



#### **Translating Cultures Theme**



### OTTOMAN PASTS, PRESENT CITIES: COSMOPOLITANISM AND TRANSCULTURAL MEMORIES

AHRC RESEARCH NETWORK

# **Outline of research**

- Transcultural exchange in cities of former Ottoman Empire
  - Baghdad to Belgrade, etc.: comparative approach
  - Urban space foments cultural exchange
- Period focus on 1780s-present: from competing imperialisms, to contemporary sectarianisms:
  - Iraq, Israel, Bosnia, Croatia, Turkey, Cyprus, Crimea, etc.
  - Cultural exchange between past and present ('memories')
- Interdisciplinary network made of 'transcultural' disciplines:
  - Cultural History, English/Humanities, Literature, Life-writing and autobiography, Visual Culture, French-Francophone/North-African and Levant studies, Anthropology, Architecture and Urban Studies etc.; also musicians, art curators, film makers
- Ottoman Empire as a relative model of multiculturalism



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## Contribution to Translating Cultures Theme.

- 1. Theoretical Transcultural approach (John McLeod, Edhem Eldem et al)
  - Ottoman cities thrived on diversity/plurality, while also ensuring boundaries maintained and respected between co-existing communities (until late period)
  - Points of commonality between ethnic and religious groups.
  - Fissures and points of tension/conflict, perpetual negotiations at the intersections between cultures, between contact zones.
  - Multidirectional, local/international, political/historical/ cultural frames surrounding Ottoman cities, then and now.
- 2. Literal 'translating' academic research/practice into wider arena through impact and external engagement activities.

### **EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT:**

•Our investment in this project was very much aroused by ' external engagement' and in part motivated by impact

•The exhibition 'East and West: Visualising the Ottoman City' (June 2014) is to be a key event in terms of external

•As Visual Advisor, research and networking have highlighted the importance of archives in order to reactivate neglected cultural heritages rich with transcultural exchanges

Also part of our external engagement:

- Jay Prosser/Project with Dialogue Society (Leeds)
- Gabriel Koureas/ Armenian Institute : 'Armenians in the Ottoman Empire'



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# **Challenges to Developing the Network**

- Absence of inter-disciplinary research and a methodological framework in relation to the Ottoman Empire and the challenges this posed to the network.
- Identifying academics and other participants who are in tune with our basic aims. Some participants were discouraged by the lack of a disciplinary focus.
- The network has attracted many from outside the academic world which excellent from one perspective posed a number of challenges.



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# Network's contribution to future research

- Interdisciplinary research by non-Ottoman specialists, including new arts and humanities models of cultural exchange ('transcultural turn,' 'postmemory,' 'multidirectional memories') producing genuinely new knowledges of Ottoman Empire.
- Comparative research takes Ottoman Empire from monolithic to plural signification. Network intervenes in Western media representation of Ottoman as 'Islamic' Empire.
- Interrogation of structure of empire: a federation of states? Comparative research (Ottoman versus 'national' models of empire) might be developed: e.g. Austro-Hungarian/Ottoman.
- Injecting Ottoman Empire into postcolonial studies. Formation of Empire that revises postcolonial theory, namely through transcultural.

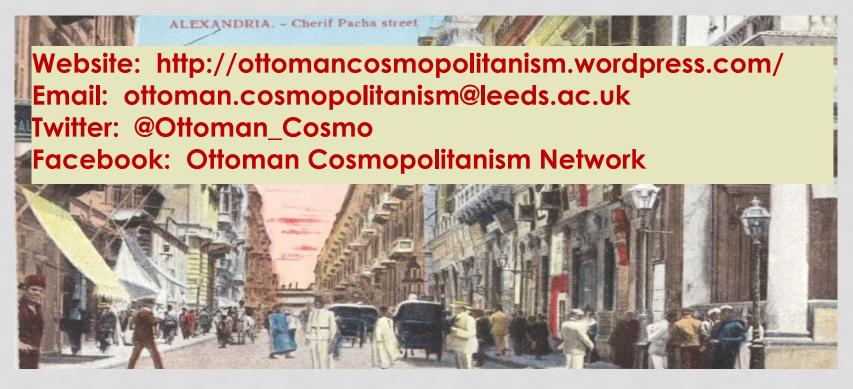


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