

CALL FOR PAPERS

VERA Conference “*Know Your Rights*”: *Marginalities, Minorities and the Travails of Democracy*.

27-28 May 2020, Online via Zoom link

100 years after the Treaty of Versailles linked the protection of minorities to the establishment of democratic regimes in eastern Europe, minorities and marginalised groups are coming under pressure at the same time as understandings of democracy are being reevaluated. Across the world, populist regimes are targeting ethnic, racial and confessional minorities, migrants and refugees, and LGBT groups and individuals, not only in rhetoric, but also in legal development and administrative actions. In Russia, the constitutional position of national territories and of non-territorial ethnic groups has gradually eroded since the early 1990s. Current regimes such as those in Russia or Turkey are increasingly adopting ‘civilizational’ discourses which explicitly oppose the assumed universalism of European values, while within Europe there are strong movements looking to redefine European values. Under such discourses, sexual, ethnic and religious minorities are often represented as presenting a challenge to alternative civilizational orders. On the other hand, Western assumptions of a hegemonic liberal values system are seen as threatening to sovereignty and alternative values.

Academic research may have been slow to respond to these developments, but recently flourishing research approaches have much to offer for our understanding of them: New Imperial History, border studies, biopolitics, hybridity, and migration research all offer ways of making sense of current phenomena. What is needed is more integrated and interdisciplinary approaches which can make sense of rapidly changing global and local environments in relation to minorities.

This conference will examine the past, present and future of minorities in the post-Soviet and broader world, how states accommodate difference, and how minorities organize themselves. Proposals for presentations of around 15 minutes may be submitted from any discipline, and interdisciplinary proposals are especially welcome. Written papers are not required for the conference, but can be circulated in advance if requested.

Keynote speaker for the conference will include Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova (Higher School of Economics, St Petersburg) on Disability in the Russian Public Sphere, and David Smith (Glasgow University) on Post-Soviet Minority Rights.

In order to be considered for inclusion in the conference, **please send an abstract of your talk of no more than 300 words, together with a biographical statement of no more than 100 words which should include your current position and affiliation, no later than 4 pm on Wednesday 6th May 2020. Applications should be sent by email, with the subject line ‘VERA Conference 2020’, to Matias Hänninen, matias.hanninen@uef.fi.**

The conference is organized by the VERA Centre for Russian and Borders, which coordinates and promotes the substantial research on Russia and Borders at the University of Eastern Finland.