

GEI-Kolloqium am 7.11.2018 um 17.30 Uhr:

The School Sector and Educational Media in Times of Populist Politics: Examples from India and Ukraine

Yuliya Yurchuk, Södertörn University, Huddinge, Sweden, and Anil Sethi, Pokhrama Foundation, Bihar, India

In various countries in Europe and beyond, populist political parties and movements – left- and right-wing alike – have enjoyed growing popularity in recent years. Many of these movements and parties have reverted to a nationalist rhetoric, pretending to represent the voice of “the people” more authentically than “the elites” do. They challenge established discourses of the past as well as social values and attempt to partially replace them with allegedly more authentic versions. The education sector and educational media are also affected by these developments. Based on empirical research, our guests will illuminate the situation in their two countries – Ukraine and India – that are characterized by varying socio-cultural, political, economic, and historical frameworks.

Historian Yuliya Yurchuk traces how populist discourse penetrates the school sector. The main focus is on the public appropriation of populist discourses and attempts of their implementation in the Ukrainian education sector. Taking two Ukrainian textbooks on civic and family education as examples she concludes that populist politics influence the education sector in a subtle way – in some cases, Yuliya Yurchuk argues, these populist discourses can be filtered and stopped, in other cases not.

Historian, history educationalist and NGO activist Anil Sethi focuses on history textbooks currently being used by schools affiliated to examination boards in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan states and on some of the literature for the ‘moral development’ of the young, produced by publicists of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, a radical Hindu organization) who may in fact be termed “pulp writers”. In order to demonstrate that their production is “populist pulp”, he will contrastingly examine textbooks developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training after 2005. In so doing, Anil Sethi will construct an argument about the place of RSS-led “populist pulp” in a vibrant democracy – even as democratic forums and practices are sought to be curtailed by the current populist Indian government.

In-house discussant Dirk Sadowski will subsequently comment the two papers, analysing differences and common grounds, and linking the papers to research at the GEI.

Biographies

Anil Sethi has taught Modern South Asian History and History Education for thirty-six years around the world, notably at Delhi University, Delhi, Osaka University of Foreign Studies, Osaka and the Azim Premji University, Bangalore. He has also worked for the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi. He has written for, and helped develop, History textbooks of the NCERT, published from 2006 to 2008. At present he is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Pokhrama Foundation, a not-for-profit that is engaged in establishing schools for disadvantaged children in rural Bihar. Anil has a PhD from the University of Cambridge, UK on ‘The Creation of

Religious Identities in the Punjab, circa 1850-1920’.

Yuliya Yurchuk is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of History and Contemporary Studies at Södertörn University, Sweden. She is the author of the book “Reordering of Meaningful Worlds: Memory of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in Post-Soviet Ukraine”. Her ongoing research deals with memory and religion in Ukraine funded by the Baltic Sea Foundation. She specializes in memory studies, the study of nationalism in East European countries, and postcolonial studies. Her recent publications include “Special Volumes on Memory of Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists” (*Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 2017 and 2018) (co-edited with Andreas Umland); “Memory Politics in Contemporary Ukraine. Reflections from the post-colonial perspective” (*Memory Studies*, 2017) (co-authored with Barbara Törnquist-Plewa); “Reclaiming the Past, Confronting the Past: OUN-UPA Memory Politics and Nation-Building in Ukraine (1991-2016)”, in *War and Memory in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus*, ed. Julie Fedor, Markku Kangaspuro, Jussi Lassila, and Tatiana Zhurzhenko, Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2017.