

Migration in and out of East and Southeast Europe: Values, Networks, Well-Being



The third Annual Conference of the Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS), Regensburg, took place on July 2-4, 2015. It was titled “Migration in and out of East and Southeast Europe: Values, Networks, Well-Being,” and sought to emphasize an interdisciplinary approach with regard to the study of migration.

The two introductory keynote lectures contributed to this aim by reflecting on the phenomenon of migration from both a historical and economic perspective. The

first speakers, LESLIE PAGE MOCH and LEWIS H. SIEGELBAUM (both East Lansing), examined the historical dimensions of migration by analyzing internal migration in Russia during the 20th century. They employed the dual concepts of regimes (the policies, procedures, and infrastructure designed to shape human movement) and repertoires (the range of social, cultural, and economic/routine practices available to people who move, or avoid moving), suggesting a tension in the interrelation of these two concepts. The following discussion emphasized the need to concentrate on categorizing regimes and repertoires in order to apply these concepts to fields outside of migration.

In the second keynote address HERBERT BRÜCKER (Nuremberg / Bamberg) presented an econometric approach to determine the factors that drive migration within Europe. He stressed the importance of the relevant alternative destination countries available to potential migrants but also for receiving countries when explaining East-West migration in the context of the EU’s Eastern Enlargement and the financial crisis. Furthermore, his research made clear that the recent emphasis on the relevance of migrants’ networks may have been exaggerated. The resulting discussion focused on the inclusion of institutional factors in such econom(etr)ic models.

The first panel of the conference addressed the issue of return migration. In her paper, SARA BERNARD (Regensburg) demonstrated how Yugoslavia’s policy of reintegration as a strategy of development failed and hence contributed to the de-legitimization of the Yugoslav federation. This de-legitimization in turn gave way to the establishment of new ethno-national states. After the presentation the role of the local governments in the process of reintegration and the problem of non-invested remittances were discussed.

In the panel's second paper SARA REITH (Mainz) presented an anthropological analysis of return migration in Russia. Using biographical interviews she observed that values and attitudes gained in the West made it difficult for returnees to re-integrate into a society they no longer recognized. The following discussion explored the limits of data concerning the truthfulness within respondents’ statements and questioned whether these cases can be seen as stories of success or failure.

The final paper of the panel examined the economic performance of return migrants in the Kyrgyz Republic through an estimation of their wage earnings and employment choice. KAMALBEK KARYMSHAKOV (Bishkek) has found that returnees do not exhibit high performance and therefore migration does not have favorable long-term economic development implications. The resulting discussion highlighted the problem of self-selection and also addressed further methodological issues.

The second panel was devoted to the reintegration of migrants. ROBERT PICHLER (Berlin) began the discussion by reflecting on the “concept of return” making use of case studies in former socialist countries. He highlighted the complexity of migration and the ambiguity of terms like “home” and “return”. Consequently, he noted the need for new terms like “circular migration” and “home polygamy” to more accurately describe migration in a globalized world.

This general perspective was enriched by GIOTA TOURGELI (Tripoli) in her paper about homecoming in the case of Greek-Americans. She highlighted the fact that the so called “Brooklidhes”, whether exalted or scorned by their fellow countrymen, helped to enhance economic activities in the Peloponnese by taking the advantage of the wealth and experiences gained while being in America. The discussion that followed revolved around gender and seasonal migration as well as the sampling and other practical aspects of this research.

Finally, SELMA POROBIĆ (Sarajevo) shifted the focus of return migration to the case of Bosnia. She argued that the sustainability of a return decision is a local phenomenon and significantly connected to the strength of the ties and the benefits of social relations in the returnee’s community. The participants then debated about formal and informal social capital and pre and post-war social state. Again, the important role of local communities for the reintegration process was underlined.

The papers of the third session sought to evaluate the impact of migration on the educational experiences of the populations who remained in the sending country. In his paper, IRA N. GANG (New Brunswick) suggested that in the case of Tajikistan individuals are more likely to migrate than to pursue professional education, which could in turn lead to a brain loss trap. The resulting discussion focused on the role of household characteristics, variations in education (including distribution and supply), as well as variations in destination.

The second paper of the session, presented by KSENIIA GATSKOVA (Regensburg) argued that migration had a negative effect on family investment in children’s education in Tajikistan thus reducing the probability of secondary school enrolment. The discussion raised questions regarding the role of household characteristics, domestic factors, and the characterization of migration.

In his paper, TOBIAS STÖHR (Kiel) asserted that migration had a negative impact on private education expenditures in Moldova, as bribes to teachers decreased and caregiver educational supervision increased. The discussion highlighted the issues surrounding self-reporting bribes, the significance of the destination country, characteristics of the data set, and additional effects of migration.

The final paper of the session was presented by VICTOR CEBOTARI (Maastricht) who argued that paternal migration corresponded to diminished educational performance in Georgia and increased performance in Moldova. The resulting question and answers focused

on self-reporting, the categorization of migrants, and the significance of the students' gender for their performance.

The third session of the conference sought to explore the relationship between family, gender, and migration. The first paper of the session presented by DOMNA MICHAIL (Kozani) contended that second generation immigrants of Albanian, Bulgarian, Polish, and Romanian migrant women in Greece engage in a form of transnational migration. The discussion addressed issues of sample size, the role of emotion in the study, and migrants' perceptions of the ongoing economic crisis in Greece.

In the session's concluding paper TRUDE MAURER (Regensburg / Göttingen) explored patterns of female student migration from the Russian Empire to Germany from 1900-1918 characterising it as circular migration. Questions following the presentation emphasized the impact of temporal boundaries (1914), the significance of ethnicity, the differing careers taken up by the women following the completion of their degrees, potential internal migration upon return to the empire, and student support networks.

The fourth session of the conference continued to investigate issues related to family and gender. ELI KRASNIQI (Graz) elaborated on the role of second generation migrants, or "Schatzis", in the socio-cultural life of Opoja (Kosovo). She showed that incomes from migration are vital for having big weddings. Differences in gender, distinctions between rural and urban areas, as well as the meaning of the term "Schatzis" were addressed in the discussion.

DANIELA KOLEVA'S (Sofia) paper focused on the emigration of the Bulgarian Jews to Israel after World War II. She examined the historical background of the Great Aliyah the transnational networks and relationships that were formed following the migration, and the subjectivity and the agency emigrants experienced. The resulting discussion addressed the transformation of ideology into every day politics, as well as the ambivalence of place.

The fifth panel of the conference discussed the social, economic and political effects of remittances. First, ANNA K. RAGGL (Vienna) emphasized that South East European countries benefit from remittances by experiencing higher GDP per capita growth rates and lower poverty rates. However, the income inequality is also rising due to inflows of remittances, especially in low and middle-income countries of the region. The discussion challenged the methodology of the study and advised to focus on specific countries.

The second paper of the panel by BOGDAN VOICU (Bucharest / Sibiu) argued that Romanian migrants through remittances and contagion affect civic participatory values and behaviours in their home country. The presentation was followed by a discussion that focused mainly on the potential civic changes that could be experienced by Southeast European countries as a result of West-East migration.

Finally, IULIA KUNTSEVYCH (Prague) addressed the relationship between remittances and recipients' political attitudes towards the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. Using survey data from 2007 Kuntsevych concluded that individuals' political views did not significantly affect their investment decisions. The subsequent discussion explored the importance of family ties for the probability of sending remittances and the impact of those remittances on capital accumulation and thus to a country's economic development.

The last panel of the conference was devoted to exploring the social and political aspects of migration. In the first paper, ALEKSEJ KALC (Ljubljana) examined the effects of the large outflow of inhabitants of Slovenia (24,000) and the associated social restoration of coastal towns in the 1950s and 1960s by a case study on the city of Piran. The following discussion explored the rural-urban aspects of the migration, the role of communist propaganda, and the potential for comparative analysis.

The second paper of the panel was an ethnographic study given by RUSTAMJON URINBOYEV (Lund). By exploring the relationship between Uzbek migrant workers, Uzbek middlemen working in Moscow and serving as a link between migrant workers and employers, and the families who remained in Uzbekistan, Urinboyev argued that these interactions transmit legal, formal and informal rules. The resulting discussion raised questions about how to characterise a middleman, the role of trust in the transmission of rules, the significance of the Uzbek case and the peculiarities of participatory observation in field work.

Concluding the conference, the two directors of the institute, Ulf Brunnbauer and Jürgen Jerger underscored the interdisciplinary nature of both the conference and the study of migration more broadly. Brunnbauer highlighted the role of the knowledge production in the study of migration. In particular, he noted the public sphere's almost exclusive emphasis on the impact of immigration on receiving countries rather than the consequences of emigration for sending countries. Jerger's comments engaged with Brunnbauer's idea of migratory continuity by underlining some of the key differences in the experiences of sending and receiving countries, discussing the potential policy implications of contemporary trends in migration, and reemphasizing the significance of the current political climate in the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis.

By addressing similar questions from various perspectives the participating anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and economists all sought to explore the ways in which migrants choose their repertoires of migration (or optimizing decisions) and the impact of such a choice at both the household and aggregate level. Given this, the Third IOS Annual Conference, "Migration in and out of East and Southeast Europe: Values, Networks and Well-Being," represented a significant contribution to the development of cross-discipline dialogue.

Conference Overview:

Keynote lectures:

Leslie Page Moch / Lewis H. Siegelbaum (East Lansing), Making their own history, but not as they please: Repertoires and regimes of migration in Russia's twentieth century

Herbert Brücker (Nuremberg / Bamberg), East-West migration in the context of the EU's Eastern enlargement and the financial crisis: macro and micro perspectives

Panel: Return migration

Sara Bernard (Regensburg), The return of the Gastarbeiter in socialist Yugoslavia (1965-1991). A policy-based analysis

Sara Reith (Mainz), Return migration to Russia - patterns, current trends, reintegration within a newly formed society

Kamalbek Karymshakov (Bishkek), Performance of return migrants in Kyrgyzstan

Panel: Reintegration of migrants

Robert Pichler (Berlin), Re-(e)migration, return migration, homecoming? Reflections on the „concept of return“ based on case studies in former socialist countries

Giota Tourgeli (Tripoli), The „Brooklidhes“ homecoming: Greek-Americans and their re-integration in their communities of origin

Selma Porobić (Sarajevo), Bosnian „returnee voices“ communicating real life needs, reintegration experiences and re-established livelihoods. A Cross-case analysis of the social capital's role in the Bosnian returnee context

Panel: Education

Ira N. Gang (New Brunswick), Brain loss in migration

Kseniia Gatskova (Regensburg), Effect of migration on child education in Tajikistan

Tobias Stöhr (Kiel), Does migration fund the education of the left behind? Public, private, legal and illegal expenditure revisited

Victor Cebotari (Maastricht), Migration of parents and education of children who stay behind in Moldova and Georgia

Panel: Family and gender (I)

Domna Michail (Kozani), Liminal spaces and moving subjects in a context of crisis: Transnational cultural production and emotions in Eastern European migration to Greece

Trude Maurer (Regensburg / Göttingen), Women on the move. Patterns of student migration from the Russian Empire to Germany (ca. 1900 till 1918)

Panel: Family and gender (II)

Eli Krasniqi (Graz), Schatzis are home - the impact of migration in socio-cultural life in Opoja, Kosovo

Daniela Koleva (Sofia), Oranges across the Iron Curtain. Transnational family ties resulting from the emigration of the Bulgarian Jews to Israel after WWII

Panel: Social and political effects (I)

Anna K. Raggl (Vienna), The impact of remittances on economic performance, poverty and the distribution of income. An empirical analysis with a focus on South East European countries

Bogdan Voicu (Bucharest / Sibiu), Remitting civic participation. Are sending countries changing due to mediated exposure and contagion?

Iuliia Kuntsevych (Prague), Remittances, investments and political instability in Ukraine

Panel: Social and political effects (II)

Aleksej Kalc (Ljubljana), The other side of the „Istrian exodus“: Immigration and social restoration of Slovenian coastal towns in the 1950s and 1960s

Rustamjon Urinboyev (Lund), Rethinking „informality“ in post-Soviet societies. Ethnographic study of po rukam (handshake) experiences of Uzbek migrant workers in Moscow, Russia

Concluding remarks

By: Inesse Ajana, Toulon; Miriam Frey, Regensburg; Michael Heyna, Regensburg; Rachel Trode, Toronto

Published on H-Soz-Kult (9.9.2015):

[http://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-6151 /](http://www.hsozkult.de/conferencereport/id/tagungsberichte-6151/)