Welcome to the guest lecture with

Prof. Oksana Dovhopolova, Odessa Mechnikov National University (Ukraine)

Time and Place: 10 December 2019, 13.15-15.00, LUX A127.

BABYN YAR AS A PLACE OF MEMORY AND CONFLICT

On 29 September 2019, two memorial marches were organised in Kyiv, both devoted to the mass executions in Babyn Yar, one of the most heinous acts of the Holocaust on the territory of Ukraine. The paradox was that the two marches were held separately. The nature of this memory conflict become more comprehensible if we look at Babyn Yar through the prism of the concept of heritage which brings to fore strategies of exclusion and inclusion. In the context of the exclusionary heritage narrative, the symbol of Babyn Yar caters for ethnic Ukrainian, Jewish, Roma versions and promotes competitive victimhood. Suffice to say that currently 30 marked places where people come to honor “their” victims are located in Babyn Yar. While significant layers of Ukrainian history are marginalised, various actors present the local Jewish heritage as a concern of Israel rather than of the modern day’s Ukraine. However, the symbolic weight of Babyn Yar for Ukrainian historical culture becomes obvious also with the postwar tragic history of Babyn Yar in mind. Efforts of the Soviet authorities to silence the crimes committed there led to the waves of legal and cultural-artistic resistance movements in Ukraine, USA, and Israel.

As an expert actively involved into elaboration of the conceptual framework of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center, Oksana Dovhopolova argues that instead of being a site of conflict Babyn Yar could become a place of all-Ukrainian memory representing the inclusive historical narrative and the concept of a future multinational Ukrainian state.

Oksana Dovgopolova is Professor of Philosophy at Odessa Mechnikov National University. Since 2014 she organises and supervises a range of educational projects in collaboration with museums in Odessa. Since 2017 she has been working for “Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center” as an expert in Historical Memory, and since 2018 as a Memory Lab curator.