



HILARY 2019 SEESOX SEMINAR SERIES

Comparative diasporas: Reflections on South East Europe

WEEK 1 Wednesday 16 January

Diaspora entrepreneurs and contested states

Maria Koinova (University of Warwick)

This presentation introduces findings from the European Research Council Starting Grant “Diasporas and Contested Sovereignty” directed by Dr. Maria Koinova at Warwick University (2012-2017). Why do conflict-generated diasporas mobilize in moderate and contentious ways? How do contexts affect such mobilizations? Koinova’s work evolving from this project challenges statist theories analysing the relationship between diasporas, home-states and host-states. The talk presents a novel conceptualization of four types of diaspora entrepreneurs based on their socio-spatial positionality, their linkages to Kosovo, Palestine, and Nagorno-Karabakh as *de facto* states, and a typological theory featuring causal pathways through which these diaspora entrepreneurs mobilize.

WEEK 2 Wednesday 23 January

Transnational citizenship: Views of Serbia’s active diaspora

Tena Prelec (University of Sussex)

Members of the Serbian diaspora, especially those vocal in representing their home country’s views, have previously been regarded as leaning towards nationalistic stances. The results of recent elections, however, indicate that today a rather different situation might be present. The study that will be presented in this seminar confirms this indication. The analysis sheds light on the political views of Serbian citizens abroad, discussing the results of two surveys conducted around the 2017 Serbian presidential elections. Three main sets of findings concerning the attitudes of the ‘active diaspora’ (diaspora members who took part, or wanted to take part, in the voting process) are outlined. First, there is a decisive rejection of the course the country has taken. Second, it is shown that concerns about governance top by far geopolitical issues. Finally, respondents have highlighted a wide-ranging set of issues concerning the voting procedure, which have hindered their ability to participate in the vote. They are used as a basis to formulate recommendations for a better electoral process for the diaspora. The overall findings indicate that Serbia’s active diaspora might have the potential to participate more vigorously in the political life of the country and that, if emboldened, its weight in future elections could be much higher. Next to outlining the results of the study on Serbian voters abroad, the seminar will also touch upon the current provisions and trends in terms of the diaspora vote in the countries of the Western Balkans from a comparative perspective.

WEEK 3 Wednesday 30 January

Contested diasporic identities in times of crises: The case of the Other Bulgaria in the UK **Elena Genova (University of Nottingham)**

The *Other Bulgaria* is a term deeply embedded in the Bulgarian socio-political discourse in relation to outward migratory flows, which have seen a 10% decrease of the country's population between 1992 and 2012 alone (OECD, 2012). This phenomenon is contextualised in wider European processes of intensified integration, leading to the EU's first and second wave of Eastern enlargement. However, such cosmopolitan trends have always been in tension with nationalist sentiments, the latter becoming more prominent in the last few years. While the absence from one's country of origin and the presence in a host society has always been equally problematic (Triandafyllidou, 2006; Pratsinakis 2017), in the current climate of ongoing crises (Sierp and Karner, 2017), it unlocks a discursive space where migrants, with Bulgarians being no exception, become exposed to processes of double-sided othering. In such a context, migratory projects and migrants' identities become inevitably questioned.

Respectively, this presentation focuses on the case of Bulgarian migrants in the UK to explore contested diasporic identities in times of crises. In doing so, I draw on longitudinal fieldwork carried out between summer 2011 and 2017 that consists of 62 interviews and participant observation. Consequently, the presentation argues that Bulgarians in the UK reinvent their (national) identities to counterbalance the double-sided othering they are exposed to in both home and host societies. To make sense of their complex positionalities, I propose a tentative typology of identification routes, which vary according to strength of the link with the homeland and the host society. Ultimately, the paper critically examines the characteristics of each ideal type, arguing that they offer an insightful understanding of agency in times of crises.

WEEK 4 Wednesday 6 February

Fragmented communities: Diaspora politics of the UK's Turkish-speaking communities **Mustafa Cakmak (Keele University)**

In the context of an increasingly transnational world highlighted by proliferating population movements, diasporas have been reconsidered and reconceptualised as agents of change. Diasporas have become crucial political actors with their contribution to the financial and political transformation in their home countries as well as their engagement in policy making in their host countries. In the case of the Turkish-speaking diaspora, there have been noticeable transformations in Turkish democracy in the last 5 years which has been affecting social cohesion and dynamics of its diaspora in Europe. The controversial coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 and the constitutional change in 2017 has led to the collapse of the country into an authoritarian regime. Autocratic measures in Turkey suffocates the opposition, polarises Turkish society in homeland and diaspora which adds new layers to an already highly fragmented community. There is a new significant wave of migration, added to the already existing Turkish-speaking diaspora in Europe. Solely in October 2018, a total of 2,280 Turkish citizens applied for asylum in European countries in addition to 17,300 who have already applied and are waiting for the conclusion of their asylum process. As a response to the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey, a broader range of groups that were predominantly apolitical subjects started to participate in the political sphere in European diaspora trying to transform Turkey from abroad. This research explores the current dynamics of the Turkish-speaking diaspora and their political engagement from a historical perspective in the UK context. It also investigates the Turkish state's involvement with its diaspora and dissidents in the UK. The first dimension gives an overview of long-distance nationalism and political engagement of major political groups among the Turkish-speaking diaspora. The second dimension focuses on the Turkish state's

involvement with diaspora in the UK and how it tries to mobilise diaspora as a leverage tool while negotiating European countries as well as intimidating its dissidents globally.

WEEK 5 Wednesday 13 February

Social protection and return migration: The Albanian-Greek migration corridor **Zana Vathi (Edge Hill University)**

Based on qualitative research with migrants, their children and key informants in Albania, this presentation will investigate the experiences of return migrants with social protection and their positionality towards social protection stakeholders. Return migration to Albania has intensified in the past few years due to the economic crisis in different European countries where many Albanians have migrated to since the beginning of the 1990s. Findings of multisited fieldwork testify to the centrality of social protection in the process of migrants' relocation to the country of origin. Due to the trans-national and trans-temporal dimensions of the return process, access to and overall experiences of social protection are mediated by different understandings and regulation of the thresholds of vulnerability, need and welfare held by return migrants, locals, policy makers and service providers. These staggered understandings and thresholds are embedded in an observed trans-national and trans-local developmental gap between the country of immigration and country of origin where migrants relocate to. Resource environment in the context of return is, therefore, characterised by cognitive and material discontinuities at trans-national and trans-temporal level. Experiences of these discontinuities impact on returnees' social protection strategies and have significant implications for their social and economic positioning upon return to the country of origin.

WEEK 6 Wednesday 20 February

Gendering remittances: Women's empowerment in Albania **Julie Vullnetari (University of Southampton)**

Remittances are arguably the most researched dimension of the Migration-Development relationship. With over US\$460 billion remitted to low and middle-income countries in 2017, they have captured the imagination of policy makers, especially those involved in international development, for their huge potential for development. However, little attention has been paid, in both academic research and policy circles, to how these remittances and the remitting process itself, might be gendered. Drawing on research in Albania, this talk will show how gender relations in sending countries shape the sending, receiving and decision-making around the utilisation of remittances. This is important if we are to understand how power structures and relations are negotiated between men and women in the process of migration, thus helping formulate policies that nurture gender equality and women's empowerment. The talk will draw on research carried out in Albania during 2007-2009 for a multi-country project on Gendering Remittances and Development commissioned by UN-INSTRAW (United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) – now UN-WOMEN, and funded by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme).

WEEK 7 Wednesday 27 February

Articulating identity options: Eastern and Southern European migrants in Britain **Laura Morosanu (University of Sussex)**

Identification processes amongst migrants and their descendants have long constituted an important topic of research. In particular, scholars have debated the extent of choice, ethnic

minorities have in expressing various identities, and the role of categorisation and racialisation therein (Waters 1990; Song 2003). This paper adds new insight to this literature by examining the meaning and salience of ethnic identity for ‘white’ European migrants in Britain. Drawing on over 70 in-depth interviews, it compares East and South Europeans from four countries (Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain) who tend to see, embrace or downplay ethnic identity in markedly different ways. Ethnic identity turned out to be relatively unproblematic for South Europeans, who could ‘choose’ to emphasise their Italianness or Spanishness, regarding it as a source of pride and comfort, when they did. This was less so for East Europeans, more likely to articulate ethnicity’s importance in negative ways, underlining its ‘given’ aspect, hard to conceal or escape. These tendencies seemed reinforced when participants downplayed the salience of ethnic identity in favour of cosmopolitan or European ones, which were mobilised to assert openness or, alternatively, overcome a stigmatised ethnicity. I relate the different ways in which East and South European migrants articulated their identities to the British context of reception, and the positive or negative discourses surrounding specific ethnicities and migrant groups. I also discuss how the EU Referendum potentially reshuffled these hierarchies and representations. The findings extend research on ‘ethnic options’ with insights from the experience of ‘white’ migrants who find themselves differently perceived in British society.

WEEK 8 Wednesday 6 March

Diasporas and Peace Mediations in Home States: Cypriots abroad and reunification attitudes

Neophytos Loizides (University of Kent)

This presentation will address the role of diasporas in peace mediations taking place in their ‘home states’. It utilizes for the first-time quantitative data from two large-n surveys of Cypriots in the island and abroad. We focus on diaspora attitudes towards the current power-sharing negotiations in Cyprus and specifically the prospect for a rotating presidency between the two communities. We examine whether diaspora status has an impact itself in rejecting or endorsing such proposals and compare the general demographic and attitudinal profiles of diaspora Cypriots to the two communities in the island. Then we examine possible immigrant country variation based on the political system of the ‘host country’ by comparing Cypriots residing in majoritarian states (e.g. Greece and the UK) with Cypriots in countries experiencing some degree of power-sharing (e.g. Canada, Australia or South Africa). Finally, we explore the impact of direct or indirect contact, the role of diaspora community membership, and victimization status (e.g. refugee experience). We conclude by investigating the preferred modes of participation of diaspora members themselves in a future reunited Cyprus including constitutional guarantees for citizenship and voting rights. While a novel practice, we argue that the inclusion of diasporas and their views in future peace settlements is essential due to their increasing interconnectedness and potentially positive influence.

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