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Black Sea Currents: Migration and cosmopolitan dynamics in two post-Imperial cities, Odessa and Istanbul

Summary

This project aims to compare the changing cosmopolitan dynamics and migration flows of two great port cities on the Black Sea - Odessa, Ukraine and Istanbul, Turkey - focusing on old and newly emergent diasporic subjectivities and identities. Both cities have been represented as 'cosmopolitan' in their Russian/Soviet and Ottoman contexts and been extolled for their harmonious spirit and diversity. Yet, it is important to study critically the real underlying processes of urban formations and (post) Imperial cosmopolitan imaginaries. The Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, not unlike Imperial Russia and the USSR, have a long history of uprooting and moving people around. Forced migration and internal exile, as well as the fixing of populations in one place, are facets of cosmopolitanism created by the authoritarian state that we wish to investigate.

A comparative anthropological and historical inquiry into state policies, migration, and the political imagination is, thus, the key theme of this project. This theme will be explored along three main lines of inquiry: Diasporic subjectivities; History, materiality and the dynamics of cosmopolitanism; Post-Cold War migration.