

Study trip and workshop

Balkan Route(s). Entangled Mobilities in Rijeka and Beyond

Organized by Lea Horvat (Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena), Elisa Satjukow (Leipzig University), Philipp Schäfer (University of Osnabrück), Sanja Bojanić and Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić (Center for Advanced Studies Rijeka), Alenka Ambrož (University of Nova Gorica), Boris Ružić and Vjeran Pavlaković (University of Rijeka) in co-operation with the Southeast Europe Association. **Co-funded by** Erasmus+, Center for Advanced Studies Rijeka and the European Union **Rijeka and Cres, Croatia, 18 – 22 April 2022**

Report: Simon Wittekindt, Osnabrück

The picturesque Trsat Castle with its position on top of a hill 539 stair treads above the Adriatic city of Rijeka, where it has been guarding the mouth of the Rječina river since the thirteenth century, is the perfect spot for a sunset group picture with nearly 30 students and lecturers from four universities in three countries. The walk up to the castle was one of the highlights midweeks through a one-week study trip to the city of Rijeka and the Adriatic Island Cres. The panorama of Rijeka tells the story of a strategically important located harbour town that was shaped by now fading decades of booming industrial production and influx of workers from all over Croatia, Yugoslavia and beyond. What is left are empty production halls, old railway

tracks and socialist apartment blocks. The image of the city is nowadays also formed by tourist attractions like a traditional barbecue festival, yachts next to small fishing boats, more or less frequented shopping malls, cafés and Irish pubs at many corners.

The study trip and workshop “Balkan Route(s). Entangled Mobilities in Rijeka and Beyond” was a joint project. The organizing committee prepared an exciting study programme to explore the historic and contemporary dimensions and landscapes of mobilities in a city shaped over centuries by dynamic migration movements. Prior to this meeting, most students in winter term 2021/22 had attended a joint online



Group Picture at Trsat Castle. Photo: Elisa Satjukow

seminar with a socio-historical perspective that explored the various forms of mobilities in and across the Balkans, organized by *Elisa Satjukow* and *Lea Horvat*, Leipzig University, and *Philipp Schäfer*, Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies at the University of Osnabrück. One purpose of the seminar was to critically question the very concept of “the Balkans” and to reflect on the ideas and images transported by the narrative of the so-called “Balkan route”. With the study trip to Rijeka, these questions were taken a step further, expanding the group by more students and lecturers and their perspectives. What made the discussions and talks especially exciting and stimulating were various disciplinary perspectives – with students from Osnabrück studying interdisciplinary Migration Studies, the group from Leipzig consisting mostly of History and Ethnography students and the participants from Nova Gorica and Rijeka contributing their expertise from Art, Media and History.

The programme in Rijeka started on Monday, 18 April 2022. Most of the participants arrived in the morning after a long journey via bus and train from various places. Coming together for the kick-off meeting at the Kazališni park right in front of the National Theatre of Rijeka, the participants were exhausted but excited to finally meet in person after only knowing each other from online sessions. As the first lesson of the week, they reflected on their experiences travelling to Rijeka – the various means of transportation used, an unplanned switch from the – supposedly direct – night train to local train and then in Slovenia to a bus in the middle of the night and finally the passport controls when leaving the Schengen Area at the Croatian border. Then there was time to explore the city in small groups while collecting traces and multi-sensual impressions of the dimensions of mobility and migration in the urban landscape of Rijeka – a task the group kept pursuing throughout the week.

In the afternoon, there was the chance to do a guided city tour with *Kristina Pandža* from the Center for Industrial Heritage. Starting at the Hotel Continental, an impressive building from the late 19th century right in the heart of the city and still in operation, the participants learned

about the once booming industry and port of Rijeka and the various factories that are now mostly abandoned and are only partly used for new purposes. They also learned why Rijeka does not have what some might describe as “Mediterranean flair”: The Baroque architecture of Rijeka, also called Fiume in earlier times, points to the history of the city being under the rule of the Habsburg Monarchy until 1918. As one of the biggest rivals to Venice and an important access to the Adriatic Sea, Rijeka/Fiume and its port were constantly expanded and invested in over a long period. In 1719 the port of Rijeka/Fiume, together with the port of nearby Trieste, was declared a free-trade zone (Freihafen), leading to an even more vivid development of its industry, seafaring, and crafts.

Today, times have changed – as people from Rijeka often mention not without nostalgia. The industrial heritage of Rijeka, being still present in the cityscape, is supplemented with layers of tourism and consumerism as well as the remnants of Rijeka being the “European Capital of Culture” in 2020. The slogan Rijeka chose for itself as European Capital of Culture was “Port of Diversity”. This leads to the second day of the trip, which started at the very place where the city tour ended on Monday, namely the port of Rijeka. The second tour was led by *Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić* who is a research fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies Rijeka and one of the organizers of the study trip. Together with Kersten-Pejanić, the participants were exploring linguistic traces like writings and graffiti at the Molo Longo, a 1,707-meter-long wave breaker in the port. The Molo Longo has now become a promenade and, due to the impressive panorama view, a prominent place to take a walk.

In a project in the framework of the European Capital of Culture 2020, quotes from migrants and travellers who lived in Rijeka at different times and for various durations were collected in historical documents. These quotes were then placed on the walls of the Molo Longo with needful explanations added. *Kersten-Pejanić*'s work on linguistic or – as she theorises it in her work – “semiotic landscapes” provided the participants with an important theoretical input to grasp how every wall and every part of the infrastructure of the city is docu-



Exploring semiotic landscapes at the Molo Longo together with Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić. Photo: Elisa Satjukov

menting the traces and imprinted memories of generations of migrants, tourists and travellers as well as locals living in Rijeka. After the walk on the Molo Longo, quite a different form of historic documentation was explored: The City Museum of Rijeka. The exhibition about the history of the city provided a lively and interactive overview of many aspects and factors that shaped the city and its surrounding area and helped to systematize what had already been learned.

For the second half of the day, there was a workshop at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Rijeka. After the welcoming words by *Sanja Bojanić* from the Center of Advanced Studies Rijeka, *Sanja Puljar D'Alessio* and *Boris Ružić* were giving a lecture on Croatia as a site of the so-called Balkan Route(s). In their research, they focussed on the area of Gorski Kotar, approaching the topic with a dual perspective in two senses. Firstly, they worked with two very different disciplinary backgrounds, as *Puljar D'Alessio* is an anthropologist and *Ružić* focusses on digital communication and media. Secondly, they studied the Balkan Route in Gorski Kotar both from the perspective of the local Croatian society and the people on the move traveling through the area. By collecting oral testimonies of locals, focus-

ing on their feelings of being marginalized, forgotten, and abandoned by the national politics, *Puljar D'Alessio* and *Ružić* are trying to understand anti-migrant resentments and the rise of radical right-wing opinions. On the other hand, they are reconstructing how people on the move experience and perceive the area and their journey on the Balkan Route in Gorski Kotar by analyzing social media posts and communication.

Right in the beginning of the lecture, *Boris Ružić* mentioned the ambivalent feeling of living at the Mediterranean coast, knowing that thousands of humans who are trying to find a way to Europe lose their lives in this very sea, and how this feeling also shapes a city and the people living and working there. Here, he was drawing on another dimension of the entangled mobility in Rijeka and beyond. The second lecture shifted the focus to the 20th century and the character of *Gabriele D'Annunzio*. *Vjeran Pavlaković* took through the period following the First World War, when in the middle of a complex historical situation, the Italian author, poet and soldier *Gabriele D'Annunzio* captured the city of Rijeka/Fiume with a group of franc-tireurs (the so-called "Arditi"). They ruled Rijeka for 15 quite extraordinary months, causing various dimensions of immigration, expulsion

and mobilities. Without going into details, this period is often interpreted as a pre-fascist experiment – with the interpretation itself being highly contested in Croatia and Italy. As the last part of the workshop day, the participants came together at student roundtables and discussed their impressions and thoughts on past and present entangled mobilities in the city of Rijeka.

On 20 April 2022, the group took a trip to Opatija, a small town and seaside resort at the Kvarner Bay. As a popular spa resort and tourist attraction in times of the Habsburg Monarchy, Opatija gained importance in the 19th century when the Austrian Southern Railway Company (Südbahn-Gesellschaft) connected the place to their railway network. After arriving by bus, the participants swarmed the place in small groups to collect impressions and information on the long history and contemporary meaning of Opatija as a place with vivid touristic mobilities. Discussing the results, the group learned about the various periods from the Habsburg Monarchy to intra-Yugoslav tourism and today's popularity of Opatija as part of what some might call "Habsburg nostalgia". Back in Rijeka, the participants split up in two groups. The first one visited an exhibition of the art collective and non-profit organisation Drugo more (English: The Other Sea). Drugo more produces, promotes, researches and disseminates culture and, in their own words, "identif[ies] and explore[s] topics of social relevance and of general interest to the community we all live in."¹ As one example of their work, the group saw a critical contemplation of Rijeka's former involvement in the global colonial network of sugar trade, which connected the city and its local sugar plant with the transatlantic enslavement on the sugar fields of America – an aspect of history left out by the City Museum.

The second group went to a small but impressive museum on vintage computing technology called PEEK&POKE, which is "home to anything from calculators and game consoles to rare and obsolete computers from the 20th century, as

well as an extensive library of computer books and magazines from that era."² While one might think that this topic is only loosely connected to the overall topic of the workshop, it becomes more obvious on a second thought: on the one hand, the development of digital technology influenced major steps in and transformations of global mobility. On the other hand, the mobility of materials and the circulation of intellectual goods and property is highly interesting, as well as questions of centre-periphery relations, for example when it comes to (counter-)development of computing technology in former Yugoslavia. The third day ended where this report started: at the Trsat Castle.

The fourth day started with a visit and guided tour to the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral, located in a former palace which was designed and built in the 19th century as the residence for the king's emissaries and governors, later also used by D'Annunzio for his daily speeches, which, this as a side note, marked an important transformation in political communication in the direction of populism and even fascism. The museum collects and presents artefacts connected to the history and culture of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and the city of Rijeka. The visit allowed the group to take a broader look at the history of the region, bringing together learnings and impressions gathered about Rijeka so far. Later that day, the group took the ferry to the nearby island of Cres and the identically named island capital. Once arrived, the Moise Palace, a research hub of the Center for Advanced Studies (CAS) Rijeka, was visited. There, the group had another chance to engage with the work of *Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić* and her colleagues *Vjeran Pavlaković*, *Kevin Kenjar* and *Eric Ušić* by visiting their exhibition "Graffitied Memoryscapes". The exhibition is based on photos taken by the four researchers to analyse "the political sentiments, ascriptions, and statements that are manifested and realized in the form of graffiti and other linguistic and semiotic signs located in the physical landscape";³ drawing on the already mentioned concept of semiotic landscapes.

1 <http://drugo-more.hr/en/about-us/>

2 <https://www.peekpoke.hr/>

3 <http://cas.uniri.hr/exhibition-graffitied-memoryscapes/>

Before a get-together with the CAS fellows in the evening, there was a lecture by *Nikolina Židek*, for many of the participants one of the most interesting impressions of the study trip. Židek, who is an Adjunct Professor at IE School of International Relations in Madrid, talked about “The Ustasha Ratlines in 1945” and, more generally, about the networks and passages that enabled fascist functionaries and their families from different European countries but mainly Germany, Croatia and Italy to avoid criminal prosecution and verdict. Drawing on extensive research among the Croatian post-World War Two diaspora in Argentina, Židek traces and reconstructs their intergenerational transmission of collective memory – mainly focussing on the events in Bleiburg in May 1945, commonly referred to as “Bleiburg repatriations” or “Bleiburg massacre”, and how it is imprinted in the collective memory among diaspora members in a certain identity-forming way. The lecture provided with another aspect of mobility and migrant pathways in the last century and the transnational impact it has until today.

The last day of the study trip started with the journey back to Rijeka and ended with different

ways and routes back home to Germany and Slovenia. But first, the participants came to visit the Museum for Modern and Contemporary Art: A Cultural History of Mobility Nodes. Since 2017, the museum is located in Building H of the post-industrial Benčić complex, which was a sugar refinery in the 18th century, then converted into a tobacco factory in the 19th century and which finally was used for the production of ship parts in the World War II period. Overall, the museum was a fitting final for the study trip: the different historical layers of the building complex and its transformational processes, the exhibition and work itself, it all sums up many aspects of the study trip’s topic and purpose.

Summing up, the author can conclude that it was an instructive trip dealing with and learning about the various and interconnected forms of mobility in and across Rijeka from not only socio-historical but also artistic and everyday points of view. From a student’s perspective, it was particularly inspiring to discuss such topics together with other students from Leipzig, Rijeka and Nova Gorica with reciprocal and interdisciplinary interests.

Interdisziplinäre Tagung

Islam auf dem Balkan

Der Balkan und seine religionspolitische Relevanz für den Islam in Europa/Deutschland

Veranstalterinnen: Evangelische Akademie Loccum und Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft (SOG)

Leitung: PD Dr. Jordanka Telbizova-Sack

Hybrid: Online per Zoom / Loccum, 09. – 11. Mai 2022

Bericht: Sina Rothert / Megan Nagel, Berlin

Die europäische Öffentlichkeit diskutiert vermehrt und kontrovers islambezogene Themen, lässt aber oft die Tradition muslimischer Gemeinschaften sowie deren Vielfalt innerhalb Europas und der europäischen Kultur außer Acht. Ausgehend von historischen und gegenwärtigen Entwicklungen in verschiedenen Balkanstaaten nahm die Evangelische Akademie Loccum in Kooperation mit der SOG dies zum

Anlass, die Entstehung islamischer Traditionen in Europa nachzuvollziehen und einen Transfer zu Fragestellungen im deutschen Kontext zu leisten. Die Vielfalt des Islam in Europa, das interreligiöse Zusammenleben auf dem Balkan sowie Formen der Institutionalisierung und Rechtsstaatlichkeit des Islam in europäischen Kontexten waren die ausschlaggebenden Themen der dreitägigen Tagung in Loccum.