

## **Interdisciplinary 4EU+ Workshop: Role of Culture in Times of War and Post-War Reconstruction. The Case of Ukraine**

Reflecting on the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Klára Kosová (Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University) and Neil Predmestnikov (University of Warsaw) organised an interdisciplinary workshop *Role of Culture in Times of War and Post-War Reconstruction. The Case of Ukraine*. The central aim of the workshop was to create a collaborative network of 4EU+ junior researchers, senior scholars and societal actors seeking not only to reflect on what exactly war means for the cultural landscape, how it affects cultural representation(s), what role the culture plays in dealing with war trauma, and what role should it play in post-war reconstruction but to work towards embedding Ukraine's post-war reconstruction as part of its path towards a more inclusive Europe.

The workshop succeeded in bringing together a vibrant group of participants consisting of nine students and five senior scholars affiliated with 4EU+ Alliance universities (Charles University, University of Warsaw, University of Milano) and six special Ukrainian fellows working in the societal sphere. In addition, as the event was opened to the public, the workshop participants had the opportunity to share their experiences, ideas and views with the more general public.

The workshop took place on the 22nd and 23rd of September at the Hollar Building of the Faculty of Social Sciences (the first day) and Jinoňice Campus of the Faculty of Social Sciences (the second day). The programme consisted of two keynote speeches, two panel discussions and two student panels. Concretely, on the first day, Valeryia Korablyova (Charles University) gave the opening keynote speech on (re-) politicisation of culture in times of war. This was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Valeryia Korablyova on the role of culture in dealing with post-coloniality with Oksana Dovgoplova, Liuba-Paraskewija Strynadiuk and Ondřej Klípa. The second day of the workshop was opened by the keynote speech by Bartłomiej Chromik (University of Warsaw) titled "Toward post-war cu(ltu)re". The keynote was followed by two student panels, in which Jan Šír (Charles University) and Jakub Šindelář (Charles University) joined as discussants. More particularly, the first panel was devoted to the role the culture plays during the war, while the second panel provided a more transnational perspective on what role can/should culture play in post-war reconstruction. The workshop finished with yet another panel discussion with Olha Kovalska, Tetyana Lewińska, Oksana Strynadiuk and Neil Predmestnikov and moderated by Bartłomiej Chromik.

The workshop facilitated both horizontal and vertical knowledge and experience sharing and proved to be fruitful ground for a deep discussion with open conclusions and many thought-provoking takeaways. It showed that culture is not merely about pieces of art. People live by culturally mediated intellectual representations of the world, by their shared historical experience, and by their emotional attachment to cultural communities, which determine their understanding of daily life and influence their decisions. It reflects shared values and practices of certain group of people while, at the same time, activating and orientating their behaviours. It gives them an understanding of their lives and the world around them, which is crucial, especially in times of war and, undoubtedly, during the post-war reconstruction.

The organisers were happy to have promoted a slightly different form of networking by bringing together experts from within and outside academia. As such, the workshop provided researchers at any stage of their careers interested in culture more generally, and Ukrainian culture in particular, with a valuable opportunity to exchange findings with other scholars as well as with representatives from societal actors. In turn, societal actors were presented with substantial and

potentially refreshing ideas and experiences surrounding their challenges concerning the creation of cultural products and the role of culture in dealing with war trauma and defining the values of society. Hopefully, there will be a repeated chance to meet with the participants and facilitate a similar exchange in the future.