

Workshop:

Ethnicity, Indigeneity, and Identity in Soviet and Post-Soviet Contexts

Exploring how Soviet legacies continue to shape identity, belonging, and nationhood across Eurasia

13 February 2026, University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Humanities

Hosts: East European Studies Group (University of Amsterdam) and ETHNICGOODS (a project of the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals, IBEI, funded by the ERC)

About the Workshop

The Soviet Union profoundly influenced how ethnicity, indigeneity, and nationality were categorized, governed, and lived. Through nationalities policy, census practices, and institutional frameworks, the Soviet state not only classified its populations but also embedded these identities deeply into social and political life.

Yet these categories were never fixed; they were constantly contested, negotiated, and reimagined. Today, across the post-Soviet space, their legacies continue to evolve in new and complex ways:

- In **Central Asia**, Soviet-era ideas about nationality and indigeneity intersect with debates on language, Islam, and state-building.
- In the **Baltic states**, questions of citizenship and belonging emerge amid European integration and minority politics, reinterpreting the Soviet legacy.
- Among **Russia's ethnic minorities**, Soviet classifications still shape autonomy and recognition even as Moscow's centralizing policies reshape these dynamics.
- In **Ukraine**, identity politics are being redefined in light of war, memory, and coloniality.

This interdisciplinary workshop brings together scholars examining how Soviet and post-Soviet identities are **contested, renegotiated, and transformed** across time and space.

Schedule

09.00-9.15 Welcome

9.15-10.30 Keynote

Perestroika Revisited: Why Was There So Much Ethnic Mobilization in the Soviet Union During and After Perestroika – and So Little Violence?

Pål Kolstø, University of Oslo

10.30-10.45 Coffee break

10.45 -12.30 Panel 1

Chair: Andrei Tarasov, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)

Collective Identity in Transition: A Case Study of Estonian Subcultural Identity from the Soviet to the post-Soviet

Isabel Ekua-Thompson, University of Amsterdam

Who's Welcome? Security, Soviet Memories, and the Estonian Refugee Dilemma

Hakob Matevosyan, Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS)

A Lot Has Happened, But Little Has Changed: A Queer Reading of the 20th and 21st Centuries In Lithuania

Rasa Kamarauskaite, University of Amsterdam

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30-15.15 Panel 2

Chair: Gulnaz Sibgatullina, University of Amsterdam

Colonial Framework in Times of Crisis: Digital Sense-Making in Ukraine after 2022.

Mila Rossokhatska, University of Amsterdam

Undoing Soviet Identity: Communication Strategies in Ukrainian State Media

Nataliia Vdovychenko, Tilburg University

Constructing the Nation: A Comparative Computational Analysis of
Nationalist Discourse in Azerbaijani and Armenian History Textbooks

Emre Amasyali, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)

Transnational Belonging and Susceptibility to Disinformation among
Russian-Speaking Communities

Sabina Imatova, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

15.15-15.30 Coffee break

15.30-17.15 Panel 3

Chair: Emre Amasyali, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)

Between Nationalisation and Russification: Language Policy in Public
Schools in the Soviet and post-Soviet Context

Andrei Tarasov, Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)

Categories of Nationality and Ethnicity through the Lens of Late Soviet
Developmentalism

Davlatbegim Mamadshoeva, University of Amsterdam

Azatlıq Radiosı and the 'Other' Tatar Nation: The Cultural and
Historiographical Discourse of the Tatar-Bashkir Service of Radio
Liberty/Radio Free Europe during the Cold War Era

Mansur Gazimzianov, University of Amsterdam

Nevada-Semipalatinsk Anti-nuclear Movement: Placing the Soviet Union
into the Framework of Global Colonialism

Kamila Smagulova, Leiden University

17.15-18.00 Closing notes

18.15-21.00 Dinner

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