouts, networking, urban anthropology and other self-organized activities.

## Program

The final conference program, with room numbers, will be published on the [mempop.eu](http://mempop.eu) website by **March 10** and all speakers will be notified via email.

The final schedule of the **ACSI workshops and accompanying cultural program** will be released by **March 10**, and all ACSI participants will be notified via email.

The complete ACSI program booklet will be distributed to all participants in pdf format by **April 2**.

## Conference Presentation Duration

Presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes each, to leave 10 minutes per speaker for Q&A. Please bring your presentation on a flashdrive or download it to the computer in the conference room during break before your session.

## Venue

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Kardeljeva ploščad 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Room numbers will be announced once on the final program, which will be made available online through the MEMPOP webpage by **March 10**, and will be distributed to all participants by the end of March.

## Wi-Fi

Eduroam is available at the venue.

## Formal Acceptance Letter

Please contact us through [info@mempop.eu](mailto:info@mempop.eu) if you need a formal letter of acceptance/invitation. For help with visa procedures, please contact the Slovenian embassy in your country or, in the absence of a Slovenian embassy, the country responsible for processing visas for travellers to Slovenia. For more information, consult

<https://www.gov.si/en/topics/entry-and-residence/>

## Help, I got lost in Ljubljana/have trouble getting to the venue/ not sure where my hotel is!

Contact **Jernej Kaluža**, +386 31 531 799, through Whatsapp or sms.

The number will be available on April 19–25, and is to only be used in emergency situations.

## Registration and Welcome

**April 20–21:** We would like to begin at 9:15 a.m. sharp on April 20, and at 9:30 a.m. on April 21, so please be at the venues on time. The conference rooms should be easy to find once you are at the main entrance (there will be signs).

**April 22–24:** Please be on time for the Welcome speech on April 22 at 10:00 a.m. Workshops on April 22–24 will begin at 10:30 a.m. The program at the Cinemathèque begins at 6:00 p.m. on April 22 and April 23, and at 5:00 p.m. on April 24.

Coffee and snacks, as well as buffet lunches will be provided by the organizers on location. More information on conference dinner on April 20, and Institute dinner on April 24, will follow shortly.

## Hotels for International Guests

There are several accommodation options available in Ljubljana. Even though the venue (Faculty of Social Sciences, Kardeljeva ploščad 5, 1000 Ljubljana) is not in the city centre, most hotels and attractions are. Therefore, we recommend you search for your hotels / flats there. The Faculty of Social Sciences is easily accessible by city bus, city bike, taxi or on foot.

**Here are some of the more affordable, but still comfortable hotel options:**

- 1 **B&B Hotel Ljubljana Park** (Tabor 9, 1000 Ljubljana)  
You can make a reservation via their page:  
<https://www.hotel-bb.com/en/si>
- 2 **City Hotel Ljubljana** (Dalmatinova ulica 15, 1000 Ljubljana)  
You can make a reservation via their page:  
<https://www.cityhotel.si/>
- 3 **Hotel Emonec** (Wolfova ulica 12, 1000 Ljubljana)  
You can make a reservation via Booking.



If none of these hotels work for you, you have plenty of other options throughout the city. **Holiday Inn Express** (Podmilščakova 51, 1000 Ljubljana) and **Austria Trend Hotel** (Dunajska 154, 1000 Ljubljana) are walking distance from the Faculty of Social Sciences (cca 12 min walk) but are not central. Reservations for all of these can be made via Booking.com.

## Transportation

If you are staying in the city centre, you have several options for getting to the conference venues.

**By bus:** we recommend taking the bus (buses 6, 11, and 8 all take you to the station Mercator, where the Faculty of Social Sciences is). To do this, you need to buy an Urbana card (a transportation card). To get the card, you need to find a kiosk or a green Urbana machine (see both side-by-side in the picture below). You can buy and fill your Urbana card (which costs 2 euros) at both. Alternatively, you can download the Urbana mobile app via Google Play/App Store. Once you have enabled a virtual card and topped it up, you can pay for your ride by tapping your phone on the bus reader (if you are using an Android device with NFC enabled) or by scanning a QR code from the app screen (if you are using an iPhone or other devices).



**By bike:** you can also rent the city bike Bicikelj. Bicikelj stations are located throughout the city. For this, you need to buy an Urbana card. The Urbana app also integrates the Bicikelj bike-sharing system. With it you register on the Bicikelj website, where you pay a weekly (1 euro) or yearly (3 euros) subscription. For more information on payment, use, and the locations of the stations, visit: <https://www.bicikelj.si/en/offers/groups> and Bicikelj app in your app store. Please keep in mind that April weather in Ljubljana is not necessarily very bicycle-friendly (it tends to be rainy, with temperatures at around 10 degrees Celsius).

**By taxi:** you can also call a taxi; the ride should cost around 7-8 EUR in one direction. For this we recommend you download the **Uber app** or call:

**Taxi Metro**, +386 41 240 200

**Taxi Laguna**, +386 31 492 299

## Getting to Ljubljana

**By train/bus:** both bus and train stations are located in the city centre.

**By plane:** Ljubljana airport is 27 km from the city. We advise you to not take one of the taxis waiting at the airport as it will cost you close to 100 euros. Instead reserve your shuttle seat in advance. We recommend you contact:

**Markun Shuttle**: <https://www.markun-shuttle.com/en/landing-english/or>

**GoOpti**: <https://www.goopti.com/en/>

**By car:** if you are travelling by car, your best option is to leave your car in the **Park and Ride area** (there are several on the outskirts of Ljubljana) and go into the city centre by bus. More info on P&R: <https://www.ljubljana.info/parking/park-and-ride-ljubljana/>

## Transportation

If you want to park in the centre, **City Hotel** and **Hotel Park** offer parking options for their guest. Otherwise, the nearest parking garages are:

**Parking Kongresni trg**

**Parking Šubičeva**

Please note that parking in the centre can be quite expensive.

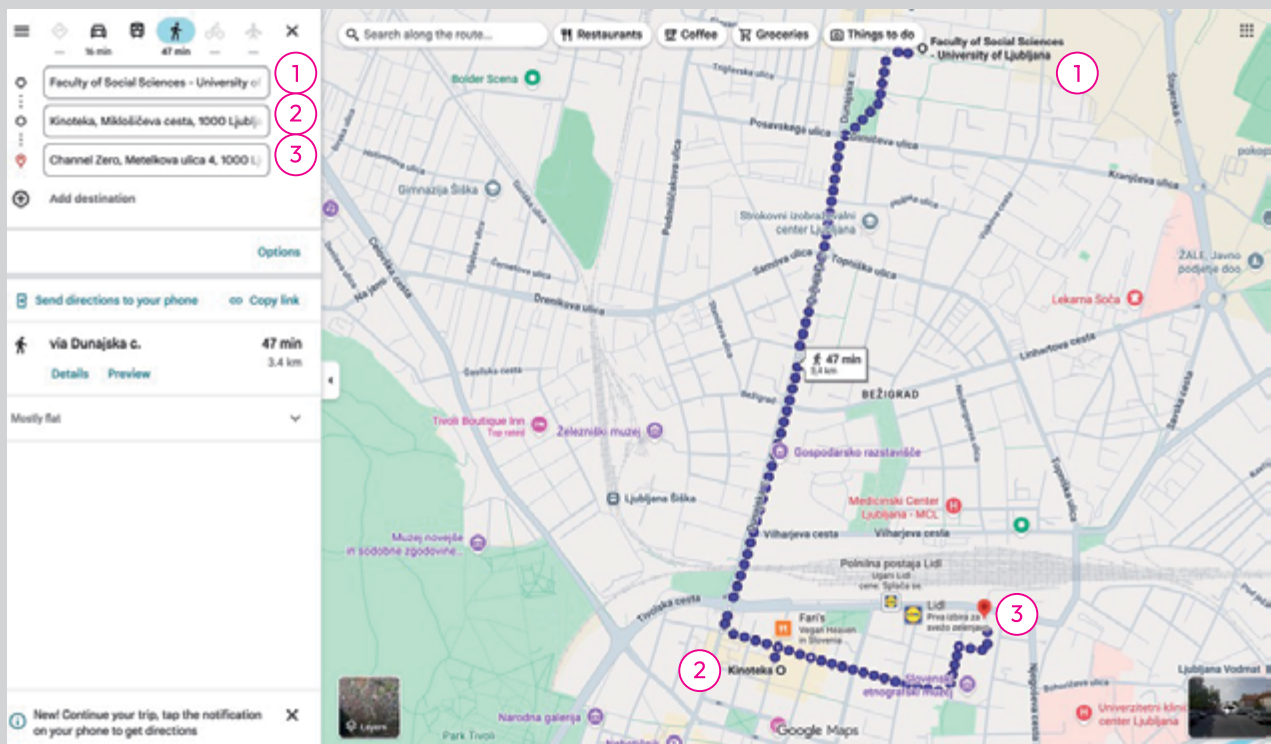
More on this here: <https://www.lpt.si/en/parking-facilities>

**On foot:** if you decide to walk from the city centre to the venue, the trip will take you **cca 40 mins**.

If you are traveling to Ljubljana by car, there are several affordable Park and Ride options available on the outskirts of the city

<https://www.ljubljana.info/parking/park-and-ride-ljubljana/>

## All venues involved:



# Decolonization Strategies and Memory Work in Popular Culture: MEMPOP Final Conference Schedule



# April 20, 2026, Monday

8:30

Registration – Coffee and snacks available (FDV main entrance)

9:15

Welcome (Grand hall – Velika dvorana)

9:30

1a

Reclaiming Spaces, Reclaiming Memory: Popular-Cultural Resistance and Decolonial Urban Imaginaries (Panel, FDV20)

1b

Decolonial Gaming and Playful Memory Work (Panel, FDV21)

11:30

2

David Mwambari, The Politics of Vernacular Memory: Locality, Crisis, and the Work of Memory (Keynote lecture and conversation with Tanja Petrović and Aljoša Pužar) (Grand hall)

12:30

Lunch Break

13:30

3a

Populism and Protest as Vectors of Memory Work (Panel, FDV20)

3b

Film Festivals and Epistemic Decolonization (Panel, FDV21)

15:30

Coffee Break

15:45

4

MEMPOP Perspectives and Beyond: Cultural Studies in (South-)Eastern Europe and Popular Culture as Memory Arena (Round Table, Network Launch, Book Exhibition) (Grand hall)

17:30

5a

'Perverse Decolonization' and Popular Culture (Part I): Contested Legacies, (Anti-)Imperial Appropriations and Illiberal Uses of the Past (Panel, FDV20)

5b

Subversions (Panel, FDV21)

20:00

Dinner – (self-paid, except for ACSI workshop participants and organizers, Vivo D125, Dunajska cesta 125, 1000 Ljubljana)

# April 21, 2026, Wednesday

8:30

Registration – Coffee and snacks available (FDV main entrance)

9:30

6a Re-Imagining and Reclaiming Popular Culture for the 21st Century (Panel, FDV20)

6b

Transnational Perspectives on Mnemonic Aesthetics and Strategies in Popular Culture (Panel, FDV21)

11:30

7

Madina Tlostanova, Can the Abandoned Remember, Create, Re-Future? Imagining Popular Cultural Strategies for Re-Existence in the Looming Poly-Crisis (Keynote lecture, Grand hall)

12:30

Lunch Break

13:30

8a Public Spaces (Panel, FDV20)

8b

Mnemonic Lives and Afterlives in/of Yugoslav Socialist Popular Culture (Panel, FFDV21)

15:30

Coffee Break

15:45

9

'Perverse Decolonization' and Popular Culture (Part 2): Vernacular Voices, Mnemonic Struggles, and Post-Dependent Voices (Panel, Grand hall)

17:45

10a Sonic Trajectories (Panel, FDV20)

10b

Decolonial Disobedience (Panel, FDV21)

20:00

Drinks and Snacks – (self-paid, Pritličje, Mestni trg 2, 1000 Ljubljana)

# Panels, Keynotes, Roundtables



**1a**

## Reclaiming Spaces, Reclaiming Memory: Popular-Cultural Resistance and Decolonial Urban Imaginaries

This panel examines how self-managed artistic spaces and independent cultural infrastructures across Europe articulate alternative forms of memory and knowledge production. By focusing on occupied theatres, artist-run initiatives, and popular-cultural practices, it investigates how communities reclaim both urban and symbolic spaces through creative, non-institutional modes of collective expression. The papers explore how practices of artistic resistance and grassroots cultural production generate new decolonial imaginaries, reconfiguring relations between centre and periphery, past and present, institution and commons. Combining methodologies from theatre and performance studies, media studies, and urban cultural history, the panel aims to question how aesthetic practices can become tools of social transformation, producing shared memories that challenge dominant narratives of progress, heritage, and development.

Andrea Capriolo, Murals of Memory: Public Art and Collective Identity in Milan's Ortica District

Marianna Lucarini, Producing Space Otherwise: Self-Managed Cultural Spaces and Counter-Memory in Europe

Nona Shahnazarian and Areg Balayan, Walls that Mourn, Walls that Speak: Armenia's War Murals as Decolonial Memory Work

Julia Székely, The Forensic Archive as Memory Work: Material Traces of Socialist-Era Graffiti

Chairs: Marianna Lucarini and Andrea Capriolo

**1b**

## Decolonial Gaming and Playful Memory Work

Özlem Yumrukuz, Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna): Indigenous Iñupiat Memory Reclaimed through Popular-Cultural Storytelling

Tomáš Erhart, From Chernobyl to Chornobyl: Decolonization of Videogame Franchise S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

Daniil Leiderman, Memory Work During Memory Play

Wang Yuen Ho, Subversive Memory Work in Coded Creativity: Navigating Censorship in Post-2020 Hong Kong YouTube Productions

Chair: Rodoljub Jovanović

**2**

## David Mwambari, The Politics of Vernacular Memory: Locality, Crisis, and the Work of Memory

This keynote builds on my earlier work on master narratives in postcolonial contexts to examine how localized vernacular memory emerges and operates in relation to dominant narratives. I explore how vernacular memories may counter master narratives, coexist alongside them, or persist for reasons that exceed direct opposition. Rather than treating memory as fixed, I approach it as dynamic, contingent, and politically productive within specific local contexts. The talk traces how certain memories become politicized through processes of narration, silencing, stabilization, and forgetting, and how they shift across time, sometimes hardening into seemingly stable forms, sometimes fragmenting, or surviving as open secrets or silences. Particular attention is given to memory work produced during moments of crisis, or about past crises, especially in sensitive settings shaped by unequal power relations among state actors, communities, and institutions. I ask what happens to memory narratives and memory sites

when they are created under pressure, and how positionality and identity shape both their articulation and their reception. The paper draws on comparative empirical research from Brazil, Kenya, Belgium, and Uganda to show how vernacular memory operates as a crucial, if fragile, political resource in times of uncertainty.

Keynote lecture and conversation with Tanja Petrović and Aljoša Pužar.

Chair: Natalija Majsova

**3a**

### Populism and Protest as Vectors of Memory Work

Astrea Nikolovska, Laura Mafizzoli, *Seams of Ambivalence: Populism from Below in Serbia and Georgia*

Laura Innocenti, *The Art of Remembering: Russian Exile and the Layers of Memory After 2022*

Peter Vermeersch, *The Afterlife of a Protest Song: Music, Memory, and State Power in Belarus and Russia*

Aleksei Semenenko, Maria Engström, *Soviet Myth in Post-Soviet Russia*

Chair: Danijel Matijević

**3b**

### Film Festivals and Epistemic Decolonization

This panel examines the dynamics of film festivals through a decolonial lens, interrogating their structural logics of cultural production, distribution, and exhibition. Building on prior research on film festivals and situating their analyses within broader theoretical frameworks of cultural memory, media industries, and anthropology, the contributors offer a multi-layered set of perspectives. Together, these studies illuminate the complexity of film festivals as multifaceted events, shaped by negotiations among economic, social, and cultural forces – sometimes competing, sometimes collaborating – that govern the circulation and consumption of cinema today. Aida Vallejo focuses on the Basque festival landscape, specifically the San Sebastián International Film Festival, adopting a decolonial perspective to analyze contested practices surrounding linguistic diversity, national identities, and geopolitical tensions. María Paz Peirano turns to audiences and community formation, emphasizing collaborative methodological approaches that shed light on the construction of cultural memory through cinemagoing. Finally, Marijke de Valck focuses on the film *Tanna* and its circulation through festivals to explore how a decolonial perspective can reveal modes of representation and agency in the work of the Indigenous Yakel community.

Aida Vallejo, *Writing Geolocated Histories of Cinema: The San Sebastian Film Festival and the Basque Context*

María Paz Peirano, *Co-Creating Cinema Histories: Audiences, Memory, and Participatory Festival Research*

Marijke de Valck, *Festivals as Sites of Translation: Tanna and the Politics of Decolonizing Popular Narratives*

Chair: Boris Ružić

**4**

## MEMPOP Perspectives and Beyond: Cultural Studies in (South-)Eastern Europe and Popular Culture as Memory Arena

This round table is designed to foreground the MEMPOP project's central conceptual challenges and key findings, situating them within ongoing debates on memory work in popular culture and the reverberations of post- and decolonial efforts in South-Eastern Europe. By foregrounding the transmedia and mass-mediated dimensions of popular culture, the discussion addresses its ambivalent role as both a site of hegemonic reproduction and a platform for mnemonic contestation, negotiation, and transformation. Featuring representatives of MEMPOP's three media-specific working groups – murals and graffiti, film, and popular music – the round table offers a synthetic overview of the project's comparative insights. It highlights how, in the specific context of the post-Yugoslav space, different media forms shape, circulate, and reconfigure collective memories across scales, from local contexts to global cultural flows. Particular attention is paid to the tensions between commercial infrastructures, participatory practices, and political imaginaries. The session will conclude by outlining future horizons, including forthcoming project-related publications, new research trajectories, and potential collaborative initiatives. After the end of this spotlight session, we will invite everyone to celebrate the recent emergence of a South-East-European cultural-studies network, facilitated over the past several years by different research projects and initiatives, including MEMPOP.

Participants: Mila Orlić, Boris Ružić, Eric Ušić, Jasmina Šepetavc, Jernej Kaluža, Mitja Velikonja, Owen Kohl  
Moderators: Natalija Majsova and Vjerran Pavlaković

**5a**

## 'Perverse Decolonization' and Popular Culture (Part I): Contested Legacies, (Anti-)Imperial Appropriations and Illiberal Uses of the Past

'Perverse decolonization', a concept that Ekatarina Degot and David Riff conceived one year before the Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022, refers to the manipulative nature of autocratic regimes' abuse of certain arguments in the decolonization debate, while the age of resurgent nationalism progresses (Degot/Riff 2021). At the same time, however, the notion of the perverse is also a queer concept that enables appropriation from below, by the oppressed and discriminated. We wish to discuss this ambivalence of 'perverse decolonization' in two panels by focusing on the politics of memory and popular culture in East-Central and Eastern Europe. This first panel explores how different popular media forms – television series, music, fiction, and comics – become arenas where decolonial narratives are re-signified. By foregrounding the interplay of memory politics, affect, and cultural performance, the panel interrogates how 'perverse' decolonization both consolidates new exclusions and opens space for alternative solidarities.

Matthias Schwartz, *The Marginalised of the Empire: The TV Series Salam Maskva as a 'Perverse Decolonization' Strategy*  
Indira Hajnacs, *Losers in the West, Stars in the East – (Perverse) Decolonization and the (Re)Invention of the Steppe Music Tradition in Hungary*  
Aleksandra Szczepan, *The Emotional Life of Perverse Decolonization: Polish Popular Culture and Nationalistic Imaginaries*  
Svitlana Pidoprygora, *Perverse (De)colonial Aesthetics on Graphic Novel Covers: The Case of Ukraine*  
Chair: Alexandra Kolesnik

**5b****Subversions**

Waseem Ahad, Aesthetics of Memoricide: Rishism/Sufism and Subversion in Kashmir's Digital Art  
Gala Naseva, Post-War and Post-Ethnic Conflict Memory in Western Balkan Feminist Theatre  
Clara Vlessing, Identifying the Master's Tools: Audre Lorde, Mnemonic Capital and Resistance  
Fedja Šlaki, Kissed by a Fish: A Study of Aquatic Monsters, Through Cultural Memory, Gender and Identification  
Chair: Jasmina Šepetavc

**6a****Re-Imagining and Reclaiming Popular Culture for the 21st Century**

Milena Dragičević Šešić, Tatjana Nikolić, Remediation of Popular Culture in Protest Walks in Serbia 2024/25  
Lana Zdravković, Reappropriation of Tradition and Pop Culture and Reclaiming the Memory as an Emancipatory Element of the Serbian Student Protest Movement  
Neja Berger, Alja Pehar, TikTok 'Brainrot' Between Post-Legibility and Vernacular Psychology  
Chair: Jernej Kaluža

**6b****Transnational Perspectives on Mnemonic Aesthetics and Strategies in Popular Culture**

Maria Sokolova, (Not) Too Young to Reminisce: Memory Work in Contemporary Popular Children's Literature  
Mina Ibrahim, Reclaiming Repertoires: Decolonizing Memory and Justice through Popular Culture among Syrians in Germany  
Lethabo Ngoasheng, The 'Digital Imbizo': South African Black Twitter as Decolonial Strategy and Popular Memory Work  
Chair: Gal Kirn

**7****Madina Tlostanova, Can the Abandoned Remember, Create, Re-Future? Imagining Popular Cultural Strategies for Re-Existence in the Looming Poly-Crisis**

Unlike the ideological divisions of the past, the world today is increasingly divided into the select few and the (soon to be) abandoned. In all our diversity, the abandoned are not necessarily passive and mutually aggressive victims competing for the pittance from modernity/coloniality, but an emerging subjectivity that needs to be critically conceptualized, embodied, and inhabited for the sake of survival in the arriving world of geopolitical crises, climate change, and techno-coloniality. Popular culture is a crucial space for unfolding this active and creative subjectivity of the abandoned, crucial for the retention of life on our planet, at least for a while. Moreover, popular culture connects the past with the future, paradoxically allowing collective memory from below to become its agent. Although memory seems to be directed toward the past, without rethinking the relationship with memory, it is impossible to re-imagine the future. The original promises of re-existence as an achievable decoloniality have dissolved into rhetorical devices, whether re-existence is seen through a return to an idealized past or through

the construction of a utopian future. But the urge for wording otherwise hasn't disappeared, although it has acquired a humbler and calmer neostoic character – “low case hope” (Walsh) and “low-intensity struggle” (Machado de Oliveira) – and a focus on the everyday tasks of survival, coping, and care. Popular culture is a key element in “the world of retention” (Fry), aimed at what can still be saved. It's not only about endangered species or reservoirs of clean water, but also about the disappearing fabrics of human and interspecies relations, about rapidly virtualizing and vanishing belonging to the world, to a community, to oneself. It's also about the trampled solidarity and empathy that once helped our species survive and that we are rapidly losing. If popular culture can become a space for multiple critique, intersectional dialogue, emancipation from victimhood rivalry, and re-instatement of solidarity on new grounds attuned to the current situation, remains an open question. But low-case hope still lets us believe in the small, active, local communities of survival and care able to empirically develop specific cultural and social practices, artistic forms and everyday communication that would further re-existence for homo narrans (Wynter) in relation to other forms of life on the planet.

Keynote lecture.  
Chair: Owen Kohl

## 8a Public Spaces

Anita Khachaturova, *An Anthropology of Loss: Exploring the Spectral Maps of the Armenians from Hadrut, Nagorno-Karabakh*  
Celia Martinez Saez, *The Untranslatable City: Queer Micropolitics and Counter-Tourist Gaze in Barcelona*  
Andrea Průchová Hružová, “The Beauty” of Neoliberal Anti-Communism: Public Art and Corporatization of Public Space  
Jeremy Walton, *Curating Decolonial Hegemony: On Turkey's 15 July Museum*  
Chair: Eric Ušić

## 8b Mnemonic Lives and Afterlives in/of Yugoslav Socialist Popular Culture

The panel (Mnemonic) Lives and Afterlives in/of Yugoslav Socialist Popular Culture presents Yugoslav socialist cultural practices in factories, travel writing, comics, and picture books for children from diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Departing from media, forms, politics, practices, and infrastructures of past popular culture, using archival, ethnographic, and hermeneutic methods within the framework of critical epistemology, the panel questions the roles and meanings of past popular culture, the existing conceptual apparatus, and their transgressions and regressions in relation to the (dis)continuities of memory, life, and their imaginations.

Ana Hofman, *More Than Fun: An Infrastructural Lens on Yugoslav Youth, Leisure, and Popular Culture*  
Tanja Petrović, *Popular Culture and Memory of the Revolution: “Partisan Comics” by the “Second Generation” Authors of the Yugoslav Comics*  
Iva Kosmos, *Yugoslav Socialist Travelogues in the Third World: Anti-Colonial, Decolonial, Colonial?*  
Katja Kobolt, *In Flux: Children's Popular Culture and Memory (of War)*  
Chair: Ana Hofman

**9**

## 'Perverse Decolonization' and Popular Culture (Part 2): Vernacular Voices, Mnemonic Struggles, and Post-Dependent Voices

This panel continues the debate on 'perverse decolonization', a concept describing how emancipatory discourses of decoloniality are inverted and sometimes mobilized to legitimize authoritarianism, cultural exclusion, and nationalist narratives (Degot/Riff 2021), by situating it in a broader context of Central-East and Eastern European popular culture. The papers discuss popular culture as a critical site of decolonial resistance, where mnemonic struggles, vernacular voices, and semi-peripheral positionings challenge dominant narratives of history and belonging. Focusing on popular music from Ukraine, the diverse appropriations of Viktor Tsoi's legacy across the post-Socialist space, the 'grey zones' of (post-)dependent Slovakia and East Germany as well as on Russian Left online platforms, this second panel reflects on popular culture as both a terrain of struggle and a laboratory of a 'perverse' decolonization, where subaltern and semi-peripheral voices unsettle, but sometimes also affirm hegemonic memory frameworks.

Iuliana Matasova, Refrains of the 1990s in Contemporary Ukrainian Pop: Surzhyk as a Decolonial Intuition

Alexandra Kolesnik, Mnemonic Struggles and Postcolonial Belonging: Soviet Rock as Contested Heritage in the Post-Soviet Space

Olha Norba, Grey Zones of (Post-)Dependence in Slovakia and (East) Germany: Narrating the Socialist Past Between Self-Colonization and Resistance

Gleb Koran, Decolonial Narratives on Russian Left YouTube: The Restoration of Justice Against the West

Chair: Matthias Schwartz

**10a**

## Sonic Trajectories

Meral Özçınar, Listening as Resistance: Soundscape Storytelling and Decolonial Memory Work

Asja Šuštaršič, Sounds of Resistance: Kurdish Music as Decolonizing Practice Against Cultural Hegemony

Elena Bös, Decolonial Memory Politics in Metal: Agency, Exclusion, and the Ethics of Representation

Bernhard Steinbrecher, Popular Sounds' Herstories: Exploring the Musical Experiences and Aesthetics among Millennial Women\* in Tyrol, Austria

Chair: Robert Bobnič

**10b**

## Decolonial Disobedience

Peter Korchnak, Permission to Remember: Yugodiasporadicals and Mnemonic Disobedience

Tamara Tóth, Afterimages of Utopia: Visual Diplomacy and Vernacular Memory in Yugoslavia's African Encounters

Marina Gržinić, Cinematic Solidarities: Anti-Colonial Work in Film Between Ex-Yugoslavia and the Global South

Tanja Zimmermann, Haunted Objects: Remembering the GDR Through Comics

Chair: Nina Cvar

# ACSI Institute Workshops and Cultural Program



## April 22, 2026, Wednesday

10:00

Welcome

10:30

1

INTRODUCTION TO NETWORK ANALYSIS 1 (Kostanjevec, Bobnič, [FDV18](#))

2

PARTICIPANTS' RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS 1 ([FDV19](#))

1

If you choose this workshop, you are also obliged to attend Part 2 (Thursday morning). You will have the opportunity to present your own ongoing/recent research in the afternoon (Participants' research presentation 2).

2

All Institute participants will have the opportunity to do a 10 min poster presentation of their ongoing research. You will be split into 2 groups based on the workshops that you choose to attend (Network analysis or How to historicize with care. You can also choose to attend both workshops and not do a presentation of your research.

12:30

Lunch Break

14:00

HOW TO HISTORICIZE WITH CARE (Garda, Majsova, Šepetavc, [FDV18](#))

PARTICIPANTS' RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS 2 ([FDV19](#))

16:00

WHEN WALLS SPEAK – GRAFFITI TOUR (Velikonja, tour begins in front of the main entrance of FDV UL and finishes near the Cinemathèque)

18:00

CINEMATHEQUE: Film Program 1

## April 23, 2026, Thursday

10:30

1.2

INTRODUCTION TO NETWORK ANALYSIS 2 (Kostanjevec, Bobnič, [FDV18](#))

3

CONTESTED MEMORIES (Hudelist, Wieser, [FDV19](#))

13:00

Lunch Break

15:00

GROSSBERG ONLINE WORKSHOP + BOOK LAUNCH (Pužar, Kaluža, [FDV19](#))

18:00

CINEMATHEQUE: Film Program 2

## April 24, 2026, Friday

10:30

CUTEFICATION (Pužar, [FDV19](#))

12:30

Lunch Break

14:00

MONUMENTS, MURALS, AND MINEFIELDS (Pavlaković, Perak, [FDV19](#))

17:00

CINEMATHEQUE: Film Program 3

19:00

WALKING DINNER (Local street food, pre-organized)

20:00

NIMAŠ IZBIRE X MEMPOP: LJUBLJANACORE  
([Metelkova](#): Videospot Program + Afterparty)

## April 25, 2026, Saturday

optional self-organized trips & individual consultations

# Workshops



Jan Kostanjevec, Robert Bobnič

## INTRODUCTION TO NETWORK ANALYSIS FOR COMMUNITY DETECTION OF YOUTUBE USERS

(PARTS 1 & 2 – REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS SHOULD  
ATTEND BOTH PARTS)

The participants will learn how to extract and analyze data from YouTube (and possibly other platforms) to explore user engagement with content and identify communities of audiences on the platform. Using their own video collections, they will be introduced to big-data network analysis: collecting video metadata and understanding the networks of audiences and their preferences based on comments. In this way, the participants will gain knowledge of how to detect communities of users interested in similar content and, potentially, how to infer their sociocultural profile. No prior experience is necessary, but familiarity with Python programming is beneficial. **Equipment needed: a laptop.** In collaboration with GIA Institute.

Maria B. Garda, Natalija Majsova, Jasmina Šepetavc

## HOW TO HISTORICIZE WITH CARE: FROM MEMORY AND DECOLONIALITY TO OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

This workshop offers practice-based insights into developing widely accessible pedagogical resources designed to offer correctives to dominant historical narratives. Drawing on the recently released Open Educational Resource on the role of women and minorities in the history of creative computing in Europe developed as part of the COST Action 21141 Grassroots of Digital Europe: from Historic to Contemporary Cultures of Creative Computing ([costgrade.eu](http://costgrade.eu)), we will discuss multiple epistemic, methodological, organizational, logistical, design, and other issues that are likely to arise in interdisciplinary, community-oriented research across the humanities and social sciences. In particular, the workshop will discuss good practices and challenges involved in identifying, preserving, and working with individuals, groups, and communities that have, for different reasons, been overlooked in extant scholarship.

Mitja Velikonja

## WHEN WALLS SPEAK – POLITICAL GRAFFITI AND STREET ART IN LJUBLJANA

Political graffiti are a specific indicator of the social situation in a certain space at the certain time: a sprayed “litmus paper” of the ongoing developments and a kind of street archive (or a memory agent) of the previous ones. A walk through the Ljubljana graffiti-scape will reveal what current (and recent) political debates, social issues and cultural challenges are both reflected and constructed on the walls of Slovenian capital.

Andreas Hudelist, Matthias Wieser

## CONTESTED MEMORIES: THE SLOVENIAN MINORITY IN CARINTHIA AND THE POLITICS OF REMEMBRANCE

Austria is no stranger to contradictory narratives of remembrance. Its complex relationship with its National Socialist past – long framed by the myth of victimhood – began to unravel only in the late 1980s, a period that also saw the country's crucial role in the rise of right-wing populism in Europe. Within this context, the federal state of Carinthia occupies a special position, especially as the commemorative year 2025 marks 80 years since the end of World War II. This workshop examines the marginalized history of the Slovenian minority in Carinthia, focusing on revisionist memory politics and the power of counter-narratives. Our case studies – Peršmanhof, Domplatz, and Turnersee – serve as focal points for examining how the history of the expulsion, deportation and murder of Carinthian Slovenians and the anti-fascist resistance is dealt with. By critically engaging with debates about and incidents at these places, we aim to highlight the tensions between official memory, collective memory and subaltern history, inviting a broader reflection on the ethics and politics of commemoration. Through the analysis of monuments, archival reports, and contemporary interventions, we explore how current activist, artistic, and educational projects challenge dominant discourses and reclaim remembrance as an act of resistance.

Lawrence Grossberg

## “MAMA SAID THERE’D BE DAYS LIKE THIS: LOOKING FOR CULTURAL STUDIES”: LECTURE AND BOOK LAUNCH

The future has a new paperback smell: the Slovene translation of Lawrence Grossberg's seminal book *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* is here. Written as a manifesto for renewing the discipline, the book argues for cultural studies as conjunctural analysis: a radically contextual practice that maps how power is assembled across lived experience, institutions, media, economy, and affect, without reducing the present to a single theory or cause. The translation is especially timely in an era marked by a crisis of temporality – presentism, fragmented memory, and shrinking horizons of political imagination – and highlights Grossberg's distinctive mix of the British cultural studies tradition with insights from affect studies, complexity thinking, and post-Marxist political economy.

On this special occasion, Grossberg will, following the presentation of his book, deliver a talk titled “Mama said there'd be days like this: Looking for Cultural Studies.”

Lawrence “Larry” Grossberg is an emeritus Distinguished Professor of Communication and Cultural Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has researched and written about American popular and political cultures (from the 1950s to the present). Much of this work focuses on how conservative, reactionary, and progressive politics have been reconfigured within larger political cultures. He has also studied modern and contemporary philosophy and cultural theory. Grossberg was pivotal in bringing the British school of cultural studies (the Birmingham school) methods and debates to US academia. He is an influential figure in the cultural studies movement worldwide and one of the founders of the ACS (Association for Cultural Studies).

The event will be moderated by Aljoša Pužar and Jernej Kaluža.

Aljoša Pužar

## CUTEFICATION IN POLITICS, MEMORY, AND POPULAR CULTURE

Cutefication or cute-turning is a wide and multi-layered social operation rooted in a promise of benevolent and non-threatening encounters and interactions. As such, it can activate a sense of nostalgia for an idealized, protected past, real or imagined. The aesthetic of childlike powerlessness can easily flip from nurturing to domination, often by evoking sentimentalized memories that soften lived realities and inequalities. Often interpreted superficially, as a matter of cute mascots, characters, or fashions, flat and divorced from their own violent or coercive histories and usages, cuteness operates not just as a present-day pop aesthetic but as an interface that filters discursive debris of history and uses softened or fluffed-up perceptions to make hegemonic, colonizing, totalizing or, indeed, cutefying forces and systems look and feel innate, harmless, and irresistibly affectionate. The workshop will introduce the basics of cuteness studies to the attendees and debate possible uses of the related conceptual toolbox in critically analyzing pop-cultural phenomena across different times and epistemic environments.

Vjeran Pavlaković, Benedikt Perak

## MONUMENTS, MURALS, AND MINEFIELDS: A WORKSHOP ON RESEARCHING POST-CONFLICT SITES OF MEMORY

This workshop provides participants with the “tricks of the trade” on researching various post-conflict sites of memory, including monuments, memorial museums, murals, and other. The workshop will cover various aspects of finding memorial sites, recording and studying them, engaging in ethnographic fieldwork, reflecting on potential ethical issues, and discussing what to do with the material once the fieldwork is completed. Case studies and ongoing projects (MEMPOP, Slow Memory, FRAMNAT), drawn mainly from Southeastern Europe, will help to illustrate the themes of the workshop, as well as provide examples of how digital tools can be used for both research and dissemination purposes.

# Cultural Program



Films

@ Slovenska kinoteka / Slovenian Cinemathèque,  
Ljubljana, Wednesday, April 22–Friday, April 24

Free entry for MEMPOP X ACS Institute participants.

### Commons on the Horizon: Memory Work and Post-Yugoslav Film

The film program presents the post-Yugoslav landscape of memory as a space of personal and collective experiences, testimonies, and images directed into the future as well as into the past.

The program has been developed by the Slovenian Cinemathèque in collaboration with the Centre for Cultural and Religious Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana (research project MEMPOP: Mnemonic Aesthetics and Strategies in Popular Culture (ARIS J7–50215)), the Association for Cultural Studies (ACS), and the FeKK International Short Film Festival.

## Wednesday, April 22

18:00 Farewell (Abschied)

Želimir Žilnik, FRG, 1975, DCP (filmed on 16 mm), color, 9', English subtitles

After five years spent working in a BMW factory a worker from Serbia gets on a train at a Munich railway station and gets ready for his journey south. The main character recollects his impressions about the city and the country where he worked and speaks about the new things and habits he has acquired.

18:00 Yugoslavia, How Ideology Moved Our Collective Body

Marta Popivoda, Serbia/France/Germany, 2013, DCP (filmed in digital format), b&w/color, 62', English subtitles

The film deals with the question of the manifestation of ideology in public space through mass performances. The author has collected and analyzed film- and video recordings from the period of the former Yugoslavia (1945–2000), which document both state celebrations and activities (youth work brigades, May Day parades, Youth Day celebrations) and various protests (student demonstrations in 1968, the mass uprisings in Belgrade in the 1990s, the Serbian revolution of October 5, 2000). The media images are rounded off by a (re)construction of the gradual erosion of communist ideology through the changes in the relationships between people, ideology, and the state.

“This is a research essay, but also a distinctly personal view of the history of socialist Yugoslavia, its dramatic end, and the subsequent emergence of a number of smaller democracies. The experience of the breakup of Yugoslavia and the establishment of a new class society in Serbia based on the model of wild capitalism led me to investigate recent media images and reexamine social changes through the manifestation of mass performances in public space.” Marta Popivoda

There will be an introduction before the screening.

20:00 **Stitch the Ruin (Zašij ruševinu)**

Željka Blakšić, Croatia/USA, 2024, DCP, color, 8', English subtitles

Stitch the Ruin weaves microscopic views of used textiles, focusing on stitching and tags. It explores time, labor, and the socialist structure of feeling shaped by workers, alongside a list of shut factories – some named after heroines of the Antifascist Women’s Front.

20:00 **Blum – Masters of Their Own Destiny (Blum – Gospodari svoje budućnosti)**

Jasmila Žbanić, BiH, 2024, DCP, b&w/color, 76', English subtitles

Emerik Blum was the visionary founder of Sarajevo-based Energoinvest, an economic giant that grew from nothing under his leadership from 1951 onwards, eventually becoming Yugoslavia’s largest company specializing in energy, construction, and information technology. Blum’s vision not only revived Sarajevo, which had been devastated by war and was industrially backward, but also succeeded in establishing a unique business model that combined the best elements of the socialist planned economy and Western capitalist logic. Blum was a philanthropist, a leader with a flair for human communication, relying on his own knowledge and the education of his employees. Energoinvest operated on all continents and employed tens of thousands of people, and just before his retirement, Blum became a key figure in helping to bring the Winter Olympics to Sarajevo in 1984. This is not only a portrait of a man, but also a call to action and a more humane attitude towards the working class.

## Thursday, April 23

18:00 **Line Rider**

Simon Intihar, Slovenia, 2023, DCP, color, 24', English subtitles

Like any mad genius, Boštjan Čadež lives life on his own creative terms. Art. Music. Robotics. There’s nothing his mind can’t conquer – except perhaps the legacy of his globally famous, generation-defining video game ‘Line Rider’... and his tendency to self-destruct.

18:00

**Microcassette – The smallest cassette I've ever seen**  
(Mikrokazeta – najmanja kazeta koju sam ikad video)

Igor Bezinović, Ivana Pipal, Croatia/Serbia, 2020, DCP, color, 19',  
English subtitles

Among the garbage heaps of a big landfill on the island of Lošinj, Zoki uncovers a microcassette. A close study of the discarded object serves as a tribute to chance and imagination.

18:00

**Valerija**

Sara Jurinčić, Croatia, 2022, DCP, color, 15', English subtitles

This hybrid documentary takes us on a journey into a world without men. Reality and subconscious mix as the author questions how it feels to have a family tree consisting only of women, and what our ancestresses whisper from their silent portraits.

18:00

**Like a Sick Yellow Si e verdhë e sëmurë)**

Norika Sefa, Kosovo, 2024, DCP, color, 23', English subtitles

An immersion into Nora's memory, where realities merge, the bad and the beautiful intertwine until it's all mingled and something else is formed. A tragedy foretold.

20:00

**Wild Flowers (Divlje cvijeće)**

Karla Crnčević, Croatia/Spain, 2022, DCP, color, 11', English subtitles

My father used a camera just once in his lifetime. After 30 years, he asks me to digitize the VHS material he had filmed. I am wondering what he remembers.

20:00

**Peacemaker (Mirotvorac)**

Ivan Ramljak, Croatia, 2025, DCP, color, 100', English subtitles

Composed entirely of archival material, this documentary accurately reconstructs the pivotal events of Croatian independence, which was particularly dramatic in Slavonia, as provocations and armed clashes had been ongoing since the second half of 1990. In June 1991, Josip Reihl-Kir, the chief of police

in Osijek, a man of dialogue and one of the few who represented the voice of reason amid the growing Serbo-Croatian conflicts, was killed in suspicious circumstances in Tenj, on the outskirts of Osijek, along with three other passengers in his car. Was Reihl-Kir deliberately killed by Croatian nationalists and political hawks?

“Many people have asked me whether war would have broken out if Reihl-Kir had not been killed. I am convinced that it would have, but we need to talk about the reasons why tensions were allowed to escalate and why people like Reihl-Kir had no support, while others were able to act unhindered. My film examines the causes of the event, the circumstances surrounding the murder of a police chief in broad daylight in a populated area and in front of a crowd of witnesses.” Ivan Ramljak

## Friday, April 24

17:00 Exit Through the Cuckoo's Nest (Izlaz kroz ludaru)

Nikola Ilić, Switzerland/Serbia, 2024, DCP, color, 19', English subtitles

A soldier who never wanted to be one decides to never pull the trigger. His defiance leads to military prison. Faking mental illness, he detours away from the front line through a lunatic asylum back home to Belgrade on the day that NATO begins bombing the entire country.

17:00 The Load (Teret)

Ognjen Glavonić, Serbia/Iran/France/Croatia/Qatar, 2018, DCP, 1.85, color, 98', English subtitles

It is 1999, and NATO is bombing Serbia. Vlada is trying to earn some money with odd jobs. A truck full of unknown cargo must be transported from Kosovo to Belgrade along unknown roads ravaged by war. A unique road movie that breaks twenty years of silence about one of the most horrific crimes committed by the Serbian army in Kosovo and shows the moral and social burden of war that a generation has quietly placed on the shoulders of their children.

Music

@ Channel Zero, Ljubljana  
Friday, April 24, 20:00–05:00

Free entry for MEMPOP X ACS Institute participants.  
6€ for students of selected programs.  
10–15€ for the whole night.

For the grand finale of the ACS international cultural studies institute and MEMPOP conference, we are joining forces with the notorious Nimaš Izbire collective, a Ljubljana-based community of creatives that has been organizing diverse DIY events at the crossroads of adventurous electronics and alternative music since 2019. Through their activities and platform, they aim to strengthen the local alternative music scene, connect it internationally, and encourage independent creativity within a community of all kinds of eccentrics and outcasts.

On this special occasion, Nimaš Izbire invites a vibrant selection of local musicians and creators of the younger generation, whose diversity in terms of genre and expression gives a taste of the richness of the thriving local alternative music scene. The unique Ljubljana post-punk favorites Balans are announcing their long-awaited comeback; in addition to their beloved hits, they will perform previously unreleased material from their upcoming album. We will be joined by a rising star of Ljubljana's hip-hop underground, vocalist and producer Veselko. And for all broken hearts, the evening will be warmed up by another super fresh discovery on the Ljubljana scene, the melancholic singer-songwriter Iza Napotnik. None other than Oliver Torr, a Czech music hacker and chaos agent, sound anarchist and multidisciplinary artist based in Athens, will return to us as a guest and the highlight of the evening's live performances. Torr will take us on a ride through the thicket of the subconscious with his third solo album Headstock Comforts, inspired by declassified CIA exercises for remote observation and mind control, as well as personal meditative experiments. The warm-up and afterparty will be curated by the experienced resident DJs of the Nimaš Izbire team, with visual interventions also provided by the team of uncompromising designers.

The evening will be opened by cultural studies students Ema Levec, Gaia Merlak Gnamuš, Špela Pečjak, Tjaša Pintar, and Ivan Slijepčević with their entertaining and insightful interpretations of selected music videos.

20:00

Videospot showcase: Student program featuring Ema Levec, Gaia Merlak Gnamuš, Špela Pečjak, Tjaša Pintar and Ivan Slijepčević

21:30

Iza Napotnik

22:30

Veselko

23:20

Balans

00:15

Oliver Torr

01:15

Ribero

02:45

tiln b2b sin aspirin

MEMPOP

QIMAG  
QIBOBE

# LILIBIANA CORE

## SILVER TOWER BALANS OF EMBKO A NARONIK #P82BSIN 70PAN RIBERO



POTEK 20:00  
24.4.2026 05:00



@CHANEL  
ZERO

# Conference Presentation Abstracts



## AESTHETICS OF MEMORICIDE: RISHISM/SUFISM AND SUBVERSION IN KASHMIR'S DIGITAL ART

Scholarly critique of (post)colonial nationalism and sovereignty has clustered around the framework of “low-intensity” and “gradual” memoricide, referring to discursive and narrative strategies employed by post-/settler colonial states to erase indigenous histories and cultures (Masalha, 2015). The imperial gaze over Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir has historically been organized around the image of the disputed region’s beautiful topography in poetry, photography, and cinema –cultivating desire for land and erasing indigenous history (Kanjwal, 2023). Following the 2019 abrogation of autonomy, the image has been recast in digital film and video songs produced by indigenous Kashmiri artists (Selected works). By using the analytic of “negative political theology” (Bazaz, 2024), which refers to Kashmir’s medieval indigenous saint-poet Nund Rishi’s poetic approach to challenge the hegemony of the Central Asian settler elite, this study argues that the reliance on imperial tropes is indicative of social and political exigencies that the indigenous digital artwork must navigate to make accessible to the local imagination Kashmir’s militarized, fetishized, and alienated spaces. Furthermore, the artwork animates natural bodies, such as streams, lakes, and mountains, rendering the space meaningful to indigenous history. Thus, the study introduces an aesthetic dimension, showcasing how it serves as a locus for reinforcing and subverting erasure.

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Webster, D. (2024). Revisiting memoricide.  
Zargar, S., & Osuri, G. (2023). The distinct dispossessions of Indian settler colonialism in Kashmir.  
Mushtaq, S., & Amin, H. (2021). “We will memorise our home.”  
Osuri, G. (2017). Imperialism, colonialism and sovereignty in the (post) colony.  
Kanjwal, H. (2023). Colonizing Kashmir.  
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Ahmad, R. (2011). Orientalist imaginaries of travels in Kashmir.  
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### Selected works:

- Arafat. (Director). (2024). Saffron kingdom [Film].  
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## TIKTOK “BRAINROT” BETWEEN POST-LEGIBILITY AND VERNACULAR PSYCHOLOGY

Our study explores “brainrot” as both a “post-legible” aesthetic phenomenon and an emerging vernacular psychology within online cultures. The term carries two meanings. First, it denotes the experiences of deteriorating mental states, typically engendered by the overconsumption of algorithmically curated, hyper-saturated and often trivial online content. In this sense, “brainrot” represents an unfixed cluster of psychological symptoms, such as cognitive fatigue, difficulty focusing, and depersonalization. At the same time, “brainrot” also refers to the content that is perceived as likely to lead to such states. More specifically, the so-called “brainrot memes” represent a distinctive aesthetic that has been described as “post-legible” (Nicolae, 2025): visually incoherent, sensorially excessive, with an intentional breakdown of narrative or logical continuity. This kind of “post-legible” content operates less through signification than through affect and intensity, marking the rise of media that do not tell or represent, but rather act or do. Further accelerated by algorithmic curation that rewards immediacy and emotional charge over narrative coherence, the “brainrot” phenomenon can be explored as a symptom of the saturated and chaotic contemporary digital landscape increasingly flooded with low-quality, AI-generated slop. Moreover, its biochemical metaphor invites us to attend to the experiential dimension of digital media – one that eludes traditional psychological conceptualizations and calls for a more fluid and context-sensitive account of experience. Through content and comment analysis on TikTok and related discussions across other online spaces, this study examines how “brainrot” simultaneously functions as a vernacular psychology and as an aesthetic mirror of broader cognitive-cultural transformations. By situating “brainrot” at the intersection of self-diagnosis and narrative disintegration, our study highlights the ways in which the phenomenon crystallizes the paradoxes of mental life under algorithmic attention economies.

### References:

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- Owens, E. (2025). “It speaks to me in brain rot”: Theorising “brain rot” as a genre of participation among teenagers. *New Media & Society*, 1–19.
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## DECOLONIAL MEMORY POLITICS IN METAL: AGENCY, EXCLUSION, AND THE ETHICS OF REPRESENTATION

Metal music is increasingly recognized as a site where collective memory and historical violence are negotiated – not only in lyrics and scene mythologies, but also through exhibitions and public heritage. This paper asks: How can metal music and its public heritage practices move beyond Eurocentric and exclusionary narratives to enact cultural justice and plural memory in the context of populist politics? Drawing on case studies ranging from Nervosa (Brazil; gendered and postcolonial agency), System of a Down (Armenian genocide activism), and Gevult (Yiddish metal and postvernacular commemoration), to the curatorial strategies of recent exhibitions in Berlin and Paris, I analyze how narratives of trauma, exclusion, and resistance are produced, canonized, and contested. A particular focus is given to the “Metal: Diabolus in Musica” exhibition at the Philharmonie de Paris, which presents an encyclopedic overview of metal’s history through dramatic scenography and sacralized artefacts. While the exhibition celebrates the genre’s artistic achievements, it risks discouraging critical engagement and omits context for ongoing controversies, such as gendered violence and Eurocentric privilege. Global South bands are often presented as curiosities rather than co-creators, highlighting the need for more reflexive and inclusive curatorial practice. Methodologically, the paper employs a multi-level analysis developed in my dissertation, combining close reading of exhibition design, scene discourse, and band activism with decolonial and feminist critique (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Varas-Díaz, 2021; Hill, 2022). This approach integrates aesthetic, discursive, and institutional perspectives to illuminate how memory politics operate across different scales of metal culture. The analysis highlights how musealization and scene discourse can both empower and marginalize: exhibitions may celebrate creativity and resilience (e.g. GDR metal under authoritarianism), but risk omitting ongoing harms or relegating Global South contributions to tokenism. The findings suggest pathways for curators, scholars, and scene participants to foster more inclusive, accountable, and dialogic forms of public memory.

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- Varas-Díaz, N. (2021). *Decolonial metal music in Latin America*. Intellect.

## MURALS OF MEMORY: PUBLIC ART AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN MILAN'S ORTICA DISTRICT

The murals of Milan's Ortica district represent an urban cultural heritage where collective memory and local identity intertwine with public artistic practice. These works – created along the streets of the neighborhood through the initiative of the association OrMe (Ortica Memoria) and largely executed by the OrticaNoodles collective – go beyond mere decoration of space, narrating emblematic stories and figures from the cultural, political, and social life of the community. From tributes to artistic and political personalities to the commemoration of historical events, the murals function as instruments of visual education and vehicles for transmitting shared cultural values: a veritable semiotic action. An analysis of the subjects depicted highlights the role of the murals as devices of collective memory and social resistance capable of transforming the urban fabric into an open-air museum that brings value to the history, experiences, and aspirations of the residents of Ortica. The research proposes an examination of the iconographic themes and cultural references of the murals, emphasizing their role in strengthening community bonds and enriching the dialogue between art, culture, and social life.

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## REMEDICATION OF POPULAR CULTURE IN PROTEST WALKS IN SERBIA 2024/25

The ruling regime in Serbia has not only appropriated most of the media, but also institutionalized spaces of cultural production, and even public walls for murals and graffiti (stencils) that defame opposition leaders and critical media. As a result, citizens have largely expressed their dissent on movable banners during the numerous protest walks and gatherings over the past year, while the few activist murals – such as the one depicting Novak Đoković supporting the student movement (by Pijanista) – were promptly destroyed. Our starting point, therefore, is that banners have been one of the main direct media of protest communication, created individually, but grounded in the shared values articulated by student plenums.

The research examines approximately 1,000 collected banner inscriptions, focusing on those inspired by popular culture. It investigates how the organic political response of Generation Z to an authoritarian regime has given new, 21st-century voice to long-standing strategies of resistance. We analyze the remediation and transmediality of popular culture through film and TV-show quotes, popular music lyrics, cartoons and animated film characters, as well as hybrids and unexpected syntheses. Most icons of domestic popular culture referenced on the banners originate from the 1980s – the last period of coherent music and film production that can be regarded as transgenerational cultural memory in Serbia – while global popular culture appears through “heroes” ranging from Madonna to SpongeBob. Despite this variety, all messages strongly reflect the contemporary Serbian context of crisis. This research explores memory politics and the use of rhetorical strategies drawn from popular culture within the Serbian protest during 2024/2025, with authors being physically present at almost 100 protest events in this period.

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Engström, Maria, Semenenko, Aleksei

## SOVIET MYTH IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

Our paper will present the results of a research project dedicated to the Soviet myth in contemporary Russia. In the 2010s, Russia saw the formation of conservative narrative, which acquired the status of a de facto state ideology after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. One of the defining features of this ideology is the revisionist revival of Soviet political and cultural mechanisms and structures that reconceptualize, reimagine, and “recycle” the Soviet heritage, simultaneously using it as one of the key components for the construction of a new Russian collective identity. We define this entity as the Soviet myth and argue that this myth permeates different levels of contemporary Russian society and is crucial for understanding the growing nostalgia for the USSR as well as current Russian domestic and foreign policies. Although Soviet mythology was formed during Soviet times, the Soviet myth has far outlived its host and represents now a new, hybrid, form of ideological and cultural production. Although these tendencies were to a lesser extent present already in the 1990s and early 2000s, after 2012, Russian culture has become especially oversaturated with nostalgic recollections, reflections, revisions, remakes, and other metatexts that substitute consistent development with the continuous recycling of the past. Such an inflexible, rigid, and (on the surface) predictable system is a perfect arena for propagating mythological narratives oriented towards the past. The project has investigated a complex interaction of various mnemonic actors engaged in the promotion and development of the neo-Soviet myth and strives to examine how the neo-Soviet myth is today perpetuated in popular culture: film and TV, visual art, music, video games, public exhibitions, and other cultural forms. We also pay special attention to the ambivalence of the neo-Soviet myth that can be used, on one hand, as an indoctrination tool and means of ideological control, but on the other, as an aesthetic paradigm with different implementation scenarios.

## FROM CHERNOBYL TO CHORNOBYL: DECOLONIZATION OF VIDEOGAME FRANCHISE S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

Video games from the S.T.A.L.K.E.R. franchise developed by GSC Game World are probably the most popular games made by Ukrainian developers. The first three games, published in 2007–2009, known globally for their exotic Eastern European atmosphere, originally had Russian localization. S.T.A.L.K.E.R. 2: Heart of Chornobyl was developed much later, in 2024, during the Russo–Ukrainian war. Even though the new game was more modern in every aspect, it remained a first-person survival horror taking place in a strange zone created around an infamous power plant. But there were other changes made. Even the English name of the power plant changed to Ukrainian spelling – Chornobyl. The main language of voice acting and subtitles was now Ukrainian, Russian language was not included at all, and some references of the war were included. Something similar happened in 2025 with S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Legends of the Zone Trilogy that includes the remasters of the original three games. Russian was replaced with Ukrainian, but more controversially, developers erased Soviet imagery like monuments or Lenin's name from the game. This raises questions about the decolonization of Ukrainian popular culture, reimagining and revisiting memories of older games, but also of how the reflection of Eastern Europe has changed globally in recent years.

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## CINEMATIC SOLIDARITIES: ANTI-COLONIAL WORK IN FILM BETWEEN EX-YUGOSLAVIA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

This paper examines how historical films produced in socialist Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s served as vehicles for anti-colonial solidarity and decolonial memory work across the Global South. During this period, cinema functioned not only as propaganda or national representation but also as a transnational political tool that linked the Yugoslav experience of resistance to broader liberation struggles in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Through their aesthetic and narrative strategies, these films articulated what Michael Rothberg (2009) calls a multidirectional circulation of memory, enabling the recognition of shared experiences of oppression, resistance, and revolution across different geopolitical contexts. Engaging with decolonial thinkers, the paper argues that Yugoslav cinema acted as an epistemic laboratory – a popular cultural space where socialist internationalism, anti-imperialist struggle, and cinematic experimentation converged. These collaborations, ranging from the exchange of actors and technicians to shared revolutionary narratives, created an affective geography that connected distant struggles and challenged the dominance of Western epistemologies and aesthetic hierarchies. The circulation of Yugoslav films through Non-Aligned Movement film festivals and cultural diplomacy further reinforced this transnational dialogue, producing a visual archive of socialist cosmopolitanism.

grounded in anti-colonial empathy and mutual recognition. Yet, this history of solidarity and internationalist imagination is also marked by rupture. The Srebrenica genocide (1995) and the wars of Yugoslav dissolution exposed the fragility of those utopian ideals, revealing how the people who once socialized into a transnational ethics of anti-fascism and equality could become perpetrators of ethnic violence. This violent fragmentation not only ended a shared cinematic project but also inaugurated a new phase of neo-imperial conflict, digital coloniality, and mnemonic divisions between East and West. Today, the legacy of Yugoslav anti-colonial cinema remains a contested yet vital site for rethinking global solidarities, decolonial aesthetics, and the unfinished work of historical justice.

Hajnacs, Indira

### LOSERS IN THE WEST, STARS IN THE EAST – (PERVERSE) DECOLONISATION AND THE (RE)INVENTION OF THE STEPPE MUSIC TRADITION IN HUNGARY

In recent years, a growing trend of integrating Central Asian and Turkic elements into musical performances has appeared among Hungarian artists, ranging from the vernacular to the official culture, evoking a shared cultural heritage with the nomadic peoples of the Eurasian Steppe. Through a specific folkloresque musical form, artists aim to draw inspiration from the distant past, to find solutions for contemporary challenges. This paper examines the cultural and political dynamics surrounding the metaphor “strengthening our eastern roots”, a phrase that is increasingly invoked in both artistic and public discourse coupled with the political project of the “Eastern Opening” and portraying the West as colonizer. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork among musicians, sites of memory, audiences, and cultural agents, I will examine how musical performances and narratives reimagine national identity and belonging in contemporary Hungary. By conceptualizing these phenomena through the lens of “perverse decolonisation” (Mamedov 2021), the paper discusses how narratives of decolonial self-assertion become entangled with illiberal political projects (Mihelj & Stetka, 2024; Laruelle. 2022) and right-wing hegemony-building (Éber 2025) that transform sound into a medium of contested memory and belonging.

Hofman, Ana

### MORE THAN FUN: AN INFRASTRUCTURAL LENS ON YUGOSLAV YOUTH, LEISURE, AND POPULAR CULTURE

This paper examines Yugoslav youth popular culture through an infrastructural lens – a perspective that shifts attention from cultural objects and habits to the institutional, organizational, and material structures that shaped its place in everyday life. In the 1950s, the concept of *kulturna zabava* (cultured entertainment) emerged as a central framework for shaping new forms of youth social life. Rooted in the aspiration to integrate cultural activities into all aspects of people’s lives, *kulturna zabava* positioned leisure not as a retreat from productive time or a mere escape, but as a collective practice that fostered participation, creativity, and social cohesion. The network of youth and social clubs in factories, educational institutions, and local communities – including amateur cultural-artistic activities, festivals and reviews, organized travel, and daily and evening programs – was designed to reduce alienation and cultivate active social subjects. An infrastructural lens therefore allows us to go beyond a dichotomized top-down/bottom-up toward considering how different political economies build – or dismantle – the material conditions for everyday engagement with popular culture. Revisiting *kulturna zabava* recovers lost historical memories of the role of popular culture in shaping emancipatory forms of communal leisure. right-wing hegemony-building (Éber 2025) that transform sound into a medium of contested memory and belonging.

## RECLAIMING REPERTOIRES: DECOLONIZING MEMORY AND JUSTICE THROUGH POPULAR CULTURE AMONG SYRIANS IN GERMANY

The presentation examines how popular media – soap operas, songs, TV, and radio programs – decolonize memory and justice work on the Syrian atrocity in Germany. Rather than reading media as propaganda or resistance, I trace how diaspora audiences re-activate “entertaining” and “apolitical” repertoires consumed under repression as vernacular languages for narrating detention, torture, disappearance, and massacre (Wedeen, 1999/2015). A key vignette is the 1990s Venezuelan telenovela *Cassandra*, remembered by prisoners and jailers; it intertwined with incarceration and later resurfaced on stage as a vehicle for narration (Ibrahim & Peisch, 2022). Methodologically, I combine community workshops, narrative interviews, co-annotation, and digital ethnography to center practices of watching and listening (Hine, 2000). I frame this as justice-from-below: survivor participation contests extractive “official” memory about their histories, claiming ownership of how their stories should be told and to whom (Lundy & McGovern, 2008). Importantly, this approach complements post-2011 digital platforms that document regime atrocities for legal and political strategies. It treats repertoires as mnemonic prompts that show how their afterlives travel with migrants and are re-signified in encounters with host publics, generating more inclusive media memory (Edy & Austin 2022). Finally, I position community archiving as a decolonial practice of care and ownership, shifting knowledge production back to communities and building infrastructures for vernacular remembering and solidarity across communities today (Caswell 2021).

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## THE ART OF REMEMBERING: RUSSIAN EXILE AND THE LAYERS OF MEMORY AFTER 2022

In this paper, I examine how Russian artists who fled the country following Moscow’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have emerged as prominent memory activists, and how they engage with existing memory agents and debates in their host countries. Although scholarship on Russian activism in exile has grown over the past three years, memory activism in the artistic sphere has received little scholarly attention. Memory activism within the arts involves a wide range of actors – from curators and archivists to graffiti artists and poets – and encompasses multiple forms of artistic expression, including visual, performing, and literary arts. Such artistic initiatives have the potential to create connections and partnerships with other communities, institutions, and organizations. This is especially significant in the

context of exile, where migrants often become key memory activists, forming transnational networks (Wüstenberg & Sierp, 2020) and contributing to the global circulation of particular memory politics and commemorative practices. Building on the conceptualizations of memory as “multidirectional” and “travelling” (Rothberg, 2009; Erll, 2011), I explore how Russian exiled artists engage with audiences, spaces, and local debates in their host countries through the lens of remembrance, and how they produce and transform their own and their host countries’ memories. In 2025, we can identify multiple “types” and “layers” of Russian memory activism (cf. Rothberg, 2009), engaging not only with common, but also family, individual, and oral memory. Moreover, an artistic perspective allows us to uncover the more intimate, sometimes overlooked dimensions of remembrance. I argue that Russian exiled artists represent a compelling case of how Russian memory activism is becoming increasingly transnational, transcultural, and multilayered.

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Khachaturova, Anita

## AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF LOSS: EXPLORING THE SPECTRAL MAPS OF THE ARMENIANS FROM HADRUT, NAGORNO-KARABAKH

This article offers an anthropology of loss by examining how Armenians from Hadrut, Nagorno-Karabakh, experience the lost space of homeland. It explores the presence of lost spatialities in the everyday lives of displaced communities through a hauntology of space, drawing on Derrida’s concept of haunting as “neither living nor dead, present nor absent—it spectralizes.” The article introduces “spectral mapping”, a method using drawings of Hadrut to represent the spectrality of the experience of displacement. Moving beyond sedentarist/anti-sedentarist paradigms in refugee studies, it contributes to anthropologies of exile by proposing a framework for understanding the agency of lost places. While it stems from a reflection on the method of mental mapping, it inscribes mapping practices within an Armenian tradition of remembering erased places of homeland, called village memories, or Houshamadyan. This approach puts into perspective the origins of mental mapping as emerging from the evolution of a Western scientific practice of representing space, introduced as a departure from Euclidean conceptions of cartography to endow the exercise of map making with cognitive and sensory elements of human experience. By reclaiming it as a method emerging from a local experience of loss, it sheds light on a situated, embodied knowledge of space and on the conditions that make the present forms of its expression possible. It also interrogates conventional IR approaches to disputed territories which are generally addressed through grand narratives about national space and state-sponsored cartographies, by giving an account of a local relation to the places of homeland, shedding light on overdeterminations on ethnic and national identities that artificially fix a dynamic social reality.

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Kobolt, Katja

## IN FLUX: CHILDREN’S POPULAR CULTURE AND MEMORY (OF WAR)

In addition to the nearly half a billion children whose lives are directly affected by wars today (UNICEF), children are also confronted with the mediatization of wars – primarily through the entertainment industry aimed at young adults. In the past, particularly in post-war Europe and socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), children’s memory culture on war – including literature, comic books, music, films, theatre plays, and art addressed to children – formed a central pillar of memory politics and peace education. Today, at least in Slovenia, neither curricula nor textbooks include any children’s culture on war, especially marginalized are works on the Second World War and the National Liberation Struggle (1941–1945) against Nazi and Fascist occupiers. Drawing on a focus group of ten-year-old children, an analysis of their textbook, and the continually growing collection of illustrations by women artists who illustrated children’s literature during the socialist period in Yugoslavia, this paper will examine the previously popular genre of picture books on National Liberation Struggle as mnemonic objects. By tracing the structural, cultural political, aesthetic and material genealogy of selected picture books (*Slikovnice o narodnooslobodilačkej borbi*, *Lastavica*, *Veselin Masleša*, *Sarajevo*) the paper will raise conceptual, cultural and memory political questions about the changing nature of popular mnemonic objects in relation to social reproduction, and peace education – past and present.

Kolesnik, Alexandra

## MNEMONIC STRUGGLES AND POSTCOLONIAL BELONGING: SOVIET ROCK AS CONTESTED HERITAGE IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

The paper examines Soviet rock music as a site of memory work and contested heritage in the post-Soviet space, with particular emphasis on the legacy of Viktor Tsoi. Since his death in 1990, Tsoi's music and image have been continually re-appropriated by fans, local communities, cultural institutions, and state actors across Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine. Vernacular memorials – ranging from walls and plaques to fan museums, concerts, and digital platforms – have functioned as grassroots lieux de mémoire, facilitating cultural participation and sustaining transnational networks of remembrance. These practices demonstrate how popular culture operates as an arena of mnemonic negotiation in semi-peripheral contexts, generating alternative forms of historical knowledge while exposing the vulnerability of cultural memory to political appropriation. In Russia, Tsoi's legacy has been gradually institutionalized and militarized, particularly in the wake of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In Belarus, the Minsk Tsoi Wall, long contested by local authorities, emerged as a symbolic site of protest during the 2020–2021 demonstrations, triggering heightened state surveillance. In Ukraine and Kazakhstan, debates about Tsoi's cultural significance intersect with postcolonial re-evaluations of Russian-language Soviet legacies, raising questions of sovereignty, identity, and cultural belonging. Drawing on interviews, digital ethnography, and fieldwork, the paper situates the heritagization of Soviet rock within broader debates about decolonial memory work in popular culture. It shows how fan-driven and vernacular practices resist state monopolization of heritage, foster multidirectional memory, and create spaces of solidarity that challenge both imperial legacies and contemporary authoritarian appropriations. Ultimately, the case of Soviet rock illustrates how semi-peripheral popular cultures contribute to epistemic decolonization. By foregrounding noninstitutional, transnational, and oppositional heritage practices, the paper highlights the critical potential of fan communities to contest dominant narratives and reclaim agency in the politics of memory.

Koran, Gleb

## DECOLONIAL NARRATIVES ON RUSSIAN LEFT YOUTUBE: THE RESTORATION OF JUSTICE AGAINST THE WEST

In the last decade, several scholars have emphasized how the Russian state employs the rhetoric of decolonization. Russia has presented itself as a “subaltern empire” (Morozov, 2015) challenging the weaknesses of West-centered “globalization” (Suslov, 2024). This ideological project of decolonization, pursued in the interest of the Russian state, has its roots in the right-wing ideologies of Eurasianism of the 1990s–2000s, which contained discursive layers of geopolitics, racial theory, Orthodoxy, and more (Laruelle, 2004). In this ideology, the state is presented as the main agent responsible for preserving the unique character of Russian civilization. Without the Russian state, the Russian civilization would cease to exist. Viewed from another angle, this relativism (the idea that there are no fundamental values in the world) and the pursuit of diversity for its own sake (that civilizations should be preserved at all costs) resemble postmodernism's rejection of grand narratives – a similarity also noted in recent scholarship (Sharpe, 2025). I aim to explore how this notion of Russian exceptionalism is also used in a slightly different political logic – as a guarantor of social justice in opposition to the free-market economy promoted by Western globalization. This kind of rhetoric is often employed by the so-called Russian Left (or Communist) YouTube. While this network of channels is not officially connected to the Russian

state, it nonetheless supports the idea of Russia's exceptional role in the world. This exceptionalism is based on viewing the Russian state as the ideological heir to the Soviet Union. In my paper, I discuss how the framework of decolonization is employed by the Russian Left YouTube, how it resonates with the current ideological conjuncture of the Russian state, and how it still overlaps with the classical right-wing version of decolonization pursued in the interest of the Russian state.

Korchnak, Peter

## PERMISSION TO REMEMBER: YUGODIASPORADICALS AND MNEMONIC DISOBEDIENCE

The conference paper examines how a digital medium acts for the Yugoslav diaspora as a site of memory and a catalyst for activating memory's subversive and emancipatory potential. Certain members of the overseas Yugoslav diaspora from families of economic migrants or refugees from Yugoslavia in the late-1980s to 1990s have been socialized in host societies indifferent to their origins and in ethnic diaspora communities hostile to the former country's memory. Within these exclusionary mnemonic regimes, the Remembering Yugoslavia podcast has produced responses ranging from self-recognition to therapeutic relief to permission to remember. As they calibrate their socio-political identities, these diasporans interrogate their own roots and inter alia use digital media to seek and research alternatives to the narratives prevalent in their compatriot communities, where memory of Yugoslavia is marginalized, silenced, stigmatized, or erased altogether. For many such diasporans, the open, public discussion of socialist Yugoslavia's heritage on the podcast then acts as a means of external approval to engage in their personal exploration of the delegitimized heritage. Reversing the concept of therapist-obtained permission to not remember incomplete or absent traumatic memories, the paper speculates on the existence of external sources of permission that allow people to engage in the recovery and reclamation of marginalized collective memory. The activation of such memory serves as an act of mnemonic disobedience mobilized against the dominant diasporic memory regimes. Based on listener testimonies gathered from emails, website/social media comments, feedback surveys, direct messages, as well as follow-up interviews, the paper explores the process whereby these "yugodiasporadicals" use digital media to cultivate marginalized memory in order to transform their liminal diasporic position into a new form of belonging.

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## YUGOSLAV SOCIALIST TRAVELOGUES IN THE THIRD WORLD: ANTI-COLONIAL, DECOLONIAL, COLONIAL?

Eastern Europe and newly independent countries in Africa and Asia formed close partnerships during the Cold War, spanning from common political and diplomatic agendas to military, economics, education and cultural cooperation. Eastern European travel writers were part of this process and often focused on introducing these new global partners to domestic public. Travelogues flourished in the form of reportage, literary journalism, and traditional literary travel diary. Yugoslavia, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, differed from the Soviet bloc in its political approach towards the Third World. However, Yugoslav and other European socialist travel writers shared comparable goals, approach, and intentions towards the Third World (Burton et al. 2023). Aware of the influence and long history of Western colonial, imperial, and orientalist imaginary, they set on the discursive mission. They intended to form new anti-colonial imaginaries, narratives, and cultural connections. Emphasis was put on equality, ideological and class proximity, and imagination of possible common futures. However, as they formed new narrative strategies, Eastern Europeans were also heirs to Western literary canon and cultural imagination that they could not fully escape. Moreover, they often visited countries lacking what they considered basic standards of modern(ized) living. Imbalance in political power and social development – understood through the lens of modernization – was reflected in their texts, evoking Eurocentric conventions and hierarchies. Some scholars interpreted thus socialist travel writing as yet another colonial, semi-colonial or just “failed” project (Subotić and Vučetić, 2017; Brumen and Jeffs, 2011; Buzzasyova, 2022; Szakas, 2018). Others insist on the travelogues’ productive aspects, as an “attempt to introduce an alternative language and patterns of relationality” (Krizmanics, 2025; see Radonjić, 2023, 2024). In this presentation, I look at how different designations used to describe travel writing shape our memory politics. Rather than aiming at an “objective” evaluation, I pose the question: what does socialist travel writing mean for us today? How do we want to remember – and use – its legacy?

## MEMORY WORK DURING MEMORY PLAY

In this paper, I will look at games as sites for peculiar memory work, focused on the historical experiences of 20th-century utopian ideologies. The Soviet project and its many dissensions have left potentialities and scars alike on the former “Soviet bloc”. Contemporary games from Eastern Europe engage games as a medium for history and historical memory, raising the question of what sort of historical memories can emerge from play, what they represent for historical consciousness, and whether such epistemologies can ever be valid approaches for understanding history. Numerous games transform the historical experiences of 20th century Russia and Eastern Europe into playful allegories – symbolic or metaphoric representations of trauma, loss, historic catastrophe, utopia, communism, capitalism, revolution, etc. I will examine several in which memory takes front stage, assuming multiple key functions. Memory shapes the procedural rhetorics of these games through making previous mistakes feel like existential trauma, which accumulates as you replay the game. In historical games, personal ludic experience and real historical experience collapse into each other, entangling the player’s own memories with a fictional, but still compelling historicity. The literal and allegorical meanings and experiences here constantly metamorphose into one another, producing authentic memories about phantasmagoric historical events. In the process, phantasmagoric ludic histories become allegories for examining and

coming to terms with the Soviet past. Such ludic territorializations of history do not produce authentic historicity. Nevertheless, through conduct and play, their allegories become existentially meaningful, convincing the player that they experienced something authentic within the fiction, obliged and tested as they were by their own sovereign choices and the weight of their own memories.

Lucarini, Marianna

## PRODUCING SPACE OTHERWISE: SELF-MANAGED CULTURAL SPACES AND COUNTER-MEMORY IN EUROPE

This paper examines occupied and self-managed cultural spaces in Europe – such as Teatro Valle (Rome), Kunsthaus Tacheles (Berlin), Tabacalera de Lavapiés Madrid), and Le 6b (Saint-Denis) – as sites of aesthetic resistance and collective memory production. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space and on recent debates around participatory art and slow memory (Wüstenberg, 2020), it analyzes how these spaces re-appropriate abandoned or marginal urban infrastructures, transforming them into laboratories of counter-hegemonic cultural production. Based on archival research and interviews with artists and cultural practitioners, the paper explores how theatrical and performative practices operate as tools for reclaiming both material and symbolic territories. These experiences generate forms of “memory in action”, where artistic programming, institutional critique, and grassroots organization intersect. In contexts marked by gentrification and neoliberal urban policies, occupied theatres function as liminal zones negotiating constantly shifting relationships with public institutions, local communities, and the cultural market. Rather than framing these spaces solely as sites of opposition, the paper interprets them as dynamic arenas of negotiation, where practices of self-management produce alternative imaginaries of the commons. By foregrounding the aesthetic dimension of resistance, it argues that popular-cultural memory becomes a decolonial method for rethinking urban belonging, challenging dominant narratives of heritage and development, and reshaping collective imaginaries in contemporary Europe.

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Martinez Saez, Celia

## THE UNTRANSLATABLE CITY: QUEER MICROPOLITICS AND COUNTER-TOURIST GAZE IN BARCELONA

This presentation explores how tourism-driven urban transformation in 21st-century Barcelona has contributed to the erasure of local queer memories, replacing them with sanitized narratives of cosmopolitan diversity. Since 1992, the city has been reimagined as a global brand, its spaces reorganized around consumption and visibility, often turning queer culture into spectacle and commodity. Against this backdrop, micropolitical practices emerge: small-scale, affective, and often ephemeral acts that reclaim memory and desire from the forces of gentrification and pink capitalism. This study focuses on hybrid forms of resistance that move between online and analog spaces: digital communities like Cuntalunya that materialize through concerts, Catalan drag performances, or LGBT meetups where the Catalan language itself becomes a site of belonging and care. These counter-touristic gestures – rooted in affect, performance, and linguistic intimacy – refuse the city’s neoliberal aesthetics and

challenge the translation of queer desire into consumable imagery. By tracing these untranslatable practices, I argue that these micropolitical practices rewrite an affective archive, producing alternative cartographies of memory, desire, and collective presence.

Matasova, Iuliana

## REFRAINS OF THE 1990S IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN POP: SURZHYK AS A DECOLONIAL INTUITION

Working with the idea of postsocialism's queer temporality (Atanasoski & Vora, 2018), this paper analyzes case studies from the 1990s and contemporary Ukrainian popular music to explore the intensities behind the linguistic choices of pop-punk singer Sestrychka Vika, anarchopunk band Braty Hadiukiny, and indie-pop band Latexfauna, at the beginning of the 1990s – quite a unique moment in Ukraine's recent history, as well as on the threshold and in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion. Namely, these musicians most often sang and sing in Surzhyk – a vernacular of Ukrainian and Russian that has long been stigmatized on classist assumptions. In my presentation, I will discuss why this lyrical practice was so widespread in Ukrainian pop in the 1990s and what the re-collection of this practice means today. Conceptualizing singing in Surzhyk as a decolonial intuition on the part of contemporary Ukrainian musicians and their peers, my paper unpacks the Surzhyk songs as a radical opening of a ludic space that generously allowed for the queering of memories in the 1990s and, nowadays, as a performance of radical (self-)care. Drawing on a personal memory of hearing Latexfauna's song Bounty in the shopping mall Złote Tarasy next to Warsaw's Central Station (a place which became a key juncture for Ukrainians on their journeys from Europe and back home), I will reflect on the implications of (decolonial) re-listening by audiences speaking in vernaculars that nowadays more and more often mix Ukrainian and Russian with German, Polish, Czech, English, Romanian, French, Icelandic, and other idioms, being accommodated in multiple and multiplying locations.

Mwambari, David

## THE POLITICS OF VERNACULAR MEMORY: LOCALITY, CRISIS, AND THE WORK OF MEMORY

This keynote builds on my earlier work on master narratives in postcolonial contexts to examine how localized vernacular memory emerges and operates in relation to dominant narratives. I explore how vernacular memories may counter master narratives, coexist alongside them, or persist for reasons that exceed direct opposition. Rather than treating memory as fixed, I approach it as dynamic, contingent, and politically productive within specific local contexts. The talk traces how certain memories become politicized through processes of narration, silencing, stabilization, and forgetting, and how they shift across time, sometimes hardening into seemingly stable forms, sometimes fragmenting, or surviving as open secrets or silences. Particular attention is given to memory work produced during moments of crisis, or about past crises, especially in sensitive settings shaped by unequal power relations among state actors, communities, and institutions. I ask what happens to memory narratives and memory sites when they are created under pressure, and how positionality and identity shape both their articulation and their reception. The paper draws on comparative empirical research from Brazil, Kenya, Belgium, and Uganda to show how vernacular memory operates as a crucial, if fragile, political resource in times of uncertainty.

## POST-WAR AND POST-ETHNIC CONFLICT MEMORY IN WESTERN BALKAN FEMINIST THEATRE

The paper analyses recent feminist documentary theatre productions that challenge the “Western claims to universality” of epistemic authority (Harding, 1991), but more importantly, the internal hierarchies and patriarchal aesthetics of the regional theatrical canon created in the Post-Yugoslav, Western Balkan region. It focuses on three theatre productions that exemplify and analyze four recurring topics: gender, post-war or post-ethnic conflict memory (the latter in the case of North Macedonia), bilinguality, and regional marginality: *Largime* (Leavings, dir. Gunin, 2022, North Macedonia), *Uhvati zeca* (Catch the Rabbit, dir. Kaikčija, 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina), and *Gratë e Trojës* (The Women of Troy, dir. Maja Mitić & Zana Hoxha, 2025, Kosovo). Each of these performances engages with the lived experiences of women in post-war and post-ethnic conflict societies. Memories are neither collective nor universally shared; what one remembers, another forgets. They are constructed, discussed and performed through an individual’s specific embodied perspectives (Ahmed, 2004). This paper adopts the theory of intersectional positionality (Crenshaw, 1989), through Haraway’s situated knowledge analysis (1988) to examine how selected feminist theatre practitioners in the Western Balkans recreate memories on theatre stage. Choosing three plays from Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is intentionally foregrounding a so-called “cartography of exclusion”, as certain theatre stages, especially the ones in Kosovo and North Macedonia, are usually left on the margins, discarded or forgotten from the dominant academic Western Balkan or post-Yugoslav canon.

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## THE “DIGITAL IMBIZO”: SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK TWITTER AS DECOLONIAL STRATEGY AND POPULAR MEMORY WORK

This paper investigates South African Black Twitter (SABT) as a site of decolonial strategy and digital memory work. In the post-apartheid context, traditional judicial and corporate systems often fail to provide accountability for ongoing colonial/apartheid-era power structures. I argue that SABT functions as a “Digital Imbizo”, a counter-public sphere that repurposes popular media platforms to enact material, culturally resonant forms of social justice. The research analyses the strategic use of “Archival Surveillance”, a form of popular memory work, to hold political figures like Helen Zille accountable for ideological transgressions, bypassing institutional power. Furthermore, the study explores “techno-linguistic adaptation” and affective appeals to Ubuntu and Black solidarity as decolonization strategies. The Clicks case study, for example, demonstrates a successful popular campaign for economic justice rooted in a shared political history. Using a Critical Techno-Cultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) of 1,500

high-engagement tweets from five major “cancellation” cases (2019–2024), this study theorizes how this digital popular culture operates as a potent form of anti-hegemonic expression, providing a new narrative template for decolonial justice.

Nikolovska, Astrea, Mafizzoli, Laura

## SEAMS OF AMBIVALENCE: POPULISM FROM BELOW IN SERBIA AND GEORGIA

At souvenir stalls in Belgrade and Tbilisi, politics quite literally ends up at people’s feet. In Serbia, socks featuring Putin, Trump, and Orbán hang beside Harry Potter and Lionel Messi; in Georgia, Stalin’s face shares shelf space with the EU flag. Could these juxtapositions of authoritarian icons, pop-cultural and liberal symbols, sold side by side on an object as mundane as socks, reveal how the legacies of socialism, Cold-War, and global capitalism are woven into everyday? Drawing on comparative field observations, this paper explores how these socks operate as populism from below in Europe’s semi-peripheries. They challenge the moral and geopolitical binaries such as East/West, liberal/illiberal, democratic/authoritarian through which the “West” continues to structure global hierarchies of value and legitimacy. In Serbia, a country historically suspended between NATO and the Non-Aligned Movement, and in Georgia, caught between Soviet memory and European aspiration, these socks materialize a post-Cold War ambivalence that resists hegemonic classifications. We interpret them in the sense of Ernesto Laclau’s empty signifiers, as objects that absorb conflicting meanings (irony, nostalgia, resentment, admiration) without resolving them. Anti-hegemonic yet non-revolutionary, these socks perform a decolonial gesture from below: they expose the fractures of universalist moral claims while making geopolitical confusion visible, wearable, and even humorous. In doing so, they exemplify how popular culture in Europe’s borderlands becomes a site where memory, irony, and resistance are knitted together.

Norba, Olha

## GREY ZONES OF (POST)DEPENDENCE IN SLOVAKIA AND (EAST) GERMANY: NARRATING THE SOCIALIST PAST BETWEEN SELF-COLONIZATION AND RESISTANCE

While decolonial discourse after 1989 is often associated with national questions and the search for new cultural identities, post-dependence studies employ scalar approaches to uncover specific power dynamics within particular social and cultural contexts. For Central Europe as a “partially privileged semi-periphery” (Kalmar, 2022), the colonial parallel is only of limited relevance. The modernizing mission of normalization in Czechoslovakia – including its comparatively “softer” version in Slovakia and the participatory tone of Honecker’s GDR – contributed to processes of self-colonization and the internalization of Soviet hegemony in exchange for stability and conformity. This is mirrored in post-1989 personal narratives written by former cultural actors, which reveal layers of dependency and complicity, and challenge binary interpretations of late socialism that reduce society to victims and perpetrators or heroic dissent versus passive compliance. My contribution analyses these retrospective texts not merely as acts of remembrance but as political interventions and literary strategies for working through (post-)dependence-related trauma. Circulating in the public sphere, they become contested memory spaces and forms of “history from within” (Fulbrook, 2010), where questions of guilt, responsibility, and narrative authority are re-negotiated. The rhetorical positions vary: dissidents invoke the grey zone to mark their distance from the silent majority; former officials present themselves as “saviors of the possible” who pursued the “lesser evil” by preserving culture under pressure from the (Soviet) center; while writers from the grey zones – those who avoided open confrontation through situational

conformity – seek to legitimize their ambivalent past and claim oppositional merit. The concept of the ‘grey zone’ thus functions both as an empirical object and an analytical tool: it highlights how cultural actors navigated their roles during a time of “unstable stability” and reflects the enduring imprint of socialist legacies in post-dependent societies.

Özçinar, Meral

## LISTENING AS RESISTANCE: SOUNDSCAPE STORYTELLING AND DECOLONIAL MEMORY WORK

This study examines soundscape storytelling as an innovative methodology for decolonial memory work, emphasizing its potential to amplify the voices of vulnerable and marginalized communities. Drawing on frameworks from cultural studies, memory studies, and sensory ethnography, the research positions sound not merely as an aesthetic or environmental phenomenon but as a socially and politically embedded medium that shapes perceptions of identity, space, and collective belonging. The primary aim is to investigate how participatory sound-based practices can create alternative narrative pathways that challenge hegemonic representations and provide participants with agency over their own stories. Methodologically, the project combines guided soundwalks, audio diaries, spatial listening exercises, and collaborative transmedia storytelling. Participants engage in critical listening within selected urban or historical environments, record and reflect on personal and collective sonic memories, and co-create multimodal narratives integrating sound, text, and visual elements. This non-extractive, community-centered approach embodies decolonial principles by foregrounding participants’ perspectives and lived experiences rather than privileging institutional knowledge. Preliminary findings indicate that soundscape practices facilitate embodied memory engagement, foster emotional and social resonance, and generate collaborative transmedia imaginaries that integrate individual and collective memory. Moreover, these practices allow participants to interrogate dominant cultural narratives, rethink spatial and temporal frameworks, and enact forms of resistance through creative expression. By bridging theory and practice, the study demonstrates the potential of sound as both a methodological tool and a narrative medium. This contribution advances scholarship on memory, media, and decolonial methodologies, offering an applied model for integrating sensory, participatory, and transmedia approaches into research and pedagogy. It illustrates how sound-based storytelling can cultivate inclusive knowledge production, empower marginalized voices, and foster critical reflection on collective memory and cultural identity within contemporary popular culture.

Paz Peirano, María

## CO-CREATING CINEMA HISTORIES: AUDIENCES, MEMORY, AND PARTICIPATORY FESTIVAL RESEARCH

This paper examines film festivals as sites of cultural memory where practices of cinemagoing, filmmaking, and cinephilia are enacted and negotiated. Festivals operate as spaces of collective memory, embedding individual encounters with films, places, and communities within broader cultural narratives. Through programming strategies and engagement with local audiences, festivals construct memories of local film cultures and their own institutional histories, while also shaping audiences’ viewing experiences and fostering a sense of community. Building on participatory action research, this paper highlights the use of collaborative workshops and oral history practices that position audiences and organizers as active co-researchers rather than passive subjects of study. Methods such as group discussions, mapping, image elicitation, and co-creation are employed to trace the intersections of personal and

cultural memory, producing layered accounts that reveal the affective and social dimensions of festival participation. These approaches move beyond traditional audience research tools (such as surveys or box-office metrics), offering insights into the complexities of festival memory-making, including questions of power, marginalized voices and overlooked aspects of film culture. Ultimately, the paper argues that memory-centered and collaborative methods enrich festival studies by offering reflexive and inclusive perspectives on festivals as dynamic agents in the construction of cinema history.

Petrović, Tanja

**POPULAR CULTURE AND MEMORY OF THE REVOLUTION:  
“PARTISAN COMICS” BY THE “SECOND GENERATION”  
AUTHORS OF THE YUGOSLAV COMICS**

In spite of the negative attitude toward the comics in the immediate aftermath of the WW2 and contrary to expectations, the extensive production of People’s-Liberation-Struggle-related comics in socialist Yugoslavia between the 1960s and the 1980s has proven that not only can comics be a suitable medium for the narratives of the socialist revolution, but that the revolutionary imagery can be shared through practices of comic book production, circulation, and consumption, across generations and classes, and in combination with other popular imageries (superheroes, Wild West imagery, rock music, etc.). This paper looks closely to this revolutionary imagery of the “partisan comics”, elucidating symbolic shifts, entanglements, and generic transgressions. It aims to offer an interpretation going beyond dominant views operating with notions of “ideologization” and “Americanization”, exposing the realm of mass culture production as not totally separate from revolutionary imagination, but as operating within its horizons.

Pidoprygora, Svitlana

**PERVERSE (DE)COLONIAL AESTHETICS ON GRAPHIC  
NOVEL COVERS: THE CASE OF UKRAINE**

The cover of any book is crucial: it is designed to capture attention and to communicate, through both text and imagery, the condensed message of the work. In the case of graphic novels, this becomes even more significant, as the cover reflects the author’s conceptual approach and is often tailored to a specific (local) audience. The same graphic novel, when translated into foreign languages and targeted toward other national readerships, may feature entirely different covers – an aspect that deserves particular attention, especially when the theme concerns an ongoing war in Europe, the Russian war against Ukraine. This paper explores how global graphic novel covers representing Ukraine visualize the tensions between decolonial and perverse-decolonial aesthetics. Focusing on Igot’s *Quaderni ucraini* (Ukrainian Notebooks, 2011, 2014, 2022), published in several languages with distinct cover designs, I examine how the author both challenges and reproduces colonial narratives, employs what may be termed a “perverse decolonization”. By analyzing various international editions, I investigate how the politics of memory and visual identity is negotiated through cover design – where global mass culture conventions, (trans)national imagination and stereotypes intersect and create certain meanings.

Průchová Hružová, Andrea

## “THE BEAUTY” OF NEOLIBERAL ANTI-COMMUNISM: PUBLIC ART AND CORPORATIZATION OF PUBLIC SPACE

The public space of the city of Prague represents one of the seminal examples of the rapid neoliberalization that many postsocialist cities in the CE region have encountered. Throughout the new democratic decades, neoliberal urbanism has given the hegemonic power in the co-production of public spaces' symbolic, material, and sensorial levels into the hands of urban elites (Tunali, 2021), including the realm of public art. This paper examines the most recent, prominent, and widely debated example of the corporatization of public space through public art production from 2024, when the façade of a historically protected building of socialist architectural heritage in the city center was used to present two gigantic sculptures of butterflies- WWII Spitfires. The sculptural piece was conceived as a highlight of the new reopening of the shopping house Máj, opened in 1975, based on the design by the acclaimed Czech architectural group SIAL, after its reconstruction was done by a private investment group that turned the protected building (including the protected façade) into the Prague House of Fun. The author of the piece happened to be a well-known Czech visual artist, David Černý, a strong promoter of anti-communist politics and sentiments, and a frequent author of corporate art. The public art piece initiated a heated debate among professional groups, politicians, and the lay public. The paper approaches this case as the intersection of the issues of neoliberalization of public space, corporatization of public art, anti-communist sentiments, and mnemonic entrepreneurship by adopting the methodological approach of infrastructural critique (Segbars, 2019). It asks what forms of resistance can be invented or appropriated to resist the hegemonic forces shaping the public space to reclaim it for the communities of citizens.

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Schwartz, Matthias

## THE MARGINALISED OF THE EMPIRE: THE TV SERIES SALAM MASKVA AS A “PERVERSE DECOLONISATION” STRATEGY

In 2021, the editors of the volume *Perverse Decolonization?* addressed the alarming phenomenon of authoritarian regimes today using anti-imperialist and anti-colonial criticism to justify their repressive policies against “the rights of women and LGBTQ people, atheists or ‘foreign agents’” as a decolonial struggle against the “liberal West”, thereby contributing to the “rise of new nationalisms, toxic patriotism and systems of exclusion” (Degot/Riff 2021). They call this phenomenon “perverse decolonization”. In contrast, Georgy Mamedov argues for defending the concept of “perverse” as an emancipatory “badge of honor” for marginalized and ostracized groups against all reactionary calls for authenticity (Mamedov 2021). Focusing on the multiaward-winning, popular TV series *Salam Maskva* (2016, dir. Pavel Bardin), I intend to discuss the extent to which, in Putin’s Russia, the Soviet past of a multi-national empire, traumatic memories of state violence and decolonial rhetoric are used in an ambiguously “perverse” way to stage the state as a protective power for the marginalized and an anti-colonial empire.

## WALLS THAT MOURN, WALLS THAT SPEAK: ARMENIA'S WAR MURALS AS DECOLONIAL MEMORY WORK

This paper examines post-2020 Armenian graffiti portraits of fallen soldiers as vernacular sites of memory work (Haug, 1987; Crawford et al., 1992; Kuhn, 2000) that both contest and reconfigure official remembrance. Based on multi-sited ethnography (Yerevan, Hrazdan, and other regional towns), visual analysis, auto/ethnographic witnessing, and a geo-mapping of over 200 portraits, we argue that these images function as spontaneous shrines (Santino), relocating commemoration from state monuments to neighborhood walls. This shift transforms mnemonic priorities from monumental events to community-based, affective practices of everyday care. We interpret these murals as decolonial cultural production from the (semi-)periphery – practices that pluralize knowledge, foreground marginalized grief, and unsettle metropolitan canons of memorial art (Puar, 2007; Tlostanova, 2018). Through multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009), they weave Armenian histories of genocide and war into present-day losses, generating solidarities across traumas without collapsing their distinctions. The murals' social life – commissioned by families and classmates, later co-opted by municipal or educational actors – reveals a dynamic field where grassroots mourning encounters patriotic domestication. Reception studies (focus groups with students, street interviews, as well as interviews with graffiti artists) show generational divides: youth embrace the murals as identity anchors and civic pedagogy, while some elders perceive them as immobilizing grief. We situate Armenian war murals within broader grassroots visual cultures that reimagine urban surfaces as infrastructures of hope, accountability, and communal resilience. As decentralized and networked practices (shared via Instagram, Facebook, Telegram), these works perform epistemic decolonization by legitimizing subaltern archives, participatory curation, and non-extractivist remembrance – demonstrating how popular culture can reimagine futures under geopolitical precarity. Our research question would be: How do post-2020 Armenian graffiti portraits of fallen soldiers operate as decolonial forms of memory work that both contest and rearticulate state-controlled narratives of war, mourning, and national identity?

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## (NOT) TOO YOUNG TO REMINISCE: MEMORY WORK IN CONTEMPORARY POPULAR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children's literature is a complex site of memory work (Kuhn, 2000), where narratives often operate on multiple levels – addressing parents and children simultaneously. These texts function similarly to other forms of popular culture such as cartoons, games, or toys, which shape intergenerational experiences and inconspicuously provide discourses on how to preserve memories. Children's books often evoke nostalgia in adult readers while introducing younger audiences to practices of memory-making, addressing their sentimental attachment to objects, which frequently become “accidental archives” (Rigney, 2015) and engage with their desire to collect (Pearce, 1995), and thus control their expanding world (Baudrillard, 1994), helping children understand and negotiate these impulses. In this presentation, I draw on an autoethnographically informed selection of contemporary children's books, including Julia Donaldson's *The Paper Dolls* (2012), Åshild Kanstad Johnsen's *Kubbe lager museum* (2010), and Emma Lewis's *The Museum of Me* (2016), among others. I discuss how these authors explore the ways in which memory is created, preserved, and shared through objects and stories, intertwining motifs of imaginative play with themes of curation, remembrance, loss, and continuity. Through these narratives, children's literature emerges as a medium of intergenerational dialogue, inviting both children and adults to engage in shared acts of remembering and identity-making.

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## POPULAR SOUNDS' HERSTORIES: EXPLORING THE MUSICAL EXPERIENCES AND AESTHETICS AMONG MILLENNIAL WOMEN\* IN TYROL

Popular music in its broad variety offers its listeners a diverse range of affordances to make valuable cultural and aesthetic experiences, to take and ascribe meanings, or to form individual and social identities. In contrast to this diversity, however, the range of perspectives and narratives on popular music is often rather narrow. Austria serves as a prime example of this historiographical narrowness, as both media and academic coverage convey the impression that those who have predominantly been “doing” popular music in Austria are male, urban, young, (Eastern-)Austrian, and musicians themselves. In this presentation, I want to elaborate on how to unfold an alternative story, of those who are not male and not in their teens or twenties anymore, who live in Western Austria, possibly even in non-urban regions, and who do not necessarily make music themselves. I present a project concept that aims at shedding light on the sounds of popular culture through the eyes and ears of women audiences, including non-female persons identifying as women, whose voices and tastes have so often been neglected and devalued in the popular music discourse. Specifically, the project strives to examine, through an integrated musicological, sociocultural, and historical perspective, the (present and past) experiences, evaluation practices, and discursively important aesthetics of women who belong to the millennial

generation and have predominantly lived in Tyrol over the past three decades – a traditionally conservative, Catholic state pervaded by patriarchal gender roles, male political dominance, tourism, and (the semblance of) rural culture. In my talk, I will sketch the dominant historiographies of popular music in Austria through a gender-sensitive lens. I will summarize media narratives and scholarly endeavors and suggest methodological tools for adopting an intersectional female gaze on the music-cultural memories, realities, and orientations of a generation, set against the backdrop of local and regional conditions, conceptions, and styles.

Szczepan, Aleksandra

## THE EMOTIONAL LIFE OF PERVERSE DECOLONIZATION: POLISH POPULAR CULTURE AND NATIONALISTIC IMAGINARIES

In the last years, seemingly decolonial rhetoric has been used by various authoritarian and rightwing governments in East-Central Europe to justify their “revisionist reinvention of history” (Radonić) on a state level. The universalization of the Holocaust as a negative icon, fundamental for human rights discourse and a basis of European identity, has been hijacked in various East-Central European countries. The forms of Holocaust memorialization have been appropriated to emphasize war-time suffering of local, non-Jewish communities, especially from the communist crimes. In such revisionist memory politics, individual complicity in the Holocaust is downplayed or concealed, engagement in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust mythologized and greatly overestimated, and figures of local antisemitic and nationalist partisans or politicians whitewashed and celebrated. This strategy can be read as a form of “perverse decolonization” that Joanna Warsza and Jan Sowa – after the authors of the term Ekaterina Degot and David Riff – denote as “a strategy in which former colonial dependence and semi-peripheral inferiority foster obscure ways to preserve one’s allegedly endangered way of life.” The proposed paper turns away from the official memory politics towards a more diverse realm of popular culture and employs the category of “perverse decolonization” to analyze the ways in which Polish popular culture of the last decade rewrites the history of the Second World War, focusing on popular novels about Polish victims of Auschwitz and TV series on adventurous youth fighting with Nazis and Soviets. Inspired by the framework proposed by Eva Illouz in her book *The Emotional Life of Populism* (2023), it examines the basic emotions and “structures of feeling” that enable such collective processes of recalibrating the past. It shows how historical narratives help to nurture feelings such as resentment, shame, pride, and contempt in the present and investigates the political stakes of their mobilization.

Székely, Júlia

## THE FORENSIC ARCHIVE AS MEMORY WORK: MATERIAL TRACES OF SOCIALIST-ERA GRAFFITI

During the socialist period in Hungary, state security authorities systematically monitored and investigated “hostile” actions, including written forms of political incitement such as graffiti. The resulting case files, now preserved in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, document the content of these inscriptions, as well as the state’s investigative practices. These files often also include material objects, confiscated, recorded, or produced during on-site inspections. Drawing on the sociology of materiality, from Bruno Latour to Jeffrey C. Alexander, this paper examines the “material narratives” embedded in these objects. Particular attention is given to crime scene photographs, which, following the insights of Susan Sontag, Pierre Bourdieu, and John Berger, are analyzed not as neutral evidence but as constructed representations of the logic of the state security apparatus. The paper further shows

that these objects do not merely document power, they also illuminate its limits, reflected in human decisions, errors, and accidents. In this way, the “forensic archive” becomes a site of mnemonic reflection, in which the mechanisms of control and the fragility of authority are simultaneously inscribed and revealed.

Šlaki, Feđa

### KISSED BY A FISH: A STUDY OF AQUATIC MONSTERS, THROUGH CULTURAL MEMORY, GENDER AND IDENTIFICATION

When Elisa, a mute cleaner, falls in love with the Amphibian Man in Guillermo del Toro’s *The Shape of Water* (2017), audiences worldwide celebrated an unconventional cross-species romance that would have been seen as pure horror mere decades earlier, i.e. *the Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954). Traditional stories of aquatic beings and contact with them, from inhuman sea monsters to beautiful sirens, have overwhelmingly served as cautionary tales and horror narratives. Something has shifted in how we tell stories about these monsters that breathe differently, exist in alien elements, and dissolve the boundaries between our world and theirs. Water monsters haunt folklore and cultural imagination around the world, existing as a cross-cultural motif that has nonetheless been well-localized by storytellers. These creatures occupy a unique, deeply undertheorized and under researched space in monster studies. As amphibious beings, they include many different liminalities, existing between: water and land, human and inhuman, living and dead, fully transcending binary categorization. At the same time, these monsters are profoundly gendered in asymmetrical ways, with feminine monsters depicted as seductive and dangerous, and masculine creatures as misunderstood and sympathetic. Why this split? And crucially, what happens when contemporary, especially queer or otherwise marginalized, audiences identify with these monsters? By synthesizing queer theory, namely Jack Halberstam’s work on queer monstrous identification, with Marina Warner’s study on the cultural construction of the Other, and placing it in dialogue with local ethnographies by authors like Monika Kropej, cross-cultural analyses of folklore, and textual analyses of both contemporary and classical films, this project aims to ask: How do stories of aquatic monstrosity function as sites of gendered identification, desire, and otherness? I argue that aquatic monsters as liminal beings existing between elements offer uniquely powerful vocabularies and identifications for non-normative experiences, especially ones of fluid identity, liminality and alienation.

Šuštaršič, Asja

### SOUNDS OF RESISTANCE: KURDISH MUSIC AS DECOLONISING PRACTICE AGAINST CULTURAL HEGEMONY

This presentation explores Kurdish music as a site of decolonial resistance amid political and cultural repression. The Kurds, an indigenous people of the Middle East, were repeatedly divided and dominated by various colonial and postcolonial state powers. Their past includes subjugation under the Ottoman Empire and later interference by British and French colonial interests. Across modern nation-states such as Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, Kurds remain a stateless nation, marginalized by state policies that restrict language, cultural expression, and historical representation. Within these conditions, the creation and circulation of Kurdish music become acts of resistance that challenge dominant narratives and preserve identity through cultural production. Drawing on hegemonic and decolonization frameworks, this study positions Kurdish music as counter-hegemonic discourse opposing cultural erasure and colonial legacies of state formation. In this context, sound serves not only as artistic expression but also as a political tool, enabling musicians and listeners to preserve collective memory, cultural identity, and visibility. This research demonstrates that cultural production under repression constitutes resistance against hegemonic silencing.

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Tlostanova, Madina

### CAN THE ABANDONED REMEMBER, CREATE, RE-FUTURE? IMAGINING POPULAR CULTURAL STRATEGIES FOR RE-EXISTENCE IN THE LOOMING POLY-CRISIS

Unlike the ideological divisions of the past, the world today is increasingly divided into the select few and the (soon to be) abandoned. In all our diversity, the abandoned are not necessarily passive and mutually aggressive victims competing for the pittance from modernity/coloniality, but an emerging subjectivity that needs to be critically conceptualized, embodied, and inhabited for the sake of survival in the arriving world of geopolitical crises, climate change, and techno-coloniality. Popular culture is a crucial space for unfolding this active and creative subjectivity of the abandoned, crucial for the retention of life on our planet, at least for a while. Moreover, popular culture connects the past with the future, paradoxically allowing collective memory from below to become its agent. Although memory seems to be directed toward the past, without rethinking the relationship with memory, it is impossible to re-imagine the future. The original promises of re-existence as an achievable decoloniality have dissolved into rhetorical devices, whether re-existence is seen through a return to an idealized past or through the construction of a utopian future. But the urge for wording otherwise has not disappeared, although it has acquired a humbler and calmer neostoic character – “low case hope” (Walsh) and “low-intensity struggle” (Machado de Oliveira) – and a focus on the everyday tasks of survival, coping, and care. Popular culture is a key element in “the world of retention” (Fry), aimed at what can still be saved. It’s not only about endangered species or reservoirs of clean water, but also about the disappearing fabrics of human and interspecies relations, about rapidly virtualizing and vanishing belonging to the world, to a community, to oneself. It’s about the trampled solidarity and empathy that once helped our species survive and that we are rapidly losing. If popular culture can become a space for multiple critique, intersectional dialogue, for emancipation from victimhood rivalry, and re-instatement of solidarity on new grounds attuned to the current situation, remains an open question. But low case hope still lets us believe in the small, active, local communities of survival and care able to empirically develop specific cultural and social practices, artistic forms and everyday communication that would further re-existence for homo narrans (Wynter) in relation to other forms of life on the planet.

## AFTERIMAGES OF UTOPIA: VISUAL DIPLOMACY AND VERNACULAR MEMORY IN YUGOSLAVIA'S AFRICAN ENCOUNTERS

This paper investigates Yugoslavia's utopian imagination and global positioning through the visual culture of its diplomatic missions across the Global South during the era of the Non-Aligned Movement. Drawing on archival and vernacular photographs – from official press images to personal albums of engineers and architects working in Africa – the research examines how socialist Yugoslavia performed its decolonial and internationalist aspirations through visual and corporeal representation. In these images, the handshake, the staged tableau of equality, and the proximity of bodies became the semiotics of solidarity: a photographic rhetoric of utopia that materialized the state's self-image as both modern and humane. The study focuses on photographic materials produced in the framework of Yugoslavia's early diplomatic and technical cooperation with African states during the late 1950s and 1960s. Building on recent scholarship on workers' proto-diplomacy and cultural exchange (Harisch & Musić, 2024; Dimić, 2017; Gabrič, 2023), it examines how these visual records articulated the socialist project of "active coexistence" and non-alignment as a lived, bodily practice. By tracing recurring motifs – encounters between leaders, engineers at construction sites, moments of shared labor and leisure – the analysis investigates how the camera translated ideological concepts such as equality and solidarity into performative gestures. Informed by utopia theory (Bloch, 1986; Jameson, 2005), the paper interprets these images as visual enactments of a collective anticipation, in which diplomacy, labor, and everyday sociability became extensions of Yugoslavia's utopian pursuit of global emancipation. From the perspective of the 21st century, revisiting these visual archives enables a critical engagement with the persistence of socialist utopias in contemporary memory cultures. The photographs not only reveal the tensions between ideology and lived experience but also demonstrate how peripheral actors used visual representation as a form of soft power and identity-making within shifting geopolitical orders. By reading these images as affective archives of decolonial aspiration, the paper contributes to current debates on how visual and popular-cultural media mediate marginalized histories and sustain the unfinished imaginaries of solidarity and global connection.

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Vallejo, Aida

## WRITING GEOLOCATED HISTORIES OF CINEMA: THE SAN SEBASTIAN FILM FESTIVAL AND THE BASQUE CONTEXT

This paper examines film festivals in the Basque context – a border region divided between Spain and France – as privileged sites for rethinking cinematic canons and producing geolocated histories of cinema. Focusing on the San Sebastián International Film Festival (SSIFF), it adopts a decolonial perspective to analyze contested practices surrounding linguistic diversity, national identities, and geopolitical tensions. Founded in 1953, SSIFF has undergone seven decades of structural transformations in both organizational and curatorial practices. Its eclectic identity makes it a compelling case study for interrogating how festival programming negotiates diverse – and often conflicting – interests while constructing a distinctive position within the global festival circuit. SSIFF operates simultaneously as an audience-oriented event, a showcase for Basque productions, a key gateway for Latin American cinema into the European market, and a “last opportunity” to enter the festival circuit for international films produced during the year that did not secure slots at top-tier festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, or Venice. Drawing on center-periphery conceptualizations (Campos, 2020) the paper argues that festivals such as SIFF are at the same time reproducing post-colonial dynamics, while protecting local cultural specificity. In doing so, the paper highlights the paradoxical struggle of international festivals to resist and – at the same time – reinforce global forces of cultural homogenization.

Valck, Marijke, de

## FESTIVALS AS SITES OF TRANSLATION: TANNA AND THE POLITICS OF DECOLONIZING POPULAR NARRATIVES

This paper examines if Tanna (Bentley Dean & Martin Butler, 2015) can be understood as a decolonizing re-appropriation of the popular Romeo and Juliet narrative, mobilized for the cultural preservation and self-representation of the Indigenous Yakel community on the island of Tanna, Vanuatu. The film’s collaborative production process – developed with and performed by the Yakel people – foregrounds the use of popular storytelling as a vehicle for Indigenous memory work and resistance to epistemic erasure. Situating Tanna within the global film festival circuit, the paper interrogates how festivals function as sites of translation and negotiation between Indigenous epistemologies and the global regimes of cultural value that define “world cinema.” Drawing on concepts of authenticity, cosmopolitanism, and the pluriverse, the analysis critically examines how festivals mediate the visibility of Indigenous narratives within dominant frameworks of aesthetic and cultural legitimacy. By rethinking festivals not merely as platforms of exhibition but as institutional structures embedded in colonial histories of knowledge production, this paper contributes to ongoing debates on decolonizing strategies in popular culture and the epistemic politics of world cinema circulation.

Vermeersch, Peter

## THE AFTERLIFE OF A PROTEST SONG: MUSIC, MEMORY, AND STATE POWER IN BELARUS AND RUSSIA

This paper explores the cultural and political significance of popular music during and after the 2020 pro-democracy protests in Belarus, with a particular focus on the Soviet-era rock anthem “Peremen!” (Change!) by the Russian band Kino. Originally a symbol of late Soviet yearning for reform, the song was reactivated in 2020 as a sonic emblem of resistance against the authoritarian regime of Aliaksandr Lukašenka. While “Peremen!” was banned in Belarus, other songs from Kino’s repertoire were simultaneously appropriated in Russia for state-sponsored spectacles and patriotic parades, revealing the polysemic and contested nature of protest music across post-Soviet geopolitical contexts. Drawing on cultural analysis, textual interpretation, interviews with exiled musicians, media reports, and diaspora narratives, the paper frames “Peremen!” as a volatile sound object whose shifting meanings expose the fragile boundaries between dissent and propaganda. It examines how Belarusian musicians – many now in exile – reflect on their performances and the enduring emotional and political resonance of the song. Their role in sustaining a musical memory culture under conditions of repression is central to the study. Using the afterlife of a 2020 protest song as a case study, the paper proposes a theory of “sonic dissent”, where protest sounds function not only as affective tools of resistance but also as carriers of memory and ideological struggle. Music emerges as both a medium of democratic aspiration and a target of authoritarian control. By tracing the transnational trajectories and semantic transformations of “Peremen!”, the paper contributes to broader debates on cultural politics, memory, and the role of art in social movements under authoritarian regimes.

Vlessing, Clara

## IDENTIFYING THE MASTER’S TOOLS: AUDRE LORDE, MNEMONIC CAPITAL AND RESISTANCE

Since her death in 1992, the self-proclaimed “Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet” Audre Lorde has become synonymous with popular forms of intersectional feminism (Taylor, 2025). Lorde’s words adorn protest banners and accompany social media posts; her name can be found on street signs and health centers from New York to Berlin; in 2021, the multinational technology company Google celebrated her birthday with a Google Doodle; in 2022, the International Astronomical Union named a crater on Mercury ‘Lorde’.

Through this growing buzz of activity, Lorde and her writing accrue “mnemonic capital”, becoming increasingly “artefactual or objectified within a globalised and digitised political economy of memory that affords further (trans)formations of memories within institutional settings” (Reading, 2021). At the same time, recollections of Lorde frequently seek social transformation, calling for radical disruption to institutional frameworks and political status quos. Sitting with this apparent tension, I map out Lorde’s high-profile afterlives and comparatively analyze Alexis Gumbs’s 2024 biography alongside videos engaging with Lorde on TikTok. Bringing together scholarship on the “activist turn” (Chidgey, 2024) in memory studies (Merrill and Rigney, 2024) with insights from feminist media studies on “feminist icons” (Showalter, 2001; Taylor, 2016) I consider the ways in which recollections of this multiply-minoritized figure act as activist and not-so-activist interventions in increasingly hostile presents.

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Walton, Jeremy

### CURATING DECOLONIAL HEGEMONY: ON TURKEY'S 15 JULY MUSEUM

In political contexts across the globe, an alarming pattern in the vernacularization of decolonial discourse is increasingly evident. Decolonial discourse and images have become yoked to hegemonic state power in a process that ironically neutralizes the liberatory promise of decolonization. Such instrumentalization of decoloniality is especially prominent in the successors of what Madina Tlostanova has called “Janus-faced” empires – states such as the Romanov and Ottoman Empires which were both targets and (re)producers of asymmetrical civilizational discourses rooted in western Europe. My presentation for “Decolonization Strategies and Memory Work in Popular Culture” will focus on a privileged site in contemporary Turkey for the articulation the ambivalent politics of decoloniality in the context of a Janus-faced postempire. The 15 July Museum, located at the Asian terminus of Istanbul’s Bosphorus (“15 July”) Bridge, commemorates the coup attempt of 15 July 2016 and, especially, the resistance that overcame the putschists’ designs. While the top floor of the museum, where one enters, relates the background and details of the coup attempt from the state’s perspective, the bottom floor features a comprehensive exhibition titled “The Language of Colonialism, the Concepts of Hegemony” (sömügciliğin dili, hegemonyanın kavramları). My analysis focuses on this section of the museum in order to interrogate how the specific political violence of the coup attempt has been embedded in a broader discourse of decolonial nationalism rooted, in a Manichean vision of global political history. Above all, my presentation attends to the grim aesthetics of the exhibition, which includes explicit photographs of corpses, tortured bodies and, most disturbingly, a lifelike statue of an African slave in chains. The summoning of this archive of colonial brutality to nationalist ends in Turkey demands a reckoning with the more unlikely political consequences of decolonial discourse.

Wang, Yuen Ho

### SUBVERSIVE MEMORY WORK IN CODED CREATIVITY: NAVIGATING CENSORSHIP IN POST-2020 HONG KONG YOUTUBE PRODUCTIONS

Since the enactment of the National Security Law in 2020, cultural production in Hong Kong has undergone profound transformation characterized by intensified censorship and political sensitivity. Expressions of social critique have been systematically curtailed, leading to a contraction of public discourse. Within this suppressive atmosphere, however, creative collectives have developed decolonial tactics to sustain socio-political reflection through coded and allegorical expression (Fung & Pun, 2021; Lam & Yu, 2025; Ng, 2024). This paper investigates how such strategies constitute mnemonic resistance

within the city's digital popular culture. Drawing on close textual analysis of mini dramas produced by YouTube channel Trial and Error and their online reception, this paper examines how the production team employs humor, irony, and everyday narrative tropes to veil socio-political commentary. By embedding subtextual critique in comedic scenarios and local settings, these productions mobilize vernacular memory work that actively reinterprets and challenges state-sanctioned narratives while negotiating collective trauma and the erasure of dissenting histories. The analysis conceptualizes Trial and Error's works as infrapolitics (Scott, 1990), where political critique and social remembrance are sustained through ambiguity and affective resonance rather than overt declaration. This analysis positions these productions within frameworks of epistemic decolonization, examining how vernacular humor disrupts Beijing's claims to universal knowledge about Hong Kong's historical trajectory. In the context of US-China geopolitical tensions and Hong Kong's ambiguous status as a postcolonial, re-colonizing space, these digital productions represent peripheral cultural resistance that reclaims interpretive authority over local memory. By situating Hong Kong's YouTube-based creative scene within debates on popular-cultural resilience in semi-peripheral contexts, this paper argues that such productions challenge state-sanctioned amnesia while illuminating the reconfiguration of agency, memory, and creative resistance in decolonial struggles within postcolonial urban modernity.

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Yumrukuz, Özlem

## NEVER ALONE (KISIMA INGITCHUNA): INDIGENOUS İÑUPIAT MEMORY RECLAIMED THROUGH POPULAR-CULTURAL STORYTELLING

This presentation explores the video game *Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)* (2014) as an example of how popular culture can become a medium for memory that is decolonized. Developed in association with the Iñupiat community of Alaska, the game turns Indigenous oral traditions into an interactive digital genre. Drawing from the studies of cultural memory and theory of decolonization, this paper discusses that *Never Alone* serves two interrelated functions: it resists colonial degradation by re-centering Indigenous voices and it calls back the cultural identity through unique re-mediation.

Methodologically, the analysis combines textual interpretation of the game's narrative, aesthetics, and gameplay experience with the contextual understanding of its collaborative production between E-Line Media and the Cook Inlet Tribal Council. With this, the study focuses on how the game depicts agency over storytelling – representing Iñupiat culture as dynamic and future-oriented.

Eventually, this presentation claims that *Never Alone* changes popular culture into a place of cultural continuity and solidarity. Through encouraging global audiences to experience Indigenous values of community, the game shows how digital media can both maintain marginalized memories and generate hope for a decolonial future.

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Zdravković, Lana

## REAPPROPRIATION OF TRADITION AND POP CULTURE AND RECLAIMING THE MEMORY AS AN EMANCIPATORY ELEMENT OF THE SERBIAN STUDENT PROTEST MOVEMENT

The massive student protests that swept across Serbia in 2025 mark a decisive turning point in the country's contemporary history. They are transformative not only politically and socially, but also culturally and generationally. The movement's demands reach beyond the replacement of an extremely corrupt regime, calling for a systemic reconfiguration of Serbian society based on the rule of law, freedom of expression, and social justice. In doing so, the protests reveal innovative strategies aimed at the reappropriation of Serbian tradition, popular culture, and collective memory, particularly of the contested 1990s. Through the performances of folk and pop songs (including the formation of a protest choir), the use of gusle-like rhythms, call-and-response structures, and circle dances (kolo), and the creative remixing of turbofolk – once the soundtrack of the Milošević-era mafia elite – the protesters reconfigure cultural symbols previously monopolized by nationalist discourse. The inclusion of traditional motifs, costumes, rural customs (offering slatko, bread and salt, or rakija), and the national flag reclaims these elements as belonging to the people rather than to the ruling elite or chauvinist movements. Protest caravans reaching smaller towns and villages further challenge the government's monopoly over the "voice of the people". This paper argues that the methods, practices, and affects of the student movement generate an emancipatory potential precisely through this reappropriation of tradition, pop culture, and memory – domains long co-opted by ultranationalist projects. Drawing on Jacques Rancière's concept of emancipation as "the politics of the self as the other" and as the verification of the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being, the paper interprets the Serbian protest movement as an attempt to open a space for emancipation as a process of political subjectification – as a heterology, a logic of the other – and thus to establish a genuine political community of equals.

# Bios and Contacts



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Dr. Waseem Ahad is currently working as an editorial consultant at the Digital Department of Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT). He has a doctorate in Communication Science (completed 2021) from Kocaeli University, Turkiye. His research focuses on how power and domination permeate media narratives. His forthcoming research investigates the intersection of film texts and memoricide in the (post)colonial context of Kashmir. His work has appeared in *Contemporary South Asia*, *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, and *Philosophies*.

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Areg Balayan is a documentary and visual artist whose practice bridges war photography, street art, and collective memory. Trained in zoo engineering, he turned to photography in the mid-1990s and gained prominence with his 2016 wartime photo-essay *Mob*, documenting the mobilization during the April War between Armenia and Azerbaijan. His work explores trauma, resilience, and post-conflict identity in Armenia and Karabakh. Balayan's later project *Blojiks*, born at a 2018 Berlin Street Art Festival, transforms his drawings into public murals embodying empathy and playfulness. His recent research and teaching engage with decolonial reflections and vernacular visual practices in post-Socialist spaces.

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Elena Bös is an interdisciplinary researcher specializing in popular culture and memory studies, with a particular emphasis on Metal Studies and Holocaust representation. Since 2021, she has served as a research assistant at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte Munich and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Modern and Contemporary History at LMU Munich. Her dissertation, titled *Between "Auschwitz Rules" and "Never Again" – Holocaust Representation in Metal*, is scheduled for submission in January. In 2023, Elena founded the *Schwermetallstudien* (SMS) network and actively participates in international conferences as a presenter. Her research foregrounds decolonial gender, ethical responsibility, and decolonial critique within the context of music and public memory.

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Andrea Capriolo is a research fellow for the project *Pensiero Radicale Esibito*, focusing on the study of architectural exhibitions in Italy. His research has explored the connections between artistic practice and political militancy during the years of youth protest, particularly in relation to the New Left. He is the author of the volumes *Non c'è rivoluzione senza libidine. Dai Circoli del proletariato giovanile ai centri sociali* (Bologna, 2024) and *Indiani a Macondo. Il Settantasette a Milano* (Milan, 2025)

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Nina Cvar teaches at the University of Ljubljana and has published widely on corporeality, affect, and contemporary visual culture. Her current research explores the intersections of violence, erasure, and digital technologies as she is also a researcher at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana. In 2021, she published the monograph *Digital Image and Global Capitalism: Technology, Politics, Resistance* with one of Slovenia's central humanities and social sciences publishers, Sophia. In 2025, she was a guest lecturer at the Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien.

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Maria B. Garda is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Turku, Finland. She is an expert in media history, and her current work focuses on comparative history of creative computing cultures. Her recent publications have dealt with digital heritage, sustainability, and video games. She was previously involved with several research projects, including "Creative Micro-Computing in Australia, 1976-1992" (Flinders University, 2017-2018) and "Alternative Usage of New Media Technology during the Decline of People's Republic of Poland" (University of Lodz, 2013-2017). She currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the COST Action Grassroots of Digital Europe: From Historic to Contemporary Cultures of Creative Computing (GRADE).

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Bernhard Steinbrecher is a popular music scholar and works as senior scientist at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, in the Department of Music. He holds a PhD in musicology from the University of Music Weimar, Germany, and has received his habilitation in 2024 at Innsbruck University. Steinbrecher's analytical approach towards popular music is characterized by an integrative perspective on both its aesthetics, practices, and discourses. With a particular focus on contemporary developments, he examines the relation between popular music's sounds and social, psychological, and aesthetic questions. Steinbrecher was a member of the international as well as the German-speaking board of the International Association for The Study of Popular Music (IASPM).

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Feđa Šlaki is currently an MA student in culture studies at the Faculty of Social Studies, at the University of Ljubljana, where she is currently exploring the relationship between mysticism and eroticism within several world religions in her thesis. She has a lifelong fascination with myths and legends, as well as the practices linked to them. Recently, many of her interests have gravitated more broadly towards the relationship and communication between human and non-human agents, including in folklore, and storytelling, a subject she hopes to be able to continue exploring in the future.

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Asja Šuštaršič is a researcher, currently completing her Master's thesis at University of Ljubljana, department of Cultural Studies. Her thesis serves as a main source for this presentation focusing on Kurdish music as a site of decolonial resistance and exploring how marginalized communities use music to preserve identity, memory, and social cohesion under political and cultural repression. In her work, she explores the intersections of sound, resistance, and postcolonial theory. Under foreign co-mentorship, she worked as an intern in Izmir University of Economic, where she conducted part of her Master's thesis research.

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Madina Tlostanova is a decolonial feminist thinker and fiction writer, professor of gender studies at Linköping University, Sweden. Her research interests include epistemic and aesthetic aspects of decoloniality; the postsocialist human condition, fiction, and art; critical future inquiries and critical interventions into complexity, crisis, and change. Tlostanova's most recent books include *A new Political Imagination, Making the Case* (co-authored with Tony Fry, Routledge, 2020), *Decoloniality of Knowledge, Being and Sensing* (Centre of Contemporary Culture Tselinny, Kazakhstan, 2020, Kazakhian translation – 2023), and *Narratives of Unsettlement. Being Out-of-joint as a Generative Human Condition* (Routledge, 2023). Currently she is working on a monograph *Not by Leviathan Alone. An exercise in Post-nation-state Worlding*.

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Aida Vallejo is an associate professor at the University of the Basque Country (Spain), and holds a PhD in Film History by Autonomous University of Madrid. Her research focuses on film festivals and creative documentary. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the study of cultural industries, she brings together methodologies and theoretical frameworks from media studies, anthropology, film history, and digital humanities. She has co-edited the books *Documentary Film Festivals Vol.1* and *Vol.2* and *Film Festivals and Anthropology*, and published several articles in international academic journals. She is principal investigator of two research projects focused on Basque festivals: *ikerFESTS* (Basque festival map) and "Encounters at the Festival" (a socio-historical analysis of San Sebastian Film Festival's venues).

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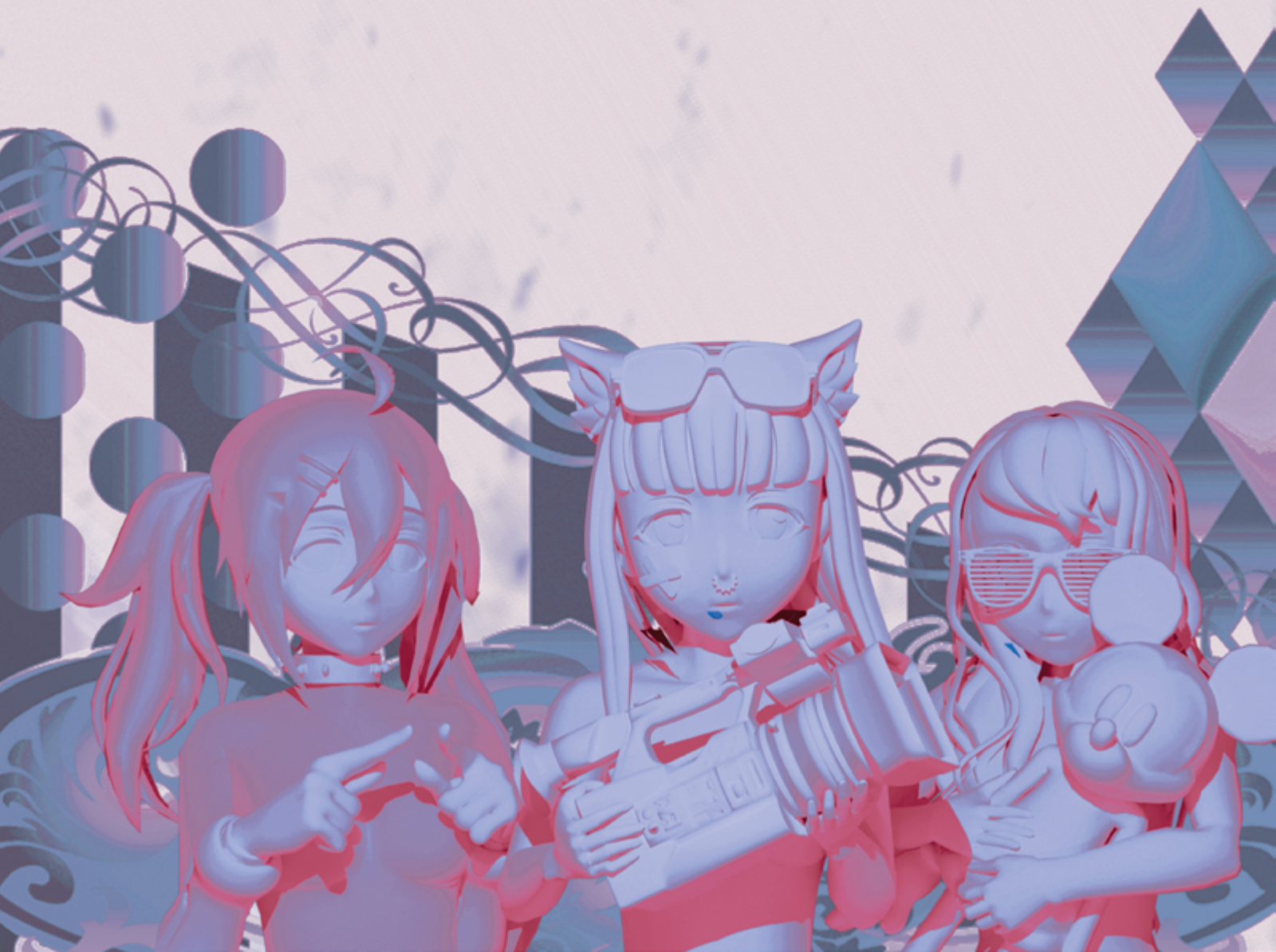
## **Zdravković, Lana, [zana.zdravkovic@mirovni-institut.si](mailto:zana.zdravkovic@mirovni-institut.si)**

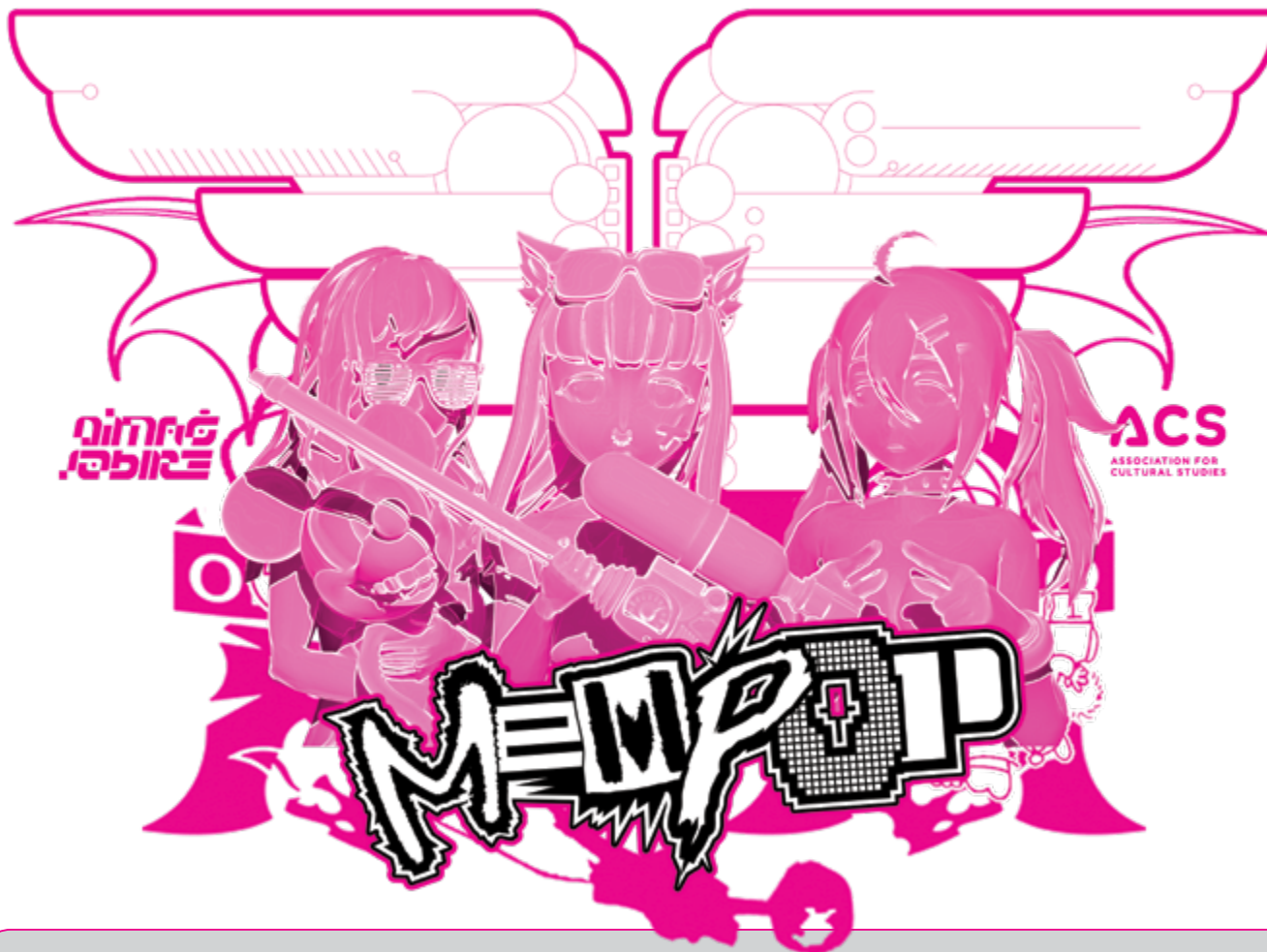
Lana Zdravković (PhD in Philosophy with the thesis “Politics of emancipation: thought-practice of the militant subject”, 2013) is a researcher, publicist, political activist, and performer. The fields of her research interest include political engagement, radical equality, emancipatory praxes. She works as researcher at the Peace Institute – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies. She is the co-founder of KITCH – Institute of Art Production and Research. The fields of her performative engagement include: potentiality of manifestation of the idea, excesses of bodily representation, embodiment of identity and belonging.

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# Credits





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### **Organizing Committee**

Evgenia Amey, Robert Bobnič, Nina Cvar, Diana Grgurić, Rodoljub Jovanović, Jernej Kaluža, Gal Kirn, Owen Kohl, Natalija Majsova, Danijel Matjjević, Ana Mendes, Maruška Nardoni, Mila Orlič, Vjeran Pavlaković, Benedikt Perak, Aljoša Pužar, Boris Ružič, Jasmina Šepetavc, Mitja Velikonja.

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