

Written Interview by Tatia Tavkhelidze

Fellow at Leibniz ScienceCampus, Eastern Europe – Global Area (EEGA)

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1. Please present yourself and your research project.

I am Tatia Tavkhelidze, a Ph.D. holder in Philosophy. My research interests encompass politics, cultural integration, racism, ethnocentrism, and cultural othering. My current research project focuses on ethnocentrism in Georgia. I aim to explore the perceptions of the ethnic majority and minorities towards each other, uncover existing stereotypes and prejudices, and identify shared cultural values and customs.

2. How did you come up with your research project?

Over the past four years, I have delved into the realm of cultural issues and discovered that the case of Georgia remains largely unexplored in many aspects. Particularly, there is a dearth of empirical data concerning ethnocentrism, a gap I intend to address through my research.

3. How did you get to know EEGA ScienceCampus?

I first encountered EEGA ScienceCampus in Passau during my MA studies as an exchange student. I actively participated in various activities there. When I decided to pursue my postdoctoral studies at the University of Leipzig, it was my professor, Gert Pickel, who recommended that I apply for the fellowship of EEGA.

4. What are the links between your research project and EEGA ScienceCampus?

One of the research fields of the Science Campus is Eastern Europe, with a focus on cultural issues. My research, which centers on Georgia, a recognized Eastern European country, and its ethnocentrism, aligns well with the requirements of this research area.

5. What is the EEGA ScienceCampus for you?

The EEGA ScienceCampus offers an opportunity to advance in the academic field by enriching academic knowledge, developing an interesting research project, enhancing the list of publications, meeting interesting people, and establishing valuable new personal contacts.

6. The benefit of EEGA ScienceCampus to me is multifaceted. I successfully finalized my research project, which I intend to pursue further for my postdoctoral studies to earn the title of professor. Additionally, I published two articles in the field of my research interest (One is being in the phase of typescripting). Moreover, I had the opportunity to meet individuals who share a similar interest in the research field of Georgian ethnocentrism, allowing me to exchange knowledge with them.

Personal Statement:

My research fellowship at the EEGA Science Campus began in August 2023 and concluded in January 2024. The primary objective of this fellowship was to finalize my research project, which I intended to submit to the German Academic Foundation (DFG) to proceed with my postdoctoral research and eventually acquire the title of Professor (Habilitation). From the very first day of this fellowship, I dedicated myself to working intensively on my research project on a daily basis. This commitment not only allowed me to complete the project but also enabled me to take the initial steps in recruiting interviewees and conducting interviews. Personal interviews with ethnic Georgians and individuals from ethnic minorities in Georgia are a crucial research method in my project. During this fellowship, I was able to conduct certain interviews that helped me understand the direction the research could take and anticipate potential research results.

In addition to the progress made in my research project, I also wrote two articles within my research fields and submitted them for publication. One of these articles has already been published in the "Caucasus Analytical Digest," and the second one is in the final phase of publication in the British Journal of Muslim Studies. Beyond scientific progress, I enriched my knowledge on various aspects through workshops offered within the EEGA Science Campus. One workshop that stands out was about academic publishing and writing skills. In addition to knowledge sharing, I had the opportunity to participate in two international conferences during this fellowship. At these conferences, I presented my research project and received valuable feedback.

Networking was another crucial aspect of this fellowship. I met new people from different countries, found individuals interested in researching ethnic minorities, and shared valuable experiences and viewpoints. In summary, this fellowship has been a cornerstone for me to advance in my academic career and pursue my future dream of achieving a professorship.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the EEGA Science Campus for providing me with the invaluable opportunity to engage in this fellowship. The support, resources, and intellectual environment offered by the campus have been instrumental in my academic and professional growth. I am particularly grateful for the chance to finalize my research project, publish articles, participate in conferences, and expand my network. This fellowship has been a pivotal experience that has significantly contributed to my academic journey. I look forward to continuing my collaboration with the EEGA Science Campus and contributing further to the advancement of knowledge in my field.