

## Abstracts for the Trade, Transit and Travel conference

### Contents

Abstracts for the Trade, Transit and Travel conference .....	1
Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railroad: Geopolitical Imagery and Evolving Practices in Europe-Asia Connectivity .....	2
Fluid zones of connection: exceptionality and infrastructure in Cyprus .....	2
Border and Road Regimes in Central Asia: Ordering Disorder at the Uzbek-Kazakh Checkpoint...	3
At the Border of Movement Freedom: Care for Visa of the Short-term Visitors from Northwest Russia to the Schengen Area.....	3
“Flowing” Labour: Race, Gender and Intimacies in Transnational Mobilities .....	4
Hebron Between Borders: Centralised Marginality.....	4

## Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railroad: Geopolitical Imagery and Evolving Practices in Europe-Asia Connectivity

Presented by Andrea Weiss, Sabanci University Istanbul Policy Center.

Tales of transport corridors, pipelines, and other megaprojects often purvey familiar stories of renewed geopolitical rivalry among global powers, like the EU and China. This geopolitical imagery also underpins recently established transport corridors that aim to provide greater connectivity between Europe and China. My paper analyses one such infrastructure project, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway. Often styled as the “Iron Silk Road,” the BTK forms a transboundary nexus that links a variety of actors on various scales, both as a built environment infrastructure project and as a form of materialized geopolitical imagery. For the first time since the break up of the Soviet Union, the BTK links the South Caucasus countries of Azerbaijan and Georgia to Turkey by rail on the so-called “Middle Corridor”. Even though the BTK construction is largely financed with Azerbaijani oil money, based on bilateral agreements between Turkey and China, this “Middle Corridor” also fits neatly into China’s Belt Road Initiative (BRI), the ambitious Chinese global development strategy. In 2017, the BTK went operational for freight trains, and the first direct freight train from Xi’an in China on its way to Prague passed via the BTK in November 2019. As the BTK provides an entirely new transport infrastructure link of (potential) global importance as well as a new logistics centre in Kars, the BTK has reshaped the Georgian-Turkish borderland. The major actors that my project considers are Turkish railways (TCDD), international companies involved in freight traffic, people and institutions involved in local railway administration and logistical operations, as well as ordinary inhabitants of the Turkish-Georgian border area. Across scales the project examines which of these actors articulates which kind of claims, particularly regarding Europe-Asia connectivity, and which geopolitical imagery and narratives these actors use to frame the BTK and to which ends. The paper itself focuses on newly evolving practices of EUChina traffic along the BTK, paying attention to the impact of the recent railway track “liberalization” in Turkey.

## Fluid zones of connection: exceptionality and infrastructure in Cyprus

Presented by Ezgican Ozdemir, Central European University.

This paper interrogates the past and present infrastructural convolutions of water resources in Cyprus, an island often characterized by disconnection and division. Infrastructural management and governance on both sides of the Buffer Zone are imbricated in geopolitical and economic reconfigurations of the region with old and new institutional actors ideologically and economically influencing the politics of the island. Looking especially at the Turkish state-funded water pipeline from Turkey to north Cyprus and the bi-communal waste-water treatment plant, I highlight the ways in which water resource management, specifically water allocation for agriculture and/or everyday use, has become a techno-political arena that reveals new avenues to understand questions of division, cooperation, and dependent sovereignties.

Ethnic and religious differences and the synthetic boundary of the Buffer Zone might physically divide the island’s communities. But these divisions hold less true when the focus steers toward the subterranean networks of water pipes, aquifers, and electricity lines, telling a different story of connection. First, I historically trace how transboundary resource management played a significant role in political discussions in the post-conflict period, being addressed quietly and in a technical manner. Then, drawing on my doctoral fieldwork in north Cyprus, I show that these connective utility infrastructures crossing borders and zones are contingent upon the very conditions of exception, temporariness, and division on the island.

## Border and Road Regimes in Central Asia: Ordering Disorder at the Uzbek-Kazakh Checkpoint

Presented by Rano Turaeva, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany.

This paper aims to unpack the complexity of understanding distant places and temporal spaces where mobility, change and uncertainty constitute power regimes, specifically border and road regimes, that are formed as a result of interactions between those in power and citizens or individuals. Uncertainty is the main resource, I argue, for those who are in power. The examples are drawn from the context of the Uzbek-Kazakh border through Chernyaevka. The main argument of this chapter is that in the process and experience of travelling, including daily interactions among passengers, drivers, service providers, road authorities, border guards, and security officials, a certain kind of order among disorder is being established and negotiated. This order, which constitutes border and road regimes, includes written and unwritten rules of behavior, manners of speaking, strategies, institutions, hierarchies, authorities, and moralities shared and accepted by all the actors involved. The actors involved contribute to the establishment and maintenance of this order by the way they communicate, act, learn, and teach on a daily basis within the border space at hand. I follow a Foucauldian understanding of regime, power, and dispositif, which I apply in explaining the emergence of the power regimes regarding border and road regimes. The paper is based on ethnographic research conducted in Central Asia in 2005-2006, 2010-2011, 2012, 2015, 2018.

## At the Border of Movement Freedom: Care for Visa of the Short-term Visitors from Northwest Russia to the Schengen Area

Presented by Olga Tkach, Centre for Independent Social Research (CISR), St. Petersburg.

Unlike the Central European Schengen member states surrounded by the nations with similar mobility citizenship, Finland lies on the edge of the Area and neighbours with a non-EU country, which is Russia. Russian short-term visitors, especially from northern regions, contribute to Finland's tourism and economic development of its eastern border areas most than the other groups. This paper conceptualizes Northwest Russia – Finland connection as a mobility hub with special – simplified – visa relations and developed infrastructure. It is based on qualitative data that include 28 in-depth semi-structured interviews held from 2013 to 2017 in St. Petersburg. The sampling criterion was belonging to a group of holders and active users of the Schengen multiple-entry 'C' visas issued by the state of Finland, although excluding shuttle traders and petty retailers. The interviewees timely renew this type of visa with the Consulate General (CG) of Finland in St. Petersburg, always keep it valid, and use across Europe. The paper explores how and why St. Petersburg residents – holders of the Schengen visas and regular border-crossers – manage to balance trips to Finland and the rest of the Schengen Area under unclear rules of this balancing. I define such practice of balancing as care for visa that presumes extra travels and emotional labour, and ends up with the certain mobility benefits of the visa bearers – non-EU citizens who usually lack mobility rights. The paper applies analytical framework inspired by the regime-of-mobility approach and the concept of governmobility. Overall, it outlines how the formal visa institute works in the context of mobility hub built by some unwritten rules and relevant bottom-up practices of the regular visitors.

## “Flowing” Labour: Race, Gender and Intimacies in Transnational Mobilities

Presented by Elisa Pascucci and Daria Krivonos, University of Helsinki.

Drawing on our respective research on transnational migrant labour (Krivonos) and refugee and humanitarian logistics (Pascucci), in this paper we develop a theoretical approach that foregrounds the role of racialized and gendered labour in enabling transnational mobilities. Against the grain of somewhat celebratory discussions of how objects produce connections, which dominated earlier literature on materialities and transnationalism in the social sciences, we expand upon logistics and infrastructures approaches that emphasise the struggles that make things and people move and circulate. Rather than focusing on migrants themselves, we bring the economy back in and look into infrastructures that enable transnational “flows” and the ways value is extracted from migration. We problematise the notion of a flow and show, instead, that transnational mobilities are forceful interventions that make commodities and workers circulate. We show that the circulation and supply of migrant labour is enabled by fragile and precarious infrastructures that insert migrants in labour. Drawing on the cases of Ukrainian migrants in the Polish service economy and that of community care workers in enabling Syrian refugee migration to Jordan, we aim to contribute to the emerging scholarship on the logistics of migration and supply chains. We further argue that transnational flows are better understood as sites of friction embedded in global hierarchies of value. It is not “labour abstract” that enables transnational “flows” but the difference in race, gender and national specificity of labour that enable the circulation of goods and the circulation of migrants that circulate goods.

## Hebron Between Borders: Centralised Marginality

Presented by Marion Lecoquierre, University of Helsinki

The references to buffer zones, passageway and crossroads implies an interrogation on the notion of border and the connection/ disconnection it implies. In my presentation, I will tackle the case of Hebron (Palestine), showing how different “locating regimes” locate the city in various ways, according to different referentials. Those frames of references can be social – depending on other actors - but also spatial – notably scalar, from the local to the global.

I will be looking at the case of Hebron, a Palestinian city located south of the West Bank. A holy city for Muslims and Jews, Hebron is also divided since 1997 in two parts, most of the city being under Palestinian authority (H1 area) while the old city, that encompasses the Haram al-Ibrahimi, where Abraham and other Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the Bible are supposedly buried, under Israeli occupation (H2 area). Locally, Hebron is a margin, crisscrossed and isolated by multiple borders, whether material or abstract. H1 and H2 are indeed separated by walls, fences and checkpoints, but also administrative and legal borders.

However, when integrating it in other systems and frames of reference at the regional level, it may also appear as a center. From a religious point of view, it is a center, as a holy city. From a political point of view, it also occupies a central position, as a flashpoint of contention. It is also a center for the Palestinian economy, while being decisively marginal at the regional and global level.

This contribution will thus tackle the relative location of Hebron in different referentials, making it a center and a margin, a crossroad and an enclave, drawing on a geographical approach and data collected on the field in the course of previous fieldwork conducted between 2019 and 2021.