

MORNING BREW TALK WITH

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BRKOVÍČ

REALIGNING HUMANITARIANISM IN THE BALKANS: FROM COLD WAR POLITICS TO NEOLIBERAL ETHICS

ORGANIZED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
MOBILITY AND MIGRATION AT THE IE CAS



Institute of Ethnology
Czech Academy of Sciences

REALIGNING HUMANITARIANISM IN THE BALKANS: FROM COLD WAR POLITICS TO NEOLIBERAL ETHICS

ABSTRACT: THIS TALK EXPLORES A HUMANITARIAN IMAGINARY INSPIRED BY THE POLITICAL VOCABULARIES OF SOCIALISM AND THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. IN THE 1970S, THE RED CROSS OF YUGOSLAVIA INITIATED A SERIES OF ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS MOVEMENT TO RECONSIDER ITS HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND INCLUDE PERSPECTIVES FROM THE COUNTRIES BELONGING TO THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. THE YUGOSLAV PROPOSAL PROVOKED DISCUSSION IN THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS MOVEMENT OVER THE MEANING OF “HUMANITARIANISM,” “NEUTRALITY,” AND “PEACE.” THE PUSH FOR THE PERSPECTIVES OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES TO BE BETTER REPRESENTED WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS MOVEMENT RESULTED IN AN AMBIVALENT HUMANITARIAN IMAGINARY THAT BOTH CHALLENGED AND REPRODUCED THE PREMISES OF THE HUMANITARIAN SECTOR IN THE WEST. THIS LARGELY FORGOTTEN EPISODE IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITARIANISM CAN BEST BE UNDERSTOOD AS AN ATTEMPT AT WORLDMAKING, NOT OF A WORLD FREE FROM THE COLONIALITY/MODERNITY NEXUS, BUT OF A SOCIALIST MODERNIST WORLD THAT WAS IN MANY ASPECTS DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE THAT HAD BEEN BUILT SINCE THE 1970S.

ČARNA BRKOVIĆ IS PROFESSOR OF CULTURAL STUDIES AND EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINZ. BRKOVIĆ IS INTERESTED IN HOW PEOPLE HELP ONE ANOTHER DURING SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION, WHICH HAS LED HER TO RESEARCH CLIENTELISM, LGBTIQ ACTIVISM, AND HUMANITARIANISM IN FORMER YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES. SHE IS ALSO INTERESTED IN ATTEMPTS TO INTEGRATE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY, SUCH AS SOCIALIST HUMANITARIANISM AND ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF EUROPEANIZATION.

THIS LECTURE IS PART OF THE PROJECT “UNEQUAL CITIZENSHIP AND TRANSNATIONAL MOBILISATION OF POLISH, CZECH, AND UKRAINIAN ROMA IN THE FACE OF WAR IN UKRAINE” SUPPORTED BY THE CZECH SCIENCE FOUNDATION, REGISTRATION NO. 24-14388L. FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [HTTPS://ROCIT.PL](https://rocit.pl).

FUNDED BY

