

TyneMouth: an NCL Europe Bulletin



Doggerland News

Positioning Newcastle University
in a changing Europe

BY BERNHARD MALKMUS

While the kind of populism that brought about Brexit continues to spread into territories that previously appeared immune to it, Newcastle University has put a lot of effort into stemming the tide: research collaborations with ‘continental Europe’ have received a particular focus, student mobility across the continent has received special support to fend off the worst effects of the government’s decision to opt out of ERASMUS, and staff members from EU member states have been offered considerable administrative help with navigating the vicissitudes of post-Brexit bureaucracy.

NCL Europe as a so-called ‘regional interest group’ is part of these efforts.

It draws its intellectual and emotional motivation from the historical experience of Brexit, but it defines the geographical and cultural entity Europe decidedly not within the boundaries of the EU. We are a group of committed colleagues and PGR students at Newcastle University who are passionate about **working in, with and on Europe**. Among our central goals are: providing a thinking space and scientific community for negotiating the post-Brexit moment, celebrating cultural connections to ‘the continent’, fostering academic partnerships, and offering a platform for support of colleagues who have come to Newcastle from across Europe.

I have had the pleasure and privilege to serve as director of this group during the past semester. It is with great regret that I will not be able to see the initiatives brought on the way during that time come to fruition, since I will be moving on to a new position at Oxford University this autumn. But I am confident that all of you will grow together as a group with renewed energy under a new leadership. NCL Europe has formed under the circumstances of the pandemic, and one of the main challenges of the next academic year will be to find a suitable space on campus to move our activities outside the virtual space and design an effective structure of a wider committee and a focused steering group.

I hope you have managed to enjoy some of the activities offered during Europe Week in early May. While there has been some discussion in the committee about the best timing for future Europe Weeks, we have decided to keep it tied to Europe Day. While early May is, of course, not ideal in our academic calendar, unmooring it from the official Europe Day would have made alternatives appear unmotivated and arbitrary. EURO-VISIONS: A Postgraduate Cultural Café under the tutelage of our excellent internee this semester, Sophie Ellis, has been a great success. The idea behind this opportunity is the historical salon around 1800 as an alternative political space, in which ideas can be exchanged without restraints and thus help bring about a nascent form of a public sphere. (For more, see Sophie’s article.) In the meantime, plans for our high-profile lecture series EUROPEAN CONVERSATIONS are underway. Unfortunately, Philippe Sands, who was scheduled to open the series in autumn had to withdraw since he took on a guest professorship at Harvard. We will inform you about alternatives in due course.

For now, I would like to thank all of you for the good spirits and camaraderie during the past couple of years and wish you a restorative summer. I hope the continued efforts at NCL Europe will help make sure that Britain remains connected to ‘mainland Europe’ through the continental shelf, which once formed from the ancient Doggerland in what is now the North Sea, and doesn’t drift somewhere mid-Atlantic.

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The UK and post-Brexit environmental policy

Not much capacity, whatever the freedoms

BY ANTHONY R. ZITO

The royal assent this past June of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 creates a useful prompt for reflection. Generally speaking, the dynamics found in the United Kingdom's relationship with the European Union (EU) integration project also have held true in EU environmental policy. One of the Brexit ironies is that the UK had a considerable environmental policy role and influence. British environmental non-governmental organisations (ngos) were often the most influential green civil society bodies politicking at the European level. Although the UK government was often an 'Awkward Partner' in EU efforts to develop regulations and high standards in particular environmental areas, the UK shaped EU approaches to environmental governance. Note the input of Paul Younger (deceased) and his Newcastle University Engineering colleagues on the EU Directive governing waste from extractive industries, and of Philip Lowe (also deceased) and his Centre for Rural Economy colleagues in promoting agri-environmental reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy.

By contrast, with its purpose of revoking certain EU laws incorporated into UK law during the EU membership, the Retained EU Law Act is symptomatic of the drift and uncertainty that faces much of UK environmental policy at the moment. Certain Conservative leaders were pushing for a massive dismantling of these environmental protections, but the current Conservative government has opted for a relatively smaller culling that nevertheless includes instruments (e.g. certain environmental assessment tools) that experts view as still being valuable. This development obscures an even larger reality, namely that the UK Environment Act 2021 contained weaker policy principles and mechanisms for monitoring environmental implementation compared to the principles and mechanisms enshrined in EU legislation. Furthermore, after over a decade of austerity and political attention paid elsewhere, there is a real question about the capacity of the British state to protect the environment, particularly in areas such as chemicals where the work of the bespoke EU Chemicals Agency must now be covered by overstretched UK bodies. The often bracing role of the EU in buttressing environmental aims and standards somehow needs replacing in the current UK context.

'The often bracing role of the EU in buttressing environmental aims and standards somehow needs replacing in the current UK context'

Euro-Visions: a Postgraduate Cultural Café

Bringing the *salon* to the 'Toon'

BY SOPHIE ELLIS

Like many young Brits in 2016, I felt angry and disheartened in the wake of a vote which did not feel like my own. The EU referendum made so many of the connections that my peers and I had forged with Europe - exchange programmes, the Erasmus scheme, free travel - a thing of the past, and I felt our horizons shrink as a result. Eager to mitigate this hopelessness by engaging in productive resistance against Brexit and its ensuing policies, I strove to sustain my personal and academic engagement with Europe, which led me to the role of NCL Europe intern.

Primarily tasked with supporting the executive committee and facilitating NCL Europe Week, my tenure this year has seen me curate programmes of events, develop websites and promotional materials and launch a series of postgraduate fora entitled 'Euro-Visions: a Postgraduate Cultural Café'. Drawing upon the salon of the French enlightenment and the Kaffeehaus of turn-of-the-century Vienna, this series of events has created an informal sphere within which postgraduates may exchange ideas and Euro-visions, all while engaging with European cultures through their music and food. Incorporating the sharing of cultural artefacts as stimuli for discussion, the series has seen Italian photographs, German rock songs and a cappella performances provided by participants facilitate debate about the 'big issues' facing Europe today.

The series thus far has featured three cafés on the themes of 'space/place', 'hospitality' and 'sharing', respectively, all of which have elicited great demand from postgraduates across the university. The second of these cafés in particular drew upon my own research specialism: the representation of hospitality in contemporary French visual culture. Spanning ideas about the neoliberal disencouragement of hospitality and the need to extend our care towards strangers beyond the

human world, this café's lively conversation reiterated the need for spaces such as Euro-Visions which are hospitable to consensus and dissensus alike. For this emphasis on hospitality speaks to the ethos of the Euro-Visions series and indeed NCL Europe as a whole, which welcomes colleagues from all schools across the university and is hospitable to their myriad perspectives working **in, with and on Europe**.



If the Euro-Visions series sustains its momentum moving into the 2023/24 academic year, we envisage that it will become a fully self-sufficient entity which is led by postgraduates, for postgraduates, with members opting to facilitate individual sessions according to their research interests. If we are to echo the positive feedback gleaned from those who attended the first three cafés, our aim to create a public sphere on campus which unites academic, civic, social and cultural interests is certainly underway. As I graduate from the role of NCL Europe Intern this Summer, I am heartened to have planted the seeds of this vibrant postgraduate forum and hope that it continues to grow into a hub of discussion, connection and hospitality with Europe at its fore.



The Journey and the Grief

Spotlight on an outstanding
NCL Europe Week Event

BY GÖNÜL BOZOĞLU

Dr Gönül Bozoğlu, Lecturer in Heritage, Gallery and Museum Studies, organised a screening of her documentary film with Dr Evripidis Karydis, Lecturer in Film Practice at the Tyneside Cinema as part of NCL Europe's programme for NCL Europe Week 2023.

The Journey and the Grief is about the memory culture of the mass forced displacement of people between Greece and Turkey in 1922/23, after the conflicts that followed the Balkan Wars and World War I. The film follows two female participants, whose names are Chrysa and Chrysa, descendants of the Greek community of Makri (now Fethiye, in Turkey). They make an emotional journey to their ancestral home from Nea Makri (literally, 'New Makri') near Athens, where refugees from Makri settled and established a new home 100 years earlier. During the journey to Turkey, the two friends reflect on their effects of the forced displacement on their family histories and commemorate their ancestors' struggles.

The event was also supported by the Society of Modern Greek Studies (SMGS). It was followed by discussion and Q&A with Prof Violela Hionidou, Professor of Modern European History (chair), Dr Dimitris Skleparis, Lecturer in Politics of Security and the directors of the films. Over 100 people joined the event and contributed to lively discussion, including the memory and politics of 1922 in wider view that for example linked to the recent 'refugee crisis' in the Aegean, and the very personal perspectives that are represented in the film.



Find out more:

- Read our **[blog](#)** rounding up the best events from #NCLEuropeWeek2023
- Consult our **[webpage](#)** to keep updated of NCL Europe news
- Request to be added to the **[NCL Europe mailing list](#)** to be informed of upcoming events