CfP: Negotiating Limits between Early Modern Sovereignties: Venetian Dalmatia and Ottoman Bosnia, 15th – Early 18th Centuries

International Conference, Zadar (Croatia)
25-28 May 2016

“In the modern conception [of political life], state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. But in the older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another. Hence, paradoxically enough, the ease with which pre-modern empires (…) were able to sustain their rule over immensely heterogeneous, and often not even contiguous, populations for long periods of time.”


In his landmark book Benedict Anderson described the proprietary relationship to land on the part of the bounded state, a geo-body belonging to the order of modernity, for which the national survey map may stand as an index. He then alluded to the paradoxical ease with which earlier and often geographically disjointed states managed the permeable edges of their territories.

This three-day conference offers a different set of assumptions when it comes to “the older imagining” of empire, before the rise of nationalisms in the nineteenth century. It focuses on the operations employed by early modern states in ongoing efforts to establish or maintain peaceful relations as neighbors while managing the heterogeneous and often mobile populations in the interstices of their rule.

The conference is part of a larger collaborative project examining the geopolitics of borderlands in early modernity (https://binghamton.academia.edu/KarenedisBarzman). Given the current configuration of the scientific committee, our initial focus is on the historically dense contact zone between Venetian Dalmatia and Ottoman Bosnia–provinces in states of vastly different political and religious orders, with footprints in present-day Croatia. The timeline runs from the fifteenth century, when the Venetians and Ottomans formally acquired territory in the region, to the Treaties of Carlowitz (1699) and Passerowitz (1718), which for the first time established seamless borders between the states via printed maps distributed as public affirmations of binding peace accords. (While these treaties also involved the Austrian Hapsburgs, the conference is limited to Ottoman-Venetian relations due to the rich nature of the archival material and practical matters concerning the fieldwork.) The instrumental use of cartography in detante is taken as a watershed and establishes the temporal end point for the conference.

Suggested paper topics include the composition of negotiating teams and protocols of diplomacy in determining borders (from elaborate gift exchange to the authentication of earlier treaties as points of departure or comparison); the practical aspects of work in the field (travel by foot or mule, provisions and lodging, interviews with local populations, communication via translators, land survey and production of sketches and drawings); the
material practices used in marking sovereign limits on the ground (building earthen mounds or piles of stone, carving signs on trees, drilling iron rings into live rock); the spatial practices of borderland populations that hindered the maintenance of *detente* and, from the perspective of the states, the ability to “live well as neighbors” (a rhetorical trope found in both Venetian and Ottoman political discourse).

The conference will combine formal presentations, round-tables, and a one-day field trip using GPS to map the borders that can be reconstructed with archival material and ground markers, featuring the borders negotiated after the Third and Fifth Ottoman-Venetian Wars (the “War of Cyprus,” 1570-73, and “Long War of Candia,” 1645-69) both of which had significant theatres of operation in the borderlands between Dalmatia and Bosnia. The conference findings and relevant archival material will be made available digitally on the web, followed by publication of the conference proceedings.

**Submissions Guidelines**

We invite proposals for 20-minute papers related to the topics outlined above. Proposals should include

- an abstract of 250 words
- a 1-2 page CV
- Contact information, including current institutional affiliation

Submit your proposals in English (the conference *lingua franca*) to kbarzman@binghamton.edu and jfarici@unizd.hr by Friday, 29 January 2016. Notification will follow within two weeks. Participants are expected to organize and cover the costs of their own travel and accommodations (discounted room rates will be available). A registration fee of €150 (€50 for students) will cover meals and coffee during the conference, as well as transportation for the borderlands field trip.

Sponsors: University of Zadar; Harpur College, Binghamton University; the Fernand Braudel Center, Binghamton University; the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation; the Lila Acheson Wallace Special Project Grant, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies.

Scientific Committee: Karen-edis Barzman (Art History, Binghamton University), Palmira Brummett (History, Brown University), Josip Faričić (Geography, University of Zadar), Egidio Ivetic (History, University of Padua), Kristijan Juran (History, University of Zadar), Richard Lee (The Fernand Braudel Center, Binghamton University), Lena Mirošević (Geography, University of Zadar), Nenad Moćanin (History, University of Zagreb), Maria Pia Pedani (History, University of Venice, Ca’ Foscari), Walter Panciera (History, University of Padua), Tea Perinčić (The Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral, Rijeka), Natalie Rothman (History, University of Toronto), Kornelija Jurin Starčević (History, University of Zagreb), Josip Vrandečić (History, University of Split).

For questions please contact the conference organizers at kbarzman@binghamton.edu or jfarici@unizd.hr.