

Balkan Futures in 2015

Marc Herzog | British Institute at Ankara

doi:10.18866/biaa2015.110

This article sums up the past and final year of the Balkan Futures research programme, which was as busy as the preceding two. Balkan Futures is a three-year British Institute at Ankara research programme that is jointly run with the British School at Athens (BSA) with the collaboration of the École française d'Athènes (EfA). In a rather nostalgic coincidence, the programme finishes in the same year as the main co-investigators all move on from their respective institutions.

Beginning in 2012, Balkan Futures is funded by the British Academy's Strategic Award Programme and counts the London School of Economics as an affiliated partner. The programme's overall analytical focus is on contemporary themes of inter-regional development and cooperation in the Balkans. Through assessment of these processes in the region's post-Cold War setting, the programme aims to define untapped and fruitful areas of research as well as stimulate the emergence of new research networks. The programme's analytical field has been complemented with a more particular focus on Greece and Turkey, examining their roles and interests in a region where they have historically played a major part in shaping social and collective identities. Secondly, Balkan Futures has, throughout its lifetime, aimed to locate its analytical engagement within the larger processes of EU accession, membership and integration as well as with the region's different and overlapping historical legacies.

The programme's life-span has been marked by four milestone workshops that have dealt with themes such as Turkey's regional role and engagement, the nature and history of state-building processes across the Balkans and the treatment and reinterpretation of Balkan historical legacies and heritage. For the last workshop, *Contemporary Mobility and Changing Stereotypes in the Balkans*, it was decided that the central theme should be the formation and reformulation of collective selfhood, self-image and otherness in the present-day Balkans. This particular theme was knowingly chosen in the context of the migratory movements currently unfolding across the region and over the last decade. The workshop took place at the EfA in December 2014. Workshop participants were asked to reflect on how, since the opening of national borders in the 1990s, traditionally-rooted stereotypes and perceptions of otherness have been reconfigured within the region, as well as by the outside world. In this regard, there was an added emphasis on how the ideational construct and image of 'Europe' has changed and how national and transnational processes of EU accession and integration have affected this image-formation or transformation. While basing itself in the post-Cold War context, this Balkan Futures workshop also maintained the concern that has run consistently through the series of linking up present and future socio-political processes and developments affecting the region with an eye towards the critical influences of its Ottoman, post-Ottoman, socialist and post-socialist historical legacies. The analytical focus of the workshop also compared the formation of contemporary forms of otherness with those of the national 'Other' of the 19th and 20th centuries. The workshop's output will be published as an edited volume.

The other publication projects from the Balkan Futures milestone workshops are also picking up steam. The edited volume from the first workshop in 2012, *Balkan Heritages: Negotiating History and Culture*, edited by Maria Couroucli and Tchavdar Marinov, will be published shortly with Ashgate. It had its origins in the workshop, *The Balkans: From Academic Field to International Politics*, which took place at the BSA in 2012. The book deals with the relationships between heritage, history and politics in the Balkans. The third Balkan Futures workshop also initiated an edited volume, entitled *The State in the Balkans: Histories and Futures of Public Service Institutions*. The volume approaches the formation of state and public service institutions in the Balkans from different levels and angles, opening up a much-needed interdisciplinary dialogue on the complexity of state-society relations. The volume, edited by Balkan Futures Fellow Özge Dilaver and Daniel Knight, is currently being prepared.

Balkan Futures has also led to the exploration of new avenues of future research, covering methodological innovations such as using agent-based modelling in archaeological research and international collaborations on Balkan studies. With British, Turkish, Greek and German universities, BSA and British Institute at Ankara researchers have prepared a proposal for a large-scale project investigating Turkey's involvement in the EU by studying its relations with its Balkan EU-member neighbours. If successful, the project will extend Özge's research to broader dimensions and will benefit from both the Institute's long-standing strengths in historical and archaeological research in Thrace and its more recent achievements in contemporary socio-political issues of the region.

