

# Representations of the Past

In times of social crises and upheaval, as well as a lack of utopias and visions for the future, pasts often become a contested resource. Under which circumstances and with which political goals can representations of the past become a mobilising social force? Which ideas of social justice and the right to speak about and for the past are linked to it?

These are some of the core questions posed by the research unit. Empirical research concentrates on (post-)colonial or (post-)socialist societies in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. The aim is to identify translocal connectivities between discourses and practices of representations as well as to compare struggles over images of the past in different periods of time. Thematic foci are the relationship between historically operating sciences and politics, the significance of memory politics as well as practices of interacting with historical images in everyday life.

## Research Projects

- Historical Icons and Representations of the Past  
Dr. Heike Liebau, Head of Research Unit

- The Dyad of Care and Discipline: Aiding Syrian Migrants in Turkey and Germany  
Dr. Hilal Alkan
- Entangled Wavelengths. Translocal Affect and Affiliation Among Radio Broadcasters and Listeners of German International Radio Stations in Cold War India, 1964 - 1990  
Dr. Anandita Bajpai
- Paper Trails and Dislocated Bureaucracies (BMBF)  
Dr. Veronica Ferreri
- Movements and Concepts: Production of Images of India in GDR Newsreels (DFG)  
Reyazul Haque
- Transforming Memories: Morocco in the Aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Instance  
Prof. Dr. Sonja Hegasy
- Relicts of (Another) Past: Crafting Soviet Urbanity and its Material Afterlife in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus  
Dr. David Leupold
- Edward Said: AutoBioGraphical Exposures and Intersecting Pathways.  
PD Dr. Norman Saadi Nikro

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## Transforming Memories: Morocco in the Aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Instance

Prof. Dr. Sonja Hegasy

Over the last 20 years, Moroccans have experienced the emergence of a gradual revision of the country's post-colonial history closely tied to investigating the grave human rights violations during the so-called years of lead under the late King Hassan II. A re-evaluation of the past was first expressed in memoirs, autobiographies, fictional texts, films and other forms of cultural expression published in the early nineties. Today, the academic landscape is under review with controversies over free access to post-colonial sources and archives. In the current research programme this project concentrates on academic history writing, both close to the palace and independent. The project thus looks at the interplay of state and non-state actors in the field of Moroccan memory politics.

## Historical Icons and Representations of the Past

Dr. Heike Liebau

Which processes of valuing, revaluing or devaluing the past become the foundational basis for dealing with historical icons as role models? This project examines the making, utilization and impact of the construction of role models with a special focus on India. At the center of its inquiry are historical personalities who have been iconized as models. The project emphasizes the process of the making of such figures, which are based on a recourse to history, linking different temporalities to one another, thereby creating references between present and absent times. A central concern is to work out the linkages between role-model constructions and their ensuing historical images (*Geschichtsbilder*) on the one hand, and, unpacking expectations of an idealized future that are attached to them on the other.

## Edward Said. AutoBioGraphical Exposures and Intersecting Pathways

PD Dr. Norman Saadi Nikro

In the concluding, poetically charged paragraph of his memoir *Out of Place*, Edward Said speaks about himself as an embodied range of 'currents': 'I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance.' Similar to the 'personal dimension' section of the introduction to his famous book *Orientalism*, Said foregrounds his abiding interest in how his life experience has come to inform his research and critical practice. This research project proposes a phenomenological lens by which to discuss Said's interest in giving an account of himself.

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**Entangled Wavelengths. Translocal Affect and Affiliation among Radio Broadcasters and  
Listeners of German International Radio Stations in Cold War India, 1964-1990.**

Dr. Anandita Bajpai

This research project investigates the mutual entanglements of the cultural, political, and affective radiophonic repertoires devised by the two iconic German international broadcasting services, Radio Berlin International from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Deutsche Welle from the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), during the Cold War years in India. Rather than limiting these entwined, often competing, translocal trajectories of the two radio stations to a reductive comparison, the Indian perspective promises to reveal their complex histories as entangled and overlapping. How did India become a site for sonically mapping Cold War affiliations, and how did Indian actors co-shape inter-German competitive acoustic presences? The project probes into the interstitial affective spaces made of voices, ears and postal feedback, between the microphones in Bonn and East Berlin and local radio sets in India.

**Movements and Concepts: Production of Images of India in GDR Newsreels (DFG)**

Reyazul Haque

This project looks into newsreels (Der Augenzeuge) focusing on India which were produced by Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA) in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) between 1946 and 1980. In post-war East Germany, and later in the GDR, India occupied a crucial and interesting place in these cinematic productions that created specific types of images of India. These newsreels were screened in cinema houses before main feature films.

This project seeks to study and analyse the aesthetic, and cultural-political arguments of the newsreels, alongside its production processes. By studying these aspects, it seeks to outline the history of Indo-GDR entanglements in this specific area, as well as to discuss the nature and understanding of "entanglement" in the context of newsreel productions.

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## The Dyad of Care and Discipline: Aiding Syrian Migrants in Turkey and Germany

Dr. Hilal Alkan

This project focuses on the intimate encounters between Syrian migrants and the members of the communities who welcome them in Turkey and Germany. It employs the theoretical tenets made available by feminist philosophers working on care and the anthropological literature on the gift to develop an understanding of these encounters and relations as mutually constituted and marked by notions of care and discipline. The intensity of these relations, entangled with larger socio-political schemes, affect migrant trajectories of life and mobility, their decisions to further migrate or stay, and finally, their senses of belonging. While the project explores these themes with ethnographic work with migrants, it also examines the imaginaries that are prevalent in the host societies in relation to migrant reception and hospitality. These imaginaries involve invocations and representations of the past not only at the discursive but also affective and visceral levels; which then feed into the embodied practices and performances of care and discipline.

## Paper Trails and Dislocated Bureaucracies (Normality and Crisis, BMBF)

Dr. Veronica Ferreri

This project examines Syrian official documents and the work of the Syrian and German bureaucracies to excavate past experiences of citizenship in Syria. In the context of migration and displacement, the significance of official documents becomes prominently visible as they concretely allow people to have a legally-valuable (and recognised) life. At the same time, I follow documents' metamorphosis from the legal and political realm to the affective one which transform bureaucratic documents as a testimony of a disappearing past but also an evidence of lineages across international borders, specifically between Syria and Germany/Lebanon.

## 'Relicts of (Another) Future?' – The Afterlife of the Socialist City in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus

Dr. David Leupold

Cross-cutting Urban Sociology, Social Geography and the History of the Soviet South (Caucasus and Central Asia), the project explores not only how urbanity was created, but how as a physical remainder of the ancien régime, they condition social relations in Bishkek and Yerevan today. Hereby it explores the role urban materiality plays which outlived the system to which it owes its existence. How does urban space informed by the visions of Soviet urban planners and the goal to attain a socialist society inform our perceptions three decades later – and which answers does it provide to the most pressing urban questions of today such as seismic security, urban growth, protection of green spaces and access to affordable living space?