

Decolonization in Theory and Practice (Amsterdam, 21–22 May 26)

University of Amsterdam, May 21–22, 2026

Deadline: Jan 18, 2026

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Rethinking Colonial Dynamics in the Balkans and Post-Socialist Societies: Decolonization in Theory and Practice.

In an era of multiple ongoing globalized crises, it is crucial to examine how systems of oppression and extractivism intersect with different manifestations of (neo-)colonial dynamics, as many of those systems are rooted in “modernity/ coloniality” and capitalism (Mignolo 2007). For this two-day conference, we wish to focus on colonial dynamics developed in the Balkan region and in Post-Socialist societies. In recent years, scholarship engaging with the particularities of colonialism in the above-mentioned areas has been expanding. Yet to speak about colonial dynamics in these areas still remains a highly contested topic due to the divergent ways in which colonial power has been exercised in those regions, which often do not include practices traditionally associated with colonialism, such as land occupation.

Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery (2009) have traced similarities between postsocialist and postcolonial societies in aspects that include control over “sovereign states”, organization of empires, racism and classification processes. Following their approach, such comparisons can play a pivotal role in enriching the ways in which we rethink and find alternatives to current struggles that result from capitalism, (neo-)colonialism and their intersections.

Another perspective that places Greece and, more generally, the Balkan region in dialogue with decolonial approaches comes from Dušan I. Bjelić. According to Calotychos, Bjelić follows the Black Marxist tradition, in order to argue for the birth of colonial projects, enslavement and racialization processes in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean already in medieval times (Bjelić 2023; 2025, Calotychos 2023). At the same time, Greece's complex, “crypto-colonial” relationship with the West, which was exemplified during the so-called “Greek crisis” (2009-2018), provokes us to further investigate forms of coloniality in the case of Greece in relation to other countries, which in some cases have experienced non-traditional colonial forms of control (Herzfeld 2002; Bjelić 2023; 2025; *dëcoloniZe hellás* 2023).

While considering the specificities and unique characteristics of colonial manifestations in the Balkans and postsocialist societies, the conference aims to facilitate transcolonial dialogues. We seek to contribute to the development of theoretical frameworks, practices and vocabularies that forge alliances and encourage productive conversations from North to South, from West to East, as well as beyond these binary conceptualizations.

Dr. Penelope Papailias (University of Thessaly, Volos, Greece) will deliver a keynote lecture and give a workshop as part of the conference.

More speakers will be announced on a later date.

We invite researchers and scholars from all career stages (including MA students and PhD candidates) to submit an abstract of their proposed paper (up to 300 words) and a short bio (up to 150 words) by 18 January 2026.

We welcome proposals from researchers working in Art History, Cultural Analysis, Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Literary Studies, Anthropology, History, and any other field across the humanities and social sciences. Early-career researchers are especially encouraged to apply.

Topics for paper proposals could include, but are not limited to:

- ☒ Historical and contemporary forms of (neo-)colonial dynamics in the Balkans and/or post-socialist societies
- ☒ Intersections of capitalism, extractivism, and “modernity/coloniality” in the region
- ☒ Comparative analyses of post-socialist and postcolonial contexts
- ☒ Medieval and early modern genealogies of coloniality, enslavement, and racialization in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean
- ☒ “Crypto-colonial” relationships between Balkan states and Western Europe, including case studies such as the Greek financial crisis
- ☒ Racialization processes, Black Marxist approaches, and alternative genealogies of colonial projects in Southeastern Europe
- ☒ Transcolonial dialogues across South–North and East–West axes
- ☒ Decolonial frameworks, methods, and vocabularies relevant to the Balkans and post-socialist contexts
- ☒ Artistic, cultural, or media representations that negotiate or challenge colonial and decolonial narratives around the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean
- ☒ Case studies highlighting grassroots, activist, or community-based efforts toward decolonization
- ☒ Intersections of nationalism, identity formation, and coloniality in the Balkans and post-socialist societies

Please send your abstract and short bio to the following email address: RethinkingColonialDynamics@gmail.com. All submissions will be reviewed by the three conference organizers. Applicants will be notified of the results in February 2026.

The conference is generously supported by the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Analysis (<https://www.nica-institute.com/>), the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (<https://asca.uva.nl/>) and The Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies (<https://www.oslit.nl/>). It is embedded in the activities of the ASCA research group “Crisis, Critique and Futurity” <https://asca.uva.nl/content/research-groups/crisis/crisis.html>

Reference:

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