

MIGRATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – RE-THINKING CRISIS NARRATIVES

Venue: University of Belgrade – Faculty of Political Science, Belgrade, Serbia

February 2-3, 2023

Abstracts submission deadline: December 10, 2022

Apply at: migrec@fpn.bg.ac.rs

Migration in the Western Balkans has been contextualized within various intersecting narratives of crises for decades. The positioning of the region within the East/West dichotomy strengthens the narrative of being in perpetual crisis and also its othering. However, are these migration and related “crises” endogenous to the region or are they driven by external processes? Are there any lessons learnt from past crises which help in navigating through current and future ones? And, is this “crises lens” helpful at all for the region, or is there a need to move beyond crisis narratives altogether?

The region of the Western Balkans is characterised by increased migration diversification (Zitranova, 2014), but the complexity of the migration picture is rarely captured within migration studies. It is most commonly scrutinized within the framework of negative demographic changes and “brain drain”. It is frequently presented narrowly as a ‘sending’ region, through which people transit; a region that constructs migrants as a security threat, as opposed to a humanitarian concern, and which prioritises bordering over humanitarian responses. Contrary to that dominant perspective, we want to look into particular neglected aspects of migration in the Western Balkans – migration flows, processes, relations and practices that contribute to the political, economic, and social development of societies within the region.

Accordingly, we aim to advance debates and scholarship on migration beyond the narratives of crisis in the Western Balkans and give them contextualized meanings. We position the Western Balkans at the centre of the debate, challenging widespread perceptions of peripherality. We aim to explore more nuanced multi-level responses to migration and extend beyond state actors and a one-dimensional focus on securitization. This shifts the focus from security to humanitarian responses and concerns, and accounts for policy, media and behavioural lenses. We are also interested in capturing divergent experiences as related to different groups of migrants (irregular, regular and returnees), but also to variegated responses, in the Western Balkans region.

We explore these challenges through three broad and overlapping areas:

- Migration and development nexus (e.g. migration and socio-economic landscapes, migration patterns – causes and consequences, labor migration and human capital, emigration and socio-political mobilisation of diaspora/diaspora engagements, social and

financial remittances, transnational perspective of ‘migrants’, ‘diaspora’ and ‘transnational community’, climate change, etc.).

- Migration governance (e.g. bordering/de-bordering practices, racialization, mobilities to and from the Western Balkans, NGO-ization of migration governance in the region, resistance and grassroots solidarity, etc.).
- Integration of migrants (critiques of integration, integration in receiving societies, including gender-specific inequalities, forced migration and post-conflict integration, political, economic, social, cultural dimensions of integration, etc.).

To apply, please email your abstract (250 words max.) to migrec@fpn.bg.ac.rs along with your name, affiliation, the title of your presentation, the panel you are applying to and 3-5 keywords.

Deadline: December 10, 2022

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Prof. Russell King from the University of Sussex, the UK

Dr. Angeliki Dimitriadi from the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin, Germany.