In the past decade, a significant sub-field within social anthropology has taken a memorial turn. This paradigm shift has arguably brought increasing sophistication to the ways in which anthropologists account for cultural experiences of time and history. The resulting transition from unilineal or chronological models of time to alternative, culturally-informed models could be said to mirror the transition from geometry to topology in the study of shape and surface: just as the shift to topology in the sciences allowed for the study of space not as fixed but in movement and distortion, so too new socio-cultural models of memory could be said to allow us more fully to account for the non-lineal nature of time, and its apparent differential rates of flow as some critical events become ever-present or sempiternal (remaining close) while others fade away from public consciousness (becoming distant).

With the countries that once constituted the Ottoman Empire having arguably been amongst the most productive geographical areas for studies of collective memory, this workshop aims to bring together researchers working on the intersubjective experience and intergenerational transmission of historical events in this geographical area. Previously unpublished papers are invited that examine recent ethnography with a view to assessing the role played by social representations and affective or embodied experiences of the past in contemporary social processes, debates, and conflicts. Papers are equally welcome that question the social memory paradigm and propose alternative analytical models. It is intended that an edited collection will be published based on the papers presented.

Nicolas Argenti.

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1 The workshop forms part of the Balkan Futures programme of the British School at Athens, the Ecole française d’Athènes and the British Institute at Ankara.
List of Participants:

Keynote:

Charles Stewart (University College London)

Speakers:

Nicolas Argenti (Brunel University)
Dimitra Gefou-Madianou (Panteion University)
Laurie Hart (Haverford College)
David Henig (University of Kent)
Daniel Knight (LSE)
Ivana Maček (Uppsala University)
Yael Navaro-Yashin (Cambridge University)
Leyla Neyzi (Sabancı University)
Penelope Papailias (University of Thessaly)
Alice Rogalla von Bieberstein (Cambridge University)

Discussants / chairs:

Laurie Hart (Haverford College)
Penelope Papailias (University of Thessaly)
Eleana Yalouri (Panteion University)
Timetable:

19th May

6:30pm  Welcome reception for speakers and discussants.

20th May

9:00  Coffee
9:40am-10:00am  Welcome: **Prof. Catherine Morgan, OBE** (Director, British School at Athens); Opening remarks: **Nicolas Argenti**

**Session 1: Materialities and Mediations of Memory.**

10:00am-10:40am  **Dimitra Gefou-Madianou**, ‘Eyes shut, muted voices’.
10:40am-11:20am  **David Henig**, ‘Sensing history in Muslim Bosnia’.
11:20am-11:50am  Coffee break
11:50am-12:30pm  **Penelope Papailias**, ‘(Re)sounding Histories’.
12:30pm-1:10pm  Discussant: **Eleana Yalouri** (discussant 10 min/open discussion 30 min)
1:10pm-2:30pm  Lunch break

**Session 2: Temporalities of Crisis and Political Violence.**

2:30pm-3:10pm  **Daniel Knight**, ‘Fossilised Futures’.
3:10pm-3:50pm  **Nicolas Argenti**, ‘Crisis and famine in island Greece’.
3:50pm-4:30pm  Coffee break
4:30pm-5:10pm  Discussant: **Penelope Papailias** (discussant 10 min/open discussion 30 min).
6:00pm  Keynote address: **Charles Stewart** (University College London)
7:30pm  Reception
21st May

9:35am-10:00am  Coffee

Session 3: Displacement, Achronicity and Spatio-Temporal (De)formations.

10:00am-10:40am  Yael Navaro-Yashin, ‘The multiple returns of the past’
10:40am-11:20am  Laurie Hart, ‘Unresolved contiguities.’

11:20am-11:50am  Coffee break

11:50am-12:30pm  Leyla Neyzi, ‘Youth, time and conflict’.
12:30pm-1:10pm  Discussant: tbc (discussant 10 mins/open discussion 30 mins).
1:10pm-2:30pm  Lunch break

Session 4: Childhood, youth, and kinship.

2:30pm-3:10pm  Alice Rogalla von Bieberstein, ‘The past as a question of ethics and existence’.
3:10pm-3:50pm  Ivana Maček, ‘Bosnia’s unfinished war’.
3:50pm-4:30pm  Coffee break

4:30pm-5:10pm  Discussant: Laurie Hart (discussant 10 mins/open discussion 30 mins).

8:00pm  Dinner (speakers and discussants).
Titles and Abstracts

Nicolas Argenti, Brunel University. (Nicolas.argenti@brunel.ac.uk)
‘Crisis and famine in island Greece: Sovereign debt, political violence and topologies of memory in Chios.’

The sovereign debt crisis that has engulfed Greece since 2010 is not only shaking people’s belief in their government and their future, but it is fundamentally reshaping people’s experience of the past and its relation to the present. Memories from several different historical periods in the eventful history of the Aegean island of Chios have come since the crisis began to be enfolded within the EU-IMF restructuring programme that was being imposed throughout 2011 and 2012. As local people contemplate the effects of the crisis on their daily lives, on the existence of their family members and friends, and on the social fabric of their communities, collective memories of earlier periods of political violence that have befallen the island – including the massacre of 1822, the exchange of populations of 1922, and the German occupation and famine of WW2 – are brought into play. Telescoping effects and the implosion of chronological time have often been noted in the literature on political violence and ascribed to traumatic effects. This paper questions whether the conflation of episodes of political violence is best explained in terms of the trauma paradigm, and suggests that it is not trauma that collapses time but rather rapid social change and crises that reveal the chaotic topography of social temporalities, revealing the limitations of dominant western models of linear time.

Alice Rogalla von Bieberstein, University of Cambridge. (adr31@cam.ac.uk)
‘The past as a question of ethics and existence.’

My paper tackles the challenge of relating to the past as it poses itself differently for differently positioned subjects in contemporary Turkey. Instead of interpreting identities and political constellations in terms of a history of social relations mediated by different memories, I look at how individual and collective inscriptions within particular genealogies (or their absence) become the object of reflection and reconsideration or the site of a struggle. I further reflect on how these problematizations occur within a context in which ‘memory’ itself has been taken up in the state’s politics of history and citizenship. Thus, I explore how ‘confronting the past’ has appeared as a kind of ‘universal’ (Tsing 2005) for a number of activists, intellectuals and public figures permitting a critical reflection on their personal investment in nationalist dimensions of leftist ideologies as well as a reconsideration of the problems of democracy and human rights. Memories, especially of encounters with members of ethnic and religious minorities, then become the sites of such critical re-evaluations.

Turkey’s regime of denial has sought to erase the historical presence of Armenians from the land(scape) and public narratives. This discourse moreover renders ‘their’ memories of the Armenian genocide as simply one ‘perspective’ and therefore equivalent with that of ‘Turks’. Within this context of exclusion and dispossession, the more immediate problem is less how to relate to the past than how to relate to the past in the first place.
Dimitra Gefou-Madianou, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences. (dmadia@panteion.gr)

“‘Eyes shut, muted voices’: Narrating the post civil war era through a monument.’

The recent construction of a memorial commemorating the community’s ‘Resistance’ against Nazi occupation during the Second World War and the ensuing Greek Civil War, as well as the burning-down of the village, has brought to the surface enduring political conflicts and tensions within the community. In a period of apparently conciliatory politics and a flourishing civic ethos, the memorial has provoked contradictory memories and discourses about the events which took place during that period, offering voice to conflicting versions of ‘history’ that surround different orders of political power at different levels of abstraction. Drawing on a number of life histories of informants, both right- and left-wing (survivors of exile), whose lives have been affected by the events of that time, the paper attempts to discuss the ways in which an inability to deal with traumatic events of the past at the level of consciousness leads to novel conceptualisations of evil at a symbolic/imaginary level, which themselves belong to individual, family as well as collective institutional mythologies. Furthermore, the paper inquires into the manners in which retrospective construction of mnemonic loci, narratives, texts, representations or even ‘practices of remembering’ and disquieting politics ethnographically transform such conceptualisations of evil in idiomatic languages. It also attempts to uncover muted, inchoate, or latent and painful memories, which challenge the national hegemonic discourse, and the politics of institutionally-organised forms of forgetting.

Laurie Hart, Haverford College. (lhart@haverford.edu)

”‘Unresolved contiguities’: political violence, international boundaries and the transmission of history.’

History can be seized in its non-linear aspect through grasping the local transmission and re-apparition of events. The significance of memories of political violence is shaped by temporal processes but also by the specificities of space, place, location, territory. The dynamic of memory production and transmission is embedded in the social and physical landscape in a variety of distinct registers. Borrowing from photography the suggestive concept of “unresolved contiguity” (Weaver and Hammond 2000) for an interpretation of both kinship and place, in this paper I am particularly interested in developing a better understanding of contiguity and proximity in space on the impact of the past for those who have experienced (and for the descendants of those who have experienced) political violence, subsequent exile, and return to home territory. Using comparative cases and my own field research at an international Balkan boundary, I consider the mnemonic functions and tangible transformations of landscape; disputes over property and its disposition; problems in the continuity of kinship; the peculiar life of boundary zones in the construction of the political and personal meaning of events; and the questions that returning/remaining in place poses for the realization of life in the aftermath of conflict.

David Henig, University of Kent. (d.henig@kent.ac.uk)

‘Sensing history in Muslim Bosnia: A tale of šahit (witness) and šehit (martyr)’
This paper is an exercise in the ethnography of history (Stewart 2012). It explores how Muslims in Central Bosnian highlands produce knowledge about the more distant (Ottoman), and more recent (pre/post war) pasts. Drawing upon recent debates on ordinary affect and materiality (Navaro-Yashin 2012; K. Stewart 2007), I want to trace the shifting assemblages of history in post-war Muslim Bosnia. In this paper I suggest two modes via which Bosnian Muslims affectively apprehend and temporalise their past, that of witness (šahit) and martyr (šehit). The two modes of affection animate and interrelate actions, events, places, persons, and objects, and bundle these into their knowledge of and relationship with the past. Ethnographically this argument is documented in the ways Muslims of different walks of life - village Muslims, dervishes, orthodox ulema - perform prayers, and interact with sacred sites and material debris (e.g. graves, land mines, shrapnels) in singular moments of everyday life. By accounting for an ethnography of an affective engagement with the past I want to overcome the grand historiographic narratives of post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina predominating among scholars as well as nationalist politicians, and suggest an analytical move towards the more flattened and multitemporal ways history is sensed in Bosnian Muslims’ engagement with the world.

Daniel Knight, London School of Economics and Political Science. (D.M.Knight@lse.ac.uk)
‘Fossilised Futures: To Infinity ... and Beyond!’

Drawing on ethnography from western Thessaly, this paper reassesses notions of time and temporality in light of the Greek economic crisis. Time is experienced as a folded assemblage of apparent contradictions as people negotiate the current turmoil by embodying linearly distant historical moments. It is the responsibility of anthropologists to embrace the paradoxes of (poly)temporality and address the topological experience of time and history. In an era of severe uncertainty, in central Greece temporality is often discussed through material objects such as photovoltaic panels and fossils as people articulate their situation vis-à-vis the past, present, and future. This reveals diverse strategies for understanding temporality as multiple histories are condensed into a singularly meaningful moment.

Ivana Maček, Uppsala University. (ivana.macek@valentin.uu.se)
‘Bosnia’s Unfinished War.’

A decade and a half after the end of the war in Bosnia and Hercegovina, the political conflict that started the war is still unresolved, the juridical institutions seem not to have had significant impact on the lived reality on the ground, violence is still palpably present albeit in changed forms, and the poverty and social injustices that started during the war seem to have become permanent. The mourning has not ended, and is disrupted by political national narratives blending into the personal processes of coming to terms with real losses. The politicizing of guilt along the national lines in the public discourse seems to have banned in large the possibility of sharing individual experiences of war in private contacts. This article explores meanings of war and the ways in which the war and its legacies inform the contemporary everyday lives of Sarajevans. Similarly to the period of the siege of the city, people’s perceptions of war are still shaped primarily by their own
experiences, although in a complicated and often contradictory interplay with the political leaders’ nationalist viewpoints. The themes that emerge are remembering the war, mourning the dead, nationalistic politics, guilt, political and economic corruption, contested truths and courts of justice, responsibility for the war but also for the future, negotiation of identities, the processes of healing, and the post-war generation’s relation to the war and the nationalism it has rooted in the society.

Yael Navaro-Yashin, University of Cambridge. (yn213@cam.ac.uk)
‘The Multiple Returns of the Past: Reincarnation and Temporality in Antakya, Turkey.’

Among Arab Alewis of Antakya, Turkey, the past is conceived as having many re-apparitions in the form of re-embodied, reincarnated souls. Memory is known to extend the boundaries of one’s life-time experiences, and to expand backwards towards one’s past lives. Small children give accounts of having been someone else, with a different name, family, and home in a previous life. They recount the stories of their own death, as well as of the moment when their soul separated from their body. Many such reincarnated persons speak of feeling more intense affections for family members from their previous lives, and many locate these relatives, re-creating kinship ties. There are therefore people in Antakya who co-inhabit their past and present lives, nourishing their relations from both existences. Ethnographic material on reincarnation stories in Antakya will be used to analytically stretch the boundaries of ‘memory,’ ‘temporality,’ ‘subjectivity,’ and ‘the past.’

Leyla Neyzi, Sabanci University. (neyzi@sabanciuniv.edu)
‘Youth, Time, and Conflict: Old Children and Ageless Youth in Eastern and Western Turkey’

How do young people relate to time? How do they define history? Upon which sources are their memories based? How do Kurdish and Turkish young people born into this conflict narrate the war between the Turkish military and the PKK? At a time when Turkey’s recent history is one of the most hotly debated topics in academia as well as in the public sphere, this presentation focuses on youth rather than the elderly, whose testimonies are conventionally associated with oral history. Recent interest in postmemory, mediated/remediated memory and multidirectional memory form the backdrop for this project in which interviews were conducted with young people between the ages 15-35 in eastern Turkey (Diyarbakir) and western Turkey (Mugla). I show that Kurdish youth incorporate into their lifestories the memories of those older than themselves who they view as having suffered and sacrificed, creating a debt relationship with the collective. The experience of the previous generation forms part of the memories of the chronologically young, who describe themselves as having been born aged. Unlike the elaborately performed lifestories of Kurdish youth, the lifestories of Turkish youth are fragmented and incomplete. There are distinct silences in their representations of history, such as Greek settlements in Anatolia. Born into a dynamic regional economy transformed by tourism, Turkish youth expect the previous generation to invest in them, living in the present. This mnemonic gap, along with economic competition and representations in the mainstream media, makes encounters between Kurdish and Turkish youth both superficial and volatile.
Penelope Papailias (nyni@hol.gr)
‘(Re)sounding Histories: Voice, Audition and Publicity in a Balkan Media Event’

This paper examines the media event not as the bastardization of “actual” events, but as the quintessential form events take with the advent of technologies of reproducibility. The media event, on a theoretical level, brings into conversation studies on violence, trauma and testimony, with critical histories of technology, anthropologies of mediation and political theories of communication that center on questions of temporality, the archive/database, circulation, affect and publicity. This is not the event we know from historicist history, but the post-Benjaminian event: the event as catastrophe and wound. Failing to contribute to knowledge of the past, the media event continually reenacts the shock of the present.

My research takes up a particular contested event through which a “Balkan” public briefly coalesced: the unprecedented “live” televisual coverage of the 1999 hijacking of a Greek bus by an Albanian migrant worker, an event that crystallized the tensions and violence of the first decade of mass migration to Greece. In this paper, I examine the Albanian cassette-recorded memorial song hailing the hijacker as martyr and hero that circulated widely among Albanian migrants. This song presents an alternative media ideology (and ethical hierarchy) that naturalizes voice and marshals epic song tradition to fix biography in national diachrony. Furthermore, from the perspective of audition, I consider how playing the song reenacts the hijacker’s act of speaking back to the Greek public, while also opening a public space of mourning for a death unrecognized as worth mourning. The fragmented, dispersed experience of listening to the song (in jail, in buses), as well as the voice-over of Greek television, troubles romantic notions of an autonomous and resistant soundscape.

Charles Stewart, University College London. (c.stewart@ucl.ac.uk)
‘Uncanny History.’

Western academic historiography has established a widespread understanding of history according to the idea of historicism. Historicism posits temporal linearity, the separation of past from present (and future), and a firm subject – object distinction between the historian as knower and the past which is known. Philosophers of history have long pointed out, however, that these rules do not fully correspond to the actual conditions of historical production. History is written in and for the present (or future). For this reason history, as Ricoeur observed, is ‘uncanny’ -- it both does and does not accord with our lived sense of time and the past. Human existential sensibility is not linear and not necessarily objective in the terms of Descartes. As Chakrabarty argues from a postcolonial perspective, historicism has deligitimated and excluded alternative ways of knowing the past. We chuckle at Renaissance paintings depicting Romans in sixteenth-century dress. Historicizing practices such as telling ghost stories, participating in battlefield re-enactments, or receiving dream revelations are dismissed as folklore, popular amusement, irrationality or religion. This presentation, and the workshop more generally, seek to understand past relationships established according to principles and motivations other than those of post-Enlightenment historicism. Looking particularly at the post-Ottoman region, I consider ethnographic accounts of historical consciousness to identify the logic by which the present retrieves the past. This requires attending to the powers of affect, repression, or imagination that drive historicization.