

## JHoK, Special Issue 2024: A History of Conflicts after WWII

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Noit Banai

Journal for the History of Knowledge – Call for Proposals, Special Issue 2024: "A History of Conflicts after WWII: Beyond the Nation State: Towards an Epistemology of Transitional Justice"

Guest Editors:

Dr. Noit Banai, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, noitbanai@hkbu.edu.hk

Dr. Marina Gržinić, Akbild. Vienna, m.grzinic@akbild.ac.at

Dr. Martin C.K. Chung, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, ckmartin@hkbu.edu.hk

### Aims and Scope

This special issue emerges from the claim that, after many centuries of military conflicts and attempts at healing through trans-national justice and reconciliation, a new model of Europe is necessary, one that aspires to move beyond the continent's foundational Westphalian epistemology: the nation state.

While 1648 habitually marks this modern project of nation building, we trace this genealogy to 1492 in the Iberian Peninsula, when Jews and Moors were expelled - or ethnically cleansed - from the national homeland of the Christian Spaniards and the Castilian monarchy began its colonial journeys of discovery to the New World. The emergence of the European nation state was thus linked to a double violence, one that targeted minority populations living both within and beyond its territorial boundaries in order to constitute a homogenous majority. In the words of Mahmood Mamdani, "The birth of the modern state amid ethnic cleansing and overseas domination teaches us a different lesson about what political modernity is: less an engine of tolerance than of conquest."

It is probably unnecessary to list the countless episodes of violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide that have occurred on European soil and its extra-territorial colonial dependencies as a result of 'the fear of small numbers.' In the twentieth century alone, under both capitalist and communist regimes, the ideology of the sovereign nation state as the basis for governmentality and citizenship has gone hand in hand with large-scale efforts to protect the national ethnos and its singularity against any perceived contaminations. These histories, which are only a few centuries old, implicate a wide spectrum of modern disciplines, techniques, mechanisms, and epistemologies through which populations are represented, counted, classified, or otherwise enumerated. Used to shape various representations of the 'people,' they have become naturalized as modes of knowledge.

At the crux of the nation state model, which has arguably become universal, is both a fantasy of

wholeness and an anxiety about minor differences, which together produce predatory identities that contain potentialities for conflict. According to Arjun Appadurai, "... the tip-over into ethnonationalism... and much to do with the strange inner reciprocity of the categories of 'majority' and 'minority... which produces ... the anxiety of incompleteness. Numerical majorities can become predatory and ethnocidal with regard to small numbers precisely when some minorities... remind these majorities of the small gap which lies between their condition as majorities and the horizon of an unsullied national whole, a pure and untainted national ethnos."

Importantly, as is the case in some historical conflicts, certain victim groups can be the plurality – and not the minority – in terms of absolute numbers. And more often than not, numbers become the critical points of contention surrounding the scale and scope of conflict, genocide, and subsequent reparations. Assaults against both literal and imagined minorities, unleashed at bodies and beings by the apparatus of the nation state and its population, have produced one of the paradigmatic subjectivities of the 20th and 21st centuries, namely the refugee.

From the perspective of the present, we argue that these mutually entangled histories of violence and nation building urgently need to be superseded by another collective model of the 'people'. Though it is still unclear what this future epistemology of belonging might look like, the first necessary steps include:

- 1) undertaking a comparative analysis of the history of conflicts across different parts of Europe and its former proxies and, in tandem,
- 2) exploring processes of trans-national justice and reconciliation that have been debated and implemented, if not fully achieved.

Such efforts to bring about peace and the nation states that participate in them are often termed 'transitional'. Given the contemporary prevalence of such processes of social and political remaking as well as the intense antagonism and push-back against them by various agents, we can claim that Europe is in a process of transition. But towards what?

To that end, we would like to propose an interdisciplinary special issue that includes three distinct territorial topoi in which particular histories of conflict and processes of trans-national justice and reconciliation can be studied in a comparative perspective: Northern Ireland; Central Europe and the Balkans, and the Middle East.

In each of these topoi, we propose case studies that investigate a heterogeneous constellation of discursive objects, material practices and representational and symbolic artifacts in which the histories of conflicts between majorities and minorities have taken shape in a bid to constitute a 'people.'

We situate the case studies along various historical and geographic axes in a desire to foreground the ways that processes of nation building and production of modern forms of subjectivity have both shared and unique features: We investigate the role of religious sectarianism and the legacy of British rule in Northern Ireland; the mechanisms of ethnic, racialized, and anti-Semitic discrimination in conjunction with post-socialist transitions to neoliberal global capitalism in the Balkans and Central Europe; and the legacies of colonialism, Cold War, and the Holocaust in conjunction with ethnic and religious factionalism in the Middle East.

The line connecting these three areas of conflict history is the critical decade of the 1970s. During this period, all three areas experienced an intensification of brutality and violence in a string of

events that continue to shape the contemporary period. As Louis Kriesberg notes in his history of the field of conflict resolution, the practice of conflict resolution flourished between 1970 and 1985, and consensus was reached on many of the field's core ideas. In addition, he demonstrates that feminist theories and social movement theories added important new insights to the field. This is our starting point for looking at the three territorial topoi, which in themselves show a confluence of dramatic conflictual events that radically influenced the decades that followed.

The 1970s was a time of Cold War upsurge and the paths of confrontation were highly exposed as a dividing line: the effects of the conflicts led to a fortress on one side, namely Western Europe, and, as we suggest through our interdisciplinary reconsideration in this special issue, these conflicts were waged both internally and externally. Yugoslavia as a former state, which no longer exists, showed strong nationalist ideas that exposed the conflicts between Serbs and Croats. As Hikmet Karčić writes, in the 1990s, as a result of the past, a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia was not possible, and the second-best solution was the creation of a separate territory. As early as April 7, 1992, Bosnian leaders in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Pale declared the creation of Republika Srpska (RS) within Bosnia and Herzegovina. From that moment on, events escalated until 1995, when the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place.

When Itamar Rabinovich talks about the Middle East, he notes that the region, prone to domestic turmoil, intra-regional conflict, and superpower competition, has never been characterized by stability, but in the first decades of the post-colonial era there was a pattern: The two Cold War protagonists promoted their local allies; Turkey and Iran played a limited role; a series of intra-Arab conflicts, mainly between radical, revolutionary regimes allied with the Soviet Union on one side and pro-Western, moderate/conservative regimes on the other; and the endemic Arab-Israeli conflict. This pattern has gradually permuted since the late 1970s towards what we have today, the Ukraine war is a direct outcome of the 1970s Cold War.

Finally, in Northern Ireland, the annual death toll of the Troubles (1968-1998) peaked in the early 1970s. In 1972 alone, which began with 'Bloody Sunday' (January 30) when British soldiers killed thirteen unarmed demonstrators, there were more than 10,000 shooting incidents and other acts of violence resulting in 480 deaths among a population of just 1.5 million. It was a turning point in the conflict that tipped the balance in favor of the "physical force" argument within Irish nationalism, championed then by the Provisional Irish Republican Army, as the British state lost its credibility as a neutral and disinterested adjudicator to end the Unionist domination in the country.

As we foreground these conflicts, we also wish to make evident both the diverse and uneven processes of trans-national justice and reconciliation that have taken place in the wake of seismic violence and the obstacles that make such processes so difficult. These include, but are not limited to, the contestation of histories and memories by victims and perpetrators who once shared the same nation state and/or who wish to build a new state structure in the wake of conflict and genocide. Their competing narratives, interpretations, and understandings are also often implicated in other histories of struggle that connect with the geopolitical organization of empires during the long *durée* of modernity. Our special issue is an essential step in the process of repairing the wounds caused by the last five hundred years of nation building; it is also a formative step to creating the conditions of possibility for a different epistemology, one that neither emerges from nor contests the Westphalian model but stands on a different ground

altogether.

We welcome papers from a wide range of disciplines on one of the following or other related themes:

The history of concepts of nation state formation, conflict, trans-national justice, and reconciliation in any of these three geographic topoi: Northern Ireland, Balkans and Central Europe, and the Middle East.

The study practices, institutions, and sites of knowledge production, adjudication, and legitimation around which these particular histories of conflict have taken shape and continue to permute. These can include a wide spectrum of artistic, visual and cultural practices, representational and discursive artifacts, symbolic objects and spaces, monuments and museological sites, religious practices, official and non-official discourses and channels of communication.

Contributions highlighting the relevance of the history of conflict, transnational justice and reconciliation to current political concerns and the socio-political, economic and cultural landscape In Central Europe, Austria, Hungary, Poland, the former Yugoslavia, in the context of antisemitism, colonialism and Turbonationalism to be exposed. Issues of the development of memory and the construction of history, maps, genocidal activities in the last century, pogroms, racist attacks, the status of the central EU, the development of postnations, etc.

Contributions that articulate possible epistemologies and imaginaries beyond the nation state model.

Submission Guidelines and Deadlines:

- All abstracts must satisfy the theme of the special issue.
- Please submit your abstract (250 words max) and a short CV via email to all the editors by April 20, 2022.
- Accepted authors will be asked to develop 8,000-word papers, which will be due on May 1, 2023 and subject to peer review.
- We anticipate the special issue appearing in May 2024
- Questions about the Special Issue can be directed to the guest editors: Dr. Noit Banai (noitbanai@hkbu.edu.hk); Dr. Marina Gržinić (m.grzinic@akbild.ac.at); and Dr. Martin C.K. Chung (ckmartin@hkbu.edu.hk).

About the Guest Editors

Dr. Noit Banai (PhD, Columbia University), Associate Professor, Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University, is an art historian and critic who specializes in modern and contemporary art in a global context, with a particular focus on conditions of migrations, exile, diaspora, border-regimes and statelessness. She is the author of *Yves Klein* (Reaktion Books, 2014), *Being a Border* (Paper Visual Arts, 2021) and articles appearing in journals such as *Third Text*, *Stedelijk Studies*, *Public Culture*, *Performing Arts Journal*, and *Texte zur Kunst*.

<https://ava.hkbu.edu.hk/en/academy/academic-staff/noitbanai>

Dr. C.K. Martin Chung is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Government and International Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and a Visiting Research Fellow at Queen's University Belfast. He holds a PhD from the University of Hong Kong (2014) and a master's degree in

European Studies from the University of Macau (2008). Previously, he was Research Assistant Professor of the European Union Academic Programme Hong Kong and a lecturer at the University of St. Joseph (Macau).

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Dr. Marina Gržinić is doctor of philosophy and works as researcher advisor at the Institute of Philosophy at the ZRC SAZU (Scientific and Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art) in Ljubljana. She also works as a freelance media theorist, art critic and curator. She is Professor at The Academy of Fine Arts Vienna Austria). Marina Gržinić has published hundreds of articles and essays and several books.

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Reference:

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