

Divisions, Connections and Movement – Rethinking Regionality

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Divisions, Connections and Movement – Rethinking Regionality is a new two-year BIAA research programme, funded by the BASIS strategic development programme of the British Academy. Turkey has often been studied regionally, with a focus on its important geopolitical location and its position as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East. This regional approach has encountered criticism within the social and political sciences. Indeed, the multi-disciplinary character of the regional approach has rarely promoted a creative dialogue between the different disciplines, but rather it has tended to create ‘parallel monologues’. This has resulted in further affirmation of disciplinary borders and has obstructed progress and innovative thinking. Specifically within the field of Turkish studies, much effort has been invested in constituting Turkey as a well-defined terrain of study and interest, and, as a result, significant issues that cut across national and regional as well as disciplinary borders have not received proper attention. Divisions, Connections and Movement aims to address these concerns by introducing a thematic approach to the objectives of regionally-based research in a *longue durée* perspective. The thematic approach offers a better basis for the development of interdisciplinary projects, by facilitating a culture of dialogue and cooperation that permits cross-fertilisation of ideas between different disciplinary terrains.

The themes that have been chosen – divisions, connections and movement – derive from the well-known regional concept of Turkey as a crossroads. The novelty of the project lies in creating an interdisciplinary approach within a well-defined theoretical framework for the analysis of these topics in a Turkish context. By applying interdisciplinary approaches in a diachronic perspective to the themes of divisions, connections and movement, the project aims to establish strong links between different fields of study. With this programme, the BIAA has chosen to promote and strengthen ties between the archaeology-related disciplines it has traditionally supported and those recently added to its remit, thus opening up pathways for new collaborations and creating innovative cross-discipline research and research networks. Rather than engaging in a geographically wider network, involving fewer disciplines or restricting the chronological focus, the project concentrates on Turkey and applies a multitude of disciplines over a long time frame.

The ‘idea’ for this programme on divisions, connections and movement arose from the observation that several disciplines currently represented within the BIAA’s research portfolio – including archaeology, ancient history, history, sociology, social science, social economy, political science and anthropology – use similar conceptual tools to investigate historical phenomena at different periods of time, from prehistory to the contemporary world.

The project comprises a series of related events – two workshops and one major conference – designed to initiate and promote critical dialogue between different disciplines. The intention is for participants in the workshops to focus on the exchange of ideas between different fields, to identify and explore common ground and differences between their various approaches, and thus advance the potential for collaboration.

The first workshop was entitled Bordered Places | Bounded Time: Reflexive Approaches to Understanding Societies. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Turkey from Archaeology, Anthropology, History and Political Science. Emma Baysal and Leonidas Karakatsanis present a more detailed report on this workshop later in this edition of *Heritage Turkey*, but, in short, the workshop studied the concept of borders through detailed reflection on the Turkish case and aimed to deepen understanding of the Turkish region by examining borders. ‘Turkey’ is approached in its widest sense, connoting both the modern state/nation/society, as a place imagined from different viewpoints, and the space/territory/land demarcated in pre- and proto-historic, Classical, Byzantine, Ottoman and contemporary times.

The second event will be the major conference Roads and Routes in Anatolia: Pathways of Communication from Prehistory to Seljuk Times, which will take place in Ankara in March 2014. For further details, see the short article by Leonidas Karakatsanis and me later in this volume.

Finally, a second workshop – In Motion | Movements, Crossings and Transfers in Turkey. From Prehistoric Heartlands to Modern Nation State – will take place in autumn 2014 and will be organised by me, Emma Baysal and Leonidas Karakatsanis. Participants will be asked to use a comparative approach to examine the ways in which the mobility of materials and products, people and ideas has affected social change at different periods. The final scope of the themes to be treated will depend in part on the results and outcomes of the other activities in the programme, but points of focus are bound to include population exchanges, relocation policies during the Ottoman empire, the contemporary mobility of nomadic communities, immigration and refugees as well as the phenomenon of transhumance. The diffusion of technologies, settlements and agricultural innovation throughout time are identified as likely valuable themes.

With this programme, the creation of new research networks should be enabled and encouraged, thus opening up pathways for new collaborations and the creation of innovative cross-discipline research.

