

International workshop

Geopolitics and transnational migration

organised by:

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as part of the Research Programme “Global Conflict and Local Interactions” of the Strategy AV21

Friday 25 October, 2019

Academic conference centre, Husova 4a, Prague 1

Research on migration significantly contributes to the reflection on global justice as it concerns topical questions about changing global political economy and forms of precarity, geopolitical and structural inequalities, transnational gendered vulnerabilities, membership, political community and intercultural relations. Receiving developed countries seek to control cross-border mobility while they also benefit from migrant labour and the forms of precarity, especially in some areas, such as low-skilled production and care work. Despite a larger share of intracontinental migration, a surveillance-industrial complex makes use of migration from developing countries as a bargaining counter to enforce regulatory regimes of managed migration and military accumulation. Critical migration studies show how migrant’s precarity is anchored in today’s form of capitalist globalisation and geopolitical power relations. Feminist scholarship has highlighted the processes of transnational social reproduction and gendered gaps in territorialisation of social rights.

The conference aims to discuss how the changing political economy of migration interacts with emerging global governance for migration. It will foreground transnationalizing claims stemming from distinct geopolitical perspective and the need to develop transnational norms and requirements addressing economic, political, social and cultural rights of migrants.

Abstracts:

Eleonore Kofman (Middlesex University, UK)

FAMILIES ON THE MOVE AND TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

Growing numbers of migrants and refugees, including the deported, have led to increasing numbers of families on the move and separated and transnational families. Based on a targeted economic calculus of immigration policies, state regulations shaping the right of family members to live together have engendered a complex global stratification of rights to family life and transnational social reproduction. So whilst states facilitate the right of the brightest and the best to be accompanied and reunified with family members, those undertaking less skilled jobs and earning lower incomes, are likely to have their ability to live their family life together severely constrained in terms of entry, residence and access to welfare. The shift to temporary statuses, even for the skilled, has also injected greater uncertainty into family life. Overall, such policies privilege those who are deemed to benefit the national economy, are financially self-sufficient and represent a low burden

on the welfare state, and are worthy of belonging to the nation as reproducers of future citizens. Furthermore, for migrants, including the skilled, family life is often premised, on its nuclear members and the assertion that other family members constitute a burden on welfare, thus disregarding the contribution of parents in particular to contribute to the social reproduction of the family.

In terms of social reproduction, I am referring to the production of people through various kinds of work (mental, manual and emotional) aimed at what is necessary to maintain existing life and reproduce the next generation. It includes how food, clothing and shelter are made available, the ways in which care and socialization of different members of the family are provided, and the different institutions within which this work is performed. Separated and transnational families have implications for social reproduction. Though the care of children left behind has given rise to a substantial literature, the issue of social reproduction encompasses a wider array of activities and family members in countries of origin and destination. The first part of the presentation analyses how the stratifying effects of current immigration regulations affect families on the move. The second considers the implications and impact on the social reproduction of transnational families.

Carl-Ulrik Schierup (REMESO, Linköping University)

MIGRATION, PRECARIY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Migration is a critical component in broader processes of accumulation by dispossession, the erosion of social and labour rights and the institutionalisation of new forms of 'precarity', forging 'irregular' and a discriminatory 'managed migration' as functional cogwheels of the 21st century's global political economy. The wider historical-structural context is the generation of a multimillion strong, 'surplus population' over the past four decades. It has grown on the ruins of actually existing socialism (Realsozialismus) in Eastern and Central Europe, the Soviet Union and China. It has exploded due to the consequences of imperial scramble for, not least, the Middle East, and large swaths of Africa and Latin America. Setting off from an outline of this wider historical-structural background the lecture will delineate power relations and dilemmas embedded in an emerging global governance of migration. The focus is on spaces, positions, strategies and alliance-making of a composite transnational civil society engaged in issues of asymmetric North-South relations and the rights and protection of migrants and their families. The lecture interrogates, consequently, from a neo-Gramscian position, the positionality and capacity of civil society to influence global governance of Migration. It will discuss opportunities and challenges faced in endeavours to promote a rights-based approach within international and intergovernmental fora engaged in setting up a 'Global Compact' for the management of migration as well as in other global policy spaces concerned with migration governance.

Stefan Rother (University of Freiburg)

TOKENS OR STAKEHOLDERS IN GLOBAL MIGRATION GOVERNANCE? THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE GLOBAL COMPACTS ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

Within the last fifteen years, research on democratic governance beyond the nation-state (Zürn 2000) and on the democratization of global governance (Patomäki 2003; Scholte 2011) has been steadily increasing in volume. This includes the participation of non-state actors in international institutions and the development of international agreements. Often, though, this inclusion is rather

seen as rather tokenistic; in addition, the role of civil society raises questions of representation, legitimacy and selection/accreditation.

Migration is a particularly challenging issue in terms of participatory global governance. Nation-states are often insufficiently able – or willing – to represent their interests due to the transnational character of modern-day mobility. This presents an opportunity for migrants and their representatives to move beyond being mere objects of governance (if not management/control) and achieve agency. On the other hand, they often constitute a transnationally marginalized group with very limited resources which struggles to make its voices heard and gain “a seat at the table”.

This talk will discuss how the two Global Compacts fared in this regard – considering that the inclusion of those primarily affected as stakeholders (refugees and other migrants), was a key ambition of the processes. By employing an ‘inside-outside’ perspective, it will be, firstly, analysed which groups participated in the consultative processes, what agenda did they set ‘inside’ the meetings, what alliances did they establish and how did they influence the outcomes? Secondly, the talk will discuss what kind of advocacy took place ‘outside’ of these formalized spaces and what impact it had? Besides an evaluation of the processes itself, this also raises questions around current academic debates on strategies, spaces and political opportunity structures for civil society and particularly migrant involvement in global migration governance from below.