

ONLINE WORKSHOP 5 WP5 NARRATIVES

Narratives of Migration in Politics, Ideology, Historiography and Literature

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Abstract:

This workshop addresses historical migration and representations of migrants across diverse and often overlapping discourses in the post-Ottoman Balkans, the British Empire and post-WWII Britain until Brexit. Major periods under consideration include those of the decline of empires (British and Ottoman), the strengthening of ethnic nationalism throughout the 19th century, World War I, post-World War II and post-2004 migrations to the UK as well as the spread and fall of Communism across Europe. Migration myths are treated historically (considering their role in the formation of modern national and regional identities and the perpetuation of nationalist rhetoric in the eastern Balkans), typologically (implementing a theoretical typology of migration myths based on recent and contemporary populist propaganda) and in interaction with other – critically analysed – myths such as the ‘clash of civilizations’ myth or ‘the martial races’ myth. Aside from analysing modern and contemporary migration myths and their uses through a theoretical lens, the workshop aims to present new perspectives on the formation of modern collective identities (emphasis placed on cross-border regional identities), WWI and colonisation as instances of ‘organisational migration’ and the critical potential of literary narratives to counter the ideological deployment of migration myths.

Objectives:

1. Presentation of current developments in and synergies between the three individual projects (Session 1)
2. Seminar identifying common themes and challenges with other MOVES work packages (Session 2)
3. Guest speaker presentation followed by Q+A session: Lucy Williams (tentative title: ‘Sociological Approaches to Working with Migrant Narratives’). (Session 3)

Schedule (all times CET):

14:00-14:10 Introduction (WP lead, Martin Procházka)

14:10 – 15.00 **Session 1: Presentation of Individual Research Projects in WP5 + Q&A**

Each ESR in Work Package 5 will present the latest findings and developments in their individual projects. (Chair: Martin Procházka)

- Presentation 1 (Laura Brody) *East-West Borderlands: Transgenerational Narratives of Migration, Homeland and Belonging in the Forging of a Pan-Thracian Identity*
- Presentation 2 (Cornel Borit) *A Cosmopolitan Tongue They Speak: Migration, Myths, and Power in Selected Narratives of Migration from the Caribbean and Central Eastern Europe to the UK*
- Presentation 3 (Zoheb Mashiur) *Martial Voices: Race, Gender and Loyalty in Representations of the Indian Army in World War I*

15.00 – 15.15 **Break**

15:15-16:15 **Session 2: Seminar** ‘Communal Identity-formation in Relation to External and Internal ‘Others’

(Chair: Clare Wallace)

15:15 – 15:30 Interventions by the three ESRs

15:30 – 16:00 Group work in breakout rooms

16:00 – 16.15 Report from working groups

All participants will read the seminar readings in advance (texts indicated above)

All participants will be split into four breakout groups (along WP lines)

16:15-16:30 **Break**

16:40-17:25 **Session 3 - Intervention by guest speaker Lucy Williams: ‘Sociological Approaches to Working with Migrant Narratives’**

(Chair/Respondent: Andreas Mahler)

(20 minute talk + 20 minute Q+A).

17:25-17:30 **Summary** (Andreas Mahler, Coordinator, MOVES Training Programme)

Seminar: Communal Identity-formation in Relation to External and Internal ‘Others’

The seminar covers two interrelated areas of investigation. The first part focuses on how communities -- host communities and migrant communities alike -- construct images of those unlike themselves: the ‘Other’. The Other in this context can include communities or individuals ‘internal’ to a space such as a nation-state, ranging from those conceptualized as host societies or ethnic minorities, or communities and individuals perceived as ‘external’ to a political or cultural space -- those outside the national borders, or those perceived as foreign intruders.

The second part invites the participants to reflect over ethical and methodological aspects that they may encounter in their research when operating conceptually or concretely with what may qualify as the ‘Other’.

The formulation of the topic is intentionally broad. We invite ESRs to engage with this theme by applying it to their own research projects, illustrated by examples from the three projects of Work Package 5.

Intended learning outcomes: by the end of the seminar, the participants should be able to:

1. Recognize and engage critically the different representations, guises and functions of the ‘Other’ in various social contexts and research methodologies.
2. Identify and be ready to apply in their research a variety of methodological approaches that minimize the pitfalls of implicitly and unintentionally otherising migrants or any vulnerable groups.

Preparations for the seminar

In preparation for the seminar, all ESRs are asked to do the required readings (see details below) and, based on the texts and their research experience, be ready to discuss in groups the seminar questions.

Seminar Questions

1. How are group identities formed on the basis of the Self/Other relationship? Does your research indicate other foundations for group identity formation that does not require the idea of an outsider?
2. Is othering only possible within the context of a relationship characterized by an imbalance of power? If so, is it something that can only be practiced by the privileged group against the subordinated one?
3. Have you detected in your research any hazards of othering unintentionally the subjects of your interrogation? Have you considered the risk that your research could open up new avenues for the othering of the communities you are studying after its dissemination?
4. What strategies of avoiding othering and hegemonic discourses are useful tools for your research?

Seminar Readings:

All participants in the seminar are asked to read the article *Writing Against Othering. Qualitative Inquiry* and one more article of their own choice from among the three recommended readings.

Required reading:

Krumer-Nevo, Michal & Sidi, Mirit. (2012). Writing Against Othering. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 18. 299-309. 10.1177/1077800411433546.

Recommended readings (Please choose at least one):

1. İlay Romain Örs (2006) Beyond the Greek and Turkish Dichotomy: The *Rum Polites* of Istanbul and Athens, *South European Society and Politics*, 11:1, 79-94, DOI: 10.1080/13608740500470349
2. Fell, Alison. (2011). Nursing the other: The representation of colonial troops in French and British First World War nursing memoirs. 10.1017/CBO9780511973659.009.
3. Griffiths, Melanie. (2017). 'Foreign, Criminal: a Doubly Damned Modern British Folk-Devil'. *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 21, Issue 5, pp. 527-546. DOI: 10.1080/13621025.2017.1328486

Session 3 - Intervention by guest speaker Lucy Williams:

'Sociological Approaches to Working with Migrant Narratives'

This presentation will look at some of the ways the narratives of migrants are used in sociological research and by social scientists. The capacity for migrant narratives (especially those of forced and undocumented 'outsider' migrants) to speak to the experience of the narrator are constrained by multiple types of power yet are powerful and can give research an authenticity that captivates the researcher and the research audience alike. They can elicit a range of emotions from sympathy to scorn and a well-chosen quotation can change minds and run research projects off the tracks. Narratives of experience are always 'work in progress' and reflect an incomplete understanding of situations and events that will continue to be reassessed by the narrator long after the researcher has fixed the narrative in time and moved on.

Interpersonal and structural forms of power work on narratives to shape not just what is said but what is heard and narratives, perhaps most obviously the narratives of refugees seeking asylum, may not be considered 'credible' if they fail to match the expectations of the recipients of those stories. Researchers must try to avoid judging the narratives of their participants and look deeper to try to hear the truth of the story within the narrative.

In considering these points I will propose an alternative to relying solely on using narratives as a form of evidence or testimony. In asking policy makers and practitioners for their experiences, we regularly receive their expertise and comment alongside examples of lived experience. When speaking with migrants however, we less often ask for their interpretation of the world beyond what they have lived through and in doing this we perpetuate power imbalances and miss the chance to learn from the *expertise* as well as the *evidence* of migrants.

Suggested reading:

Plummer, K. (2020), "Whose Side Are We On?" Revisited: Narrative Power, Narrative Inequality, and a Politics of Narrative Humanity. *Symbolic Interaction*, 43: 46-71.

Kelly, Tobias. "Sympathy and Suspicion: Torture, Asylum, and Humanity." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2012, pp. 753–768.