

ABSTRACTS**Kurdish Studies Conference****Panel 1A – Affective Politics of Kurdish Everyday Life, Political Mobilization, and Conflict in the Middle East*****Kurdish Revolutionary Affect and Politics of Friendship in the 1990s*****Delal Aydin, University of Duisburg-Essen**

This presentation offers an ethnography of the building of the militant Kurdish youth movement in the 1990s when Kurdish mobilization, led by the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), was at its height. Based on fieldwork, archival research, and auto-ethnography, I examine the formation of revolutionary subjectivities against the Turkish state during the Kurdish youth mobilization in the 1990s, a period marked by extreme state violence. My analysis explores friendship as a human bond of joy, playfulness, and love, which provides a core ground for young revolutionaries to craft themselves as political subjects who believe in their power to change the order of things. I suggest the need to re-think friendship as a critical political concept in the collective formation of alternative subjectivities while also recognizing the worth and uniqueness of each individual.

Feeling Debt: Affect and Intimacy in Kurdish Queer/Trans Worlds**Emrah Karakus, Brandeis University**

This paper examines intimate socialities and community building among queer and trans Kurds in Diyarbakir shaped by the longstanding war between the PKK and the Turkish state. From the memories of torture and incarceration to Kurdish guerilla songs, queer Kurds narrate an intimate racial history of queer/trans selfhood through which they constitute belonging, respectability, and desire. How do they embody, politicize, and perform the Kurdish cause in their intimate settings? How do their understandings of racial violence, (in)visibility, and honour intervene in liberal articulations of non-violence, politics of visibility, and respectability? Drawing from critical race theories and decolonial scholarship, I argue that central to how they imagine a queer Kurdish life is an affective politics of debt (bedel), the powerful feelings of indebtedness and obligation among Kurds who have lost family members fighting for the Kurdish cause. Queer and trans Kurds deploy and shift the meanings and effects of bedel to constitute social boundaries for their personal and communal security: those who can and can't be members of bedel's intimate and affective economy; link histories of state-sponsored violence against Kurds and of everyday homophobia by embodying, enduring, and embracing it to transform the society towards LGBTIs; and constitute moral value, respectability, belonging and honour in the Kurdish society.

Deployment of the "Berxwedan" (Resistance) Narrative: Experiences of Loss and Recovery in Rojava**Thomas McGee, University of Melbourne**

Recent studies have treated narratives of Resistance (Berxwedan in Kurdish) as a prominent component of the Rojava political project and philosophy in northern Syria (Iltis 2015; Küçük and Özselçuk 2016; Tank 2017; Ferreira and Santiago 2018). Indeed, the hashtag "Berxwedana Rojava" (Rojava Resistance) has been a key slogan at both moments of triumph and crisis for the dominant Kurdish-led movement in Northern Syria. This paper takes that approach forward by focusing on how this discourse of

resistance is variously applied and operationalized on the ground across territories considered to belong to Rojava (Western [Syrian] Kurdistan). Rethinking loss, pain, and memory in the Kurdish context, the paper argues that affective resistance has been experienced differently according to the fate of the territories concerned due to their respective conflict outcomes (liberation from Vs. loss to hostile actors). The military struggle to defend territories has been transformed into other forms of resistance in post-conflict contexts: reconstruction (Ava Kirin) for liberated towns and neo-resistance “Berxwedana Serdemê” for those lost to the enemy.

Panel 1B – GCRF Hub Research: Gendered Migrations, Displacements and Masculinity in Kurdistan

Gendered Return Mobilities to Conflicted Regions: The Kurdish Case

Janroj Yilmaz Keles, Middlesex University & Muslih Irwani, American University of Iraq - Baghdad

The phenomenon of 'return' mobilities, particularly gendered return mobilities, is an emerging issue of economic and political importance in many post-conflict countries and regions. Drawing on research on Kurdish migrants' return to their homeland since 2005, the central question of our presentation will be: what factors influenced these migrants to migrate back to their conflicted and politically unstable homelands? To answer this question, we examine the motives of the gendered return mobilities of men and women from diverse educational, political, ethnic and occupational backgrounds both from Western countries to Kurdistan-Iraq. This paper will provide qualitative and quantitative data (50 interviews and 200 survey responses) on the strategies used by Kurdish returnees to build social networks, have access to employment and the process of settlement, adaptation and socio-economic participation in their “new” home. The paper will also provide insight into gendered challenges, expectations and norms experienced by the research participants. Theories of transnationalism, return mobilities and conflict will be used to conceptualise this paper.

Gendered Labour Migrations in KRI

Eleonore Kofman, Middlesex University, Muslih Irwani & Jiyar Aghapouri, American University of Kurdistan

The issue of foreign and women domestic workers in Kurdistan Region-Iraq (KRI) is a rather new mainly starting from the 2005 following the official recognition of the Region as an autonomous federal region within Iraq which coincided with a relative rapid “economic and social development” in the Kurdistan Region, as well as the socio-economic and political issues in the KRI’s neighbouring countries. However such gendered labour migration from neighbouring countries (Iran, Syria) and globally has received little attention. Drawing on extensive fieldwork and interviews with 25 female labour migrants in different sectors - education, NGOs, hospitality and domestic work sectors and with different educational and professional qualifications, the project seeks to explore the dynamic of labour migration in KRI and contribute to a gender-sensitive understanding of the interaction between economic and socio-cultural drivers of labour migrations in KRI and the working and living conditions of female migrants, particularly in the three cities of Erbil, Sulaimani and Duhok.

Prolonged Displacement and Gender in Diyarbakir

Necla Acik, Middlesex University & Zeynep Ceren Eren Benlisoy, Erasmus University of Rotterdam

Three decades have passed since Turkey's counter-insurgency campaigns have forced an estimated 1 Million Kurds in Northern Kurdistan/South-eastern Turkey to abruptly abandon their lands and homes. Amid this large-scale displacement, many Kurds resettled in the big Turkish metropolises and in Kurdish towns such as Diyarbakir without any significant international or governmental support. Yet, despite this "resettlement" many of these Internally Displaced People (IDPs) still live under the poverty threshold and feel uprooted. In addition to that a new wave of displacement occurred after the destruction of large parts of the old town Sur in Diyarbakir in 2015/2016 which had been home to some of the 1990s IDPs. Thus, the prolonged displacement of Kurds in Turkey is closely linked to the securitisation of the Kurdish question which continues to shape the socio-economic conditions of the IPDs in Diyarbakir. This paper will present the gendered results of the survey carried out among IDPs households in Diyarbakir in 2021-2022 which includes IDPs from the 1990s and 2015/16 as well as some new arrivals from Syria and Iraq, who fled the war and ISIS onslaught.

Masculinity and Violence

Twana Hassan, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani

Despite thirty years of women's rights activism in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), violence against women (VAW) remains a serious social and legal issue in this region. Data collected by the General Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women and Families reveals a high number of victims and a variety of types of violence. Even though the statistics do not reflect the real numbers and all the forms of VAW, they flag a major problem affecting not only the victims, but also the larger community. When a man kills a woman (be it his wife, sister, daughter, or kin) he ends a life with all its potentials, destroys a family, transforms his character, and inflicts harm on the whole society. Although violence is wrong regardless of any consequences, it is important to understand its impacts beyond the rights of the victim. Reflecting on this broader understanding of violence, this paper aims to examine specific root-causes of VAW in Kurdistan, integrating it into perceptions of masculinity in this community.

Backlash against the Women's Rights Movement

Choman Hardi, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani

Despite the external barriers and internal shortcomings, the women's rights movement has engendered legal reform, change in consciousness, and increased participation in the public sphere for women. The resilient patriarchal system has fought through portraying men as victims and creating men's rights groups, representing feminists as infidels who are against Islam, blaming activists every time women get victimised, and more recently through accusing us of being corrupt, of getting funding from international agencies to destroy the 'high values' of the community and to spread 'homosexuality'. This paper will highlight some of the defamation attacks on activists, organisations, and academics who are working for gender equality and how the widespread condemnations attempt to destroy trust in activists, defame, exhaust, and silence them.

**Panel 1C – Social-psychological Approaches to Studying the Turkish-Kurdish Conflict:
The Role of Multiple Identities in Conflict, Peace and Reconciliation**

***The Role of Turkish and Kurdish Identities, Allyship, and Conflict Narratives in Supporting
Pro-Kurdish Policies Among Turks and Kurds***

Özden Melis Uluğ, University of Sussex & Mete Sefa Uysal, Friedrich Schiller University

Using the context of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, Studies 1 and 2 tested how identification with Turkish and Kurdish identities predicted support for Kurdish rights through the pathway of the endorsement of the conflict narrative of Kurds (i.e., independence narrative) among Kurds (Study 1) and Turks (Study 2) in Turkey. Study 2 also tested whether the paths between (a) ethnic identification and endorsement of the minority group's conflict narrative and (b) endorsement of the minority group's conflict and support for minority rights would be moderated by ally identification (i.e., Turkish ally identification). Two hundred one self-identified Kurdish participants in Study 1 and 271 self-identified Turkish participants in Study 2 participated in an online survey voluntarily. In Study 1, stronger Kurdish identification predicted more support for minority rights through the pathway of more endorsement of the independence narrative. Study 2 showed the opposite findings with regard to the relationship between ethnic identification and support for minority rights. Among Turks, higher ethnic identification predicted less support for minority rights through the pathway of less endorsement of the minority group's conflict narrative. Study 2 also found that the strength of the relationship between (a) ethnic identification and endorsement of the minority group's conflict narrative is particularly strong among strong allies, whereas the strength of the relationship between (b) endorsement of the minority group's conflict narrative and support for minority rights is particularly strong among weak allies. Results point to the important relationship between ethnic and ally identities, conflict narratives, and conflict- and peace-related outcomes.

***Village Guards as "In Between" in the Turkish-Kurdish Conflict: Re-Examining Identity and
Position in Intergroup Conflict***

Yasemin Gülsüm Acar, University of Dundee

This presentation will discuss the village guard system and its role in the Turkish-Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Recent work in social psychology suggests that a two-group paradigm in researching intergroup conflict leaves out important contextual factors that influence trajectories and outcomes of conflict. This presentation is based on interviews with 63 active and retired village guards in five provinces in eastern Turkey in 2014. Participants were asked how they became village guards, their experiences while holding the position and after they've retired, their relationship with neighbours and neighbouring villages, as well as their views on the peace process and whether they believe a lasting peace is possible. Results indicate that village guards became guards either because their tribe took arms as a whole, they felt economically there were few other options or were pressured by the state. Participants also reported feeling otherized by both non-village guard neighbours as well as state actors and were generally positive about a peaceful outcome to the conflict but were concerned about the sincerity of the government. The findings will be discussed in terms of the current state of the conflict and the village guard system.

Reflecting on the Role of Kurdish, Muslim, and Turkiyeli Identities for Reconciliation and Peace

Gülseli Baysu, Queen's University Belfast

According to social psychological research, identification with one's group, that is, ingroup identity, plays a key role in reconciliation and peace in (post)conflict societies; depending on the nature and content of the ingroup identity, it can be a facilitator for or a barrier against reconciliation. Focusing on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict in Turkey, we investigated the link between several ingroup identities, such as ethnic, national, and religious identities and various understandings of reconciliation. We conducted three studies in 2012, during which the so-called "peace process" was still ongoing. We examined how Kurds in Turkey and in the diaspora (Belgium) construed reconciliation and how they approached reconciliation and intergroup forgiveness (total N = 141). In Study 1 (Baysu & Duman, 2016), we found that while ethnic identification as Kurdish predicted less forgiveness via more positive evaluation of their own group over the other group, identification as "Türkiyeli" was associated with more forgiveness. In Study 2 (Baysu & Coşkan, 2018), we focused on qualitative analysis of what reconciliation meant. Kurds' construals of reconciliation tapped into seven themes, grouped as dialogue-based construal of reconciliation (themes: dialogue, recognition, emotions, and peace) vs rights-based construal (themes: identity rights, freedom, and confederative rights). Kurds endorsing the dialogue-based construal were more forgiving of the other group. In Study 3 (Baysu, Coşkan & Duman, 2018), we tested a mediation model in which the associations between ethnic (i.e., Kurdish) and religious identifications (i.e., Muslim) and reconciliation outcomes were mediated by positive intergroup emotions. Stronger religious identification as Muslim was associated with positive intergroup emotions and in turn more support for reconciliation, whereas stronger ethnic identification as Kurdish had the opposite effect. However, having Muslim identity as a superordinate identity was double-edged for the Kurdish minorities: while high Muslim identifiers were more supportive of reconciliation in general; they were also less likely to endorse a rights-based understanding of reconciliation (versus a dialogue-based reconciliation). Overall, we discuss the role of ingroup identities in peace and reconciliation.

Dangerous knowledge and proxy-reasons: therapeutic attempts of a former PKK fighter

Nerina Weiss, Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Studies, Norway

A sunny noon somewhere in Turkey, Jihan finds herself sitting on the balcony and contemplating suicide. Her friend happens to pass by and convinces her to seek medical help. Indeed, Jihan is allowed to jump the queue and is taken in as an acute case. The doctor immediately realizes that Jihan has experienced some trauma, however, which is unclear. Jihan on her side remains unwilling or unable to tell of her past as a guerrilla fighter and her experiences during prison in the 1990s. Based on biographical interviews with Jihan, a former PKK guerrilla fighter, this paper explores the limited access Kurdish activists in Turkey have to medical and psychological support for their health issues caused by violence and trauma. Theoretically I draw on the literature of ignorance and not-knowing (Dilley and Kirsch 2015), as well as on Das' (1996) concept of poisonous knowledge to explore Jihan's meeting with the medical sector in Turkey. Her experiences of war, torture and imprisonment constitute dangerous knowledge, which is difficult to share in a context where the therapeutic safe room cannot be taken as a given. After all medical staff have been actively involved in the torture of political prisoners, and political cleavages also exist in the therapist-patient relationship today. Jihan – and probably also the doctor - therefore navigate a therapeutic setting vested with mistrust and silences and explore the unsaid traumata

and proxy-reasons in an attempt to cope with the traumata and violent experiences unsaid.

Panel 1D – Kurds in Iran: Protests, Islam and Intersectionality

The hashtag Mahsa_Amin or Zhina_Amini: A social media ethnography on the ontological relationship between Kurdish identity and Iranian Identity during the 2022 Iranian protests

Jiyar Aghapouri, American University of Kurdistan

In September 2022, Mahsa (Zhina/Jina Amini in Kurdish) a 22-year-old Kurdish girl, travelled from her hometown Saqez[Saqiz in Kurdish] in Kurdistan-Iran to Tehran with her family. Zhina was walking with her brother in one of the streets of Tehran when she was arrested by the Morality Police because of what was called “improper hijab.” A few hours later, Zhina went into a coma and died two days later. Bloody head and ears and bruises on Zhina’s body showed that she was beaten by the police officers and had a concussion. The death of Zhina instigated a widespread protest throughout Iran which has been unique during the last 44 years of Islamic Republic’s reign. From the very first day, Zhina’s narrative provoked one of the biggest reactions in social media and the hashtag #Mahsa_Amini went viral on twitter globally. However, using the Persian name Mahsa instead of her Kurdish Zhina brought back to the fore many complex aspects in the relationship between the Kurdish and Iranian/Persian identities. Through an extensive social media ethnography of #Mahsa_Amini, this paper aims to discover the past and ongoing challenges in accommodating Kurdish identity within the Iranian national discourse. It also discusses the role of women and ethnic groups in leading the protests, as well as the repercussion of this diverse movement on social media.

The Muslim Peshmerga and the IRGC How the Iranian Islamist Regime Won and Lost Its Kurdish Allies

Siarhei Bohdan, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies

This paper investigates the evolution of the Iranian Islamist state following the 1979 Revolution by focusing on the history of alliances between radical followers of Iran’s Shi’ite Islamist movement and Kurdish Sunni Islamists. Relying on these alliances, Khomeinist radicals—largely acting through the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)—succeeded in reconquering the Kurdish areas of Iran captured by rebel Kurdish forces. Ultimately, however, the revolutionary regime failed to develop a sustainable partnership with local Sunni Islamist forces and integrate them into the Islamic Republic. The revolutionary movement’s global ambitions effectively stalled within Iran’s own territory, and its one-time Kurdish Sunni comrades-in-arms were taken over by global radical Sunni networks opposing the Iranian state. Looking at the late 1970s to the early 1980s, this study draws on Iranian and foreign media reports from the period, as well as recently published documents and memoirs by participants and observers of these events.

Komala: a popular left-wing organisation

Marouf Cabi, LSE Middle East Centre

Surfacing during the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Revolutionary Organisation of the toilers of Iranian Kurdistan, popularly known as Komala (Kurdish: organisation), left an indelible mark on the revolutionary events and the Kurdish movement that followed. In a specific historical and intellectual context, it defined itself as a communist and Marxist

organisation, quickly becoming popular through its socialist and progressive ideas and, crucially, its practice. It expanded as an amalgamation of networks of social and political activists of the previous era, creating various unions and associations and sharing the leadership of the Kurdish movement with other parties and individuals. Komala focused on social injustice and class disparities, defining itself as an organisation for the toiling class. Its attention to gender or women's question attracted women, who gradually radicalised the party in this regard. Its popularity was also crucially owed to two other factors: (1) the active and, in some ways, leading role in the Kurdish movement as a non-nationalistic party, and (2) an uncompromising stance on religious extremism, epitomised by its contribution to isolating or outperforming two important forces in Kurdistan by 1980. In the 1980s, Komala became - alongside the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK) - one of the main Kurdish parties to organise resistance against military occupation. Such a profile distinguishes Komala from most left-wing parties across Iran, which lacked the same degree of popularity or endurance.

However, despite its significance as a relatively novel historical player in both Iran and Kurdistan since the Revolution, Komala has yet to attract at least adequate scholarly attention in both Iranian and Kurdish studies. Indeed, this applies to other parties, though, for instance, DPIK enjoys more attention in scholarly works or historical narratives. Crucially, Komala's actions and programmes have always raised questions and attracted criticism, continuing to the present. In fact, organisations such as Komala - and for this matter DPIK - have never been confined to their organisational boundaries; they also appear as enduring (popular) movements, which reproduce their legitimacy despite different historical and intellectual contexts. This point assumes to be the theoretical contribution of this paper, which aims to contextualise and conceptualise Komala. It explains it as a product of the profound socioeconomic, cultural, and intellectual transformation that Iran experienced since the Second World War in a global context. For this reason, Komala developed to represent the new social forces which had emerged because of such transformation. This paper argues that Komala made a left-wing alternative to exploitative social relations and national oppression a strong possibility in Kurdistan while contributing to shaping the ideological contours of the Kurdish movement by transforming Kurdish identity beyond an ethnocentric, but within a universal, worldview. The organisation has experienced organisational and ideological transformation since the 1990s, reflecting changing historical and intellectual contexts. However, its emergence and impact on both the Kurdish movement and the left in Iran merit scholarly attention. Therefore, this paper aims to inspire research on a significant historical player in Kurdistan since the 1979 Revolution.

A comparative study of the response of the Islamic Republic of Iran to religious political groups in Iranian Kurdistan

Mehdi Dehnavi, Journalist & Researcher & Zarifeh Ahmadi, Researcher

With the 1979 revolution in Iran, the political and social life of Iranians changed. Either new political and religious groups emerged, or there were changes in the status of those that had been created before. Iranian Kurdistan was not exempted from these major changes. This time, political and religious groups in Iranian Kurdistan had to adapt to an Islamic regime based on the Shia religion. Distance or closeness to the ideology of the new regime caused a different reaction of this regime. In this study, we analysed the reaction of the Islamic Republic of Iran to religious political groups in Iranian Kurdistan using a descriptive and analytical method. As a result, we found that the regime's

response largely depends on whether these groups are Islamist or not. The regime has a different strategy against Islamist groups. As long as they support the principles of the Persian-Shiite constitution, it gives them freedom of action. In this way, it uses them as a tool to weaken nationalist and leftist political groups in Iranian Kurdistan. The regime's strategy in facing nationalist and leftist groups is to be illegal, wanted, arrested and executed.

Intersectionality and Multitasking: The struggle of Kurdish women in Iranian Kurdistan (Rojhelat)

Rahim Hajiagha, Jagiellonian University

The Kurdish women's struggle against discrimination in Iran and Rojhelat began as early as in the period of the Mahabad Republic (1945). After the 1979's revolution the women's participation was transformed. From the armed struggle it developed into an identity-seeking 'intersectional' battle. The Kurdish women position themselves within several axes of social divisions, namely, gender, sexuality, religion, economic disadvantage, class, and ethnicity. Hence, they search for the new normative public sphere and for re-casting the sense of citizenship in Iran. While studying the activities of Kurdish women in Rojhelat is not new, examining their lived experiences from the perspective of their narratives may be considered a novelty. The women's approach focuses on various activities from art to politics which assist women in recasting their reflections, emotions, and agency in order to change the world shaped by political Islam, centralist feminism, Kurdish nationalism, and the patriarchal society. The paper is based on a dozen of interviews with women activists in Rojhelat and focuses on more comprehensive and multifunctional strategies of Kurdish women activists. It applies the intersectionality concept, called to attention by the activists themselves, as a form of critical inquiry and practice to challenge the status quo and transform the power relations in Iran. The presentation is a part of ALCITfem research project which investigates the different aspects of Kurdish women activism in Kurdistan and in the diaspora.

Panel 2A – Kurdish Refugees in the Diaspora: Integration, Self-governance and Space

Toward a Multi-Scalar Understanding of Integration: Kurdish Refugees Between State, Diaspora and Geopolitics

Fiona Adamson & Veysi Dag, SOAS

The paper, which has emerged out of a collaboration funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program, draws attention to how transnational factors – including trans-state diaspora networks and geopolitical relations between European states and Kurdish refugee "homelands" – have direct impacts on the integration possibilities and trajectories for newly-arrived Kurdish refugees in Europe. Based on over 200 interviews with newly-arrived Kurdish refugees and asylum-seekers across seventeen sites in six European countries, our research suggests the need to move beyond local and national-level models of integration to one which is also transnational and multi-scalar, taking into account the enduring effects of homeland politics on integration processes, and facilitating a model of integration in which refugees are not expected to shed one identity for another, but can also live connected lives that are simultaneously rooted but also stretch across borders.

Self-Governing from Below: Kurdish Refugees on the Margins of European Societies
Veysi Dag, SOAS

The paper examines how Kurdish refugees in European bordering cities form a variety of non-hierarchical, non-institutionalised, autonomous, and horizontally-organised networks, assemblies, committees, and initiatives as the foundation of their self-governing modes that are engaged in self-organisational and autonomous practices to respond to their cultural, legal, social, and structural challenges on the periphery of European societies. The article argues that Kurdish refugees' network-based self-organisation and self-governing practices are not just reactionary to counter their marginalised circumstances but also the consequence of a variety of factors, including their kinship tradition, dedication to the various ideologies of their political homeland compatriots, shared concerns, and their traditional way of life, which is rooted in their villages, towns, and cities of origin. The Kurdish refugees import this traditional self-governing mode to European exile and establish autonomous practices. The paper analyses the structural process of self-governance, its problem areas, and coping mechanisms shaped by limited recognition and support from state-centric institutionalised actors in the context of common challenges faced by Kurdish immigrants. Drawing on inspiration from the "zone of non-being" and autonomy concepts and based on ethnographic field research and 76 in-depth interviews with Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers in Northern, Southern, and Western Europe, the paper illuminates the patterns, circumstances, and coping strategies, as well as internal dynamics of how refugee self-governing processes from below emerge to empower the marginalised refugees to manage their multiple affairs without the state mediation.

Criminalisation, self-defence and special warfare
Iida Käyhkö, Royal Holloway, University of London

The Kurdistan Freedom Movement is a popular mass movement, active across Kurdistan and many parts of the world with Kurdish diaspora communities. In Europe, it has close links to left-wing political parties, trade unions and social movements. It is a movement capable of mobilising thousands to the streets of many major European cities. Yet it is also one of Europe's most heavily criminalised social movements. Political activists affiliated with it face arrests, raids, prosecution and incarceration, frequently under counter-terrorism legislation, for their activities in community organising, lobbying and campaigning. How are these experiences narrated and contextualised by the Kurdish communities and political activists who are targeted by criminalisation? What methods of resilience and resistance are cultivated in response? This paper highlights some central concepts relating to power and security in the Kurdistan Freedom Movement. The first, self-defence, is a political perspective of resistance which traces its lineage to global left-wing, anti-colonial and anti-racist struggle. The second, "special warfare," describes the range of methods employed by states to extinguish movements of resistance: counterinsurgency, criminalisation and psychological warfare. Placing these concepts in their historical and current contexts, and analysing them through a feminist security lens, allows for an examination of the praxis of power and freedom of one of the most influential social movements in the Middle East – and increasingly in Europe, too. Further, it highlights the specific nexus of bordering practices, political policing and counter-terrorism legislation which touches the lives of thousands of Kurdish people living in Europe.

Inscriptions of Kurdish politics into spaces of exile and radical internationalist politics in Greece

Beja Protner, University of Cambridge

This paper discusses Kurdish exile in Greece as co-productive of radical internationalist politics in spaces of intercultural encounter, mutual affectivity, and political collaboration. Kurdish political refugees, particularly from Turkey/Kurdistan, have been coming to Greece since the 1980s. After 2015, Kurdish forced migration increased due to the escalation of political violence and oppression of political dissidents in Turkey following the breakdown of the peace negotiations between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish state, while Kurds have also been fleeing from war, political violence, and instability in Syria. Greece has been for most of the refugees considered a "transitional zone" on the way to Western European countries. Yet the European migration and asylum policies of re-bordering and containment after 2016 led to large numbers of Kurdish refugees staying in Greece for extended periods of time. In the same period, the Kurdish-led revolutionary struggle in North and East Syria (Rojava) has attracted international attention and support. In Greece, too, the interest in the Kurdistan Freedom Movement has grown in the radical-left and anarchist circles. In this context, the Kurdish revolutionary politics in exile in Greece that have had a continuity since the 1980s became integrated into the spaces of radical anti-fascist internationalist politics. Based on ethnographic research among Kurdish and left-wing political refugees from Turkey/Kurdistan in Greece between 2018 and 2022, this paper explores the material, ideological, and political inscriptions of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement into the spaces of radical politics in Athens and the autonomous Kurdish refugee camp in Lavrio. It discusses the ways in which Kurdish and Turkey's left-wing revolutionary symbols and praxes shape materially, affectively, and politically the places that Kurdish and left-wing political refugees from Turkey/Kurdistan inhabit and share with Greek and international activists. Following Stavros Stavrides (2016), these places are conceptualized as "urban thresholds" of cultural and political "porosity," created through intercultural encounter, exchange, and political collaboration. Examples of material and political practices that create such thresholds are political graffiti in Kurdish and Turkish, flags and images of martyrs of the revolutionary struggle, collective education sessions and panel presentations on topics related to the Kurdistan Freedom Movement, autonomous organizational structures akin to Democratic Confederalism, and political commemorations and celebrations, organized and attended by the Kurdish and left-wing exiles from Turkey/Kurdistan together with Greek and international activists. The argument of this paper is three-fold. First, it argues that the inscriptions of Kurdish politics into spaces of exile through visual symbolism, political slogans, organizational structures, and political rituals render foreign places familiar and generate political feelings that enable the Kurdish refugees to continue their struggle in exile. Second, it shows that cultural and political porosity shapes spaces of radical internationalist politics in Greece in a way that they become vigorously marked by Kurdish revolutionary politics. And third, it suggests that this process of intertwining, percolation, and "commoning" of revolutionary ideas, symbols, and praxes in exile enhances the internationalist character of the Kurdistan Freedom Movement.

Panel 2B – Kurmanji and Zazaki Identity and Linguistics

Speaking Kurdish: A space of one's own in language

Alex Pillen, University College London

A sense of being 'unique, alone, singular' permeates Kurdish cultural spheres. This can't be justified by only political solitude, the repeated idea that Kurds have no friends but the mountains. The Kurdish language belongs to an extended family of Indo-Iranian languages, and is akin to Farsi and Pashto spoken in Iran and Afghanistan. Still, a sense of uniqueness lives within the interstices of Kurdish cultural life. This paper tries to unearth such singularity. One of the enduring key notes of the Kurdish language is the reflexive pronoun, 'one's own' (xwe). Traceable to the Indo-European root *swe over millenia, today it is repeated over and over, and resembles a steel rod within the embattled history of Kurdish. In the face of cultural repression and war, the pronoun 'one's own' fulfils the role of nuclear material in grammar and generates an exceptional amount of cultural energy. The versatile character of this pronoun enables people to scale up forms of belonging, when it is used in the sense of 'our own', alluding to both family and community. The same word stands for 'my own', as a form of subtle individuation in contexts of radical dislocation. The paper also addresses this pronoun's shadow, the gloom that accompanies its current acclaim. This dark reality is the suppression and loss of tribal and family names. Namelessness, indistinctness, and obscureness feature as this pronoun's shadow, and qualify its current role. With Kurdish names in abeyance, replaced by Turkish or Arabic ones, the reflexive pronoun 'one's own' carries a heavy conceptual weight. Both a name and a reflexive pronoun 'my own' designate a particular and often unique quality. Today, the sheer prominence and repetition of the pronoun 'one's own' in Kurdish contributes to an expanded sense of the unique, and focus on what belongs to oneself. Being genuine without name is no easy feat, whilst being robbed of a name is also an assault on individuality, singularity. The eminent pronoun xwe somewhat restores a sense of uniqueness, now enhanced, and diffused across long stretches of speech.

Bi-/multilingual Identity and Linguistic Behaviour of Kurdish Heritage Speakers

Alex Bellem, Aga Khan University & Mehmet Yonat, Mardin Artuklu University

Kurmanji – Northern – Kurdish is the variety with the greatest number of speakers; it is spoken from eastern Turkey and northern Syria across northernmost Iraq (KRG) and into north-western Iran, and into Armenia and the Caucasus. Most Kurmanji speakers are bilingual and in some contexts multilingual. Across the various Kurmanji-speaking communities, the bi-/multilingualism exists in widely variant contexts, and manifests very differently. Firstly, the language pairs within greater Kurdistan are Kurmanji–Turkish, Kurmanji–Arabic, Kurmanji–Persian, Kurmanji–Armenian, and Kurmanji–Neo Aramaic, while diaspora speakers are often multilingual in Kurmanji and the dominant language of their countries of immigration, as well as the dominant language (Turkish, Arabic, Persian or Armenian) of their countries of emigration. Secondly, the sociolinguistic context is significantly affected by power relations: except in KRG (Iraq), Kurdish is a minority language, in some countries without official status, and in places subject to suppression. In diaspora countries, Kurdish is not just a minority but an immigrant language. All the above factors influence the degree of language proficiency in Kurmanji bi-/multilinguals, with a sliding scale of language competence from speakers fully competent in both/all their languages to speakers who are proficient in their majority language/s but with limited to no active or passive Kurdish proficiency. Overall, language competence differs significantly between the various types of speech

communities; concomitantly, understanding and expression of Kurdish identity also varies significantly alongside self-identification as a (heritage) speaker of Kurdish/Kurmanji across these speech communities. We identify most Kurmanji communities outside KRG as heritage speakers (Cummins, 2005; Montrul, 2012, 2016, 2021) because of the sociopolitical context. This paper is the first output of a new study of multilingualism and language identity in Kurdistan. We aim here to show the variant linguistic behaviours of bi-/multilingual Kurdish heritage speakers, through a comparative analysis of Kurmanji–Turkish heritage speakers in Turkey and Kurmanji–Turkish–English heritage speakers in the UK. This part of the study results from fieldwork currently being conducted with heritage speakers. During interview, we elicited in Kurmanji two oral texts from each speaker which we had pre-prepared in Turkish and English; speakers were then asked to free-talk about the texts’ topics in Kurmanji; lastly, speakers discussed questions pertaining to their self-identification as speakers of Kurdish in relation to their other language(s). The subsequent analysis of the participants’ output reveals inter-speaker variation in phonology, morpho-syntax and lexis that results from different linguistic behaviours between the different groups of bi-/multilingual heritage speakers analysed, and how this interacts with speakers’ sense of identity. Lastly, Kurmanji heritage speakers in or from eastern Turkey may have, in addition to Kurmanji and Turkish, proficiency in other minority languages of eastern Turkey – in particular (one of three different dialect types of) Arabic; a preliminary account of this intersection is also presented.

Linguistic Characteristics of the Zazaki Mutki Dialect
Pinar Yildiz, Mardin Artuklu University

Zazas living in the villages of Mutki district of Bitlis are isolated from other Zaza settlements because of the geography they live in. But on the other hand, throughout history, this district was a region of ethnic and linguistic diversity. Therefore, this multi-ethnicity and isolation also affected the languages of the Zazas here. Especially in terms of phonological features and lexicological features, this dialect differs from other Zaza dialects. While the dialects of the Zazas here preserve many archaic forms with the effect of this isolation, they also carry influences from Kurmanji Kurdish, Armenian and Arabic. Sounds such as /θ/ /ð/ in Arabic and the ancient Avestan language do not exist in any Zaza dialects today, but they exist in Mutki dialects. The presence of these sounds and many archaic lexical and morphological forms in Mutki dialect led us to some questions and issues in this study. Were these features borrowed from neighbouring languages, or did archaic forms preserve themselves in this isolated dialect (Mutki Dialect)? Morphologically, on the one hand, the ezafe forms and pronouns in Mutki dialect exhibit some archaic features, and on the other hand, features such as gender and oblique form, which are very dominant in Zazaki, tend to disappear in the Mutki dialect. The verbs in Mutki dialect differ from other regions in their conjugation, which is especially evident in the present tense. Lexicologically, the Mutki dialect was influenced by Armenian, Kurmanji Kurdish, and Arabic. In addition, since the geographical features directly affect the living conditions, Mutki Zazas have a different culinary culture. This situation has created a diversity and difference in the names of the foods and meals. In addition, the Zaza language spoken in the villages in this region has linguistic differences within itself. In this study, we will try to present the characteristic features of Mutki dialect Zazaki in terms of phonological, morphological, and lexicological features. Since there has not been much work on Mutki dialect, our main goal is to outline the grammar of this dialect.

Panel 2C – The KRI in Regional and Global Context

The Role of External Actors in the Making and Breaking of States Germany and the Consolidation of Statehood of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq between 1991 and 2020 **Silvia Nicola, Free University of Berlin**

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as a "want-to-be-states" has established itself as a new type of actor at the international level since the 1990s. By pursuing the conflict-prone goal of being recognized as a sovereign state by the international community, the KRI poses a challenge to the normative international system as a whole and to the concepts of sovereignty and statehood as promoted by mainstream IR. Despite its non-recognition as a state, the KRI is neither internationally isolated nor sunken into chaos. In fact, there are even many forms of interaction between recognized states and the KRI. However, these interactions have been – apart from a few exceptions – mostly neglected by IR scholars. Theoretically embedded within the framework of "engagement without recognition" (Scott Pegg, Elie Berg, J. Ker-Lindsay), this paper aims at presenting first findings of a broader ongoing dissertation project. It will show, following a dialectical understanding, how selected interaction between the KRI and Germany in the field of security have fostered the consolidation of statehood of the KRI between 1991 and 2020. Concretely, specific interactions between the German armed forces, the Bundeswehr, and Iraqi-Kurdish actors (such as the Kurdish security forces, Peshmerga, political elites, or civil society) will be scrutinized guided by the questions: What were constitutive milestones in the consolidation of statehood of the KRI between 1991 and 2020? Who was involved in these developments? Which role did Germany play? What are the sources of the conflicts related to KRI's aspirations to consolidate its statehood? How do the interactions in the security sector between Germany (as an established Western state) and the KRI (as a not-yet-state) relate to the conflicts, which arise from the KRI's statehood ambitions? How do German policy implementation processes address and alter the conflict lines inside the societies of the KRI and Iraq? To what extent does the involvement of Germany create new dependencies (such as on aid), trust or sustainable partnerships? The theoretical framework of this dissertation is methodologically complemented by assemblage thinking (McFarlane; O'Callaghan), which provides the means to grasp the multiplicity, complexity, non-linearity and contingency of the processes nudged by the interactions between the different actors. The data corpus subjected to analysis is comprised of official documents and archival sources from German state organs involved in interactions outside the domestic territory, as well as official documents issued by the Iraqi-Kurdish administration. Furthermore, this paper will also draw on empirical data collected during field work in form of background discussions and expert interviews, which were conducted across the KRI in 2019 and 2022, as well as across Germany in 2021 and 2022. According to the current working status of the dissertation, four different time periods regarding the German - Iraqi-Kurdish relationships can be distinguished: (1) "Painful Disorientation" between 1991 and 1996/8; (2) "Timid Stabilization" between 1996/8 and 2005, (3) "The Greatest Leap Forward" between 2005 and 2014, as well as (4) "A hard awakening" between 2014 and 2020.

China's Soft Power in Iraqi Kurdistan **Sardar Aziz, University College Cork**

China is perceived as an increasingly influential power in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is primarily viewed as an economic and trading power with no military or security attachment. However, it has a strong desire to influence public opinion and appear as an appealing, if

not an alternative, power model. To that end, the use of soft power is an essential component of China's rise in Iraqi Kurdistan. In my paper, I examine the Chinese perspective on soft power in light of the broader literature in this field, as Maria Repnikova (2002) put it "Chinese writings advocate for fluid boundaries between hard and soft power, treating them as symbiotic and mutually empowering". Following the conceptualization of Chinese Soft Power, I address the various roots of modern Chinese-Kurdish relations as an indirect manifestation of global Maoism (Lovell and Julia 2019). By doing so, I'll discuss how the past contributes to the current discourse on soft power. Moreover, I investigate the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and, in particular, Talabani's phantasmagorical relationship with Mao via Iranian intellectual and activist Kurush Lashei'. Against this backdrop, China's soft power today in KRI employs a wide range of tools, including education, infrastructure, technology, and, most importantly, the development versus democracy narrative. This is more problematic as Iraq has a significant symbolic role in American soft power discourse. In building their relationship with universities, civil societies, high-tech firms, party cadres, students, and elite exchanges, China exercises its soft power in this context. However, China's soft power in the KRI is not without flaws. China is acting differently than the other four permanent members of the UN Security Council. KRG is more pro-R2P, while China is more Westphalian absolutist. China is also more self-centered, with little empathy for other causes, especially those affecting minorities.

Understanding the Relations between Israel and the Iraqi Kurds: Local Aspirations and Regional Commitment

Ismail Numan Telci, Sakarya University

In July 2021, Iraq has witnessed a heated debate following an unexpected conference in Erbil on the normalization with Israel. Political and public reaction throughout the country was immense. Not only number of political and social groups have expressed uncomfot with the conference, legal and administrative measures were rapidly taken against both organizers and participants by the relevant authorities. Interestingly, social reaction was nearly unanimous; as almost all religious, ethnic and tribal groups have manifested that the calls made at the conference cannot be attributed to Iraqi society. However, this chain of events revealed something peculiar within the Iraqi political life, particularly between political leaderships in Erbil and Baghdad, which is the diverging relationship patterns with Israel. The choice of Erbil for the conference was not a coincidence as it is no secret that some of the political elites in the city consider themselves as friend of Israel. On the other hand, political and social perception of Israel is rather hostile, largely as a result of Tel-Aviv's policies towards Palestine. This animosity has clearly revealed itself following the news of the conference was made public. Therefore, it would be interesting to delve into the background of such a friendly approach of various Kurdish political elites in Iraq towards Israel, while majority of public and political groups have largely differing approaches toward the country. In this context, the Iraqi Kurds have been considered important partners even from the 1950s in Israeli security and foreign policy doctrine, whose main idea has been to establish relations with either non-Arabs or non-Muslim actors in the region. Especially after the 2000s, the relations between Israel and Kurdish political groups in Iraq come to the fore in terms of the international relations of the Kurdish political actors in the region. In line with this policy, since 2000s, successive Israeli Prime Ministers worked hard to establish close relations with the Kurdish political groups in Iraq. This has resulted with the establishment of a tight political alliance between Israel and Kurdish political leadership in Northern Iraq. The relations between Iraqi Kurds and Israel are based on three basic principles: Regional security, political demands, and strategic energy sector. Israel's

political support for the Kurds in Iraq and indicators of social affinity makes sense within Tel-Aviv's regional strategy against Iran. Within this framework, Israel provided certain amounts of logistical support to the Kurdish factions. On the other hand, close political relations with Israel would contribute to the Kurdish aspirations for greater autonomy in their political trajectory. Finally, it can be seen that the energy trade has been a dominant dynamic of the relations between the two parties, and hence, the energy dimension has increased the importance of the relations. Therefore, keeping the security aspects of the relations in mind, a comprehensive analysis of relations touching upon regional security, political demands, and the strategic energy sector could be crafted.

"Selling" the Kurdish plight in Iraq to the U.S. of the 1980s and 90s: The messaging of the Kurdish National Congress of North America

Lily Hindy, University of California, Los Angeles

This paper focuses on the role of Kurdish diaspora activists in formulating views in the U.S. on the Kurdish plight of the 1980s and 90s in Iraq, views which continue to hold sway today. It highlights the work of the Kurdish National Congress of North America (KNCNA), a non-profit organization founded in 1988 which publicized the plight of Kurds in Iraq under Saddam Hussein to an American and Canadian audience. The messaging of the KNCNA in its early days, had two main goals. First, the KNCNA avoided discussion of the peshmerga's success in posing a tangible threat to the power of the Ba'th regime for nearly the entirety of the regime's existence. Instead, the KNCNA presented the Kurds in Iraq, as a whole, as a population targeted solely for its ethnicity. This argument has been rebuffed by scholars studying the Ba'th archives, who show that the Ba'th party meted out punishments to all those who threatened the regime regardless of religious and ethnic identity. Second, the KNCNA treaded lightly when it came to the discussion of Kurdish self-determination, using vague language to describe an "independent, unified Kurdistan," rather than proposing any redrawing of borders. This reflects the balancing act Kurdish nationalists had played for years, hoping to gain some level of autonomy while recognizing that support for outright independence was unlikely. Both of these tactics used by the KNCNA were well received in the U.S. of the 1990s, freshly victorious in the Gulf War and taking on the mantle of the world's policeman in the wake of the Cold War. The KNCNA moulded a version of the story which took into account international expectations and norms around minorities and human rights, even though these were rarely met by the powers claiming to uphold them. This paper is based on fieldwork in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, KNCNA press conferences, correspondence and editions of "Kurdistan in the Media," U.S. Congressional records, newspaper and television broadcast archives, and the Iraqi Ba'th archives (mainly the North Iraq Data Set).

Panel 2D – Urban Development, Heritage and Politics in Turkey

Uproot, Detach and Pacify: On the Turkish state's infrastructural politics in northern Kurdistan

Kamuran Akin, Humboldt University of Berlin

Under the banner of state security, Kurdish areas in Turkey have been subjected to an extended emergency rule for decades. Drawing on practices such as the construction of hydroelectric dams (HPP), systematic state sponsored wildfires and deforestation practices and the building of high security military posts /checkpoints (Kalekol), this paper analyses how infrastructural projects harness in intricate ways institutional racism, population control and ecological destruction. Based on maps I have created

and extensive ethnographic research, this paper demonstrates (1) the intensive and overlapping emergence of the three infrastructural projects in Kurdish cities where resistance to the state is high, (2) how these three infrastructural projects are not independent from each other but rather intertwined and (3) the everyday resistance practices of the local population and the Kurdish subjectivisation processes that emerge under conditions of infrastructural politics and the state's permanent 'state of exception'. Against this background, I argue that the infrastructural politics in northern Kurdistan and the implication for the local population constitute a specific example of coloniality. This study mainly focuses on the spatial colonization process in the Kurdish geography and is based on the central findings of my doctoral dissertation.

Mastering the past, becoming a tourist: Heritage-making as a means of counterinsurgency in the post-conflict era
Ronay Bakan, Johns Hopkins University

Emerging modalities of warfare such as drone-delivered ordinance increasingly target urban landscapes, populations, and infrastructures. Yet states' security agendas exceed military deployment. They often use bureaucratic techniques—leveraging courts, policing, and development agencies—to achieve military control, e.g., via the reformulation of land and property rights during civil wars. If states have military means at their disposal and the willingness to use them, why do they employ bureaucratic strategies to target ostensibly threatening populations? What is the spectrum of tactics so used? What are the consequences of their deployment? This project examines the Turkish state's weaponization of land and heritage to subdue Kurdish populations in the aftermath of the 2015-2016 urban war. Drawing on multi-sited fieldwork within the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir and at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, it terms the legal practices and developmentalist strategies that states such as Turkey employ to control and manage ostensibly threatening populations 'counterinsurgent urbanism.' In doing so, it underscores three key mechanisms that constitute counterinsurgent urbanism: legal-institutional dispossession; militarization of urban landscapes; and urban development. In this article, I focus on the state's efforts to build up touristic potential of the historical city centre Suriçi, Diyarbakir as integral to its security agenda in the post-conflict era. I mainly draw on my immersive fieldwork in Suriçi to elaborate how mastering the past becomes a tool to address the potential threats in the future while creating the condition of economic prosperity in the present. By drawing on my ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, I demonstrate the intertwinement between heritage-making, commodification, and pacification. Moreover, I also employ a bottom-up approach in addressing the issue of heritage-making and touristification by paying attention to local festivals as well as residents' narratives around heritage and museum sites to shed light on ongoing/emerging counterclaims to the heritage site. Overall, I conclude that heritage-making constitutes a form of battleground which transcend the periods of active military engagements during civil wars. Instead, heritage efforts contributes to processes of (re)-ethnicization of the built environment in the struggle for generating their own morphology of power.

Turkey's Military Urbanism and Neocolonial Architecture in Kurdish Cities
Diren Taş, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

This paper focuses on how the Turkish state facilitates military urbanism as revanchist and racialized mechanisms of collective punishment to suppress grassroots mobilization, oppositional politics, and resistance in Kurdish cities. The paper is based on my ethnographic field study in Sur, Diyarbakir, extended over time between 2016 and

2019, including open ended in-depth interviews with state officials, subcontracting constructors, Sur residents, and civil society activists. I demonstrate how colonial urban policies are employed to annihilate, displace, and dispossess localities while replacing them with standardized, bordered, and financialized architectures of state security and control. Mass scale destructions, militarized policies, and coercive restructuring in Kurdish cities reveal the state's emergent spatial strategy to recolonize the region at the urban level. The authoritarian colonial state dominates, frames, and reconfigures Kurdish urbanities so as to eliminate alternatives, opposition, and challenges to its existing and deepening hegemony.

Resurrecting the Ruins: A Kurdish Haunting of Suriçi's Landscape
Aalekh Dhaliwal, University of Cambridge

Having opened to millions of tourists each year over the last two decades, Turkey has undertaken massive urban development plans to satisfy both touristic demands and European Union membership regulations. This has seen the wholesale demolition of neighbourhoods in the old, historic centres of various cities like Konya, Istanbul, Izmir, and Gaziantep, to name a few, in a bid to 'Europeanize' them. While one must not discard the care that has been taken in some cases concerning archaeological sites and museums, it is nonetheless important to cast a critical eye on the selectivity of this care. For various reasons, south-eastern Anatolia- until recently- has proven unamenable to Turkey's regeneration projects and its hinterlands are dotted with gendarmerie checkpoints. This is partly due to the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) resistance against such planning projects and partly due to the influx of Syrian refugees from the country's southern borders. Diyarbakir/Amed, the Kurdish-majority city in south-eastern Anatolia, is a particularly intriguing case that has been subjected to state-led urban planning. This is undertaken on the pretext of heritage 'rehabilitation' after the massive destruction resulting from the Siege of Sur¹ between December 2015 and March 2016. Military strategies were intended to depopulate and destroy the historic walled city of Suriçi, so it could be rebuilt and re-populated by Turkey's Mass Housing Development Administration (TOKI) (Adanalı, 2016; Genç, 2022). This paper is thus concerned with the Old City of Suriçi where demographic change has been coupled with spatial overhaul. In this manner, the historic centre is redrawn by the Turkish state, but it is remembered - almost romantically- by the Kurdish populations holding on to the last of their homes. This essay attempts to show how Suriçi's landscape resists superficial perceptions of its visible spatiality and symbolism by becoming inscribed with and imbibing the hauntological 'aura' of Kurdish 'ghosts'. In so doing, the 'uncanny' emerges as a meaningful concept to grapple with Kurdish Suriçi, and ghosts- as constituting a "dense site" instead of merely "dead or missing persons" (Gordon, 2013: 107)- are rendered a "respectable subject of enquiry" (Davis, 2005: 373). To this end, a historical introduction to the region is followed by a discussion on the methods which render this thematic specificity original. The latter sections critically address Suriçi's landscape and offer photographic evidence to support hauntological conceptions of the Old City. The 'ruins are resurrected' in various forms throughout this essay: one, the selective resurrection of ruins by the Turkish state; two, a resurrection of ruins in the discussions that are evoked by the images; and three, the resurrection of Kurdish ruins when discourses on heritage, memory and spatiality are underpinned by a hauntological analysis.

(Re)thinking Class Conflict for Kurdish Politics from Neoliberalizing Amed
Esra Karadas Ekinci, Ankara University

This study aims to examine how capitalism has affected Northern Kurdistan, especially Diyarbakir, economically, politically, and spatially (the organizational form of the city) by focusing on the transformation of capitalism after the 1970s. By doing this, the study will explore the issue of class in Kurdish politics and emphasize the significance of local governments, which are local administrative administrations. It will also discuss the value of local governments for Turkish and Kurdish politics. This study, the anthropological fieldwork I conducted for my master's thesis (*Neoliberalizing Amed: Gated Communities in Diyarbakir 1999-2019*) in 2020 also served as the foundation for this study, which will help us understand the trustee processes in Kurdistan. It will analyse the neoliberal capitalism process through social and political actors considering these field data. The study moves forward along these two main paths under the presumption that the dominance of the neoliberal capitalist market at the social level results in a transformation. The first transformation is opening opportunities for capital accumulation and making it simpler for small and medium-sized businesses to access the domestic and global markets. The relevance of local government mechanisms has therefore expanded because of the paving of the way for Turkey's local administrative structure to be created within the neoliberal framework. In light of the changing management style in nations like Turkey, which are linked to neoliberal capitalism as sources of low-cost labour and raw materials, this has made local governments a semi-autonomous actor in the budget and facilitated the creation of favourable conditions for local penetration and capital accumulation. The theory of state scaling and the idea of the entrepreneurial city are used in the study to assess this change in local governments. A rapidly growing entrepreneurial elite with a broad cultural capital emerged in Turkey and Northern Kurdistan because of this shift. Therefore, through this social group and actors whose social presence has expanded, new demands have emerged in both national and municipal politics. The policies created around the Kurdish issue were particularly impacted by these new class reflexes and demands, which appeared in conflict zones like Kurdistan. Under the influence of this process, the legal parties of the Kurdish movement, which was previously thought of as a lower-class movement, were also viewed as a "middle-class representation" and received harsh criticism in the literature. Due to the demands of new social actors in urban politics and the semi-independent status of local governments in producing social and economic policies in their regions, the process of neoliberalization has made local governments into an important political position for the Kurdish issue in Turkey. In connection with the first prediction, the second is the appearance of spatial signifiers. The question of how the space will be organized, whose demands, and which sectors will be prioritized, has become a topic that transcends both Turkish politics and local Kurdish politics due to the impact of neoliberal processes in all regions of Kurdistan, notably in the North.

Panel 3A – Democracy, Citizenship, Justice and Education in Rojava

Is the future of democracy hybrid? Lessons from Mexico and Kurdistan about how to reconcile direct and representative democracy
Hanifi Baris, University of Aberdeen

The proposed paper offers to present the first scholarly analysis of its kind: a comparison of the Mayan, P'urhépechan and Kurdish direct democratic experiments through an extensive fieldwork in Michoacán and Chiapas in Mexico and qualitative data

on Rojava in Syria. The paper will focus on the political concepts and institutions that make them genuine and promising alternatives to representative democracy. Representative democracies have been in crisis for the last three decades due to democratic backsliding, electoral disillusionment, and political alienation. The cases offer remedies to these fault lines in representative systems, although the cases display systemic tensions and flaws of their own. The political movements that established the three autonomous administrations under scrutiny in Mexico and Kurdistan originate in the 1968 generation's Marxist-Leninist and Maoist revolutionary politics. They pursued national revolutions and/or national liberation through statehood, seeking the capture of political power until the late 1980s. However, they changed course after the early 1990s and have been building autonomy from below, institutionalising popular assemblies and councils as potent organs of self-government. Which political concepts and institutions emerge as the foundation of autonomous political communities in Mexico and Kurdistan? What remedies do the cases offer for the crisis in representative democracies today? The proposed paper will answer the questions above through an examination of the conceptual and institutional novelties the cases have introduced, with a focus on the processes of political decision-making that differentiate the cases from solely representative systems.

Reconfiguration of Citizenship Beyond State Boundaries

Atefeh Ramsari, Bielefeld Graduate School of History and Sociology

This paper seeks to investigate different modes of practicing citizenship in two political settings. One, in which an ethnonational state sets boundaries of membership and excludes some groups accordingly, on the other side, in a democratic confederal system where neither state nor ethnic boundaries play a role in the configuration of citizenship. This empirical study looks at the individual perceptions and experiences of membership by stateless persons living in Rojava before and after the establishment of The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria. The Syrian Arab Republic, since its founding, has always identified itself as an ethnically homogeneous Arab nation-state and it offers the most explicit illustration of citizenship. The Syrian state has conflated Arab ethnic identity with Syrian citizenship, whereby non-Arabs have been deprived of legal membership or social rights. In the 1962 census in north Syria, those who could not provide documents to prove they had lived there before 1945 were recognized as 'Ajanib' (foreigners), stripped of citizenship status, and considered stateless. Persons who missed the census were later categorized as Maktoumin (hidden) and consequently not permitted to officially register or apply for a legal document. Both these groups, who were mostly Kurds, had limited access to resources, and their social life was restricted. When northern Syria (Rojava), in the aftermath of the 2012 uprising, went through fundamental institution-building to implement democratic self-administration and confederalism, the conceptualization of citizenship changed within the context of reclaiming power from state. Against the conventional model of the nation-state, in which state plays the determinant role in organizing people, the stateless administration model in Rojava is based on active citizenship, where people are subjects in their capacity to self-organize, decide and act for their social affairs. This is understood as a transformation from people as state objects into active actors. However, Rojava is a de facto autonomous region but operates within the borders of the Syrian state and the central government still rules citizenship legalization. In this controversial situation, the present study concerns how the above-mentioned stateless groups exercise membership in the new political context in Rojava. Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews and deep conversations. My discussion here focuses on how the stateless groups develop a sense of belonging, reposition the political

demands, and arrange social engagement horizontally. An important issue emerging from the findings is that daily experiences of membership are remarkably associated with active voluntary participation in the organization of the community. Furthermore, the findings add to our understanding of citizenship behind the state boundaries, where an unconditional membership, reconstructs socialized participatory governance. In the self-organizing system, regardless of the precarious legal status the persons are holding, citizenship content and consequences in daily life are more inclusionary and egalitarian.

Rethinking Justice in Rojava
Hasret Cetinkaya, LSE

In this talk, I argue that the feminist revolution in Rojava forms part of a pioneering experiment which offers alternative notions of justice and innovative ways of thinking about community, rights, gendered subjectivities and ethics in the colonial present. In order to understand the ideas, knowledges and cultural norms which make up the justice-framework of Rojava, it is crucial we develop a conceptual analysis of the normative world of the activists that have nurtured this experiment. This analysis must take into account the materially informed thinking that arises from the political struggles and mobilisations of people in the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). In this paper I examine the linguistic, conceptual and political specificities of Rojava's practice of 'rights' through a multi-layered analysis of the creation of the political imaginary which has provided the ground for the justice-framework that is espoused by the eleven different ethnic and religious groups in Rojava. The AANES is here conceived of in terms of a dynamic, symbolic and transnational space which is shaped and informed both by its residents, as well as various others, including exiles, academics, the Kurdish diaspora and political activists and writers around the world. This paper will provide a description of the normative backdrop to Rojava's ethics and politics of justice at four-levels of analysis—philosophical, political, the role of feminist activism and the role of the transnational community. Focusing on the anti-colonial and feminist dimensions of Rojava's practice of justice, I demonstrate how the vocabulary of justice and freedom emerging from Rojava call into question hegemonic and Eurocentric conceptions of law, justice and modernity, as it provides us with alternative futures.

Politics of education choice in North-East Syria
Benoîte Martin, Ulster University

Significant developments in the Kurdish nationalist project have occurred in recent years with the realization of self-rule in North-East Syria (NES). The region gained de-facto autonomy and the PYD-led Autonomous Administration in North and East Syria (AANES) took shape in 2012. Education is often identified as holding the power to contribute to nation-building by disseminating and consolidating a national culture and identity. In NES, the reform of the education sector initiated by the AANES in 2012 was central in legitimating its experience in self-rule, especially as it sought to make a radical shift away from assimilationist and discriminatory educational policies of the Baath Party. New educational policies enabled the teaching of the Kurdish language which was previously banned in Syria and the recognition of the diverse religious and ethnic communities living in NES as a mean to promote peaceful co-existence in the region. In 2012, the Kurdish language was introduced in schools across NES. In 2015, the AANES rolled out a new school curriculum in three languages (Kurdish, Arabic, Syriac) that allows mother-tongue education. Significant reforms were made to school ethos redefining the relationship between teachers and students and progressive teaching

methods seeking to trigger a “mentality revolution” and encourage critical thinking were adopted. However, educational policies adopted in 2015 and imposed by the AANES across territories it controls remain controversial. Criticisms exist towards the lack of official accreditation of the education system, the curriculum seen as ideological, and separatist educational policies which exacerbate mistrust among communities. Many community members have refused to enrol their children in AANES schools and have sought instead education in the few institutions that continue to teach the Syrian government curriculum. In areas inhabited by a majority of Arab communities such as Raqqa and Deir-Ezzor, community members continue to demonstrate against the imposition of the AANES curriculum seen as introducing notions and ideas considered foreign to local culture and traditions. The paper provides an overview of the evolution of educational systems in NES between 1963 until 2022, clarifying the shift that occurred between the Baath Party and the AANES educational policies. It outlines the parallel educational systems that are in place today across NES. The paper further analyses the politics of AANES educational policies and examines diverse elements in the education system that are considered contentious and problematic, generating grievances and divides among local communities. Finally, the paper shares perceptions of community members from diverse religious and ethnic groups towards the AANES education system and provides an analysis of factors that drive school choices of communities in NES. The paper shares ground-breaking research on education policies in NES undertaken as part of a PhD program. It is based on approximately 50 interviews conducted by the author in 2021 and 2022 with parents and teachers, part of diverse educational institutions and representing diverse ethnic and religious groups, religious and political representatives of diverse community groups and civil society activists, all living and working in NES.

Panel 3B – Kurdish Women and Politics of Gender in the Diaspora

Formative experiences of Kurdish women activists setting up small-scale activist projects in Kurdistan and the Diaspora

Wendelmoet Hamelink, University of Oslo

Based on 35 narrative interviews, this paper investigates how Kurdish women from different regions talk about their formative experiences that led them to set up small-scale activist projects in Kurdistan, and some, after migration, in the Diaspora. In my networks with Kurdish women that I built up over the years, I had witnessed such individual projects outside of the existing official organizations (such as political parties, guerrilla movements, municipality, and NGOs), and during the fieldwork I searched for women who chose to be active in that way. Examples are art initiatives with and for women; businesses set up by and for women; feminist reading groups; trainings for women such as bicycle classes, literacy classes, and film training; media focused on women’s stories; and personal support for LGBTQ persons and survivors of domestic violence. With these projects, women indicated that they aim to change their own and other women’s lives in their direct environment. The participants mentioned different reasons for setting up such individual projects. First, they are critical of the existing gender regimes in their communities and are motivated to change women’s positions because of the many negative experiences they have witnessed in their own and/or other women’s lives. Secondly, due to the marginalized position of Kurds in the Middle East, they do not regard themselves as citizens with access to rights and government services and feel that action is needed to improve their position as Kurds. And thirdly, they are often disillusioned with the organizational work that is done in the region; they regard organizations as strong in obtaining funding but as weak in achieving real

support and transformation. In the paper I will delve deeper into the formative experiences of activists that made them choose for a more individual, rather than organizational, activist trajectory. I argue that their stories reveal much about the gender, social and political dynamics in Kurdistan and the Diaspora, and about the options women have and find to be transformative. The stories also reveal how women position themselves in political, organizational, and economic life, as well as in family and other social networks. Theoretically I use intersectionality (Crenshaw 1988) and the gender regime theory (Walby 2009) to better understand the complex of factors that together influence women's choices and positions. A gender regime can be defined as "the cultural, legal, political and economic structures that influence gender relations and the division of gender roles in a certain historical moment and state or society context" (Hamelink & Güngör 2022). The women activists who participated in this study were well-aware of the different factors that affect women's lives in their communities and actively tried to rework women's positions on these different fronts. Methodologically, the paper connects the stories of women from different regions of Kurdistan, therewith searching for transnational patterns of lived experience, action and agency.

Transnational decolonial encounters: the Kurdish Women's Movement and Western feminism in Europe

Eleanora Gea Piccardi, University of Coimbra

Debating on transnational and decolonial feminisms' concepts of "feminist solidarity" (Mohanty, 2003) and "delinking" (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2007; Espinosa Minoso, 2019), this paper asks whether it is possible to imagine a feminist anti-capitalist politics of transversal North/South alliances, which delinks from the hegemonic modern/colonial episteme of whitestream Eurocentric feminisms. It investigates this possibility by looking at how transnational encounters rooted in the epistemologies, experiences and struggles of women in the most marginalized locations curb oppressive universalism, maintaining a certain unity in diversity. The contribution engages with this issue by analysing the encounter between the Kurdish Women Movement (KWM), and feminist activists in Europe, provided by Jineolojî – the epistemology and pedagogy of the KWM. Through a literature review on the topic, the latter will be contextualized within the transnational history and scope of the KWM and its relationship with feminism. The recent international attention towards the Rojava's revolution, in addition to the increasing transnational work of Jineolojî, have been identified as crucial for the realization of the KWM proposal of a women's world democratic confederalism (Al-Ali & Käser, 2020; Çağlayan, 2020; Dirik, 2022). Since 2016, this resulted into a political encounter with non-liberal, mostly White, trans/feminist and LGBTQ+ movements in Europe. The evolution of such encounter has been overlooked by Kurdish Studies literature. In this sense, the article contributes to fulfilling this gap, employing militant ethnography with the KWM and the Jineolojî's committees of Europe, a methodology considered of crucial relevance in the research with social movements. Inquiring into Jineolojî's composition and methods in Europe – focusing on local/regional/transnational training camps –, the article identifies three main controversial debates that have emerged until now, specifically highlighting the role of Jineolojî in challenging Western feminism. First, the debate around gender identity and the decolonial impact of Jineolojî's non-western figuration of gender in relation to a Western trans/feminist and queer one. Second, the debate around oppositional practices, and the tensions that emerged between a Western trans/feminist perspective based on separatism, and the Kurdish one rooted in women's autonomy. Third, the debate on women's strategies of socio-ecological transformation, and the process of critical self-reflection on the part of Western feminisms, spurred by Jineolojî's notion of

an “ethical and political society” beyond the State and a “democratic modernity”, which exceeds a capitalist/colonial/patriarchal one. The article concludes that the KWM has been actively engaging in the creation of transversal alliances that can foster both North/South feminist solidarity, and delinking from Western (feminism and) modernity. Jineolojî, through its method of encounter, has assumed the strategic role of an influential subject, advancing decolonial fronts within the feminist “White political field” in Global North (Bouteldja, 2014). Despite this, the article underlines that the risk of Jineolojî’s work in Europe to be hegemonized by Western white feminists’ topics and agenda is still present. In this sense, it identifies the recent alliances of the KWM with other decolonial (feminist) subjects in Europe as crucial for Jineolojî to keep advancing with its decolonizing transnational project of a world women confederalism.

Negotiating alternative social spaces - Kurdish gender roles within families and activism in diaspora

Hayal Hanoglu & Karol Kaczorowski, Cracow University of Economics

The aim of the paper is to present initial findings of research on gender roles within Kurdish families and among active members of diaspora. The study is a part of AlcitFem – a larger ongoing research project on alternative citizenship among Kurds in Kurdistan and in diaspora (funded by Norwegian Grants and Polish National Science Centre). By examining histories and views of our respondents we try to show how intersectionality of Kurdish identity and being Kurdish women are negotiated during everyday life in diaspora and in countries between which Kurdistan is located. Studying Kurdish diasporas from the perspective of transnational studies we show that despite technological advancement and development of easier ways to maintain social networks “the national order of things” connected with cultural and social boundaries still affect Kurdish families in everyday life. The findings are based on 20 episodic interviews with Kurdish women in European diaspora and Istanbul. Operationalization followed Uwe Flick’s episodic interview in which questions were asked about specific topics related to biography – in this case gender roles, views on family and history of migration.

Kurdish women’s ordinary life and trajectories of subjectivity, a case study in the triangle of Istanbul, Berlin and Paris

Dilan Salik

Throughout the last decade, studies on Kurdish women have been increasing, which is a positive approach regarding a highly marginalized community. Nevertheless, most of these works might produce rigid classifications grounded on binary oppositions between resistance and oppression or inheriting an agency and lack of agency. To move beyond the stereotyping categorizations such as ‘victims those being oppressed by their male relatives, companions; or freedom fighters, activists, or ‘strong’ Kurdish women fighting on frontlines for their demands, this study basically claims to interact with those who had never been played active role in politics on an institutional level and to grasp their ordinary lives in Istanbul, Paris, and Berlin by going through their migratory backgrounds, their confrontation with contractual social structures as well as their appreciations of being ‘outsider’ in a foreign land. Considering these aspects, this research requires apprehending the ordinary life as a dynamic motion rather than a fixed temporality and spatiality limited to people’s routines and habits. In so doing, semi-structured interviews with Northern Kurdish women living in different cities and countries embody the hub of this study that requires examining following questions: how do interlocutors’ subjectivity formations intersect and differ from each other under

different social, political, and economic conditions? How do they engage in their hosting cities as well as in their homeland that they left behind? How do they inherit or regenerate a home -in the sense of language, country, and ethnicity- on the margins of dominant political discourses at the same time in a land where they have been stigmatized as 'others' or 'outsiders?' In brief, this study basically aims to contribute to existing Kurdish studies literature through a broader analysis of how women's subjectivities in terms of their ordinary actualities, their fears, frustrations, regrets, as well as their future expectations, and interests get framed under the shadow of different countries, language systems and cultural codes.

Panel 3C – Activism and Identification through Art, Ethnography and Music

Art As An Ethnographic Event: The Art Of Ismail Khayat **Autumn Cockrell-Abdullah**

As modernity gives way to globalized spaces inside Iraqi Kurdistan, the role of art is open to question yet again. This paper will discuss the work of Kurdish artist Ismail Khayat and his art as a dynamic engagement with the very building blocks of culture. This paper will consider specific pieces of Ismail Khayat's artwork as ethnographic moments by considering these pieces through the web of social relationships that have gone into the making of some of his most famous works and the tensions that reside within these relationships.

Walking, Kurdish movies and crisis in collective identification **Hemen Heidari, University of Amsterdam**

This paper investigates the politics of walking/mobility in Kurdish movies in relation to the geography, power, and identification of Kurds. The restless mobility of the characters in rural locations constructs the life of the Kurds in the movies of Bahman Ghobadi, Iranian Kurd filmmaker. The tropes which operate the physical journeys are traumatic drives such as destitution (*A Time for drunken Horses* 2000), finding a lost family member (*Marooned in Iraq* 2002), war (*Turtles Can fly* 2004), or an unfulfilled desire (*Half Moon* 2006). The personifications of these mobile bodies are usually destitute people, disabled, illiterate, children, women, and elderlies constructing melodramatic stories of collective agony, poverty, innocence, etc. Accordingly, the dramatic journey of these 'heroes/heroines' is associated with moving on the impoverished rural locations, nonplaces (Marc Auge), trails, and borders arriving at similar places or nowhere. The mobility welds the components of the pattern of bodies, the land, and socio-political contexts by means of feet, pack animals, and shabby vehicles. These on-screen menacing journeys are commonly interpreted as representation of systematic discrimination and impoverishment which Kurds have been through for many decades, therefore they can be cine-political statements against the power. However, this pattern of imagining Kurds by Kurd filmmakers, such as Ghobadi, is similar to the stereotypical 'mountain Kurd' and disparaging narratives which the power has systematically been broadcasting in its propaganda films and TV series for decades. Surprisingly, the non-Kurd filmmakers have also been perpetually identifying Kurds on the screen through conducting blood tear stories of bodies and mobility on the land. As if, imagining Kurds on the screen outside of the wandering poor, under/non-educated, aggressive, or hillbilly bodies in the mountainous regions unrealistic. In any case, walking, as the basic form of mobilizing the body in a geography/space, has always been political. From shaping ancient and religious stories to contemporary understandings of body-space such as *Techniques of the Body* (Marcel Mauss), a

flaneur (Walter Benjamin) or habitus (Pierre Bourdieu), walking has always put body in relation to power and formation of knowledge. Therefore, this paper tends to examine walking in the geography of Kurdistan in Ghobadi's movies to unfold a cine-identification of Kurds by Kurd filmmakers that is not opposed but aligned/within the meta-narrative of the power.

Documenting the Lost Practices of Kurdish Felt and Felt-Making in the Foothills of the Zagros Mountains
Renas Babakir, British Museum

This paper traces a non-woven, ancient textile technique of felt-making from sheep wool among the Kurdish community along the foothills of the Zagros Mountains. This ancient textile technique and its uses are still alive among the Kurdish community but are disappearing due to conflict, migration as well as rapid changes in textile and fashion industries. The purpose of this paper is therefore twofold. On the one hand, it aims to draw attention to the historical and cultural significance of felt among the Kurdish people as it has rarely been documented. At the same time, it aims to reveal the significance of felt and the use of felt from a perspective of history and ethnography of the Kurdish felt-making people. In examining the ethnohistory of felt-making, the felt makers and felt users take centre-stage as a way to enrich our understanding of the present. By considering an ethnohistorical approach, this paper strives towards a comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural significance of felt. This paper will draw from multiple sources such as archaeological evidence, archival sources, ancient texts, historical visual depiction, museum collections, oral histories, ethnographic collections and field studies. My aim is to offer a rich and comprehensive account of historical processes of felt-making and offer a rich textile-centred sense of life among the Kurdish people. I have already gathered an immense amount of data, and I will be conducting a thorough fieldwork in the next few months. In the next three months I will be analysing the gathered data in time for the conference. The paper will be presented in slides, and I will briefly outline the process of gathering data and taking an ethnographic approach. I will then present some of the findings of this paper, and this will be demonstrated with photos and short videos from the fieldwork and the research.

What is the Role of Kurdish Music in the Transnational Space and the Post-National Discourse?

Mediha Inan, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The dissertation assesses the role of Kurdish music in the transnational space and the postnational discourse. It concludes that transnationalism can be understood as a paradigm not exclusively attached to globalisation and modernity. What makes today's transnationalism is the post-national discourse because people like the Kurds find themselves across boundaries and (re-)think their collectiveness different from the Westphalian nation-state. As such, the first role of Kurdish music is one that frames, remembers, and mediates memories for the survival of its transnation. At times of high political-institutional oppression, the paper finds that Kurdish music is instrumentalised by political actors for power goals, whereas at times of less oppression social purposes prevail. Therefore, Kurdish music's second increasing role in the transnational space is the promotion of minority rights and inclusiveness as a practical implementation of the post-national discourse and an alternative to the (Westphalian) nationstate. Not surprisingly, since the revolution in Rojava, many Kurdish musicians have been aiming at reproducing unknown Kurdish works together with non-Kurdish elements to embrace the cultural diversity of Kurdish and non-Kurdish people. Through this music, Kurds have

been able to keep alive their transnational communities (and thus their traditions) whilst self-reflecting universal rights and exchanging with other cultures.

Panel 3D – Canon and Decolonial Critique in Kurdish Studies

Reporting on Kurdistan. A critical examination of Western post-2014 fieldwork in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria **Dastan Jasim, Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen - Nuremberg**

After the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2014 and the fight of both Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces as well as the Syrian Kurdish forces of the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel - YPG) and Women's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin – YPJ) against them, a huge quest for access to information in the field started. Western journalists tried to gather information from the field as quickly as possible and Kurdish locals were first happy to share as much information as possible, as ISIS was advancing quickly and endangering the lives of millions. As a population under permanent occupation which is often forgotten about in the public discourse, I argue, Kurds allow Westerners remarkable access to the field and provide unpaid or underpaid labour, hoping that their struggle will be seen by the International Community. Based on that, however, a great disparity that already existed between the audience and material security of local Kurdish journalists, academics, and writer's vis à vis Western professionals, who might even be less qualified than their Kurdish colleagues was deepened even more. The question of how these disparities can be resolved and how real decolonization can happen in the field of media can give insights to other fields like academia, too, as often in the field they are closely linked to media personnel. Using Frantz Fanon's materialist and post-colonial theory on the mindset of colonized peoples, a discussion with various professionals in the field of media and information is the core of the analysis. It is based on one focus group discussion and two semi-structured interviews with professionals from both the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). The paper shows how the permanent fear of being forgotten, the material disparity between colonizers and colonized, and the continuing colonization through Kurdish political groups are immensely important obstacles to decolonization.

Ethnicization and Sectarianization in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq **Michiel Leezenberg, University of Amsterdam**

Analyses of the volatile politics of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, and of the Kurdish question more generally, tend to remain at the level of politics and policy decisions; as a result, they risk falling into partisan if not apologetic argumentation. In this presentation, I will discuss the dramatic recent history of the region from a perspective of political economy. Such a perspective, I will argue, not only allows us to better understand the regional political and social dynamics (cf. Leezenberg 2019); it also allows for a more nuanced understanding of ethnic mobilization and ethnic and sectarian violence (cf. Fearon 2008). A better understanding of the region's political economy requires a longer-term perspective. From 1991 to 2003, competition for scarce resources under both UN sanctions and an internal blockade imposed by Baghdad led to recurrent infighting between the two main Kurdish parties, the KDP and PUK. Other strategies in this competition were electoral politics and consociational pacts, such as the fifty-fifty division between both parties in 1992 (cf. Leezenberg, forthcoming). After 2003, the vastly increased financial resources facilitated the peaceful coexistence of the region's power elites, and better enabled them to buy off the population's loyalty. Simultaneously,

however, the KRG became financially dependent on the goodwill of Baghdad. The January 2014 disruption of the cash flow led to a severe crisis of legitimacy for the KRG. The dramatic events surrounding the so-called Islamic State (DAESH), which peaked between 2014 and 2017, can be fruitfully analysed in the light of this crisis, as can the October 2017 referendum for independence. This perspective also yields fresh insights into the region's post-2003 sectarianization (cf. Yousif 2010 for a preliminary effort in this direction). Superficially, the region's increasingly restrictive official discourse of Kurdishness, and religious laws promulgated in the wake of the IS onslaught, appear solidly secularist and pluralist; at another level, however, the KRG appears to have consistently strengthened Sunni Islam, and in particular Salafi currents (cf. Lauzière 2016), primarily by encouraging religious endowments (awqaf) and allowing the tax-free construction of mosques subsequently populated with Salafi preachers, with paradoxical consequences for Kurdish-Arab relations, and for the status of ethnic groups like Yezidis and Christians. Thus, considerations of political economy also give us a fresh perspective on changing ethnic and sectarian relations in the region.

The intellectual and prophecy in the colony and diasporas

Bilal Ata Aktas, École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHES)

In Kurdish society, as in all societies, intellectuals have always played an important role, especially during the great moments of transformation. This research aims to investigate the formation and development of the Kurdish intellectual tradition from the Ottoman Empire to the contemporary diasporic spheres. Although most societies have a group or category of individuals exercising an intellectual function, a relatively autonomous intellectual field firstly emerged in Europe. What does this newly emerged "social type" say to the Kurdish intelligentsia? Is there any differences between an intellectual born in Europe or in Kurdistan? How has the statelessness of the Kurds affected the Kurdish intelligentsia? This article argues that in times of constant crisis and during contentious political turmoils, the intellectual is expected to perform multiple roles for his community while at the same time remains marginalized and contested as a result of fragmented consciousness and contentious politics.

Imagined or Imaginary Kurdistan: What do we know about the political stance of Kurdish youth living in Kurdistan?

Baris Oktem

Kurdish communities are fragmented, and their demographics often are unregarded precisely. Therefore, it often becomes difficult to provide statistical back-up on the community's youth population in different region of Kurdistan. However, undoubtedly, Kurdish youth constitute the largest share of the Kurdish population. For instance, over 40% of the population in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (Başur) is younger than 18 years (IOM, 2018). Or young generation between the ages of 15-24 constitute more than 15% of the population in Turkey (TUIK, 2021), the same proportional comparison corresponds to much significant percentage in the Kurdish population in Bakur region. The experiences of each Kurdish generation are thoroughly far apart from each other in terms of political circumstances and prospects. Notably, every part of Kurdistan has gone through a series of profound political and military violence and repression over the past decade. The subjective experiences of Kurdish youths and their visions of Kurdistan are being shaped around such civil disturbances they are exposed to. Nevertheless, there is no detailed research on how Kurdish youth perceive and imagine Kurdistan concerning the conditions they grow in and the politically and militarily decisive happenings in their habitus. Considering that the Kurdish youth is the

determining force and dynamics of the future of Kurdish societies, studies on the Kurdish youth's agencies, political stance and future visions gain even more importance. This paper focuses on the Kurdish youth's perception and imagination of Kurdistan and discusses the subjects of home-making, cross-border identity, sense of belonging and community. In doing so, I revisit Benedict Anderson's concept of the Imagined Community (1983), which voices the argument that Kurdistan is an imagined community by nationalism standards, uniting Kurdish communities and parts of it in a single country. It can be claimed that the Kurdistan as an imagined community, envisioned as an encompassing unity, was an observable dream and desire, significantly for the earlier and elder Kurdish generations. Yet, when considering contemporary Kurdish youth's political stance and perceptions are shaped by their unique circumstances of political and cultural repressions but also heavily by the new technological and digital developments, I pose the question of whether Kurdistan for Kurdish youth is an imagined or imaginary community. By that, I imply whether the understanding of Kurdistan becomes more politically romantic and utopian as a unified homeland for Kurdish youth, particularly in comparison with elderly Kurdish generations. With this presentation, I convey the preliminary findings and arguments of more extensive ongoing research. While doing this, I benefit from online interviews and two-stage focus group discussions with 20 Kurdish youths aged 18-24 in four parts of Kurdistan. Taking into account the importance of digital technologies that affect their perception of home and belonging, I examine the subjects of home-making, sense of community, and image of Kurdistan among contemporary Kurdish youth living in Kurdistan. Contemplating the political and military realities and subjectivities experienced in every part of Kurdistan separately, I spotlight the comparable and distinguishing agencies and positionalities of young Kurdish people

Ethical and Methodological Challenges of an Emergent Scholarship in Kurdish Studies
Mashuq Kurt, Royal Holloway University of London

In parallel with the regional conflict and global political developments, Kurdish Studies have gained momentum in the last decade. While global political interest increased the demand for scholarly knowledge on Kurdish political actors, dynamics and societies, a new decolonial current in Kurdish Studies has also emerged, mainly in North American and Western European universities. This new wave of research is led by scholars of Kurdish origin and activist scholars of various backgrounds whose aim is to engage with decolonising epistemologies and methodologies in the field of Kurdish Studies to contribute to the understanding of this understudied field that has been overlooked by the scholars of the broader Middle East Studies. The emerging field of Kurdish studies often deconstructs dominant epistemologies in Middle East Studies. It allows us to explore the possibilities and limitations of decolonial and indigenous perspectives while engaging with debates around postcolonialism and orientalism. While this emergent scholarship addresses the question of how colonial subjectivities have shaped conversations and exchanges within academic spaces and reflects on alternative spaces of knowledge production, it also brings about significant changes and ethical and methodological challenges that I aim to unpack in this paper. I argue that the fragmented habitus of Kurdistan and Kurdish political fields create their own ethical and methodological challenges about a) the limitations of binary thinking and oppositions, b) the dilemmas of activist scholarship and critical engagement, c) the balance between epistemological autonomy and solidarity research, d) the fragmentation of Kurdistan/Kurdish societies/political fields and the need to investigate how it affects our ways of thinking, e) the problems around positionalities, entitlements and cancel culture, f) the over-focus on particular areas/groups/research topics in Kurdistan and under-

researched areas/groups/research topics that require our attention. Addressing these challenges, I aim to answer two interconnected questions.

1. What kind of epistemological, ethical, and methodological shifts are needed to transform our research and knowledge production?
2. How can Kurdish Studies contribute to the wider discipline of Middle East Studies and broader discussions of decolonizing epistemologies and critical race studies?

Panel 4A– Kurds in-between Multiple Political Spaces and Discourses

Displaced Bodies: Syrians in Kurdistan and Kurds in Syria **Yunus Abakay, University of Exeter**

Displacement is often understood in its literal meaning with reference to the change in living space as mostly is the case with refugees. Informed by ethnographic data collected from the interviews with Syrian Kurdish refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and framed by a phenomenological analysis, this study demonstrates how the body in its symbolic ground is the living site and displacement is fundamentally a disorienting affect arising from the gap between the body as a physical entity and its habitual nature. Drawing on the parallels between their experiences as refugees in the KRI and as residents in Syria, where Kurdish identity was securitised, this work attracts attention to how this gap familiar with migrants and refugees was generated by modes of discrimination against the Kurds in Syria. The securitisation of bodily dispositions, such as the prohibitions on the use of the Kurdish language, was a common experience among the Kurds experiencing disorientation in their ordinary life by forcefully being distanced from their habitual nature in public spaces controlled by the state. The phenomenological analysis of the data collected from semi-structured interviews that were conducted in 2018 and 2019 with over 80 people draws attention to the phonetic nature of the body. An aspect that attracted less attention in studies concerning identity and modes of discrimination focusing primarily on visibility. To conceptualise the phonetic character of the body and to draw attention to the silencing modes of discrimination, this study introduces 'somaphonetic' as a term to denote the agency undermined by modes of discrimination. Although the margins of the ethnographic data are limited to the Syrian Kurds and their personal experiences, the phenomenological analysis grounded in Husserl's recognition of the body as the living site demonstrates a universal phenomenon that requires further discussions that this work aims to contribute.

Three New Datasets on the Transformation of the Turkey-PKK Conflict since 1984 **Amy Austin Holmes, George Washington University**

The Turkish-Kurdish conflict is one of the longest-running and most complex armed conflicts in the world. Until now, a full understanding of the transnational dimensions of the conflict has not been possible due to a lack of adequate data. Our paper seeks to begin to remedy this lacuna by presenting three original datasets. First, we have compiled a dataset of 38,447 armed conflict events spanning the entire duration of the conflict from 1984-2022 in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, which we believe is the largest of its kind in existence. Second, we have created a dataset of all English-language statements issued by the Turkish Foreign Ministry relating to Kurds from 1998-2022. Finally, we have attempted to quantify changing levels of Kurdish autonomy along political, cultural, and territorial dimensions in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq from 1984 to the present. Our data allows us to analyse how the nearly four-decades long conflict has

evolved across time and space. First, the data illustrates that the first three decades of the conflict differ considerably from the period since mid-2015, when a significant rupture took place. From 1984 until July 2015, 98.9% of all armed conflict events in our dataset were occurring inside Turkey. Beginning in July 2015 onward, only 39.7% of the armed conflict events occurred inside Turkey's borders, while 60% were occurring in Iraq and Syria. Previous scholarly frameworks have analysed the Turkish-PKK conflict as a civil war, an ethnic conflict, a nationalist movement, a separatist movement, and as a counter-terrorism operation. While these frameworks were useful in understanding the first three decades of the civil war, the post-2015 geographic expansion into Syria and Iraq requires a new approach that can account for the transnational dimensions of the conflict. We show how what was once a dyadic civil war concentrated in southeastern Turkey has metastasized into a conflict that now encompasses vast geographical terrain, all ethnic and religious groups indigenous to the borderlands of Iraq and Syria, and an array of state, non-state, and hybrid actors, including the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) whose rank-and-file members are majority Arab. What led to the post-2015 expansion of the conflict? More broadly, why do civil wars become internationalized? We argue that the transformation of the conflict was prompted by the simultaneous rise of autonomous Kurdish power across the wider region, which peaked in 2015: parliamentary success of the pro-Kurdish HDP in Turkey, territorial gains by the SDF in Syria, and the KDP's declared goal of holding a referendum on independence in Iraq. Ankara responded to the rise of autonomous Kurdish power in Iraq and Syria in three ways: 1) by launching major military operations in both countries 2) by occupying a large swath of northern Syria about the size of Lebanon and 3) by creating a proxy army known as the Syrian National Army (SNA) and training it to fight the Kurdish-led SDF instead of the Assad regime.

Sub-state diplomacy at work – The KRG and the Syrian conflict
Tamas Dudlak, Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest

Sub-state diplomacy or paradiplomacy refers to the independent or semi-independent nature of sub-state actors (such as the Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG) conducting their foreign policy in the international arena. Theoretically, paradiplomacy runs 'parallel' with the central government's foreign policy activity, resulting in both overarching and conflicting agendas. In the case of Iraq, not only the foreign activities of the KRG can be regarded as paradiplomacy. The territory under the control of the KRG is not a monolithic federal entity with a unitary position in foreign policy issues; there is another 'layer' of actors seeking their own interests and formulating their own foreign policy positions within the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the different foreign strategies of the parties, interest groups and factions within the KRI, such as KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party), PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), Gorran, and PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). The KRI can be considered the only Kurdish de jure autonomous entity accepted by the international community, and the KRG claims to advance the issue of Kurdish self-determination and promote a pan-Kurdish sentiment. The Syrian conflict since 2011 enabled the rise of a de facto autonomous Kurdish territorial entity in Northern Syria (Rojava), thereby creating a new situation in the Kurdish movement by challenging the KRG's political and cultural leadership on pan-Kurdish issues. By 2013, the PYD (Democratic Union Party), closely connected to the PKK, had gained prominence in Rojava, representing a considerably differing ideological and political agenda on the Kurdish question from the KRG. This paper argues that the developments in Northern Syria can be interpreted as a part of a larger geopolitical, ideological, and intra-national rivalry between the KRG (dominated by the KDP) and the PKK (and the PYD in Syria) for the leadership of the pan-Kurdish

movement. The contest between these actors intensified since the Iraqi Kurdish leadership could not significantly influence the Northern Syrian political sphere. Although the Kurdish National Council (KNC) in Syria and the KRG's leading party, the KDP, strongly opposed the PYD's democratic autonomy project in Syria, there were examples of pan-Kurdish cooperation and solidarity along common interests and against common threats (such as against the ISIS in Kobane, Syria, and Sinjar, Iraq). This paper lays out four organising principles that structure the complex matter of relations between the many constituents of the KRG and the Syrian conflict:

1. the relations between the KRG and the Kurds of Syria (pan-Kurdish feelings)
2. the relations between the KRG and the PYD (two state-like non-state actors competing for intra-Kurdish leadership)
3. the relations between the KRG and the Assad government in Syria
4. the KRG's activity at international forums concerning the Syrian conflict (especially with regard to the Syrian refugees)

The Democratic Union Party (PYD) and People's Protection Units (YPG) in Turkish Official discourse
Azad Deewanee

The article explores the construction of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Turkish official discourse. In the article, I employ critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze written texts produced during the years 2014–2019 that reflect the position of the Turkish authorities. The article sets out the main narratives that construct the PYD and YPG as terrorist organizations and posits them as a threat to both Turkey and the international community. The analysis reveals that these narratives serve the purpose of delegitimizing the PYD and YPG and legitimizing Turkish military operations and violations against Syrian Kurds. It highlights that the Turkish official position regarding the PYD and YPG is driven by two ideological factors: first, the influence of Kurdish autonomy in Syria on the action of Kurds in Turkey, and second, the barrier that the PYD and YPG have created against the Islamist agenda of Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Syria.

Panel 4B– Ideology, Governance and Reconciliation in Conflict

Governance without Territorial Control: The Experiences of the PKK in 1970s Turkey
Francis O'Connor & Joost Jongerden, Wageningen University

Much academic attention focuses on armed movements once they launch their campaigns of violence, yet the drift into violence is often a gradual descent rather than an abrupt adoption of violence. This article addresses a major gap in the increasingly important Rebel Governance approach in the study of insurgencies and civil wars: it argues that by only addressing movements after they obtain territorial control that Rebel Governance unnecessarily limits its scope and excludes movements who provide different forms of governance in the absence of any physical control of territory, such as phases of early mobilisation or subsequent decline and in areas of marginal insurgent presence. The article looks at the incipient phase of the PKK's mobilisation in the late 1970s in Turkey, prior to the military coup in 1980. The authors argue that the rudimentary forms of governance the PKK implemented in a number of Kurdish regions and its experiments in municipal rule allowed it to develop a supportive constituency which has proved the foundation for its decade's long insurgency. It builds on extensive archival sources and interviews with individuals active during this period.

The Discourse of Death in PKK's Ideology: A Journey to Fathom Political Violence and Fascination for Death

Emdjed Kurdnidad, European University Institute

In this research it is argued that "PKK is not simply militarizing the Kurdish movement, but Kurdistan is also Kurdifying PKK" as I elaborate how the Kurdish culture is vital to understand PKK. I have studied how fascination for death (F.D.) is so central in a Marxist organization like PKK (research question). However for Olivier Roy (2017), who has created the concept, F.D. is about terrorizing the politics and having a nihilist/apocalyptic approach as the essence of F.D. (a desire to end the world), but F.D. in my research, which is the core of "the discourse of death in PKK's ideology", manifests that under special social and cultural circumstances one conducts actions that aims to kill herself in shape of suicide bombing, self-immolation, hunger strikes etc. in order to achieve political goals or make political impacts, thus, F.D. might be a rational political action too rather than terrorizing the politics. Theoretically, I develop The Sociology of Death into devoting attention to the discourse of death as a part of our social and political lives. In this regard, I have presented two concepts: kurdayeti and Hegemonic Whisper. Kurdayeti, that literally means Kurdishness, is a new concept in Kurdish language through which the Kurds internalize the will/desire of Kurdish society to survive. Hegemonic Whisper is a bad feeling that the Kurds constantly feel in Kurdish society, like a background music or a whisper that the Kurds constantly hear, which indicates that something is wrong in Kurdish society, something should be done and something should change. Methodologically, I elaborated PKK's ideology in three levels: 1. Through selected books allegedly authored by Abdullah Ocalan, 2. Through influential cultural aspects/codes of Kurdish society (such as influential literary works, widespread songs, and Kurdish cultural concepts/phrases), 3. Through interviewing 18 ex-fighters of PKK from all parts of Kurdistan, including two ethnically Italian fighters (I met them in different countries such as Norway, Italy, Germany and Bashur (Kurdistan of Iraq)). Moreover, one of the unique aspects of my research is that I also benefit from my own life experiences in Kurdistan. I have also focused on the international aspects of PKK to go beyond methodological nationalism and avoid reducing PKK to Turkish Studies that often happens in the existing literature about PKK. In this regard I have a special focus on Rojhelat (Kurdistan of Iran) and have interviewed 9 Sorani ex-fighters of PKK. Moreover, this methodological approach in addition to my knowledge of Rojhelat and Bashur allow us to understand the fluence of Sorani parts of Kurdistan on PKK too and see Kurdistan as a whole (with the complicated relationships between different parts) rather than falling into national borders of specific nation-states.

Deliberation in the Contexts of Ethnic Conflict: Kurdish Peace Process Example
Musa Akgül, Lancaster University & Çiğdem Görgün Akgül, Ordu University

This study focuses on the Democratic Opening debates in November 2009 and Law on the Termination of Terror and Strengthening of Social Integration debates in July 2014 held in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM). Deliberation quality of these law drafts will be measured and compared by two different researchers via the Discourse Quality Index method formed with an inspiration from communicative action theory and discourse ethics studies of Jürgen Habermas. This way, an answer will be sought to the question of how deliberative democracy works in a "divided" society. The goal is to make an original empirical contribution to deliberation literature because most of the deliberation studies have been conducted on the Western societies where liberal democracies are institutionalized and topics with less conflict that does not include

violence. According to these studies, when a proper atmosphere is set for deliberation, opposing groups act in a more democratic and deliberative manner. While a proper institutional design pushes participants to act respectfully; a well-justified action proposal towards common good can convince individuals who have different opinions. In this context, the “ethnic dividedness” and the conflict atmosphere that has existed for decades in the country makes Turkey an original case. Sitings held in TBMM within the deliberation process known as the Kurdish Peace Process took place in quite a contentious atmosphere. So, in this study, while it will be investigated on the one hand how a deliberation process works in a divided society, it will be discussed on the other whether this process changes the stances of the political parties in the Turkish parliament towards the Kurdish Peace process positively and thus lead to a consensus among political elites. Eventually, an attempt will be made, over official parliament talks, to understand whether said deliberation process reduces the “ethnic polarization” in Turkey.

Panel 4C– The Question of Kurdistan, Colonialism and Historiography

The Perceived Image of the Other: British in Kurdish Literary Discourse in Post-World War I and Post-2003

Karzan Kareem Ameen, Salahaddin University- Erbil

The relationship between Kurds (as a part of the East) and British (as a part of the West) is not limited to the context of political, military, and economic relations only. Rather, culture and literature as a sort of power play a significant role in understanding and conceptualizing this relation and promoting cross-cultural transmission between the East and the West. From this perspective, this paper highlights the construction and progress of the images of the British (West) in the Kurdish literary discourse as a part of eastern literature by focusing on the texts they have not been studied substantially, which were produced by Kurdish intellectual elites and authors in two vital periods of British/Kurds relations. The first stage includes post-World War I that is regarded as the beginning of the domination of British colonialism in Kurdistan. In this period, the research examines and investigates the Kurdish textual representations which depicted the image of British Colonialism and the reflection of its legacies and consequences on Kurdish society at that time, especially the texts which were published in Kurdish Newspapers. Meanwhile, the study works on Kurdish contemporary texts which represent the perception of Other/ British in Kurdish imagination after the British and its allies' invasion of Iraq in 2003 as the second important stage of the relation. The research will categorize the type of the images, identify the core themes and features of images, reveal the political and ideological factors behind each imagination, then compares the images of British in Kurdish textual representations in both stages. This analysis of Other/British in Kurdish texts will be conceptualized and demonstrated under the lens of critical discourse analysis as the main approach of Postcolonial studies by leaning strongly on the arguments of Edward Said, Homi k. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak on the concept of the self and the other which leads to deciphering the codes of the images which represent the deepening implications and lasting consequences of political instability and international tension in the dominant-subordinate relationship between the two different cultural zones in two different contexts.

Kurdish nationalist historiography: narrative, identity and belonging
Mohammed Kareem, Independent Researcher

Kurdish historiography was one among several post-Ottoman narratives witnessed in the Middle East which sought to reimagine the past, based on national political projects. Yet while the Turkish, Arab and Jewish peoples succeeded in the state-building process, the Kurds did not. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Kurdish historiography has been written in the context of the political struggle for independence, within a framework of nationalist history. For Kurdish nationalism, the movement of a people without a state, historiography has been a significant instrument in projecting the Kurdish cause and dispelling the legacy of the colonialist and orientalist view of the Kurds as a “people without history”. Little scholarly attention has previously been paid to Kurdish historiography. In existing studies of the history and politics of Kurdistan, it has mainly been treated in relation to the Kurdish nationalist movement and ideology, without consideration of the wider context. The present research will trace the complex connections between historiography, nation-state and nation-building, and explain the intersections between the absence of a Kurdish state and the development of Kurdish historiography, which was a direct response to the division of Kurdistan and the Conference of Lausanne 1923. The study locates Kurdish nationalist historiography in wider comparative theoretical and historical perspectives, and provides a transnational analysis and contextualisation with the current political and ideological debates in Kurdistan. The primary aim is to analyse the methodological and ideological trends of Kurdish nationalist historiography, including the relationship between political identity and historiography, and how history is used for ideological purposes in processes of identity formation. How did Kurdish historians deal with the Kurdish “identity crisis” created by outsiders? How did they attempt to form a new identity challenging views of them by both colonial occupiers and other regional nationalist movements? The project considers these important questions, contextualising and conceptualising them within the scope of nationalist and colonialist ideologies. These issues remain at the heart of contemporary Kurdish political debates, particularly between the main two conflicting historical narratives, the hitherto dominant secular and the subordinate Islamic narratives, each attempting to assert its own form of Kurdish identity and paradigm of Kurdishness, and presenting different trajectories of Kurdish history. The contest between these two schools of thought raises questions of authority and legitimacy in the Kurdish past. For example, what was the golden age of the Kurds, and who were their national heroes? Marxist historiography, particularly influential on the development of Kurdish historical and literary discourse in Iraq during the 1960s and 1970s, emphasises the pre-Islamic era, aiming to distance Kurdish identity from Islam; alternately, historians favouring an Islamic-inspired interpretation of the past have centred on Islamic elements of Kurdish identity and ignore pre-Islamic elements. The history of Islam in Kurdistan is thus a controversial point: was the arrival of Islam in Kurdistan an act of conquest or of liberation? The question is particularly pertinent in the post-Islamic State Middle East. The image of Saladin, in particular, is at in many ways symbolic for this debate, and is closely considered in this study. Should Saladin be praised as a Kurdish hero, or as irrelevant because he acted as a Muslim rather than Kurdish leader?

The Question of Kurdistan: Integral Colonisation after Imperial Domination
Naif Bezwan, University of Vienna

Middle Eastern studies have paid much attention to the role of the European colonial powers in the making of the nation-states in the Middle East and associated conflicts.

Given the pivotal role that the British and French played in the redrawing of political boundaries this attention may be warranted, but it comes with a price, as this narrow focus has resulted in the pronouncedly colonial policies and practices conducted by the post-imperial and postcolonial states throughout the region being either underemphasized or neglected. The study aims to redress this by offering an examination of the Kurdish conflict against the background of the territorial and political reordering of the Middle East after World War One. Drawing on insights generated by studies of self-determination conflicts, as well as historical sociology, and with a primary focus on the foundational period of state building and nation building in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria in the 1920s and 1930s, this paper seeks to explain the emergence, durability, and implications of the question of Kurdistan across the four 'host states' in which the Kurds live. Using process tracing to analyse primary and secondary sources in multiple languages, the paper will examine four interrelated questions. First, how were the predominantly Kurdish inhabited territories allocated to the emerging "nation-states" of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria? Second, by what means were the Kurdish regions incorporated into the territories of the newly established states, and relatedly, how and by what methods were the Kurdish communities ruled over? Third, how have Kurdish aspirations for self-government been responded to? Finally, fourth, how and in what ways the denial of any political settlement of the Kurdish question has shaped, and is shaped by, the political systems of the states involved? The paper will address these questions by focusing on the intersection of, and interaction between, European powers and the ruling elites of the newly established states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Whereas the British and French political, economic, and military designs and interventions are taken to represent external colonialism, the policies and practices of the of the elites in these emerging states will be reconceptualized as integral colonialism in order to capture the ways and means by which the Kurdish regions were brought under the sovereignty of two post-imperial states (Turkey and Iran), and two post-colonial states (Iraq and Syria). The main argument of this paper is that the processes of state formation and nation-building in these countries were accompanied by the imposition of direct rule over the Kurdish regions, which ultimately laid the foundations of the Kurdish self-determination conflicts within each of the four states in question. The analysis of the Kurdish question through the lens of state formation and nation-building processes has two main objectives: first, to generate new insights into the emergence and trajectories of the Kurdish self-determination conflict, and second, to provide a novel theoretical approach and a preliminary empirical grounding to the coloniality of sovereign powers over Kurdistan.

The Kurdish Quest for Independence since the First World War: The Struggle for Identity, Autonomy, and a Sovereign State
Francis Owtram, University of Exeter

The Inaugural LSE Middle East Centre Kurdish Studies Conference takes place on the 100th anniversary year of the signing of the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, a treaty which has seemingly consigned the Kurds to not achieve the independent statehood envisaged by the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. Rather, in the years since, they have found themselves inhabiting states in the Middle East in which their identity was problematic and mostly as a group they were subject to systematic discrimination and repression. Their struggle to overcome this has constituted an important dynamic in the politics and IR of the Middle East ever since. It seems apposite therefore to present the research contained in my book (under contract) entitled *The Kurdish Quest for Independence since the First World War: The Struggle for Identity, Autonomy, and a Sovereign State*. I am honoured to have this book in the LSE Middle East Centre Kurdish Studies Series published by IB

Tauris/Bloomsbury so my presentation would contribute to the aims of the conference in this regards. With a view to taking feedback from the esteemed and learned participants of the LSE Kurdish Studies Conference I would aim to give an overview of the research and argument contained in my book but with a special focus on two issues. Firstly, the periods relating to the Lausanne Treaty, drawing on my archival research at the British Library and elsewhere and, secondly, the comparative aspects of the experience of the Kurds with other stateless peoples in the MENA region and elsewhere which constitutes an important methodological feature of the book and a distinct chapter. To present at this conference would give me an opportunity to receive feedback, on which I would reflect as I finalise the manuscript for submission at the end of May 2023. To this end my presentation will briefly give an overview of the concept of post-colonial sequestration articulated in summary form by the late Professor Fred Halliday in a succinct and incisive OpenDemocracy article in 2008 (reproduced in Halliday 2011) in which he briefly mentioned the Kurds as a relevant case in a comparative analysis, which I have expounded at chapter length (Owtram 2018). As articulated by Halliday, the syndrome of post-colonial sequestration denotes the phenomenon 'where countries or peoples have - at a decisive moment of international change, amid the retreat of imperial or hegemonic powers - failed (through bad timing, and/ or bad leadership) to establish their independence.' (Halliday 2011: 238). My presentation will then hone in on the key period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath and also place in comparative context the case of the Kurds with other 'stateless peoples' in the MENA region: the Palestinians, Amazigh/Berber and Saharawi before concluding. In presenting this research I hope to contribute to the conference aim of promoting and sharing recent research in the field of Kurdish Studies.

Panel 4D– Constructions of Kurdishness at the Global Level

Reproduction Strategies among Stateless Migrants: the Syrian Kurds in Sweden

Nubin Ciziri, Uppsala University

What does it mean for families and individuals to lack a state amongst nation-states and their subsequent educational systems that reinforce existing social structures? Departing from this question, I use the case of Kurdish refugee families from Syria who migrated to Sweden. Inspired by the work of Abdelmalek Sayad, I exercise the importance of working with the émigré before the immigrant, thereby putting emphasis on the contextualization of geographical origin and family backgrounds.

Based on family interviews and ethnographic observation with twenty-five families in Sweden, I analyse parents' different types of resources in Syria, their recognition in Sweden, and how it forms their practices towards their children's education. Regardless of families' class backgrounds, parents' have a fear of 'integrating' to the Swedish culture and system to a point where children forget family values. Establishing and maintaining social contacts with other Syrian Kurds therefore becomes a reproduction strategy for parents. I show that the Kurdish language and 'community' plays a crucial role within the process of reinforcing their social and cultural values in Sweden.

Given my analysis, we can understand this in relation to their statelessness, acknowledging that it is not the sole factor. As families were not a part of a state or institution where their language and national identity was reinforced, it was only possible through individual effort to reproduce their values. Therefore, families highlighted the importance of not completely giving in the Swedish education system.

To conclude, my preliminary findings reveal why refugees are in a political and scientific discourse of 'struggle for integration', and how language can become a source of reproduction strategies for particular groups, such as those without a state.

International football through a Kurdish perspective: the local versus the global
Tiago Duarte Dias, Fluminense Federal University

Founded by Kurdish immigrants and descendants in Borlänge, Sweden, in 2004, football club Dalkurd FF utilizes symbols which evoke simultaneously a belonging to a Swedishness and a Kurdishness. By utilizing the Kurdish colours and symbols, the club has managed to gather a strong following amongst Kurds in Sweden and also abroad, in the Kurdish diaspora and in Kurdistan, being, undoubtedly the Swedish club with most interest internationally. However, the club also has a local fanbase, which have a much closer relation to it, and that attends matches, members meetings and experience the club much closer. This fanbase is also inscribed within Swedish footballing dynamic.

As Dalkurd FF is caught between the local dynamics, intrinsic to Swedish football, and the international profile that the club has acquired, the relationship its fanbase has with the club changes as well. Understanding how football is interpreted, both as an activity that creates and maintains identities, but also as a business, can offer an important contribution to the studies of Kurdishness in diaspora. In the current situation, in which football clubs invest a growing number of resources in their squads and, from sources ever more distant from the club's origins, and also quite often, morally dubious, Dalkurd FF's fandom is forced to navigate both the need for financial support in their club's activities, and the controversies that surround it.

Therefore, this article will focus on understanding how Dalkurd FF fandom sees its club through the prism of football as a globalized endeavour in opposition to its local aspects. By seeing the club having to constantly negotiate its Swedish and its Kurdish belonging, the club offers as well as series of comparisons between the state of Kurdishness as a transnational cause far more encompassing the territories of Kurdistan itself. By analysing how football is understood through the prism of Kurdishness, the author wishes to understand how those individuals comprehend their own identity in a transnational world.

Black Skins White Languages Artmaking by Kurdish Migrant Women Artists
Özlem Belçim Galip, University of Oxford

Kurdish women from all regions of Kurdistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, are leading to the advancement of artistic and cultural productions in Europe with a migratory background and a growing interest in the facets and dynamics of postmodern multiculturalism. Their number has increased particularly with the rising number of second generation. Rather than producing their artistic productions in their own native language or even trying to maintain their native identity and subjectivity, Kurdish women produce their art in the languages of the host countries, and they do not want their works to be distinguished from non-migrant and non-diasporic artists or intellectuals. However, they and their works are still seen an eclectic mix of marginal, non-Western or non-European aesthetic paradigms.

In this context, this paper aims to demonstrate how artistic and cultural productions of Kurdish migrant women, incorporating the fields of visual art, film, theatre, and music,

are articulated in the host country languages within the opportunity structures of the European nation-states, leading to interrogation of the impact of Western and local knowledge, patriarchy, white privilege and globalisation. It also aims to shed light on the different national migration and gender policies of European states with regard to artistic, cultural and linguistic issues, which encourage the maximisation of well-established networks of educational and intellectual revitalisation, and also reveal the assimilationist policies that restrict the artistic and cultural elites and initiatives. Through the critique of Eurocentrism and 'whiteness'/ 'whiteness', I will mainly argue that, regardless of the question of artistic intent or the use of European languages, the art produced by Kurdish migrant women become politicised not only by their stylistic choices or subject matter, but also as a result of the unique context within which they emerge and the way they are perceived by the audience.

Social construction of homeland and diasporic national identity among the Kurdish diaspora in the West With a particular focus on the youth
Soheila Shahriari, École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS)

Kurdish women from all regions of Kurdistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey, are leading to the advancement of artistic and cultural productions in Europe with a migratory background and a growing interest in the facets and dynamics of postmodern multiculturalism. Their number has increased particularly with the rising number of second generation. Rather than producing their artistic productions in their own native language or even trying to maintain their native identity and subjectivity, Kurdish women produce their art in the languages of the host countries, and they do not want their works to be distinguished from non-migrant and non-diasporic artists or intellectuals. However, they and their works are still seen an eclectic mix of marginal, non-Western or non-European aesthetic paradigms. In this context, this paper aims to demonstrate how artistic and cultural productions of Kurdish migrant women, incorporating the fields of visual art, film, theatre, and music, are articulated in the host country languages within the opportunity structures of the European nation-states, leading to interrogation of the impact of Western and local knowledge, patriarchy, white privilege and globalisation. It also aims to shed light on the different national migration and gender policies of European states with regard to artistic, cultural and linguistic issues, which encourage the maximisation of well-established networks of educational and intellectual revitalisation, and also reveal the assimilationist policies that restrict the artistic and cultural elites and initiatives. Through the critique of Eurocentrism and 'whiteness'/ 'whiteness', I will mainly argue that, regardless of the question of artistic intent or the use of European languages, the art produced by Kurdish migrant women become politicised not only by their stylistic choices or subject matter, but also as a result of the unique context within which they emerge and the way they are perceived by the audience.

Panel 5A – Judiciary and Governance in the KRI

The Politics of Judiciary in Iraq: An Opportunity or A challenge for Post-Referendum Kurdistan
Majida Ismael, Liverpool John Moores University

In the context of a post-conflict fragile democratic transition in Iraq, the role of the newly established Federal Supreme Court (FSC) has been particularly controversial. Over the past decade, the Court case law has expanded extensively. It has taken any opportunity to speak up in almost any policy area, developing an extensive, often controversial case

law. Constitutional disputes between the KRG and the federal government have been the exception to this rule. Both governments were less likely to bring legal challenges against one another, although the two parties had conflicting interpretations of crucial constitutional matters significant to the application of the federal system in the country. The few cases that were brought before the Court were frequently dismissed or indefinitely postponed.

It is interesting to note that in the period that followed the referendum judgement in 2017, the Court has extensively active in cases involving the two governments. Prior to that, the Court had mostly avoided addressing some of the most controversial constitutional questions that are central to the ongoing power struggles between Erbil and Baghdad, the case of oil and gas is an example. This paper argues that any number of factors could have contributed to the recent shift of approach to cases involving KRG policies, including the Kurdistan independence referendum and the 2021 Amended Law of the FSC. This Law expands Court's jurisdiction beyond what was originally provided in the 2005 constitution. At the same time, there has been a growing demand from within the Region, namely cases brought by oppositions parties and actors against KRG's policies. As a result, Kurdish policies has and will be subjected to more scrutiny by the FSC, as such, the more policy areas decided by the Court, the less constitutional space or autonomy the KRG would have on which to legislate and make policies.

It is, however, to be seen whether this will be the new reality that the contested parties in Kurdistan seek legal solution from Baghdad through binding and final Court's decision, or that they would take the opportunity to agree through other legal and political means to settle their differences. This is important not only with power-struggles between the two governments, but with everyday politics in Kurdistan. A recent development that made headlines, the FSC's decisions on the unconstitutionality of certain provisions of the amended Family Law in Kurdistan which is a rather women-friendly version of the Family Law than in Iraq, might suggest that the active Court will stay as such and political actors will take any opportunity to get the Court involved in Kurdish politics.

By tracing the development of FSC's jurisprudence on cases involving Kurdistan, this paper aims to show how the Court has legalised important policies and democratic issue that matter to Kurdistan. The primary focuses here are the interpretative strategies employed by the Court and the effect of those strategies on inclusive political and legal processes in Kurdistan.

The Impact of the Judiciary on Development and Democratisation in the KRI
Banaz Taha, City, University of London

A myriad of papers have been written on democracy and development in Kurdistan; focussing on the processes of post-conflict recovery, economic development, and geopolitical dynamics. And while in the West legal scholarship is advancing beyond the parameters of legal positivism, the focus remains on Western legal systems with longstanding constitutional traditions. Socio-legal research is still lacking and lagging when it comes to non-Western, post-colonial or post-conflict systems such as in Kurdistan.

One of the actors that remains overlooked, yet intrinsically linked to democratic stability, is the judiciary. Judicial decisions of the courts have a great impact that reverberates even outside the legal system. Through their judicial decision-making judges can enforce, implement and shape the laws. It is crucial to identify the factors influencing

the judges' decision-making process as they may reveal the overall objectives of judges. This conundrum is in particular relevant to Kurdistan given the lack of a constitution and constitutional court, requiring more creativity and innovation from the judges' in their decision-making. Judges also play an important role in the legislative process, and embody the judicial system - their conduct can affect public trust in the judiciary and the government. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of the legal system in context is imperative to the successful implementation of any reform program.

The interrelationship between state building and good governance: the case of KRI
Dara Salam, SOAS

The pivotal point of this paper is to establish the dynamic correlation between what constitutes a state in its procedural – substantive administration of justice and democracy as the core of this process. The question of statehood and the process of state building do not only hinge on legitimacy and international recognition, as debated by many in the literature as widely accepted premises. Notwithstanding the importance of these elements in the process, the most significant, I would argue, that makes any state building process successful is the direction that the state and its political and social institutions take. It relies substantively, to put it more succinctly, on good and democratic governance. In a nutshell, the link that will be established is between state building and governance. More specifically, it will be investigated in the context of a stateless nation who has de facto political autonomy, but its quest for statehood is ipso facto circumscribed by the sovereign state. If this link is established, it will further be argued that a successful state-building process is grounded in the reversal of the direction, one that turns the presupposition of the post state-building democratic transition on its head and instead takes the democratisation of government and its institutions as prior to the state-building process. The case study that I will rely on for this argument is the Kurdistan region in Iraq (KRI) and its governmental body, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Management of religion and governance in Iraqi Kurdistan
Kamran Palani, Salahaddin University–Erbil

The study of de facto nation-building, state-building, and governance in Iraqi Kurdistan is well-studied in academia and policy. However, what has not received enough attention is the role and management of religion or the relationship between religion and governance in the entity. With the threat of a self-proclaimed Islamic State and the attempts of hundreds of young Kurds to join the group in 2014, Kurdish leaders have begun to support different religious directions, for example, a Salafist movement and religious nationalism (see Gade and Palani 2022; Jalal and Ahram, 2021). Salafis and religious nationalists emerged long before 2014, but it was in this climate that they began to present themselves as two clear alternatives. Importantly, it was in this period that the government's relationship with religion began to change, with the management of religion becoming an important feature of the KRI governance.

The main objective of this paper is to develop an argument that KRG's governance and management of religion is not solely a response to the threat of violent extremism; it is also an attempt to manage Islam, making it aligned with the stability and interests of the political authorities and Kurdish independence aspirations. In this paper, I will try to answer the following question: how can we best contextualise the management of religion in the entity's broader context of governance and de facto state-building?

The Iraqi Kurdistan case can be seen considering a growing government management, centralisation, and regulation of religious discourse and citizens' religious practices in the region from Morocco via Egypt and Turkey to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (See: Gade, 2021). The specificity of the Kurdish case is that management of the religious sphere occurs in a nation without a state and is part of the process of de facto state and nation-building. There is a limited and fragmented journalistic take and analysis available on the management of religion in relation to Kurdistan's broader questions of governance, political power, and state-building. Addressing this gap will highlight the academic relevance of this proposal.

To answer the research question, the paper will employ a methodology of qualitative analysis, including content analysis and interviews with Kurdish Islamic intellectuals and religious scholars as well as academics. In addition, I will rely on my previous empirical data, observation, media platforms, and publications in Kurdish, Arabic, and English.

The paper will be organised as follows. It will first provide a background to the emergence of religious nationalists and Salafis as two alternatives to the practice of religion in the KRI. I will start with the rise of the IS in 2014 and the need to counter the terrorist group both militarily, and ideologically. The next sections will be dedicated to present the empirical findings of the paper.

Panel 5B – Kurdish Women at the Centre of Political Life

Transformation of Gender Regimes Through Entrepreneurship Among Kurdish Women in Post ISIS Kurdistan

Kaziwa Salih, Jagiellonian University

This interdisciplinary study uses semi-structured interviews to substantiate the dimension of quantitative research on how humanitarian non-profit organizations (NPOs) have empowered women and modified gender regimes in post-ISIS Kurdistan (in Iraq) with entrepreneurial orientations. Iraq has been receiving aid from humanitarian groups for decades. Canada, for example, spent approximately \$4 billion on relief efforts in Iraq and Syria between 2016 and 2022. However, only in recent years have some of these groups heeded the public's demands and implemented long-term social and women's empowerment strategies, or what Canada calls "Empowering women and girls and advancing gender equality." As it did for other minorities in Iraq, the humanitarian initiative allowed Kurdish women to play a significant part in business, a relatively new sector in Kurdish society for both women and men. This study emphasizes the role of non-profits and NGOs in empowering Kurdish women to participate in the creation of microeconomic entities since 2014. It presents two major arguments. First, the NGOs' approach not only provided passion and self-efficacy but also steered women into organizational involvement and gave them a sense of agency by creating work opportunities: woman-owned firms recruit mostly women. Second, although it may seem counterintuitive, this study argues that women's economic capital has prevailed in the heteropatriarchal Kurdish society and modified the gender regime.

Kurdish Women in the KRI Surveying Gains and Setbacks

Shilan Fuad Hussain, Middlesex University

This research aims to survey the landscape of women's rights in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), with a specific focus on matters related to gender equality, such as honour killings, FGM, forced or arranged marriages, and male marital or familial violence. The

studies importance is because such matters have gained renewed attention in the Middle East region and within Greater Kurdistan in particular, because of the various political developments in the areas adjacent to the KRI. As such, the researcher will look to investigate the prevalence of these issues on women's lives. By conducting preliminary interviews with Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) officials the author intends to gain an understanding of the aforementioned variables and their impact on the lives of Kurdish women. The hope is that such research will help the KRG craft more effective policies to give women their agency, provide relevant NGO's data with which to develop humanitarian initiatives, and help future researchers gain insights into women's matters that require more inquiry.

The Kurdish Female Fighter as an exoticized neo-Orientalist trope
Nazy Raouf

This essay explores the misrepresentation of Kurdish women in western cinema in the aftermath of the ISIS threat. It will analyse two films about the Kurdish movement in their fight against the terrorist organisation: "Sisters in Arms" by Caroline Fourest and "Girls of the Sun" by Eva Husson. I make the case that the "Kurdish female fighter" has become a stereotype adopted by western filmmakers and oversimplified into a fetishized trope, condensing not only the political and sociological history of an ethnic people's movement for self-determination but the entire gender within the context of the Middle East by countering them against the veiled Muslim woman. I argue that the adoption by these filmmakers is part of a larger realm of western imagery that has its roots in Orientalist representations of the Middle Eastern woman as an object of sexual desire. Thus, contextualised through a war against the clichéd barbaric Arab male, the films employ both the male and Oriental gaze. I acknowledge that these films are not wholly representative of the subject and contend that it is not within the capacity of this essay to compare other fictional films on the topic. Instead, I refer to their popularity and relevance to my thesis that explores the normalisation of the western gaze on Kurdish women after 2011. It will also address the capped potential of the films in achieving the formation of a public sphere in which they could encourage widespread discourse where socio-political issues regarding the Kurdish struggle and the questions of Islamic extremism could potentially lead to policy change, such as calling for the removal of the PKK from the European terrorist organisation list.

On the Everyday Life of Women in Illicit Economies of Iranian Kurdistan
Peyman Zinati, University of Exeter

In this paper, through narrating Maryam's life history, I will provide a critique of gender hegemony in smuggling in Iranian Kurdistan. Here, I will underline the hypermasculine and patriarchal formation of government bordering policies in "the war on smuggling"¹ as well as local communities' reproduction of misogynistic social constructs. In particular, I will highlight how gendered coded practices of policing and smuggling and sexual etiquettes (e.g., decency, maternal duty) influences women's involvement in smuggling. Nonetheless, gender hegemony is always forming and never complete, enabling subaltern women to reject, exploit it, via their feminine counter-hegemonic strategies, using body and sentiments (e.g., lure, charm, subtlety, rage and alike), as well as their insight, access, and collective solidarity networks, facilitating their participation and progression in illicit economies.

Finally, I argue by becoming "A Man More Than Other Men" as Maryam suggested, women smuggler may appropriate masculine discourse and disrupt gendered identity

markers in smuggling. I will discuss how “credibility” is formed at a community level and how women acquire credit by being reliable and trustworthy (especially regarding debt and money management), also by performing well in evading the police and acting courageous when chased by the police.

An ethnography on Gazete Sujin: Women-centered Journalism of Kurdish Women
Zubeyde Karagoz, Istanbul Bilgi University

This paper explores the gender-based news making practices of Kurdish women journalists at Gazete Sujin that processed news with the feminist approach that is made by, for and about women. The aim of the study is to discuss how women, who are the subjects of the news production process, "participate" in women-oriented journalism and the dynamics that determine the process. Based on ethnographic research in Gazete Sujin, it is argued that news making practice is perceived as a political area for transforming masculine language of media. Jineology is applied as a conscious political choice to claim visibility and is highly sensitive for the multiplicity and multiculturalism of feminism. Solidarity, participation, collectivism, collaboration, decentralization, and the rejection of authority were the keys in the organizational structure and news making practice itself was perceived as transformative practice for the journalists of Sujin. The news practice of Sujin journalists both theoretically and practically has relied on many sources. Gazete Şujin as a concept specific to the Kurdish movement, feeds on the science of women and defines itself as a media that makes news based on Jineology Kurdish women media. Newspaper Şûjin, stating that it sees feminism as a legacy, states that as the Kurdish society, It does not undertake the representation of the general public, as it thinks that feminism is western-centered.

Kurdish media is studied in context of historical, the impact to Kurdishness, experience of diaspora however, there is still a gap of Kurdish media that has not been studied adequately that this work has intention to make contribution to the field. The research is utilized from the oppositional public sphere, women-oriented journalism, alternative media approaches, theories and social movements, feminism, Kurdish women's movement, Jineology and Kurdish women's media literature Based on the research data made with the media ethnography method and the theoretical basis in the literature, it is seen that Gazete Şûjin is a successful feminist alternative media experience by Kurdish women in Turkey, practicing the oppositional publicity of all social segments disadvantaged by Kurds and women in the perspective of Jineology.

Panel 5C – Kurdish Socioeconomics and Marginalization in Iran

Landscapes of il/legality: contraband mobility in the Kurdish mountains of the Iran-Iraq border
Moslem Ghomashlouyan, University of Bern

With the oil-price rise in the 2000s and a new, post-revolutionary, upwardly mobile middle class, Iran experienced a consumer boom. The post-revolutionary middle class took advantage of decades of developmental and social welfare policies of the Iranian state and aspired for a perceived middle-class lifestyle. Tehran and other major Iranian cities became a spawning ground for a relatively wealthy nouveau riche demanding an ever-increasing amount of consumer commodities. The subsequent international sanctions did not stop this. It only forced the merchant elite to find different solutions in the Kurdish border mountains through the labour of the Kurds hired by middlemen, who would carry contraband strapped to their backs across the mountainous borders

(commonly known as Kulbars (plural), in Kurdish). In Rojhelat, where the unemployment rate remains high and jobs in the formal sector of the economy non-existent, well-organized trades have ever since gained prominence around the not-so-clandestine contraband routes that connect the Kurdistan region of Iraq to Rojhelat. My paper is based on fieldwork for my ongoing Ph.D. project with the kulbars, middlemen, and the Iranian border guards in a village by the Iraqi border in Rojhelat between July 2021 and June 2022. I also made short trips to follow up on the afterlife of contraband consumer commodities to the points of consumption in the urban markets of Iran in Kurdish cities as well as in Tehran in conversation with the urban merchants and consumers. Drawing on my material, I ethnographically delineate how the mobility of goods in a harshly sanctioned and economically semi-isolated Iran is made possible by what I call a game of conspicuous statecraft/presence on the part of the Iranian state. The state functionaries in the Kurdish borderlands refrain from putting the enterprise of the smugglers to a halt. Instead, they conspicuously show their presence but practically blur the boundary between the legal and the illegal and facilitate this underground economy on top of the mountains. By turning a vast area of pastures into a borderland buffer zone filled with landmines, the state has dispossessed the village population of its resources and, in turn, transformed Kurdish bodies into illegalized infrastructures of capital flow, putting their bodies on the line in that pasture-turned-buffer-zone for merchants who live far away from the borderlands. I argue that the Kurdish kulbars continue doing it because the state-led infrastructural and ecological ruination of the Kurdish borderlands has left them no choice but to engage in that form of labour or to migrate to Europe or the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The gruelling labour of the kulbars reveals a colonial mode of governance in Iran, which is at times ready to sacrifice tariff revenues to ensure the mobility of goods inside the country.

Have cross border activities been beneficial for Kurdish movements?

Hemn Seyedi, University of Exeter

The Kurds have a history of interaction, and cross-border activities are one of the main features of Kurdish movements in which one Kurdish region -in this case, Iraqi Kurdistan- can become a haven for Kurdish activists in another country, for instance, Iran. These activities have existed in Kurdish movements since 1947 and have played a significant role in the continuity of these movements, causing huge troubles for central governments in Tehran, Baghdad, Ankara and Damascus. Some scholars, however, believe the Kurdish movement in Iran suffered from such activities, and some others have a positive view of these sorts of activity and look at it as a key to keeping the Kurdish movement alive, especially in comparison to other movements in Iran that either had no chance to experience cross-border activities (because they had no access to international borders) or who faced a different political environment when they crossed the border.

I will assess the outcome of Kurdish cross-border activities from the lens of survival. These political activities and guerrilla campaigns have not led to nationalist liberty or military victory; however, despite paying huge prices, they helped these activists first to keep themselves alive, keep their movement active, and prepare them for the following opportunities with having direct access to their people in Iranian Kurdistan. Many other non-Kurdish movements in Iran have not survived mostly because they had no chance to have such activities. In this research, I will look at the outcome of some other cross-national and ethno-national movements in Iran from the lens of cross-border activities.

Kurds and Their Rights A Key to Iran's Socioeconomic Advancement **Tahirih Danesh**

The Twentieth Century embarked humanity on a new chapter in its journey of human rights. Borne out of World War II atrocities, the dream of 'never again' impelled the international community to honour the dignity of every member of the human family. However, a series of wars, crimes against humanity and genocidal episodes committed in countless communities since then, highlight the need to prioritise human rights of minorities, particularly their socioeconomic rights to education and work, as a means to mainstream the marginalised.

Contemporary waves of tension between modernity and tradition, continue to stagnate the socioeconomic life of minorities living in Asia, solidifying age old patterns of inequality. Vividly depicted in the case of Kurds living in Iran, these patterns impact generation after generation of Kurdish citizens at the social and economic levels. Although the case of the Kurdish community involves a number of countries and states, the socioeconomic impact of discriminatory laws of Iran demands particular examination and evaluation.

Following a longstanding pattern of 'creating a strong centralised state that is intolerant of ethnic dissidents,'¹ over the past four decades, the Islamic Republic minimises access to the socioeconomic rights of its Kurdish citizens with impunity. As a result, the border communities they inhabit remain deprived and repressive negatively impacting the overall situation of socioeconomic rights at the national level.

Based on human rights records of the Islamic Republic, and more recently, reports emerging from the latest series of protests, Iran increasingly violates rights of this community by ignoring the rule of laws, violating its international commitments, and employing a range of vague and random policies to prevent its largest ethnic minority from full enjoyment of their rights.

Iranian Kurds, much like the rest of the nation, prioritise the rights to education and work. However, the state-sponsored policies and practices impacting Kurds, particularly its women and youth, minimise their access to both rights. While the Kurds have continued to face unspeakable acts of repression with great resilience, the case of Mahsa Amini highlights a new chapter in the journey to optimise their access to socioeconomic rights.

This paper proposes that a close re-examination of legal and religious codes, laws and policies of the Islamic Republic hold the key to protecting socioeconomic rights of Kurdish Iranians. Based on new in-country research and previously published sources, it proposes that such examination must present a series of changes in legislation coupled with a concerted educational effort to promote the socioeconomic rights of Kurds among Iranian citizens, institutions and communities, in order to secure equal access to the rights to education and work for all Iranian Kurds.

The marginalization process of the Kurmanji-speaking Kurds from the core of Kurdish politics in Iran **Mostafa Khalili, Kyoto University**

Historically, Kurmanji-speaking Kurds had played a central role in various Kurdish rebellions in Iran, from the Battle of Dimdim (1609-1610) to Sheikh Ubaydullah (1880-81)

and Simko's (1918-22) rebellions. Since the establishment of the Kurdistan Republic in 1946, however, they have been gradually marginalized from the core of the Kurdish movement in Iran in favour of their Sorani-speaking counterparts. This paper takes an interest in investigating the socio-political grounds behind their marginalization process by focusing on some of the most influential Kurmanji-residing areas of Iran, namely, the rural districts of Margawar, Targawar, Baradust, and Sumay, located near the frontier region of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.

Methodologically, I rely on the Ottoman and Iranian archived documents between 1880 and 1971, in combination with 81 unstructured interviews conducted between 2018 and 2020 with the members of the region's influential families about their generational trajectory. The focus groups include the Saadat-e Nehri family clan, Herki, Beyghzadeh, and Henareh tribes, as well as the Shikak tribal confederation.

The paper argues that the state's increased suppression and intervention in the local political fields of those regions following Sheikh Ubaydullah and Simko's revolts had resulted in the transformation of tribal and religious ties, changed the landlord-peasant relationships, and shaped a vacuum of the local power. This led to the disintegration of the Kurmanji communities and hindered their modernization and urbanization processes. As a result, they were gradually marginalized from the relatively modern, urban, and elite-led Kurdish movements in Iran, centered in the Sorani-speaking regions.

Taking a bottom-up approach, the paper tracks the dynamics of the local political field of the Kurmanji Kurds by focusing on the transformation of their religious ties, tribal cohesion, and landlord-peasant relationships from the suppression of Sheykh Ubaydullah rebellion to the land reform era (1962-71).

To comprehend the shift in religious ties, I focus on the trajectory of the Saadat-e Nehri family, one of the most influential families in the modern history of Kurdistan. The archived data and interviews illustrate that the banishment of several family members and severe repression of others resulted in a vacuum of religiopolitical power in the region. To study the transformation of tribal ties, I have tracked the changes in the social structure of various tribes and illustrated the state's intervention's role in intensifying intra-tribal feuds. To track the transformation of the landlord-peasant relationship, I rely on the archived documents and the oral history testimonies and show how the land seizure of the entire region by the central government (Khaleseh-sazi) as a revenge action against the Kurdish rebel movements transformed the landlord-peasant relationship and resulted in a relatively late and an unsuccessful land reform process in the following years.

The Kurdish Archives in Iran: significance and challenges
Rafiqfuad Yarahmadi, Filmmaker

This paper discusses the significance of the Kurdish archives and explains how the Iranian regime attempts to destroy Kurdish archives to serve its ideological goals and mislead Iranian society about past historical events in Kurdistan through distorted historical narratives. Archives denote 'the documentary by-product of human activity retained for their long-term value' which can be found in different formats such as written, photographic, moving image, sound, digital and analogue; private institutions and individuals both can collect archives for different reasons using different methods. Archives are among the significant sources of information which shape memory.

How do you know where you come from? What informs your view about yourself, your family, your society, your region etc. For instant memory is an important source of information about the past, both individual and social memory. As we all know, oral collection, language, architecture, and landmarks shape memory. By the way, archives are significant sources of information, on which we most of the time unconsciously rely to understand the past.

That said, Kurdish archives have been the targets of the Iranian regime by (1) destroying and arresting individuals and archive collectors and (2) creating false information in Iranian cinema instead of using documented archives. The paper analyses the role of archives in enabling regimes such as Iran, which rules over the Kurds, to change the demography and also isolate and discriminate against the Kurds by destroying and deactivating the archival sources; instead, using false information to reconstruct the past in its favour.

According to international council of archive "Archives and records are the tools by which governments can make themselves accountable and demonstrate their democratic credentials. They enable the delivery of human rights and the ability for a government to explain and defend its actions."

This paper also discusses the different types of archivists, their roles, and the challenges facing Kurdish researchers. For instance, we can face some record keepers who think they are the owners of those archives which have come to their possessions by accident or been left there by someone else. Ethically we cannot claim to have the copyright to something we have not produced. This is followed by explaining, on the one hand, the importance of archives for creating documentary films and, on the other, the difficulties a filmmaker encounters in the absence of not having archive footage and the consequences of this deficiency for the filmmaker and particularly Kurdish society/people.

Finally, as a Kurdish documentary filmmaker, I will screen a short, 7-minutes film, called the Birthday Party. It is a short archived base documentary film by myself and not been released yet. It tells the story of a Kurdish child who never been able to have his birthday. By screening the film, we can see the significance of archives and the challenges of filmmaking to serve Kurdish history and memory become evident.

Panel 5D – Space and Institutions in Rojava

Space, Place, Gender, Struggle: Sociospatial Pedagogy as Data Collection in Collaboration with the University of Rojava **Charlotte Grace**

This paper will outline the methodological frameworks and data collection processes of my ongoing Doctoral research, entitled Spatial Labour and the Politics of Place in Rojava, at the University of West London (supervisors Helen Hester, UWL and Nishat Awan, UCL). Broadly, the thesis explores the relationship between spatial practices, gendered labour and the emancipatory politics of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES).

Spatial conceptualisation is common across Kurdish Thought. Abdullah Öcalan's mantra 'we must remove the ziggurats from our minds' (2013) considers architecture the key device in giving form to a politics of verticality, centralisation and thus inequality,

encoding the submissive and hierarchical human mindset. Equations between the subjugation of women and the subjugation of land through agricultural processes, urbanisation and capitalist and geopolitical developments are prevalent, and their emancipation intertwined (Ustundag 2016, Dirik 2022). Sociospatial transformation in the form of women-led construction projects are seen as central in the transition towards a liberated society - 'every corner, every hilltop, every landmark will have a symbol that reminds us of our struggle.' (Jinwar Women's Village, 2018).

Research across the Sociospatial disciplines - namely architecture, urbanism and geography - makes use of multiscale and multidimensional lenses, techniques and medias to explore, interpret and communicate its thoughts and findings (Wang and Groat 2004). While scholars highlight the ways in which image elicitation methods for data collection can foreground emotional, anecdotal, traditionally-"othered" or underrepresented data including the spatial or the embodied, and the connections between them (Rose 2016, Pink 2013, Duxbury et al 2019). I argue through my work that, when operationalised in certain ways to explore the Kurdish context, many of these methods have the capacity to capture the holistic, feminist and decolonial claims of the AANES in innovative, accessible and emancipatory ways, while building knowledge on the aforementioned, under-studied sociospatial dimensions of the region. Having laid the ground for the thesis and its methods, the paper will outline the data collection processes and auto-image-elicitation methods that were used. These methods were developed and synthesised through the facilitation of 6 week module at the University of Rojava called Space, Place, Gender, Struggle, which I taught in early 2022 and used as my data collection process. In developing the module, I brought a range of pedagogical Action Research frameworks together with auto-image-elicitation methods to develop seminars, student exercises and co-learning activities to collect and interpret data on this topic. I will discuss these methods, noting how they speak to the emancipatory politics and methodological commitments of the AANES, as well as telling us about spatial practice and gendered labour in the region.

Women's Autonomous Spaces in Rojava Rethinking the Discourse of Gender Segregation **Sumana Singha, Jawaharlal Nehru University**

The proposed paper would examine the *raison d'être* of the autonomous women spaces in Rojava and how it affects the discourse of gender segregation.

Space is a political issue and has always been highly contested. Throughout human history, certain spaces have been politically, culturally, and religiously marked as "male" and "female". Feminist analysis of space focuses on patriarchal spatialization, especially the binarism and accompanied gendered power hierarchy. Women's spatial exclusion from public spaces and associated decision-making platforms reflects gender relations and gendered power dynamics. It has been argued that women's historical exclusion and ongoing underrepresentation in all spheres of public life can be mitigated by maintaining women only spaces, provisions, and services. Women's autonomous spaces are established in response to women's marginalization under patriarchy and is perceived as a way to advance their political interests. Autonomous spaces provide marginalized groups who have suffered systemic injustice a space for political organization and conversation.

In Rojava, the adoption of a governance structure wherein parallel women only institutions and organizations operate alongside mixed gender institutions that are quota driven and co-chaired at all levels of governance, is an important signifier of the

Kurdish women's movements' struggle against patriarchy and male domination. The praxis of women's autonomous organizing in Rojava by instituting women only spaces is embedded in the "theory of separation", developed by Abdullah Öcalan. The "theory of separation" proposes both physical and mental separation of women from the web of relations which keeps women bonded to oppression and exploitation, with the aim to facilitate women to develop a free identity and free personality.

The paper would proceed by examining the politics of gendered spaces and the impact of gender-based spatial segregation on gender relations and specifically on women's position in society. The next section will discuss women communes, councils, commissions, and centres to understand the characteristics and modus operandi of women only spaces and women's autonomous organizing in Rojava. Subsequent sections will discuss the "theory of separation" and how it supposes the transformation of patriarchal gender relations. The final section will analyse how women only spaces facilitating women's autonomous organizing in Rojava challenges the dominant discourse of gender segregation, which postulates an inverse relationship between gender segregation and women's empowerment.

Searching for Theoretical-methodological Approaches to the Study of Democratic Confederalism in Rojava

Erika Aguilar, National Autonomous University of Mexico

Mexican academy on International Relations is also searching for useful and original theoretical frames and methodologies to approach rigorously to the political experiment of the so-called Democratic Confederalism of Rojava or Western Kurdistan. Therefore, one of the objectives of this presentation is to analyze the Foucauldian perspective on historical discontinuities as an object and an instrument of research or, in other words, what is at stake now is to conceive History as a genealogy of the discontinuities that have broken the continuous time. Foucault summons us to understand in a profound way a set of partial facts, traits, discourses and practices, but without linking them in a unidirectional process. This implies, in turn, that discontinuous history does not have the purpose of seeking solutions but of problematizing the breaks that open up the hazardous conditions of the possible. In this sense, we propose to identify some of the series of discontinuities that have opened spaces of possibility for the formation of Democratic Confederalism in northern and eastern Syria.

On the other hand, how Democratic Confederalism in Rojava has been conceptualized? In addition to being named as a "project", "model" or "paradigm", we propose to examine theoretical categories as John Holloway's anti-power, Rossana Reguillo's intermediate space or Anibal Quijano's horizon of historical sense. The first analytical category, more common in the literature written about Democratic Confederalism in Rojava, is interesting because of its purpose of "change the world without taking power", one of the objectives of Democratic Confederalism. In the case of intermediate space, Reguillo uses this concept in order to study social change processes that were introduced by the irruption of an event (in this case the popular revolution in Syria in 2012) or a crisis that makes possible the reinterpretation of reality, which generates its own space-time coordinates, and which implies a continuous negotiation with the previous and current conditions. Finally, it is possible to identify Democratic Confederalism as a horizon of historical sense, analytical category that invokes an emancipatory ideal. Quijano's proposal refers to the possibility of "another society, another history" that, although born of uncertainty and uneasiness, makes it possible to imagine a world founded on justice, equality and human dignity. This theoretical and methodological exploration is useful to

imbricate various “temporalities of struggle” as Braudel may say. Past, present and future (not necessarily in this classical order), mix memory, imagination and promises, just as Democratic Confederalism does.

Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria/Rojava: State-like entity in the making or hybrid form of governance beyond the one-nation state?

Katia Zagoritou, University of Peloponnese

Professor Gunter’s remark in 2014 that “the Kurds who have recently become empowered are now challenging the boundaries of the current state system established by the Sykes-Picot Agreement”¹ has been all the more evident in the case of the Kurds in the de facto autonomous region of North and East Syria - commonly referred to as Rojava. However, according to the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), the de facto governing body of Rojava region since 2018,² and its two Social Contracts explicitly rejecting the pursuit of a separate (Kurdish) nation-state,³ it is the (one)nation-state system with its embedded ethnic and gender inequalities that is foremost challenged.

In practice, one can suggest that the newborn entity questions some major conventional western and Weberian understandings of statehood: dominance of one nation (ethnic group) with its own national identity markers – notably language –, centralized authority, liberalism and capitalist economy, domination over the society, as well as patriarchal norms and structures, intimately connected to and historically rooted in the nation-state. At the same time, the AANES does display crucial statist trappings; most importantly territorial control (albeit not linked to ethnicity), forging foreign ties (unusual though for non-state actors) alongside the claim for the monopoly of the means of the legitimate violence despite the contrary assertions by the Democratic Union Party (PYD). Indeed, the PYD frames the latter solely as means of defense and claims to transfer them from the state to the people according to the principles of ‘democratic confederalism’.

The AANES has introduced novel features that can be viewed as going ‘beyond the nation-state’ and mainly include the coexistence and participation of all the ethnic, religious and cultural components of the society in the self-administration, the centrality and active participation of women and youth in the making of the ‘democratic nation’ (as opposed to the nation-state), decentralization, grassroots organization and empowerment of the society.⁴ Two major factors, ideological and political, as well as pragmatist, appear to inform their introduction and predominance. On the one hand, they are grounded on the principles of ‘democratic confederalism’, which the AANES has aspired to implement in Rojava. This socio-political system - mainly inspired by the Kurdistan Worker’s Party’s (PKK) imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan - aims at promoting the peaceful coexistence of various peoples according to the principles of direct democracy, autonomy, self-governance, feminism, ecology and multiculturalism. On the other hand, the very demographics of the region composed by a mosaic of various ethnic, religious and cultural groups, seem to inform this process as well, particularly following the Syrian Democratic Forces’ (SDF) territorial expansion beyond traditionally majority Kurdish areas in the fight against the ISIS.

I therefore argue in this paper that the AANES appears as a hybrid state-like entity combining state-like features with a new model of governance and social organization opposed to the centralized one-nation state and in favour of a multi-ethnic and multiconfessional decentralized polity. To this end, I will provide a brief presentation of the various scholarly approaches vis-à-vis the nature of the Rojava entity (varying from a

de facto state-building process to a federated form of governance), as well as the PYD's assertions. A detailed presentation of the state-like features that one can detect in Rojava will follow, while highlighting the war context within which this process is taking place. Finally, before delving into the features and novelties that appear to seriously challenge the conventional nation-state model, I will briefly examine the theoretical backgrounds on which is founded the socio-political project that the PYD-led Administration has sought to implement in Rojava

Political Violence and Decolonial Construction Process: An analysis of the relationship between self-defense and the building of new institutions in Rojava
Pedro Campos & Marcial Suarez, Fluminense Federal University

In this article, we will analyze the concept of self-defense for building new institutions in the political experience in Rojava, northern Syria. First, we draw a comparison between the role of political violence in Franz Fanon (1968) with the concept of self-defense in Ocalan (sociology of freedom, 2020), their proximities and ruptures in terms of the importance of the use of material force as well as the subjective character of liberation that the anti-colonial armed struggle engenders in those who participate in it. Arguing that both are part of the decolonial tradition, notwithstanding they propose different objectives: the perspective of national liberation in Fanon (1968) and the struggle for democratic confederalism in Ocalan (2020). In this difference lies the answer to their different ways of seeing violence. In a second part, we will illustrate the reading of the importance of self-defense through the voice of interviewees in the field carried out during May 2022: a commander of the YPJ, a director of the female television channel JIN TV, a female director of a dairy factory, a member of the Kobanê commune, members of the village of JINWAR women and the co-president of the communes.

The objective is to present, first through the bibliographic review and then through the voice of participants in the Kurdish political experience, the importance that self-defense has in the decolonial attempt that is underway in the region.

Panel 6A – Neoliberalism, Security and Social Movements in the KRI

Neoliberalism in Iraqi Kurdistan: nationalism, dissent, and new forms of political engagement
Müjge Küçükkeleş, Global Partners Governance

This paper seeks to explore the difficulties a nationalist project faces in becoming a force for collective action and identification under conditions of neoliberalism in Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2005, the new Iraqi constitution recognised the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as a federal region of Iraq. Yet, rather than re-integrating the region back into Iraq, this legal status played a critical role in incorporating the region into international markets and global development frameworks, foregrounding the process of building the region's political and institutional apparatus according to economic logics.

Drawing on Foucault's notion of neoliberalism as a governing rationality that disseminates economic norms and principles to every domain of life, I will examine how the construction of statist order within neoliberal logics has interacted with Kurdish nationalism, dissent and new forms of political engagement. I argue that the neoliberal processes in the Kurdistan region have produced opposing articulations of nationalism, national liberation and independence. As neoliberalism has re-oriented the nationalism

espoused by the political parties (Kurdistan Democratic Party-KDP and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan-PUK) to the greater pursuit of integration with international markets to preserve the region's political status, it has simultaneously intensified contestation, producing new meanings of nationalism, independence and self-rule. I view these new ideas as a quest for seizing the political from the economisation of life. I then discuss how this quest for the political was thinned by the neoliberal ethos of good governance, self-reliance and empowerment. I examine the form of subjectivity these discourses promote and cultivate as well as their effects on dissent. I also analyse how this subject relates to politics, the notion of the state and self-determination, in a setting that self-rules in the absence of juridical independence.

This paper provides a novel perspective on subject formation, nationalism and dissent in Iraqi Kurdistan. By understanding neoliberalism beyond a set of economic policies or an ideology that seeks to maximise interest of a certain class, it departs from conventional accounts of political economy in Iraqi Kurdistan. In drawing attention to the neoliberal imperative to reconfigure all domains of life in economic terms, it demonstrates the paradoxes of self-rule achieved under the conditions of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism's reconfiguration of the state, the political and popular sovereignty in existing states has been widely discussed. This paper will contribute to this broader literature by drawing attention to a political context, which achieved its quest for self-rule in economic logics rather than on sovereign right to self-determination and exploring what this means for the nationalist project.

Path Dependence from Proxy Agent to De Facto State A History of 'Strategic Exploitation' of the Kurds as a Context of the Iraqi Kurdistan Security Policy
Piotr Sosnowski, University of Warsaw

One way of telling the history of the Kurds and Kurdistan might be by enumerating and explaining irregular and long-lasting cases of strategic exploitation by its quasi-patrons. Most of the literature on proxy wars focuses on reasons and expected benefits for the quasi-patron, but ignores (see e.g. Groh 2019; Rauta 2020; Hughes 2014) or only briefly mentions motivations for the agents (see e.g., Mumford 2013; Ahram 2011). Based on the available source material and studies, an attempt to assess to what degree an agent was aware of its role and to understand the quasi-patron's intentions seems challenging.

Therefore, it can be assumed that Kurdish political entities perceived entering a relationship with the quasi-patrons as conducive to the implementation of their own local interests, e.g., the Kurdish principalities in the Ottoman and Iranian Empires (Eppel 2016, 27–45; Klein 2011, 170–71); the Assyrians and Great Britain 1915–1932 (Ahram 2011, 62–65; Browne 1932); the Soviet Union and the Mahabad Republic in 1946 (Vali 2011, 27–60); the Kurdistan Democratic Party and Iran, USA, Israel 1962–1975 (Borghard 2014, 180–210). The long-term adaptation of the role of a proxy agent shaped collective strategic thought of the Kurdish political entities, which was expressed by balancing asymmetric interactions, which then led to the transformation from non-state proxy agents into a de facto state, against the intentions of the quasi-patrons.

The scientific goal of this paper is to conceptualize the phenomenon of 'strategic exploitation' of Kurdish political entities and to investigate it as a process that triggered the change in Kurdish actorness from isolated non-state to de facto state. Covering two centuries, the contribution examines actorness and cases of patron-client relations

between Kurdish political entities and sovereign states. It answers the question: What was the path of strategic exploitation of the Kurdish political entities and how does it affect the contemporary security policy of Iraqi Kurdistan? Combining the concepts of proxy war, de facto state, and path dependence, it argues that the persistent experience of strategic exploitation shaped the collective strategic thought of Kurdish political entities and has a visible impact on contemporary Iraqi Kurdistan security policy. It applies the process-tracing method based on an analysis of literature on the history of Kurds and Kurdistan to investigate patron-client relations and variability of actorness. The paper concludes that the experience of 'strategic exploitation' has shaped the main direction of Iraqi Kurdistan security policy. It is expressed in practice as abstaining from an official declaration of secession and diversifying relations with external actors.

Why Do Social Movements Not Arise? Civic Dis/engagement and Youth Migration in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)

Hewa Khedir, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust

Research on social and political movements has been preoccupied with the question of the occurrence and impacts of these movements. This paper offers a particular insight into the study of social movements by investigating why social movements have not arisen in KRI. The central question of this paper is why issues that although indicative of severe dysfunctions in governance and economy, still do not form a base around which a vibrant social movement could occur. The paper employs youth migration from KRI as a case study to illustrate why this issue, unlike gender, free speech, and even recently environment and animal rights, for example, has not triggered a social movement to address structural factors that lie behind it. The paper is an attempt to answer three main questions:

- How is youth migration perceived in KRI and what is the relative significance of youth migration compared to other issues that face KRI?
- How vibrant is civic engagement in KRI?
- How can we make sense of civic engagement disparities between civic engagement for public issues such as gender equality, free speech, and environmentalism (in its broad sense), on the one hand, and youth migration civic dis/engagement, on the other hand?

Methodologically, the paper employed a modified version of the civic engagement instrument developed by the Centre for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). A sample of 1065 units participated in the civic engagement and youth migration survey in KRI in October and November 2022. Initial data analysis has begun, and it is anticipated that the results of the study will be complete for dissemination at the conference.

Panel 6B – Transformations and Continuities in Kurdish

What do the Kurds want now? Spotighting the Gap in Public and Private Perceptions in the Southeast and Istanbul

Aslam Kakar, Rutgers University- Newark

This article describes Kurdish identity and daily existence in southeast Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan's authoritarian regime. Based on forty formal field interviews and hundreds of hours of informal conversations and observations, the article discusses the themes of identity, language, war and peace from the standpoint of Kurds –from shop

owners and teachers to civil society professionals, rights activists, lawyers, academics and politicians. The article takes an in depth look at how the Turkish state has suppressed and denied the Kurds their basic rights and identity and the ways in which continued oppression manifests itself in daily Kurdish existence today. Most importantly, it addresses the question as to what the Kurds want now after a four-decade long armed conflict with the state. Incorporating ethnographic and anthropological methods of analysis, the article compares public and private perceptions among the Kurds in southeast Turkey and Istanbul. It finds that in a possible world most Kurds in the southeast desire an independent Kurdistan while the majority of Kurds born or raised in Istanbul lean towards integration. Moreover, while there is consensus in the public sphere on Kurdish demand – democratic rights and autonomy within Turkey—in both regions, in the private sphere, the Kurds in the southeast aspire to more autonomy or even independence. This is an element that remains largely missing from most literature on Kurdish conflict after Abdullah Ocalan’s arrest and his rescission of demand for independence. The article unveils the obscure Kurdish view in salons, drawing rooms and kitchens – spaces which elude censorship and public criminalizing by the state of their inner political truth

Prefiguring Post National Identities through Learning and knowledge making process: Insights from The Peoples’ Democratic Congress (HDK), Turkey
Birgul Kutan, University of Sussex

This paper explores the learning and knowledge-making processes of the HDK (People’s Democratic Congress) a Turkey based social movement that emerged in 2012 and united the political left and Kurdish liberation movement alongside feminist, ethnic, and sexual minority groupings. In a short period of time, the movement galvanized oppositional struggles in Turkey, created its own successful political party, and projected forward of post-nationalist, democratic and inclusive vision through prefigurative political praxis that evidenced in the present what could be achieved in the future. Building on the pathbreaking work of Mahmoud Mamdani (2020), this paper explores the tension between nation and state relations, and evidences how grassroots movements can create the conditions under which inclusive political relations between ethnic, cultural, religious and political minorities can be constructed from below. In doing so it demonstrates the way social movements, through prefigurative politics, can address ongoing tensions between state building and respect for diversity and lay the foundations for peace with social justice. Drawing on a 3-year participatory research process, involving interviews, focus groups, and workshops with leaders and activists, the paper will evidence how HDK learns and makes knowledge, the types of learning and knowledge that occurred, and the effect of that knowledge and learning on both the movement itself and the broader society. A movement that contained within it a politics of hope that despite suffering massive repression over recent years, still shines a light forward to alternative possibilities and more egalitarian futures.

Songs and the Performance of Kurdish Identity
Ana Cristina Henriquez Marques, University of Kurdistan Hewlêr

The Kurdish language(s), oral traditions (particularly folklore, poetry, and songs), and more recently, written literature, have been central to the “construction” of Kurdish cultural identity, supporting the claim for independence. This paper is part of a larger research project, which, through the analysis of intergenerational attitudes, intends to explore the perceived, enduring significance of Kurdish songs, in the performance and expression of everyday life nationalism, which, at a minimum, assumes the right of

existence of Kurdish people, but that for many, corresponds to a right of self-determination.

The paper will share and reflect on the results of the first stage of the project: seven focus groups conducted with university students (ages between 18 and 29 years old), from the governorates of Sulimaini, Erbil, and Duhok, in the Kurdish Region of Iraq. As the project develops, we will conduct individual interviews with a selection of the students; their elder relatives; a number of renowned Kurdish musicians. With an emphasis on “cultural memory”, we will also analyze the songs, that the students have identified as having significant cultural and “national” importance.

Areas of particular interest, which the paper will discuss, include the impact easily accessible transglobal digital media, has had on young adult attitudes towards the traditional Kurdish song repertoire. For example, thus far, our research suggests that a proportion of the young adult Kurds now, largely, eschew an everyday engagement with traditional Kurdish songs in favour of listening to Western music, implying “cosmopolitan” feelings of belonging, that place them as citizens of the world.

Other young Kurds, have expressed how, although they have welcomed the availability of modern, international modes of music, this familiarity with “foreign” sounds, has simultaneously nurtured a stronger appreciation of, and connection with, the traditional Kurdish songs of the past. For these young Kurds, old songs are considered a treasured form of “cultural memory”, which connects them to the values, mores, and cultural practices of their ancestors; correspondingly, for many of these same young adults, modern Kurdish songs (in terms of themes, social conventions, instrumentation, etc.), are seen as “corruptions” of this traditional heritage.

Moreover, regardless of the differing quotidian attitudes towards traditional Kurdish songs, our initial findings suggest that the songs seem to retain an inclusive potency and appeal for the young adults, when enacted in certain prominent performative contexts (weddings, Newroz celebrations, historical/political commemorations, etc.), connoting that, potentially, the traditional Kurdish songs still play an important role in feelings of national identity for young adults; even for those who – by their own admission – privilege Western songs in their everyday lives.

Lastly, within the broader category of “Kurdish songs”, there are stylistic subdivisions, contingent on regional dialects (e.g., Sorani, Kurmanji), and localized, cultural diversity. The paper will, therefore, reflect on how the young adult Kurds expressed their discernment of, and attitudes towards, the acknowledged cultural differences, which permeate the regional, traditional songs. Moreover, the paper will accordingly consider how these differences might conceivably complexify notions of the traditional songs, as performances of everyday life nationalism.

Kurds of Central Anatolia as an Alternative Kurdishness
Haci Cevik, University of Potsdam

It is well known that Kurds in Turkey mainly live in eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. However, outside the geography of Kurdistan, a significant number of Kurds called Kurds of Central Anatolia, who have been among the original population of the region, have been settled in Ankara, Konya and Kirşehir for many years. Kurds of Central Anatolia migrated from Kurdistan for various reasons and have a history of approximately 400 years. The Kurds of Central Anatolia have different characteristics,

both because of the political tendencies of the geography they settled in and because of their migrations to European countries. These differences have two dimensions: The first dimension is that the geography where the Kurds of Central Anatolia live is a region that has been characterized by Turkish nationalism since the foundation of the Republic. The Kurds, who have been directly defined as a marginal ethnic group within the Kurdish struggle for collective identity that has been going on for more than a hundred years, have been associated with their own ethnic identity in such a nationalist geography, which has led to important differences. On the other hand, Kurds, especially in Konya, have been migrating to various countries in Europe since the 1960s. For Kurds of Central Anatolia living in a Turkish nationalist geography, the phenomenon of migration to Europe has meant meeting the Kurdish diaspora and Kurdish political movements. This acquaintance has directly affected both the Kurdish identity and the political positioning of the Kurds of Central Anatolia. These two dimensions, which I use to define difference, have increased the interest in Kurds of Central Anatolia in recent years. In this paper, I will analyze the paths of Central Anatolian Kurds' engagement with Kurdish politics, considering the conditions of the geography in which they live. Within the framework of the literature on ethnic politics, I plan to discuss the political relations of Kurds of Central Anatolian both in the cities where they live and in European countries in the context of the general election results in Turkey. At the same time, the impact of the phenomenon of migration to Europe on the social and cultural sphere brings about a significant identity transformation. Therefore, I will propose to reflect on the meaning of the construction of Kurdishness of Central Anatolia as a new collective identity, despite its relations with the Kurdish diaspora.

Glocal securitization of the Kurdish identity and desecuritization of the Kurdish question in Turkey

Ibrahim Has

This paper revisits the Kurdish question (KQ) from perspective of interdisciplinary and multiscale glocal securitization (glosec) framework. It problematizes hegemonic ontology and epistemology of historically racist securitization of KQ where its analysis has been deeply underpinned by political choice and positioning. The paper criticises existing literature on securitization of KQ as state-centric that reduces KQ to minority question while constructing the Kurdish movement (KM) as an existential threat against indivisibility of the Turkish state, its nation and national space. These literatures usually ignore or legitimize decades-long state terror and violence through counterterrorism with a focus on national security paradigm paying less attention devoted to roles of KM and its struggle.

From glosec perspective, the paper argues that state-centric securitization of KQ has been producing insecurity for survival and sustainability of Kurdish society. It discusses dialectics of KQ as much societal as territorial that are deeply interpenetrated which cannot be analysed in isolation or independently from one another. The discussion provides fresh perspective that constructs KM as a securitizer in context of the Copenhagen School's societal sector. Concurrently, it constructs the Turkish state as an existential threat to existence and survival of the Kurdish identity, language and culture. It claims that societal security of the Kurds is a challenge to authoritarian securitization of the state, and materialisation of societal securitization of Kurds is a milestone that influences and impacts simultaneous glocal desecuritization of KQ and space at local, national and regional scales.

Panel 6C – Ottoman Kurdistan

Road to Rebellion: A prehistory of Sheikh Ubeidullah Rebellion **Sabri Ates, Southern Methodist University**

Based on a book-length study of the Sheikh Ubeidullah Rebellion, this presentation concentrates on the social, political, and environmental circumstances that propelled numerous Kurdish groups to take up arms to create a state of their own. Their rebellion started in the last months of 1880 when tens of thousands of Iranian and Ottoman Kurds marched on northwestern Iran. Under the command of Sheikh Ubeidullah of Nehri, an Ottoman citizen and influential leader of a Sunni religious brotherhood, they temporarily took control of several cities. Their success, followed by the aggressive response of the Iranian army, activated what had been relatively dormant Shia-Sunni sectarian boundaries and resulted in great violence and displacement: tens of thousands of families left their ancestral lands, villages and towns were depopulated, civilians lost their lives, and the affected districts were laid to waste. The memories of the revolt shaped the relations between the Kurds and the Iranian state for a long time. In the literature on the Kurds, this revolt has been characterized as the cradle of Kurdish nationalism. No doubt, nationalist aspirations and some other factors contributed to the making of this rebellion. However, this paper argues that Iranian oppression and environmental factors, including the draught and famines of 1860-1 and 1873, significantly contributed to the making of this revolt.

The Sheikh Ubeydullah Debate and the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism **Djene Rhys Bajalan, Missouri State University**

The emergence of Kurdish national consciousness is often characterized as a process defined by a shift from the cultural to political, culminating in demands for a Kurdish territorial nation-state, political nationalism. Yet, such a narrative is far from satisfactory. For instance, for some scholars, the birth of Kurdish political nationalism can be traced back to the Sheikh Ubeydullah Revolt of the early 1880s. Yet, the notion that the Sheikh sought to create a unified Kurdish state has been criticized by others. Not only was the revolt a tribal affair, but it also predated the first Kurdish newspaper by over a decade and the first Kurdish civil society organizations by over two. Moreover, it was not until after the First World War that the demand for a Kurdish national homeland gained currency amongst a significant portion of the Kurdish intellectual and political elite. This paper will attempt to provide an explanation for this apparent incongruity.

In doing so, it draws on the work of Miroslav Hroch and his comparative study of national movements amongst the “small nations” of Europe during the long nineteenth century. Hroch’s work presents a three stage schemata that charts the development of such movements from a stage of apolitical scholarly interest in the nation towards mass political mobilization around specific sets of national demands. In short, Hroch’s stagism encompasses both the concrete organizational basis of the movement as well as its political orientation.

Hroch’s approach is particularly useful in conceptualizing the progressive development of Kurdish national consciousness in a general sense, a development that is manifest in increasing organizational sophistication and depth. However, the adoption of this model is more problematic in understanding the evolution of its ideological orientation, which was not characterized by a progressive shift from scholarly interest that lacked “specifically national demands to remedy deficits” towards one with a more overt set of

political demands. Indeed, Kurdish political nationalism developed in tandem with (and even prior to) a host of other cultural and political tendencies. This, it will be argued, is because Kurdish national consciousness was not merely shaped by sociological and cultural changes internal to the Kurdish community, but also a global framework, one shaped by participation in broader Ottoman society as well as a context in which other regional and international actors were already articulating politics in “national” terms. And it is this set of dynamics that perhaps helps us understand the place of the Sheikh Ubeydullah Revolt in the Kurdish history.

Shaikh Mahmud and the Kurdish revolt
Richard Wilding

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I left Britain controlling the three Ottoman wilayets of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. However, because the British occupied Mosul after the armistice was signed, Turkey continued to claim the Mosul wilayet as rightfully theirs until 1926. Britain sought to counter these claims by setting up Kurdish provinces in the Mosul wilayet to be loosely attached to whatever administration might ultimately be established in the rest of Mesopotamia.

In 1919, the British appointed Shaikh Mahmud from one of the leading Sufi dynasties of Kurdistan as ‘Hukmdar’ (ruler) in Sulaimani. But Mahmud found the restrictions placed upon him by his British ‘advisors’ too severe and led a Kurdish revolt. After suffering a humiliating defeat at Tasluja outside Sulaimani, the British returned with reinforcements, defeating Shaikh Mahmud at the Bazyan Pass. Mahmud was sentenced to death, later reduced to ten years’ imprisonment, and was exiled to India.

The following year, Britain installed Amir Faisal of the Hijaz as King Faisal I of the newly created state of Iraq. However, the Kurds in Sulaimani did not recognise this new ruler in Baghdad or accept their inclusion in the new Kingdom. Turkey encouraged a series of Kurdish tribes to rebel against the British, declaring a Holy War and appealing to their historic allegiances to Sultan and Caliph. Britain therefore needed to appoint a new Kurdish leader to quash Kurdish unrest and act as a bastion against Turkish incursions into Iraq.

After considering other options, the British reluctantly brought Shaikh Mahmud back from exile, with assurances of good behaviour. The rapturous reception that greeted him on his return to Sulaimani encouraged Mahmud to lead a second rebellion with even higher ambition. In October 1922 he proclaimed Sulaimani as the capital of Kurdistan, formed a cabinet and declared himself King.

Four-Legged Capitalism: Kurdistan’s Economy in Nineteenth century
Zozan Pehlivan, University of Minnesota Twin Cities

Historically, Ottoman Kurdistan, located at the intersection of major trade routes linking the Black Sea with the Persian Gulf, and Iran and Iraq with Syria and Anatolia, served as a crossroads of population, raw materials, and commodity flows. Based on Ottoman and British archival sources, this paper aims to examine what made Ottoman Kurdistan a cohesive economic region in the nineteenth century. By focusing on the historical compatibility and collaboration between peasants, pastoralists, and urban dwellers and using available Ottoman and British archival materials, this paper will focus on the importance of animal husbandry in the region’s economy and changing environmental conditions during the nineteenth century.

Panel 6D – Aspects of Yezidi and Soviet Kurdish Studies

Soviet Kurdish Studies and Policies towards the Kurds: The Problem of Agents and Agency

Angelika Pobedonostseva-Kaya, Saint Petersburg State University

The modern Kurdish national movement since its inception interacted with the regional and global powers and was sporadically instrumentalised by them. The Soviet state engaged especially intensively with the Kurdish political projects, e.g., by creating the first Kurdish autonomy known as 'Red Kurdistan' in the Caucasus, involvement in the establishment of the so-called 'Mahabad republic' in Iran, and contradictory relations with Mustafa Barzani's movement in Iraq.

This policy took its roots in the early Bolsheviks' attempts to both revise the Tsarist Russia's handling of ethnic groups inside the empire and launch global revolution by revolutionising the 'East.' The new Soviet polity famously has been described by Terry Martin as 'affirmative action empire,' and Francine Hirsch and Vera Tolz investigated the expertise, also scholarship from the Imperial period, which Moscow used to substantiate and shape this political course. Their works, however, implied the domination of the centre in these policies in which Bolshevik officials and experts partnered up to design and implement them with little or no agency left for activists and other representatives of respective ethnic groups. The question of the part played by the latter arose with new urgency when researchers like Adeeb Khalid, Adrienne Edgar and, most recently, Gero Fedtke published their case studies of Bolshevik politics in several regions of Central Asia.

My paper builds upon the approach of these scholars, positing that the Bolshevik interaction with the Kurds living inside the USSR and abroad (as with other ethnic group) involved processes inside an interactional triangle with its sides created by the state officials, academic (or other) experts and Kurdish activists and elites. It shall focus on the history of Soviet Kurdish studies and their interaction with Soviet state policies, including the role of Soviet Kurdish experts in respective political processes as well as the role of ethnic Kurds in these scholarly and political activities related to the Soviet state. The paper shall deal with the entire Soviet period to follow development of respective academic and political projects and lives of those involved in Soviet Kurdish policies inside the USSR and in the Middle East.

The study rests on Russian archival records, personal collections of Soviet Kurdish scholars, memoirs and memoirs-like publications of Soviet and Kurdish scholars and politicians (including Jalal Talabani, Evgeny Primakov, Oleg Vilchevsky and others). I am going to re-read the existing evidence taking account of possible biases which marginalise the role of the Kurds in Soviet academic and political settings as representatives of an 'Oriental' ethnic group.

This paper revisits the results of many years of my previous research on modern Kurdish history, with numerous case studies published as papers on Russian Empire's policies towards the Kurds, prominent Soviet Kurdish scholars.

The new Elite within Yezidi Siberian Diaspora: Breaking of religious boundaries and new political consciousness

Henriette Raddatz, Free University of Berlin

As unexpected place of desired migration one will find in Russia's Siberian urban centres and some rural areas a very active Yezidi diaspora, which is not shy to develop a new political consciousness for the entire Yezidi community even beyond Russia. As triggered through the Armenian genocide of the Ottoman empire Yezidi communities were also badly effected and moved from places in East Turkey at the beginning of the 20. century to Northern Armenia and formed the biggest minority in Armenia up till today. Nevertheless, the hard economic and social conditions in the 1990s in all former Soviet states forced many people and the Yezidi communities likewise to seek economic and social safety elsewhere. Through former military and trade connections Siberia became a small hub of migration for the Yezidi community from Armenia. In many cases not only family structures migrated, but entire clan systems. Breaking through religious caste orders the Murid cast of the Yezidi believe system was already pushed in Soviet Armenia to engage in educational programs and challenging the higher classes of Pirs and specially Sheikhs. Though, pushed by anti-religious sentiments of the Soviet time. Following these trend, with the fall of the Soviet Union the lowest Murid cast took active decisions of movement and it was the Murid class who developed strong economic relations and well going businesses in Siberia. The economic and social capital was invested in the materialization of the Yezidi believe, as building Yezidi temples, opening language schools and institutionalization of the entire believe with Yezidi organizations throughout Russia and Siberia particular. The acceptance of these religious offers and acts from the Murid caste, requires a social and religious authority. An authority which inherently challenges the traditional religious caste system and forms new class structures within the Yezidi Siberian Diaspora, but also gives challenges to other Yezidi communities in terms of social-religious values and authority.

The next step on the way to orthodoxy: the International Yezidi Theological Academy in Georgia and its activities

Artur Rodziewicz, University of Warsaw

In the mid-20th century, some 600 years after the religion of the Yezidis was formed, a massive violation of their religious ban on literacy took place. This happened in the South Caucasus, where Yezidis subjected to the Soviets were forced to participate in the universal education system. It was here that the Yezidi written literature was born, it was here that the first school textbooks for the 'Yezidi-Kurds' were published, and it was here that the first Kurmanji novel (*Şivanê kurmanca* by Erebe Şemo in 1935) was written. However, the transmission of religious principles among the Yezidis was still purely oral.

Then again, South Caucasus played an important role in the transformation of Yezidism in 1978, when the first publication of several Yezidi religious hymns and religious poetry appeared in *Zargotina Kurda* by Ordîxanê and Celîlê Celîl. The first Iraqî publication of the hymns, by Pîr Xidir Silêman and Xelîl Cindî in *Êzdiyatî: Liber Roşnaya Hindek Têkstêd Aîniyî Êzdiyan*, took place a year later.

Another milestone in the transformation of Yezidism, in which again the Yezidis of the South Caucasus played a key role, can be seen in the establishment of the Yezidi Spiritual Council (*Civata Ruhaniya Êzdiyan ya Gurcistanê*) in Georgia, followed by the construction of the first Yezidi temple – Quba Siltan Êzîd – in Tbilisi, and the

establishment of the first Department of Yezidi Studies at Giorgi Tsereteli Institute of Oriental Studies of Ilia State University in 2019.

One of the latest initiatives of the Georgian Yezidis was the establishment of the International Yezidi Theological Academy, the first such institution in the world to educate the Yezidi clergy and to work on codifying the principles of the Yezidi religion. In 2022, the first students graduated from the Academy.

As a scholar of Yezidism who has been invited to join the Academy as one of its lecturers and who has thus had the opportunity to observe its teaching system from the inside, I would like to talk about its activities, the most recent initiatives, and the impact it is having on the entire Yezidi community with its potential to become an important academic and spiritual centre defining the future form of the Yezidi religion.

Panel 7A – Trans Aesthetics and Activism, Marriage and Women's Resistance

Towards Kurdish Trans Aesthetics: Art, Materiality, and Queer Politics **Heja Aksünger, Mimar Sinan University**

This article takes the emergent queer/feminist aesthetics in the Turkish art scene under scrutiny by deploying a trans Kurdish perspective that incorporates the material conditions of those living under the authoritarian regime into art-making. Informed by a liberal queer perspective and trans-exclusionary Turkish feminist politics, contemporary queer art in Turkey has approached (queer/trans) Kurdish lives either in pragmatist ways (functionalizing Kurdish suffering for their arts) or appropriated its radical potential for their individualized liberal projects. Rethinking some of the key premises of the emergent trans/feminist Kurdish artworks, I develop a critical trans* aesthetics perspective on how art can build solidarities and communities across differences, reflecting the everyday realities of violence, transphobia, and homophobia without being incorporated into capitalist and nationalist narratives of consumption and individualism. Keywords: aesthetics, trans, Kurd, feminism, violence.

Kurdish Queer/Trans Interventions: Rethinking Queer Politics and Activism in Turkey **Rukan Atçeken, Istanbul University**

This paper analyzes the emergent political agenda of Kurdish LGBTIs activists in Turkey, which seems to diverge from the mainstream Turkish LGBTI+ movement on many accounts, including a powerful critique of violence against Kurds and the dominant homonationalist politics of the mainstream LGBTI+ movement. In this context, resistance based on the collective organization involves anxieties over asymmetrical power relations that ultimately end up furthering racism, transphobia, and homophobia within these collectives that one may assume to be in alliance. By looking at the various ways and historical snapshots of how queer and trans Kurdish activists have demonstrated their diverging political and ideological positions within the mainstream LGBTI movement, I show how, under the authoritarian regime of the Justice and Development Party, queer and trans Kurdish activists have demonstrated their diverging political and ideological positions, disrupting the contemporary LGBTI movement's discourse towards Kurdish rights. Based on a decolonial queer/trans perspective, I examine the possible ways of discussing issues such as the reality of war and the possibility of peace.

Marriages and the politicization of Kurdish culture in Turkey in the context of the civil war
Derya Kiliç, Pantheon-Sorbonne University

Violence has accompanied the clashes between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish army since the early 1980s. Civilians become more and more a part of this war since 1980 and they find ways to show their ideology and political approaches. One of them is cultural instruments like music, folk dance and dress. It is observed that they have also been instruments of non-violent resistance by Kurds in Turkey against Turkish power. In a way, they indirectly respond to and challenge oppression and state policies through culture to circumvent the threat of repression. However, these resistance fighters do not go unanswered. The authoritarian state tries to control them with bans and arrests. But while the state uses violence, many pro-Kurdish population groups rework and politicise elements of Kurdish cultures and identities. The private sphere is thus politicised and the authoritarian regime tries to control it in return. As they are both intimate events and public manifestations, wedding ceremonies are emblematic of this politicisation of the private sphere, especially through music, dance and dress. The wedding is a place where people come together and meet. But on that day, when they come together, their political and ideological identity also shines through in the clothes they wear and the music they listen to, sing or dance.

Songs, dances and clothing contain certain meanings. First, in order for Kurds to share common values, they tend to create an atmosphere during the wedding. The place where the wedding takes place also plays a crucial role. There are two types of places where this day is celebrated: the first is the public space, such as streets or rooftops (which is a characteristic of the old culture and hardly exists anymore), and the second is the private space, the wedding hall. Wedding halls are becoming more and more popular. Although private, they do not escape the scrutiny and threats of law enforcement. Since the state has given itself the right to intervene in the private sphere, it has lost the concept of private and has become public. Although the oppression by the hegemonic power is also felt in the private sphere (which has become public), it is considered by the Kurds as a public counter-sphere by the Kurds, as seen in the wedding days. Therefore, the space of the wedding celebration becomes a sphere of resistance, which testifies to the fact that non-consent can also be expressed differently than through the triptych Exit, Voice, Loyalty.

Kurdish Women's Democratic Experiment in Rojava
Mustafa Kemal Topal, Roskilde University

In my doctoral thesis (2020), I investigated the identificational, sociocultural, and material factors in Kurdish women's politically motivated, yet militant struggle. Based on my ethnographic research undertaken in Iraq, Europe, and Rojava, I illustrated different collective and individual aspects of Kurdish women's choices in becoming militant women fighters. The visits also indicated that women fighters are developing and implementing their own ideals, including ideals for gender, in the process of constructing a new system of self-government for Rojava in this region's transition from war to peace. In this context, the paper, which is also the topic of my current postdoc project, seeks to understand how women's resistance and their pursuit of freedom is carried out in general post-conflict contexts. Based on my fieldwork in Rojava from 2018, 2019 and autumn 2022, in the form of observations and interviews with Kurdish and non-Kurdish informants, this paper will examine which ideals and thoughts, Kurdish women's organisations in the post-conflict period develop, in their attempt to become active participants in political and societal activities with the purpose of creating a

democratic form of government. In this analysis, it will be interesting to examine how the radical and political changes that women are leading, are implemented in local communities and how the normative changes of gender roles are experienced in everyday life. Answers to these questions will be sought with reference to the new social movement's perspective (Della Porta, Donatella & Diani, Mario 2006) and Judith Butler's theory of performativity (1990) including supplements from Karen Barad (1998) and Sara Ahmed (2004), to examine the complex interaction between individual motivations, collective dynamics, and the greater political and social contexts. On the practical level, the findings of this case study, especially the analysis of hindrances and strategies for implementation of democracy, will have the potential to feed political debates on what to support in future democratic initiatives practiced by non-institutional and non-elite actors.

Panel 7B – Justice, Indigeneity and Displacement in Turkey

Transitional Justice Trajectories in Turkey's Kurdish Conflict **Nisan Alici, Nottingham Trent University**

This paper analysis the transitional justice (TJ) trajectories in Turkey's Kurdish conflict by drawing on the past TJ initiatives, current TJ imaginaries, and the prospects for TJ. Despite various atrocities, military coups, and conflict-related human rights violations, Turkey has never adopted an official, overarching TJ agenda to deal with past atrocities. However, there have been several initiatives that sought to achieve the TJ goals including truth, justice, accountability, recognition, and memorialisation. Especially as of the early 2000s, limited efforts for prosecutions and reparations were put in place by the state, while activist groups led unofficial TJ initiatives to deal with the past. In this paper, to gain a deeper understanding of what civil society has achieved, I explore one of the most critical developments in the 2000s: the civil society-led truth project, Truth and Justice Commission for the Diyarbakır Prison. Specifically, I investigate how civil society actors perceive and conceptualise transition and TJ in the given context of an ongoing conflict and an authoritarian regime. Since these actors are among the ones most often advocating and mobilising the demands for truth, justice, and accountability, the article interrogates how they engage with the TJ terminology and existing frameworks. In doing so, we can better understand the prospects and challenges of TJ in Turkey at present and into the future. The article concludes with reflections on the implications for TJ in Turkey and TJ as a field, contending that there is a wealth of experience that could prove helpful when the political conditions are more favourable to implement a fully-fledged set of TJ mechanisms.

This paper, therefore, makes three key arguments. First, even in the absence of political willingness for TJ, civil society actors in Turkey still hold a solid potential to catalyse a transformation and implement TJ mechanisms, at least in small or incremental steps. Second, engaging more widely with established literature and praxis in the field would empower these actors and make them more effective in advancing their goals. Third, the TJ field, in return, would benefit from paying more attention to ongoing conflict situations such as Turkey, where there is a tremendous amount of grassroots work done without an official TJ agenda. The theoretical arguments in this paper are supported by my interviews with practitioners, lawyers, and activists based in Istanbul and Diyarbakır.

Tribal Conflict Resolution Among Kurds of Turkey – the Current State, the Need, and the Future

Jan Byczkowski, Marmara University

Kurdish tribes in Turkey are usually known in the general population for their blood feuds and other conflicts with states and non-state actors. However, apart from the violence, the tribal system occasionally leads to achieving peace among various groups or individuals through mediation and good services. In this paper, the author intends to research the current state of tribal conflict resolution among Turkish Kurds – how prevalent it is and how its status and acceptance by the public and political actors have changed in recent years. Moreover, we intend to ask the opinion of stakeholders – national and local politicians, tribe leaders and tribe members – on the need for tribal conflict resolution mechanisms and whether it is a necessity born out of a lack of alternatives or a preferred form of seeking justice and reconciliation. Finally, the future of such a non-state system will be put into question, taking into account the possible political regime changes in Turkey and the potential new Kurdish opening. The research methods employed throughout the paper include media analysis, interviews with stakeholders, and comparative analysis with tribal conflict resolution systems in other states.

The Radical Democracy Model of The Kurdish Political Movement in Turkey: Mesopotamian Indigeneity with Honeycomb Analogy

Aynur Unal, Arden University

The struggles of Kurds (for more than a hundred years) and other indigenous peoples of the Middle East have had limited scholarly attention regarding indigeneity. This research examined the Kurdish political movement in Turkey by concentrating on central indigeneity themes: self-identification, language/culture, homeland and self-determination. The research included three types of data: first, pro-Kurdish political party programs (1978-2014); second, statements released by two of the newest pro-Kurdish political parties (Peace and Democracy Party- BDP and Peoples' Democratic Party - HDP) concerning Kurdish issues (2008-2017); and, lastly, twenty semi-structured interviews conducted with deputies of HDP (2018). Data is analysed by employing the Discourse-Historical Approach in Critical Discourse Analysis, and findings are interpreted to evaluate the meaning and significance of the indigeneity concept within the Kurdish political movement.

Analysis of the research data indicates that indigeneity constitutes a core part of the discourse about Kurdishness within the Kurdish political movement in Turkey. Moreover, the research findings suggest that democratic confederalism and democratic autonomy have been fundamental concepts of the political discourse of the Kurdish movement since the early 2000s. These models, often used interchangeably (Gerber & Brincat, 2018), enable local people to participate in local decision-making processes and provide equal opportunities for people with different ethnic and religious backgrounds. It is worth emphasising again that the main aim has been not only to create a new non-state-oriented discourse on the Kurdish issue but also to create a model for a democratic Turkey for all people, whatever their ethnic or religious background.

Therefore, Kurds claim that their indigenesness and contributions to the discourse make other indigenous peoples of the Middle East visible such as Greeks, Armenians, Assyrians, Yazidis, and Laz. By closely examining the discourse about Kurdishness, this research sheds new light on the Kurdish political movement. Due to the practical and

political implications of indigeneity under international law, this provides an alternative pathway for the understudied and often neglected self-determination claim of peoples of ancient Mesopotamia (Middle East).

Entangled Atmospheres of Affect: The ambivalence of Displacement, Resettlement and the Kurdish Question in Hasankeyf, Turkey
Cansu Sonmez, Gran Sasso Science Institute

Most literature on displacement and resettlement due to hydropower dam developments have extensively focused on macro-scale geopolitics, governance, socio-economic costs, and loss or gains. However, rethinking the indigenous communities in the colonial contexts, as powerful actors of change in local conflicts has been neglected in the critical geography of resettlement. To this end, in the presence of Turkey's unsolved Kurdish question within the contested territory of South-eastern Turkey, I aim at analysing personal embodied experiences, struggles, and vulnerabilities of forcibly displaced and resettled Kurds and Arabs in the wake of the construction of the Ilisu dam. The article examines how residents experience infrastructural contestations (dam, displacement, and resettlement) through their identities, and existing ethno-territorial contestations (Kurdish question). By exploring the positions of the displaced and resettled communities, the article questions: in what ways does the implementation of the Ilisu dam intersect with Turkey's Kurdish question and shape the affective experiences of displaced residents in Hasankeyf? I carried out a qualitative empirical case study in Hasankeyf town, Batman city before the submergence in 2020 and after the resettlement of Hasankeyf in 2021. I argue that processes of displacement and resettlement do not produce binary generalisations of negative and positive conditions, but rather different modalities of power dynamics induced entangled and affective ambivalent relationships and conditions (experiences, feelings, practices, and discourses) between settler colonial powers (state actors/dam implementers) and displaced Kurdish-Arab communities. A settler colonial mindset which is characterised by violence, displacement, and dispossessions is revived with ambivalences in Hasankeyf. This article aims to complement and extend ongoing debates on the concept of ambivalence in geography from affective and decolonial perspectives and critical geography of resettlement scholarship.

Panel 7C – Liberation, Activism, and Memorialisation

The national liberation movement of the Kurds, the other of the international system
Sahar Bagheri, Sorbonne Paris Nord University

The nation-state constructs a new majority-minority dichotomy, in which the majority is the state-forming and state-possessing group, and the minority is the group of quasi-alien, people in the state but not of the state (Claude, JR 1955 p. 86). National minority groups are the product of this process, being more visible since the First World War when nationalist ideologies swept through the world and new nation-states emerged in Europe and Asia. Consequently, settling the national minority question since WWI is critical to state sovereignty and international security. In the Middle East, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the presence of colonial powers following WWI triggered the creation of new nation-states and the dissolution of former political and economic autonomy systems, which brought about a singular trajectory for the Kurds. The division of Kurdistan among six countries, most located within the heart of the Middle East, between Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, and a tiny part in Azerbaijan and Armenia makes it a 'cross-border' issue (Baser 2019). In Iran specifically, they have been transformed from

semi-autonomous confederations (Bruinessen 1992; McDowall 2010) under Ottoman and Qajar governments to a "minority" within the new modern state in Iran, deprived of the power to establish laws and independent administrative regulations at the cultural, social, and political levels by themselves. While the Kurds conducted a national liberation struggle since the middle of 20 century to obtain autonomy and sovereignty, and despite the coincidence of this struggle with political opportunities in the aftermath of WWII and the Iranian Revolution of 1979, their struggle was unsuccessful in receiving international legal support and changing the political status of the Kurds. This article reviews the history of the evolution of national minority issues from WWI to the post-Cold War era to comprehend the status of the Kurdish national struggle in Iran within the international system. It shows that the world order of the nation-state, supported by the mainstream international law, as well as the development of capitalism, affecting the redrawing of borders, have delegitimized this struggle, dissociated it from liberation movements, and attributed it to an "ethnic conflict".

Imagining freedom beyond state-seeking: On Kurdish transformative mobilization
Rosa Burc, Scuola Normale Superiore

Among activists referred to as yeni paradigma (new paradigm), the contemporary Kurdish movement moved away from mobilizing for an independent Kurdish nation-state and instead went through a process of ideological reconfiguration, where the idea of liberation was meant to be disentangled from nationalist claims. The past 40 years of Kurdish insurgency and cross-territorial mobilization, movement repertoires have been impacted by this paradigmatic shift.

By way of unpacking current revolutionary narratives and practices of stateless autonomy developed by the so-called 'largest nation without a state', this paper explores (1) the intellectual and political origins of the political imaginaries that have culminated in the construction of de-facto autonomy in various cases across Kurdistan and its diaspora, (2) how the new imaginaries of freedom are (re-)negotiated with most-different movement constituencies in most-different contexts of conflict, (3) the particular political and social role ascribed to women* and feminist frameworks in both imagining freedom beyond state-seeking.

I argue that the shift in imagining a future beyond Kurdish statehood was not only critical in the movement's survival despite recurring episodes of state violence and transregional wars against Kurdish populations but further made it possible for the Kurdish movement to dynamically grow into a transregional mass movement. This paper is based on the extensive fieldwork I have conducted for my doctoral dissertation.

Multidirectional travel of the concept of "Genocide" in the Kurdish victimo-mémorial grammar across time and space
Adnan Celik, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Germany

The act of naming can be considered as a commitment, which is needed to support a political position, express an opinion, admit an action, and defend moral principles. After the concept of "genocide" appeared on the international-political scene in the second half of the 1940s, it was immediately embraced by Kurdish intellectuals and politicians from the 1950s onwards to describe their national "calamity" where they were dominated by nation-states like Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria in a colonial situation. In this presentation, I will focus on two entangled phenomena of the use, circulation and interpretation of "genocide" in the Kurdish cross-border space: on the one hand, the

appropriation of this concept by using it in the different situations of massive violence committed by the nation-states against the Kurds across time and space, and on the other hand, the haunting memories from the genocidal past of the Armenians in 1915 that echoes for the articulation of a victimo-mémorial grammar among the Kurds by projecting themselves into the continuity of the state violence via the concept of “genocide”. While the first dimension refers to the massive and perpetual acts of violence against the Kurds in four different countries and their claims for the naming of this violence as “genocide”; the second dimension operates in the memorial and moral field that wants to be associated in continuity with other genocides, such as the genocide of the Armenians.

The applicability of small state theories on Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan
Máté Szalai, Ca’ Foscari University

While the literature on the foreign policy of semi-independent states and various sub-national entities is growing, the cases of the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) are still difficult concepts to work with. While both entities are clearly not official states, their foreign policy autonomy does exist, even if to varying extents. Both in the Syrian and the Iraqi contexts, one can easily make the argument that the de jure and de facto limitations to their practical ability to maintain international relations have not always been constraining enough to undermine the possibility to examine their foreign policy as an independent series of actions. Moreover, it is also plausible that other states, which have formal sovereignty and enjoy recognition as independent entities, have to survive with narrower room for leverage. Consequently, to analyse the behaviour of the two entities in regional and global politics, the analytical framework of small state studies (which uses resource scarcity and lack of power as a starting point) might provide a better understanding than the conceptual framework of quasi-statehood or sub-national actors, which focuses on legal and political constraints within the nation-state.

The primary aim of the paper is to investigate the question of the applicability of small state theories on the KRG and the AANES in a comparative manner. After the investigation of the theoretical and conceptual dilemmas, the analysis will focus on identifying various aspects of agency and small state behaviour, which will serve as a basis for the comparison. Setting up different periods in the history of the two entities, the main argument of the paper is that domestic and international developments enabled these entities to conduct foreign policy to various extents, during which the traditional vocabulary of small state studies is highly effective in describing their main causes, attributes, and effects.

The research attempts to add value to the literature in two ways. First, by investigating the nature of the KRG and AANES in international relations, the paper seeks to better determine their role as semi-independent entities. Second, it will contribute to discussions concerning small state theories and, in general, foreign policy analysis by highlighting the often overlooked and highly simplified generalizations regarding statehood and sovereignty.

Unstable Climate in Unstable Land: Kurdish Activists Facing Ecological Catastrophe
Dobrosława Wiktor-Mach, Cracow University of Economics & Marcin Skupiński,
University of Warsaw

Across the Middle East, environmental mobilization has intensified in the recent decade reflecting the vulnerability of the region in regard to climate change and environmental degradation on the one hand, and the dynamics of structural factors and social activism on the other. While many studies highlight the impact of the natural conditions on social life, e.g. the resource curse argument, we adapt the political ecology approach which stresses the role of politics and socio-economic factors in understanding the human-nature relationships (e.g., Neumann, 2014, Roberts, 2020). The presentation intends to shed light on the key finding of the ongoing research project on the dynamics of environmental movement in the Middle East, focusing on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq where social mobilization around some nature-related issues is currently on the rise along with a significant involvement of the younger generation. As across the Middle East, environmental activism in KRI has developed largely around issues directly linked to livelihood (e.g., jobs, agriculture, food), or public health (cf. Sowers, 2018). What is special to the ecological mobilisation in KRI is its “dutiful” form (O’Brien 2018), which manifests itself in acting within the system and not crossing the red line set by the state. The materials from Iraqi Kurdistan that will illustrate this argument are then compared with data gathered in the same framework in Kurdish inhabited areas of Turkey, where the radical and prefigurative ideas and practices are much widespread, which has an influence on the responses towards water crisis, pollution, massive deforestation and other elements of ecological catastrophe. Based upon the fieldwork and qualitative data, it will present the dynamic landscape of social mobilization - informal groups, NGOs, and networks of individuals - highlighting variety of strategies adopted by the activists depending on available resources, political situation and intended goals of their movements. Utilizing the conceptual tools from the political ecology, postcolonial studies and social movement scholarship, this project utilizes, among others, the approaches which underline the role of agency, social practices and people’s imaginaries in the complex process of social change. The analysis of framing the activists use and their practices suggests a diversity of discourses and the interrelatedness of environmental and other socio-cultural and political issues. We argue that this environmental movement can, at least partially, be interpreted through decolonial and transnational perspectives and do not easily fit into common representations of environmental movements outside the global North.