CAT 2020
Press release

New project ideas to tackle societal challenges funded by European network

Results of the 2020 Constructive Advanced Thinking (CAT) programme

The Constructive Advanced Thinking (CAT) initiative aims to foster networks of excellent early career researchers committed to developing new ideas in order to understand and tackle current or emerging societal challenges. CAT was incubated within NetIAS in 2019 and is supported by 11 European Institutes for Advanced (IAS) Study. The programme provides travel funds for an international and interdisciplinary teams of three to five early career researchers, possibly including a stakeholder, in order to advance constructive thinking and stimulate discussion.

In the latest call for applications (deadline for applications was 1 September 2020), three innovative, young ideas have been selected:

“Socio-ecological reshaping of European Cities and Metropolitan Areas”

Jochen HACK (PI – TU Darmstadt), Carlos Oliveira Cruz (Universidade de Lisboa), Rieke Hansen (Hochschule Geisenheim) & Andrea Nóbrega Carriquiry (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Our early-career network addresses pressing societal challenges of living and ecology in urban agglomerations. Societies in European cities are faced with environmental problems related to the quality of air and water, biodiversity loss, and advancing climate change, but at the same time need to tackle social-economic issues such as social cohesion and justice or the need to develop sustainable economic and mobility systems. All these challenges place complex demands on the use and functionality of urban space and infrastructures. Nature-based Solutions (NbS), such as Green Infrastructures (GI), are expected to play a major role in solving these issues through a redefinition and amplification of its functionality in urban areas. Based on our broad experience from case studies of NbS and together with stakeholders outside academia, we will cross current frontiers of knowledge regarding key issues of upscaling and mainstreaming of NbS by developing highly innovative ideas for improved multi-functionality, integral cost-benefit sharing and diverse stakeholder engagement. By connecting various schools of thought with individual research foci of the team members and applying it in an integrated manner to different case study cities at different spatial
scales, new knowledge in terms of Technical knowledge (evidence base for NbS functionality / efficiency), Policy knowledge (governance tools and strategies for upscaling green infrastructure), and Transformative knowledge (leverage points, transformative actions and methods) will be generated. The integration and transferability of these knowledge dimensions across case studies (e.g. with different climatological, political, social contexts) and spatial scales (building - neighborhood - city-wide-level) will be conceptually addressed and then applied to develop policy recommendations regarding upscaling and mainstreaming of urban GI in European cities. Stakeholders will be interactively integrated at the network meetings through video conferences and interviews. A web page disseminating outputs from research and stakeholder involvement will be a central deliverable.

“Reconstituting Publics through Remembering Transitions: Facilitating Critical Engagement with the 1980-90s on Local and Transnational Scales”

Ksenia ROBBE (PI - University of Groningen), Agnieszka Mrozik (Polish Academy of Sciences), Andrei Zavadski (HU Berlin) & Alexander Formozov (Deutsch-Russischer Austausch e.V.)

Three decades after the radical transformations of the USSR and its satellites began in the 1980s—1990s, the topic of ‘transitioning’ from socialist states to liberal democracies remains highly contentious in Central and Eastern Europe. Over the last decade, the transitional past has been increasingly instrumentalized, particularly by nationalist-populist actors and ‘memory entrepreneurs’, and this process has been paralleled by their opponents’ construction of counter-memories. In the context of heated contestations of memory, with high political stakes, spaces for dialogue are rapidly shrinking and public spheres are becoming increasingly ‘disconnected’. The project addresses this societal issue, drawing on our research expertise in post-socialist cultures and politics, and combining approaches of the diverse (inter)disciplinary fields we work in and our knowledge of different societies and languages. By engaging with memory practices beyond the polarized versions on theoretical and practical levels, we aim to develop strategies for facilitating more cohesive and at the same time more critical practices of remembering that have the potential to lead to dialogue and form reflective communities. The combination of methods and approaches which we draw upon from our respective fields of research – cultural analysis of discourse and affect, critical memory studies, public history, (digital) ethnography, intersectional study of gender and generations – forms a solid ground for achieving the project’s aim. The comparative approach will allow for developing strategies and policies on a transnational (European) level based on trans-local resonances rather than top-down scripts. The participation of the NGO DRA (German-Russian Exchange), based in Berlin, Germany, with their experience of connecting different social sectors and policy makers, and close collaboration with the European Solidarity Center in Gdansk, Poland, and the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center in Yekaterinburg, Russia, will facilitate the execution of empirical research and its translation into concrete policy recommendations.
“Light as a key predictor of human health and well-being: Robust evidence and translation to public health”

Manuel SPITSCHE (PI - University of Oxford), Laura Kervezee (Leiden University), Renske Lok (Stanford University), Ray Najjar (Duke-NUS Medical School) & Elise McGlashan (Monash University)

Light exposure is a key driver for synchronising rhythms in our bodies and brains with the external 24-hour light-dark cycle. In turn, light exposure at the wrong biological time of day can disrupt our inner clock and lead to sleep loss, which has knock-on effects on our physical and mental health and well-being. Additionally, light is important for normal development of the eye, with low levels of light exposure being associated with myopia. With increasing knowledge from basic laboratory findings on the wide-reaching effects of light exposure on human health and well-being, it is time to apply this knowledge to the real world, guiding policymakers and other stakeholders. In this interdisciplinary NETIAS CAT project, five internationally recognised early-career scientists come together to address these topics, with a view to (1) develop a unified scientific framework for understanding effects of light exposure on human health and well-being, (2) develop strategies for making the existing and future scientific evidence base as robust as possible and (3) will develop strategies to communicate the complex scientific knowledge to different audiences.

During their project duration (up to three years), the groups will be hosted for a short research stay (up to two weeks) by five to six different European IAS. More information about the programme can be found online.

We are looking forward to exciting discussions and collaboration with the groups of Jochen, Ksenia and Manuel!

The 2020 CAT programme is a cooperative project by the following European IAS:

**INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY**
**CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY**
Institute for Advanced Study CEU, Budapest

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**Israel Institute for Advanced Studies**
Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem
Montpellier Advanced Knowledge Institute on Transitions, Montpellier

Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, Amsterdam

Paris Institute for Advanced Study, Paris

Scienza Nuova, Torino

Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study, Uppsala
Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Berlin

ZiF
Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung, Bielefeld

Zukunftskolleg

Zukunftskolleg Konstanz