

eurocentric historical studies, situating “Othering” discourses against a “provincialised Europe” and a “tunnel history” of the coloniser’s model of the world, to uncover “people without history” and to provide a more contextualised historical understanding of eurocentric geographical knowledge production. The study will attempt to unravel universalised narratives of diffusionist historicism, heroic expansionist visions of explorations, and Enlightenment rationalist accounts of accumulating “objective” scientific facts, arguing for a more critical understanding of imperial hegemony and dispossession through rewriting local histories, commodifying local knowledge and exhibiting a stage-world of the “Other” by Hungarian geographers. The total absence of such critical historical studies in Hungary runs contrary to a recent upsurge of attempts to popularise geography by a discursive return to national achievements in expeditions.

Session: [123] Breaking new ground: postcolonial approaches to Hungarian geography

Róbert **Gyóri** (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest)

Geography and state protection: the political colonisation of Hungarian geography after the 1956 revolution

After World War II, Hungary became a part of the Soviet occupation zone, with a brief provisional period of multi-party elections between 1945 and 1948, followed by the violent establishment of the communist regime. This marked a radical turning point not only in the country’s history, but also in the development of Hungarian science. The “Sovietisation” of Hungarian geography began in 1949, but gained new momentum after the defeat of the 1956 revolution. All scientific institutions were purged, and this purification was conducted by entitled communists without any former affiliation to geography. By the end of the 1950s, most Hungarian geography departments had received new lecturers with fast acquired doctorates. Most of them had been émigrés, some had studied at Soviet scientific institutions, while others had been high ranking officers of either the State Protection Authorities (dissolved in 1956), or special branches of the police. Who were they? How did they manage to get scientific credentials? What did they teach? How could they produce scientific results? The aim of this paper is to enhance our understanding of how science was regulated by a colonising totalitarian regime, and how Hungarian geography in particular was colonised as a result of Soviet-era transformations.

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Territorial revision as a civilising mission in interwar Hungary

After being traumatised by the immense territorial losses resulting from the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty, Hungary’s political leaders, alongside a vast majority of Hungarian scholars, considered territorial revision as a major goal. Geographers played a crucial role in this process by creating a wide array of arguments to provide scientific justification for reestablishing the pre-1920 boundaries. One of these arguments presented the Carpathian Basin as the scene of a grandiose civilising mission, with Hungarians destined to bring both civilisation and the achievements of the modern age to other nationalities who were, from the Hungarian perspective, “at a lower cultural level”. The aim of this paper is to reveal how this narrative emerged, how it was instrumentalised and expressed through the language and methods of geography, and how it implied that the fulfilling of Hungarian revisionary goals should be of crucial interest to the entire continent, and to the flourishing of European civilisation.

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Pseudo-photogrammetry and the touristic imagination

In 1864 Francis Galton presented a series of stereographic slides depicting ‘mountainous regions’ to the Royal Geographical Society. These slides were unlike the vast majority of