

The FP7-project MEMORYROW “Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue” prepared ground for a revision of conflicting images of the Russian-Ottoman War (ROW) of 1877/1878. Positioned within the new tendencies in regional and memory studies, the project aimed at the establishment of a network of researchers from all countries, from both Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus region, with relevant ROW memories in order to facilitate this revision. It is worth mentioning that this was the first initiative of this kind, which included a cooperation of researchers from University of Graz (Austria), SWU Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), INH Skopje (Macedonia), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), Bilgi University Istanbul (Turkey), Shota Rustaveli University Batumi (Georgia), SKFU Stavropol' (Russian Federation) and NASRA Yerevan (Armenia). The progress of the consortium's endeavors could be constantly monitored via the project's website.¹

The Russo-Ottoman War (ROW) of 1877/1878 is part of the formation of national narratives in the Balkans, in Turkey, and in the Caucasus in the 19th and 20th centuries. The official politics of memory of these countries is based on symbols that unite, generalize and fix contradicting memories, which have been passed from one generation to the next. The project MEMORYROW has addressed both politics of memory and memory cultures to the ROW of 1877/1878 in six steps and work packages, each lasting for eight months and each being capped by a workshop and a publication in order to internally compare and externally disseminate the proceedings and results of the research related to the different work packages. Furthermore, several PhD theses have evolved within the framework of MEMORYROW.

The first half of the project, i.e. the three work packages which had started the project, has seen scholars from various disciplines and countries elaborate on different interpretations of the national historiographies, the plurality of memorial materialization related to the ROW of 1877/1878 and also gave silenced memories of emigrants and minorities a voice. The different interpretations of the national historiographies were put together and now allow an understanding going beyond national boundaries and furthermore gave a voice to alternative interpretations of the war and the related peace treaties, which were mostly silenced by the dominating national narratives.

¹ <http://memoryrow.weebly.com/>

The second half of the project, i.e. the three work packages that guided the involved scholars' research between months 25 and 48 of the project, was then started by the fourth work package with the title "Gender and War Memory". By this work package, the project aimed at increasing the awareness for gender aspects of the war and its interpretation, voiced women's experiences and memory of the war and furthermore outlined male domination in war memory as well as male strategies to filter women's experience. How the image of women as heroines, supporters, activists and victims of the war was constructed can be exceptionally well seen at hand of the online exhibition "Women's Faces of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878"². The next stage illustrated how war memory can be used as ideological design. Thus, the main focus was laid on the comparison of uses and misuses of the ROW in the ideological battle at the two sides of the "Iron Curtain" as well as on the analysis of the dynamics of the politics of memory of the ROW after the end of the Cold War, i.e. the main tendencies of (re-)interpretations of the memories caused by the new nationalism and new alliances coming into existence. Finally, MEMORYROW brought together all the different narrative strings and tackled the issue of historically and politically formed stereotypes, thus helping to open a wider space for dialogue. This space for dialogue was also carried into the educational sphere as a major scientific achievement was the instigation of present school textbooks and the creation and promotion of new complimentary, multi-perspectivized and more balanced interpretations of the ROW in the form of additional teaching materials, also available online³ and on an open access basis.

Open access are also the collective volumes stemming from each and every work package. These publications contain a multitude of methodological and topical approaches to how this particular war was remembered and give an insight into how memory cultures and politics of memory are intertwined on many different levels. Furthermore, MEMORYROW has led to an intensive reciprocity of transfer of knowledge, which has not only culminated in scientific insights but has also led to manifestations on an institutional level as the cooperation between scholars from Southeastern Europa and the Caucasus has resulted in several partnerships and has influenced curricula on both sides of the Black Sea, leading to a broadened horizon for both regions and to an intensive interest in mutual research on common questions, thereby leaping alleged divergence and fostering dialogue. The project clearly supports the establishment of close ties between the Caucasus Region and Europe as well as it helps to overcome stereotypes and conflicting images, which have survived from the 19th century and

² <http://nmuratova.wix.com/memoryrow>

³ <http://nmuratova.wix.com/teaching>

need urgent revision in order to enable fruitful dialogue rather than alienating conflicts. The project MEMORYROW has helped to sensitize to the necessity of such a revision.