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“BETWEEN THE NORTHERN EPIRUS AND CHAMERIA: POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND

LINGUISTIC IMAGINARIES IN THE ALBANIAN-GREEK BORDERLANDS”

Over the recent decades, borders and borderlands have attracted much attention among

researchers in social sciences, anthropologists not being an exception. These studies often

describe borderlands as complex geographic and symbolic spaces in which negotiations of power

and sovereignty together with construction and reconfiguration of socio-cultural identities and

boundaries become particularly intense and revealing. At the same time, they conceptualize the

experience of living in the borderlands as a condition of exceptional uncertainty, marginality,

and liminality.

In my PhD project dedicated to the historical region of Epirus in the Western part of Albanian-

Greek borderlands, I explore one of the multiple examples of such liminal symbolic spaces and

attempt to trace the connections and tensions between the state sovereignty, language, and

everyday life. Drawing upon the concept of imaginaries, I bring together the state-governed

ideologies, linguistic practice, and intimate, subjective experience and try to avoid seeing them

as separate levels of social analysis but to phenomenologically study them as profoundly

integrated aspects shaping the social world of a border region.

Based on this premise, in my project, I aim to answer the following questions: What role does

imagination play in the symbolical construction of the borderlands? What key social imaginaries

do the borderlands produce, and vice versa, are constructed, reproduced, or challenged by? What

are the dynamics between the shared imaginaries and the work of individual imagination, which

people use to make sense of their life stories? To answer these questions, I dwell upon several

approaches in political, linguistic, and psychological anthropology and analyze observations and

interviews collected during my field trips to the “Albanian”; and “Greek” parts of Epirus. In

different chapters of the thesis, I discuss such topics as historicity and construction of

temporalities; competing sovereignties and political imaginaries; cultural intimacy and the

micropolitics of categories; linguistic imaginaries and ideologies.