
60th International Academic Week of the Southeast Europe Association **Return Migration and its Consequences in Southeastern Europe**

**Organizers: Southeast Europe Association (Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft) /
Akademie für Politische Bildung Tutzing**
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Introduction

This year's International Academic Week (HSW) gathered researchers for an interdisciplinary exchange on a common research topic: Re-Migration in Southeast Europe. The conference committee, consisting of Dr. *Lumnije Jusufi* (Tirana/Berlin), Prof. Dr. *Jasna Čapo* (Zagreb) and Prof. Dr. *Rozita Dimova* (Skopje), had invited anthropologists, sociologists, historians, geographers, lawyers, linguists, literature critics and activists to shed light on this complex phenomenon in Southeast Europe from different perspectives. They discussed strengths and challenges of current theories and methodologies of migration research, and shared their investigations of migration histories, transnational modes of life, kinds and types of remittances, goods and commodities, cultural and linguistic transfer as well as emotions and motives following migration paths. All of the presentations and posters showed how studying migration is a process in which the state and individual level are always intertwined, and that for the researchers this academic endeavour is always a personal, professional and also an intellectual challenge.

As is the intention of the International Academic Week, the conference emphasizes recognizing

and awarding effort done by young scholars. This year's Title of Master Thesis in Southeast European Studies was awarded to Jeremy Wölbling (Tübingen), a young geography scholar, with his thesis "Die Schmach von Trianon: Karten und Karikaturen in Ungarn im Dienst der territorialen Revisionsbestrebungen (1920–1938)". The prize for the Best Academic Poster was awarded to two young scholars: Jana Stöxen for her poster on material and immaterial remittances between Moldova and Germany, and Bledar Feta's poster on identity, home and belonging among young second-generation Albanian migrants.

The conference also created opportunities for dialogue with actors from outside of academia. Thus, the organizers included two film screenings accompanied by discussion sessions with the authors and filmmakers, as well as a public plenary discussion with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora in Kosovo, *Liza Gashi*, and *Corinne Wicher* from the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees in Germany.

The conference overall, but particularly the film screenings and the panel discussion made it explicit how important it is to talk outside of

one's own discipline but also outside of one's own academic circles to exchange, to establish connections with different levels of the political decision-making process as well as with the politicians who are responsible for them. A conference volume based on the papers presented will be forthcoming in 2023 as a Südosteuropa-Jahrbuch (SOG/Peter Lang Verlag).

Day One: Opening

The conference was then opened by Prof. Dr. *Daniel Göler's* keynote lecture on Return Migration and Consequences in Southeastern Europe. He demonstrated the brief, but intense history of return migration research which has only in the past 20 years gained traction. Only this year, a handbook of return migration (King/Kuschminder 2022) has been published on the topic. Even though the state of research has improved over the years, still the emotional or psychological impacts of return are heavily understudied. In his keynote, Göler showed a number of theoretical approaches, and highlighted a spatial perspective. Mobility is not linear, and by adding the third dimension of time to two dimensions of space enables a more comprehensive modelling of daily commuting paths as well as transcontinental mobilities. Through this approach, it is clear that migration is a step-by-step process with stages and interruptions, such that the whole process can take weeks, months or years. Like this, it becomes clear how thinking in terms like "origin", "destination", "sending" and "receiving" are outdated perspectives on the migration process. It also puts into question terms like "home", "belonging", or "reintegration", as in the case of second generation "returnees", who grew up in what was the destination country of their parents and are then relocated to their parents' country of origin, where they do not feel belonging and face considerable struggles to integrate. Return is motivated by different factors, and no two returns are the same. Consequences of migration have been read differently throughout the brief history of migration studies, which partially depends on how data is read. Thinking in binary patterns in any aspect of migration studies is therefore highly questionable and needs to be fundamentally reconsidered in migration research.

Day Two: Panel 1

The first panel was opened by *Nicole Immig* (Giessen) by sketching out of the field of the existing theoretical and historiographical approaches to return migration in Greece through a number of paradigmatic examples. Dr. *Eda Gemi* (Tirana/Athens) then presented her qualitative micro-level investigation into how second generation Albanian migrants think about return from Greece, how they take decisions and mobilize resources for return, re-emigration, circulation or (re)integration. By comparing their drivers and types of return and their experiences of (re)integration, the investigation points to how the macro-level factors are shaped by meso- and micro-level elements that can shape the decisions and actions of second generations.

Panel 2: *Darija Hofgräff Marić* (Zagreb) presented the institutional, economic and individual ties between migrants, returnees and their country of origin, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes – Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Between the two world wars, different royal institutions, but also private unions and what we would call today public-private partnerships kept statistical data of migration and returnees, but also organized protection and provided services, such as housing for impoverished or orphaned returnees.

Panel 3: *Karolina Bielenin-Lenczowska* (Warsaw) inquired to what degree Macedonian-speaking Muslims from Macedonia still conceptualize their migration to Italy as *pečalba*, a temporary, male-dominated migration. Even though some traditional habitus is kept and most migrants are still male, they increasingly apply for EU citizenship, invest in houses in the country of destination rather than origin, and women start to study in Italy or invest in learning languages to change their social and labour status. *Ivaylo Markov* (Sofia) demonstrated on the examples of three select-case studies the complexity and multifacetedness of migration, as it interlaces diverse and conflicting political, economic and emotional factors. He emphasized the role and effect of nostalgia and inquired how memories and longing affect migration choices and considerations. *Lumnije Kadriu* (Prishtina) presented her new project on self-voluntary "perma-

nent" return migration in post-war Kosovo and exemplified it on the case-study of the Heqimi family. They are self-voluntary permanent returnees who, as a family unit with many members, jointly planned, negotiated and invested into a successful return through the establishment of a pool resort.

Panel 4: *Remus Gabriel Angel* (Bucharest) presented findings of his longitudinal research of German, Romanian and Roma returnees in Sebeş, Romania. The studied groups experience very different social status, prestige and access to resources upon return, but also renegotiate and blur ethnic lines between Romanians and Germans on the one hand, while maintaining strict delineations from Roma on the other. *Nilay Kılınç* (Helsinki) presented select insights from her completed Phd-project in which she researched the forced return of young, mostly male Turkish-German people. In interviews with them, she studied their self-(de-)construction of identity, masculinity, home and belonging. *Kalie Kërpaçi* (Durrës) presented findings from her joint project with *Martin Kuka* in 2019, in which they followed up on interviews held with returnees in 2013. They learned that nearly half of them have already re-emigrated or were trying to find ways or opportunities for their children to leave Albania. They name corruption, lack of work culture, chaotic infrastructural development in the city of Tirana among others as main motivations to leave Albania again.

Poster Session Presenters and Topics

In the following poster session, six posters were presented, two of which were awarded Best Poster Prize (see above). These were: *Jana Stöxen* (Halle (Saale)/Regensburg): Parcels, Pills, and Pufuleți – Remittances as Transnational Strategy of Migration between the Republic of Moldova and Germany; *Judith Möllers / Arjeta Arapi-Gjini* (both: Halle/Saale): Remittance Scripts and Rural Return in a Patriarchic Society; *Bledar Feta* (Athens): The Second-Generation Albanians Return Home – The Complex Views about their Identity, Home, and where They Belong; *Hasan Işıklı* (Izmir): Basmane: Frustration and Accumulation; *Petya Dimitrova* (Sofia): Rural Eco-Friendly Life Inspired by Travelling Abroad; *Nuri Korkmaz* (Bishkek/Bursa): Return Migration and Conceptualizing Its Dimensions

in the Balkans – The Case of Bulgaria's Turkish Minority.

Day Three: Panel 5

Dhimitër Doka (Tirana) presented through statistical data and qualitative interviews how remigration becomes a blurred category for Albanian transmigrants in/from Greece, since many split their year between their origin and destination country, putting into question where it is they are returning to. *Sara Žerić* (Regensburg) presented first findings of her Phd-thesis in which she aims to uncover how Yugoslav migrant workers' remittances influenced the social and economic transformation back in their homeland. This legacy of *gastarbeiters'* contribution to building factories and other aspects of modernization back home is not present in the current collective memory, and her project aims to uncover that. *Julia Anna Schranz* (Vienna) is combining in her ongoing Phd-thesis archival research and oral history with the aim of uncovering how translocal activities of Austrian *gastarbeiters* (translocal businesses, communication and visitation of family and friends, vacationing and recruiting of workers, and later fighters) were affected by the 1990s Yugoslav war.

Carolina Leutloff-Granditz (Frankfurt/Oder) presented a joint project with *Judith Möllers* and *Ulf Brunnbauer* in which they are investigating the role of cross-border social networks, acquired knowhow and of (geo-)political conditions for the start-up and success of migrant enterprises established in Kosovo by returnees. *Oliana Sula* (Durrës) presented findings from interviews with entrepreneurial female returnees in Albania. Among them, she identified different reasons for return as well as different motivators to establish businesses in Albania. *Marsida Tafilica* (Shkodër) showed through a nationally representative sample, how variables such as human capital, age, and gender significantly related to an increased likelihood for establishing an entrepreneurial activity after return. Female entrepreneurs dominate in particular, even though only a quarter of returnees are women.

The organizers invited *Latif Avdyli* and *Anneluise Tiefengruber* of the Office for Repatriation

Assistance for a dialogue about the process of voluntary repatriation. They discussed the gap between legal frameworks and practice as well as problems voluntary repatriates from South-east Europe face before, during and after repatriation, but also about the psychological and emotional hardships repatriates but also workers in the Office face when dealing with difficult life circumstances.

Day Four: Panel 6

Mila Maeva (Sofia) presented her ongoing study of transnational and bi-lateral care for the elderly whose children left Bulgaria. Migrants send back financial, social and physical care, and the elderly send homegrown food or medicine to their (grand-)children. However, a part of the elderly receives no such support due to the poor living conditions of their children, so they rely on mutual help from other elderly in their communities. *Lidija Stojanović Lafazanovska* (Skopje) presented reflections on what happens to the habitus of people once they take the decision to migrate. She identifies a tearing of habitus as well as a lack of communication between the emigrated communities and institutions or organizations in Macedonia and proposes a vision of a more successful remigration experience. *Janine Pinkow-Läpple* (Halle) is investigating in co-authorship with *Judith Möllers* the transformative power of migration on the sample of highly skilled female returnees in Kosovo. Introducing the concept of intangible remittances, the authors are able to describe how returnees desire the transfer of gained open-mindedness, notions of gender equality, and notions of civic rights and responsibilities. When trying to introduce these back home, returnees face challenges and as consequence, one third decide then to re-emigrate.

Panel 7: *Samir Beharić* (Bamberg), *Azra Berbić* (Sarajevo), and *Denis Šarić* (Berlin) presented a study that wasn't intended as such. At the outbreak of the corona-crisis, it began as an action to collect data on the number of Bosnian students abroad and the existential and financial problems they faced in order to then organize help through non-governmental channels and diaspora organizations. In the end, it demonstrated an example of a successful synthesis of research and activism. *Dragana Antonijević* and

Miloš Rašić (Belgrade) presented their findings within the historic context of emigration from Serbia. They focus on descendants of gastarbeiters from north-eastern Serbia in Vienna. The studied group is transnationally very active in the social, political, symbolic and economic spheres, regularly crossing. However, despite these ties and numerous state-run initiatives for remigration, the reasons for staying in Vienna outnumber the reasons for return by a large margin.

Panel 8: *Zaira Lofranco* (Milan) showed findings from her ongoing project on transmigrants from and back to Bosnia and Hercegovina in which she follows the way financial circulation of money intersects with different migration paths. She employs an anthropologic view of the social role of money, where it isn't just a source of income or a means to acquire commodities, but money is also a way of earning dignity and privatizing hope back home. *Anna Zadrožna* (Istanbul) presented findings from her published doctoral thesis in which she investigated how *paketčinja* (packages or luggage) sent back and forth between North Macedonia and Istanbul by transmigrants communicate familiarity and carry symbolic and emotional value for the senders and receivers. They contain pragmatic items such as foods and particular products, but also heavily symbolic items like bottles of water from a specific water fountain in the village of origin or pots of soil.

Panel 9: *Ivana Pajić* (Novi Sad) presented her ongoing project in which she is investigating the poetologic treatment and construction of "homeland" in novels by German-writing authors with roots in the region of former Yugoslavia. After creating a corpus encompassing all works written after the Yugoslav war of the 1990s, she will inquire how narrative structure, characterization, plot devices and representations of "homeland" are influenced by types of migration and migration experiences. *Mirko Milojević* (Giessen) examines several literary texts by the younger generation of post-Yugoslav authors, dealing with the issues of homecoming and home return. By looking into the novels and their key thematic and structural features, he demonstrated how the writers re-think the dominant binaries of homecoming

and home-departure as well as question national identities and models by negotiating different cultural and political discourses and everyday practices. *Blertë Ismajli* (Prishtina) showed how the long-standing diverse ties between Germany and Kosovo established via transmigrants have contributed to German becoming the second *lingua franca* next to English. This popularity is reflected in pragmatic choices such as foreign language learning, but also in popular culture as well as advertising through Albanian and German code-mixing. *Aleksandra Ščukanec* (Zagreb) presented findings from her ongoing longitudinal study on Burgenland Croats. Through presenting select language biographies of Burgenland Croats with different migration backgrounds, she demonstrated how the views and attitudes of the informants regarding language, identity, country of origin versus destination country or experiences of prejudice are similar.

Day Five: Round Table – Going Back and Looking Further

This conference day was dedicated to a panel discussion. Professor of political science and Director of the Akademie für Politische Bildung, *Ursula Münch* (Munich), opened the session. She emphasized in her speech the importance of trans- and interdisciplinary exchange and welcomed young researchers, encouraging

them to continue research and teaching. SOG's Deputy Director, *Viktoria Voglsinger-Palm*, welcomed and introduced the attending panelists, namely the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Diaspora of the Republic of Kosovo, *Liza Gashi*, *Corinna Wicher* from the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees in Germany, and two attendees of the conference, Dr. *Nilay Kılınc* and *Samir Beharić*, with *Rozita Dimova* as moderator. After 90 minutes of lively discussion, Dimova in her closing statement summarized: "We need to talk, to have dialogue, there is no other way."

Film Screenings: No Place Like Home? (Forced) Return Films in Southeastern Europe

On 5th and 6th October 2022, the organizers of this year's International Academic Week invited film researchers and artists to select and present films dealing with the topic of migration. Two film screenings were held: one for the world premiere of the ethno-fiction "Arkadaşloch" and the other for a series of short films selected and chaired by artist and filmmaker *Linda Paganelli* (Berlin) and film researcher *Anne Piekwitz* (Passau/Potsdam).

(There are separate reports on the round table and the film screenings to be found on this website, editor's note.)