

Wellbeing and Migration: Inter-Asian Perspectives

Launch Conference:

Inter-Asian Dynamics Research Network

May 7-8, 2018

Koç University, Istanbul, Turkey



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Day 1 (May 7th 2018)

8:30 – 9:00 Breakfast

9:00 – 9:45 Registration

9:45 – 10:00 Welcoming Remarks

Şebnem Köşer Akçapar (Director of KUASIA, Senior Researcher at MiReKoc, Professor of Sociology, Koç University)

Magnus Marsden (Professor of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology; Director of the Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

10:00 – 11:30 PANEL 1: Migration, Refugees and Governance

Chair: **Umut Kuruüzüm** (PhD Candidate, LSE, Anthropology)

Laura Foley (Doctoral Researcher, Department of Politics, The University of Sheffield, UK)

Title: *The Gendered Governance of Migration: Lessons from Southeast Asia*

This paper investigates the governance processes of domestic worker migration in Southeast Asia, and analyses the ways in which migration governance is feminised, and the impact, if any, this has. Domestic worker migration has emerged as one of the largest and most feminised migratory flows in Southeast Asia and remains a key policy concern and major bilateral issue in the region. Whilst the push and pull factors of domestic worker migration have been researched, we lack insight into how policy actors within the governance framework conceptualise this type of migration and how this conceptualisation affects policy outcomes. It is vital to look ‘inside’ the policy-making process in relation to domestic worker migration due to the exploitative recruitment and employment practices. Domestic work is amongst the lowest paid, most marginalised, least protected and least valued work in Southeast Asia. This paper adopts an actor-centred approach and combines traditional framing analysis with theories of sense-making to analyse how policy actors in Southeast Asia frame, and make sense of, domestic worker migration, and the ways in which policy narratives develop based on these understandings. This paper combines analysis of primary and secondary documents with semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The empirical material comes from 40 in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires with key policy actors in Malaysia and the wider region, including government officials, policymakers, international organisations, regional organisations, NGOs, employer federations, trade unions, and others. The preliminary findings shed light on the constitution of the migration governance system, and the ways in which actors within this system conceptualise domestic worker migration, and the resulting consequences. Such findings improve our understanding of migration governance in Southeast Asia, revealing the ways in which gender permeates migration policy processes. This research is part of the Prospects for International Migration Governance (MIGPROSP) project.

Ayat Jebril Nashwan (Yarmouk University, Faculty Member, Department of Sociology and Social Work) & **Zeynep Şahin Mencütek** (Centre for Global Cooperation Research, Swedish Research Institute)

Title: *Employment and Well-being of Refugees in Jordan*

Forced migration policies intersect with other public policy areas such as health, education, law, and employment. The working rights of forced migrants in the destination countries appear one of the most contested policy fields specifically in protracted refugee situation. A participation of refugees into the labor market is crucial for the well-being of the refugees in a dignified and sustainable way. Employment is also a crucial aspect of the local integration. However, receiving governments in Asia tend to make limitations for the legal employment of refugees. Urban refugees often counter-balance the limitations by working in the informal economy and using their networks. However, informality brings insecurity due to the exploitative employment conditions, low salaries, long working hours and lack of legal ways to seek justice that all threaten forced migrant's well-being. On the other hand, the granting working rights to refugees is one of the least desired policies for host communities because competing with refugees for already scarce job opportunities often considered to place natives into the disadvantaged position, fueling the social tensions. Relying on the ethnographic policy analysis and desk research about Jordan, this paper addresses the discussions around the refugees' right of employment as well as refugees' well-being in relation with working rights. Jordan is a quite interesting but still exemplary case to understand inter-Asian perspectives about employment and forced migration. The country is historically one of the main host countries for Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees. It also has labor migrants mainly working in the special industrial zones. However, it had a strict regulation impeding the employment of refugees until 2016, although many refugees including Syrians work in private informal sector thanks to their pre-war labor networks. The Jordanian Government's negotiations with the European Union (EU), known as Jordan Compact, led to granting working permits to Syrian refugees in 2016. The EU promised to grant funding and facilitative measures in importing Jordanian products. In a year from its adoption, there is a huge public outcry about giving working permits to Syrian refugees and its negative consequences over the well-being of natives at the local level and Jordanian economy. This paper provides insights about the well-being of refugees, tensions around migrant employment as well as negotiations between refugee hosting countries and donors that aim to keep refugees in the region of origin such as Middle East or Asia.

Hidayet Sıddıkoğlu (Visiting Scholar, Migration Policy Center, Yıldırım Bayezıt University, Ankara)

Title: *Pakistan's Inconsistent Refugee Policies: Identity and Cultural Crisis for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan*

Despite the fact that Pakistan is not a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, it has been housing the largest number of Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. However, Pakistan's Afghan refugee policies have remained inconsistent with respect to both changing political and strategic situations in the region and to changing circumstances of international humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees, particularly unstable political relations with Afghanistan. This study deals with the question of how inconsistent refugee policies of

Pakistan have influenced the sociocultural and economic situations of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Moreover, this analysis examines challenges pertaining to reintegration of about two million Afghan refugees who are culturally and socially more Pakistani than Afghan. Based on theoretical and fieldwork analysis, between 2011 and 2013, in Peshawar Pakistan, this study argues that it is necessary for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to take some important steps to change their de facto policy towards Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In regard to Afghanistan, with the help of UN agencies, it can build refugee camps in the relatively peaceful provinces of the country. For those Afghan refugees who prefer to stay in Pakistan, the provision of credible identity documents - credential in the eyes of both the public and government - to refugees will help boost the economy of Pakistan (increase in trans-border trade and tax levies) and will allow for better scrutiny of illegal activities.

11:45 – 13:15 PANEL 2: Health & Care

Chair: **Magnus Marsden** (Professor of Anthropology, Director of the Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Diana Ibañez-Tirado (Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology; Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Title: *Caring for a liver: searching for a cure to Hepatitis C in Tajikistan and Beyond*

In Tajik language, the ‘liver’ or *jigar* is regarded not only as being one of the body’s most important vital organs, but also the seat of affect, love and intimate feelings, especially as these are conveyed to the ‘beloved’. Ironically, Hepatitis C is caused by a virus that affects the liver, potentially causing life-threatening damage to the organ by scarring. In this paper, I explore the notion of ‘caring for a liver’ in two ways: first, as the search for a treatment to cure patients with Hepatitis C in Tajikistan, a search that involves the movement and migration of families within the country and abroad; second, ‘caring for a liver’ also condenses the ways in which families seek to nurture both the patient and family members implicated in providing diverse forms of care. Through the process of travelling in pursuit of healthcare, the patient’s liver, the patient as the beloved, and the family as the carers of the beloved all struggle with the ongoing process of scarring.

Wahid Majrooh (Ministry of Public Health, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan)

Title: *“Medical Tourism” from Afghanistan to India and Pakistan*

It is widely recognized that insecurity, poverty, joblessness and seeking healthcare are the main reasons for the increasing numbers of emigration amongst the population of Afghanistan. According to the International Migration Report 2017, the number of international migrants from Afghanistan have increased from 4.5 million in 2000 to 4.8 million in 2017. Although the significant proportion of Afghans have migrated to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, India, and Turkey, European countries also host Afghan migrants. Less understood is the phenomenon of Afghans travelling abroad on a temporary basis. Today, a considerable number travel abroad for the purpose of seeking medical care. Approximately 2,000 Afghans travel abroad daily for treatment due to lack of standardized facilities at home. Afghanistan spends a small fraction of its national budget (almost 3%) on healthcare. As a result, Afghanistan’s population has limited faith in the quality of their health care system. According to the Medecins Sans Frontieres’ report, “Four in five people had bypassed their closest public clinic

during a previous illness in the preceding three months, mostly because they believed there were problems with the availability or quality of staff, services, or treatments found there. Against the backdrop of low health expenditure, low quality of services and lack of specialty services have caused many Afghans to travel abroad in order to fulfil their health needs. Afghans usually spend a significant sum of money when travelling abroad for receiving health services. As a result, MOPH, USAID, and World Health Organization officials reported that Afghans spend approximately \$285 million annually on ‘medical tourism’, depriving the healthcare sector of a vital source of revenue and further weakening the government’s ability to sustain the facilities that donors are now funding. For example, the World Bank plans to spend \$408 million over 64 months on the SEHAT project supporting health clinics, which is about \$6.38 million each month. In comparison, Afghan citizens spend roughly \$23.75 million each month in search of better health care abroad. Afghan patients spend on average between \$2,000 to \$10,000 on their treatment in hospitals in foreign countries, particularly in Pakistan and India. Yet, most of the patients travelling abroad receive substandard treatments despite paying high prices as the hospitals in India and Pakistan have increasingly put commercial interest rather than healthcare at the heart of their agendas given the expanding scope of medical tourism in both countries.

Dilmurad Yusupov (PhD candidate, Institute of Development and School of Global Studies (University of Sussex)

Title: Community-based inclusive development in Uzbekistan: Participatory Action Research with Disabled People in Tashkent City and Namangan Region

In Uzbekistan disability is conflated with physical dysfunction caused by various impairments while state efforts are directed towards returning disabled people to ‘normal’ condition through medical rehabilitation. Current practices have been largely influenced by the Soviet disability policies which were based on institutionalisation. The purpose of this study is to explore potentials of community-based inclusive development in Uzbekistan as an alternative to institutionalisation by initiating a co-operative enquiry with people with physical, sensory and learning impairments. Critical ethnography will be applied as a main approach which views disability not as a medical but rather as a culturally and socially constructed concept. The aims of the research are to understand how Islamic culture in post-Soviet Uzbekistan is shaping current concepts of disability and what is the role of existing formal/informal community and social networks in Uzbekistan in promoting or preventing social inclusion of disabled people. Participant observation, in-depth household interviews, key informant interviews, participatory video and other participatory methods will be used with disabled and non-disabled people in urban and rural settings. Collected qualitative data will be analysed together with my disabled co-researchers and final dissertation is expected to fill in the gaps in academic literature about disability and development in Central Asia. The research outcomes will also be useful to inform national disability policies and projects/programmes implemented by international organisations and NGOs, raise public awareness and understanding about the actual needs of disabled people and promote collaborative action for community-based inclusive development in Uzbekistan.

13:15 – 14:15 Lunch Break

14:15 – 14:35 Documentary Film Screening and Discussion

LIVES MATTER

Recent conflicts in the Middle East and in Africa forced millions to migrate to Europe. The number of refugees in Turkey has passed 3 million. In 2015, almost 1 million people passed from Turkey to Greece by sea. 3,771 people died on the way.

Run time: 18' 14''

KNITSTANBUL

In Istanbul, a group of Syrian ladies gather and knit to make ends meet and to share fond memories of their country before the war.

Run time: 6' 28''

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vXS7Z9Kzmc>

14:35 – 16:00 Panel 3: Informality, Illegality and Precarity: Inter-Asian perspectives

Chair: **Filippo Osella** (Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies, Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Şebnem Köşer Akçapar (Director of KUASIA, Senior Researcher at MiReKoc, Professor of Sociology, Koç University)

Title: *Unwanted Refugees in Asia? Stateless Arakan (Rohingya) Muslims in Bangladesh and India*

The situation of Arakan (Rohingya) Muslims is one of the longest protracted cases in forced migration. Statelessness and social exclusion further alienate them from the host societies leading to discrimination and exploitation. This research paper will look closely at historical evolution of the forced migration of Arakan Muslims from Myanmar. Based on fieldwork conducted among refugees in India (New Delhi and Hyderabad) and in Bangladesh (Cox's Bazaar) between 2015 and 2016, it will unfold the relationship between state policies in the region towards refugees and the migration trajectories. It will also analyse the role of Islamic social networks in migration.

Umut Kuruüzüm (PhD Candidate, LSE, Anthropology)

Title: *Cheap Labour or Making Labour Cheap: Regional and Inter-Asia Labour Migration into Iraqi Kurdistan*

This paper offers an analysis of how unskilled war-made, cheap, refugee labourers from Syria, Iraq, and Turkey are capitalized and appropriated, and skilled migrant labour from India is made cheap through terms of a legal working contract in the context of growing deregulation and informalisation in Iraqi Kurdistan. Based on an ethnographic fieldwork in a private steel mill in the south-west of Erbil near Gwer War Front between November 2014-February 2016, it is argued that the political and economic fragmentation in the region facilitated unregulated capitalist production and super-exploitation of vulnerable, malleable labour to flourish. Here, displacement and deregulation turns an extra-economic process inherent into the capitalist production to devalue human resources and appropriate new reserves of both unskilled, uncontracted and contracted, skilled cheap labour power from regional and inter-Asia migration

flows. On the one hand, the regional political and economic fragmentation has uprooted a large population of diverse unskilled migrants (Kurds, Yazidis, and Syrians) from their economic and social means of production who, despite their contrasting backgrounds, now represent a large labour reserve on which industrial production is able to draw. On the other hand, the political transition and deregulation served to suppress workers' bargaining power and wages and facilitated the conditions in which skilled migrant labourers are turned into cheap and 'unfree' labour to be bought and sold as easily as possible through tourism agencies trading South and South-east Asian labour in the region. The contract which was assumed to guarantee and secure the employment and freedom of labour paradoxically turns into something restrictive and devaluating for the skilled, contracted Indian migrant steel labour in the context of deregulation. When informal economy is thriving and the institutions of the regional government is unable to exercise to regulate, the division between the 'formal', 'skilled' and the 'informal', 'unskilled' come to appear as less disparate. This paper should expand our knowledge not only geographically on the institutions of bonded labour on a region which so far has been overlooked in the scholarly literature on foreign labour, but also illuminate the relationship between the collapse of states and dislocations, and the creation of unregulated zones for the exploitation of labour from regional and inter-Asian migration flows.

Abdullah Mohammadi (MA student in Demography, University of Tehran/ Senior Mixed Migration Officer, Central & South West Asia, Danish Refugee Council, Kabul, Afghanistan)

Title: *Typology and Functions of Migrant Smuggling Networks in Central and Southwest Asia: The Case of Afghanistan*

Smuggling of migrants is a global phenomenon that affects the countries of origin, transit, and destination. Due to its hidden and illegal nature, measuring the actual scope of migrant smuggling in the various regions is very difficult and in many cases impossible. Moreover, along the irregular routes of migration, migrants are exposed to abuse, exploitation and dangers, without being able to find the necessary support from governments or humanitarian organizations. At present, the Central and Southwest Asia is one of the most important areas for migrant smuggling networks and Afghanistan, with one of the largest refugee and migrant populations in the world, is considered one of the major countries of origin for irregular migration. Given the continuous movements of Afghans in the region and further, along with the socio-economic situation and the political instability, Afghanistan is well suited for the activities of smuggling networks. This research studies the typology and functions of such networks in Afghanistan. The research methodology is qualitative and its results are based on 24 deep interviews with smugglers operating inside Afghanistan and 40 deep interviews with forced returned migrants who already tried to migrate irregularly with the help of smuggler networks. Based on the initial findings, three types of migrant smuggling networks in Afghanistan can be distinguished in terms of the nature and type of activities covered: local, regional, and international; many of these networks are in fact part of larger networks located outside of Afghanistan in transit and destination countries, each has its own specific functions. The study also examines the smugglers and migrants' profiles, services, costs and smuggling routes to west (Iran, Turkey and Europe) and east (India and Indonesia). Ultimately, the protection risks that Afghan irregular migrants face on route will be discussed.

16:15 – 16:30 Coffee & Tea Break

16:30 – 17:30 Keynote Lecture

Chair: **Şebnem Köşer Akçapar** (Director of KUASIA, Senior Researcher at MiReKoc, Professor of Sociology, Koç University)

Brenda Yeoh (Professor of Geography and leader of Asian Migration research, Department of Geography/Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore)

Title: *The Well-Being of Left-Behind Families under a Regime of Temporary Migration: Care Temporalities and Gender Politics in Southeast Asia*

While levels of intra-Asian migrations – and in particular feminized labour flows – have increased in recent decades, it should be noted that the quickening of migration flows in the region is governed by temporary migration schemes, which in turn require a sustained, and sometimes permanent, transborder household division of labour for family/household formation and maintenance. The prevailing labour migration regime in Asia is underpinned by rotating-door principles of enforced transience, where the overwhelming majority of migrants – particularly those seeking low-skilled, low-waged work – are admitted into host nation-states on the basis of short-term, time-bound contracts, with little or no possibility of family reunification or permanent settlement at destination. In this context, for many migrant-sending families in Southeast Asian ‘source’ countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, an important component of “doing family” across borders relates to negotiations around modalities of care for the well-being of children in the absence of one or both parents. By giving particular attention to gendered and generational power geometries threaded into the transnational family politics of care, we explore the transitions and transformations – in terms of rhythm, rupture and reversal – in the modalities of care across time. First, by paying heed to the observation that ‘rhythms are necessarily implicated in the structure and restructuring of social worlds’ (Reid-Musson, 2017), we focus on the way routinised care rhythms built around mothers-as-caregivers have a normalizing and naturalizing effect on the conduct of social life and commonplace understanding of family well-being. Second, we explore the potential rupture to care rhythms triggered by the migration of mothers-turned-breadwinners, and the extent to which gendered care regimes can be conserved, re-constituted or disrupted in everyday patterns and practices of care. Third, we examine the circumstances under which gender role reversal becomes enduring, gains legitimacy among a range of poly care rhythms, or is quickly undone with the return migration of mothers-in-homecoming. The analysis is based on research on Indonesian and Filipino rural households first studied in 2008-2009 and revisited in 2016-2017, and in particular paired life-story interviews with parental/non-parental adult carers and children (50 pairs in each country).

19:30 Dinner at Façyo Fish Restaurant

Day 2 (May 8th 2018)

9:00 – 9:30 Breakfast

9:30 – 11:00 Panel 4: MiReKoc (Migration Studies Center at Koç University)

Chair: **Damla Aksel Bayraktar** (Post-doctoral Researcher, MiReKoc)

Maisam Nimer (Post-doctoral Researcher, MiReKoc)

Title: *Social inequalities in the reconstruction of differential trajectories of young migrants and projection into the future*

Social class inequalities remain undertheorized in the study of migration in general. As such, this paper will look at how debates in social theory about social class, social inequalities and status is relevant to the study of contemporary migration flows. Based on Bourdieu's theory of practice whereby actions are both constrained by and constitutive of a deeper structure, we examine the inequalities that emerge through individual practices of young migrants (between 18 and 30 years of age) that involve exchange or use of capital (cultural, social, and economic) and its convertibility into other forms in shaping decision-making. We aim to provide a broader context to understand how valuation of capital is established and demonstrate that capital does not simply transfer to integration processes but undergoes a social process of valuation. We examine the role of strength and types of ties in the transnational social networks in the way in which migrants access education and the job market. This in turn creates inequalities in the way they navigate their incorporation process into their host country and/or make decisions in terms of migrating further to another country. We demonstrate that specific *habiti* are infinitely differentiated according to factors such as place of origin, social class, gender, length of residence in host country and identify the determinant factors that affect dispositions in terms of type of incorporation into the host country and projection into the future. The findings will be based on the preliminary analysis of the data collected in a joint project between Koç University and London School of Economics, we will present preliminary results based on data collected in 2017-2018 through survey and semi-structured interviews with Syrian youth including ethnographic fieldwork in Syrian organizations in Turkey and desktop research.

Birce Altıok (PhD Candidate, Koç University)

Title: *Syrian and Afghani Refugees in Sultangazi and Exarcheia Neighborhoods – Activism Practices from Turkey and Greece*

The activism of forced migrant groups differ in the sense of their internationally recognized rights compared to other migrant categories. Therefore, this paper looks at activism practices of Syrian and Afghani refugees in two neighbouring countries, Greece and Turkey, and compares their access to rights by collecting data through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and refugee activists since 2015. It aims to contribute to citizenship literature by taking forced migrant groups' access to the realm of activism benefiting from two main methodological perspectives, political science and sociology, in particular from the literatures of social movements, citizenship and refugee studies. This paper is part of a general research on two-country comparison, and presents a comparative case study of two specific neighbourhoods in Athens and Istanbul in which refugee communities inhabits in high

numbers. The comparison highlights how refugees from similar backgrounds integrate into two dissimilar contexts affected by the mechanisms of country-level politicization of the refugee issue, policy-making, public opinion, civil society and political/legal structure of political asylum. Refugees involve in local resistance networks in the case of Exarcheia through aligning themselves with leftist-anarchist groups in which state mechanisms show a reluctant tendency to get involved; whereas in the case of Sultangazi, the conservative neighbourhood space redefines the boundaries of social inclusion and access to rights which are highly influenced with top-down state policies, power and control dynamics presenting alternative strategies for refugees to access rights. These case studies in two different spaces mainly stress the adjustment of the refugee agency to the structural context and their level of ability to move in these contexts depending on grassroots-level support, state-level politicization and political/legal structure of political asylum. Changes in these variables affect the availability and strength of activism practices either pushing for more contentious voice to occur or push refugee activism practices to stay beyond the radar of control and power dimension from the state.

Sibel Karadağ (PhD Candidate, Koç University)

Title: *Humanitarian Ethos in Border-making*

For more than a decade now, the Mediterranean Sea witnesses images of overcrowded vessels, traveller shipwrecks or dead bodies. In this space of loss and suffering, border governance of Europe increasingly goes hand in hand with humanitarian justifications even embraced by security practitioners. Concomitantly with the horror stories of shipwrecks, the scenes of rescue operations have become commonplace at the EU external borders, especially in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings. This research aims to explore humanitarian ‘ethos’ in border policing as an art of government within which discourse of control and humanitarian ‘generosity’ have become intertwined rationales in the process of border-making. The humanitarian ‘ethos’ does not only encapsulate non-governmental actors, it has also become instrumentalised by the European and Turkish security and border practitioners. Considering the wide spectrum of humanitarian practice at the European borders, the paper tries to capture the variety in the framing of mobility, control, care and ‘wellbeing’ in the imaginaries of security professionals as well as that of non-governmental actors in their humanitarian discourse and practice. The study combines the discourses of actors with their actual practices in their everyday strategies and “adaptations”. Therefore, the methodology combines the interviews with actors and participant observation in order to analyse the actual humanitarian practices. The fieldwork is conducted in Greece (Lesvos) and Turkey (Izmir) from August 2016 to November 2017.

11:30 – 13:00 Panel 5: Nodes and Networks

Chair: **Paul Anderson** (Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Al Waleed bin Talal Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge)

Didem Daniş (Galatasaray University, Sociology Department, Faculty Member)

Title: *Escaping the city: Well-being and Migration from the perspective of 3rd World metropolises*

Metropolises in the third world had been known as magnets of human flows. Istanbul, one of the most important megapoles in Europe and Asia, is a city of 15,2 million persons and hosts 18.6 percent of the Turkish population. However, despite this colossal size of the population, the net migration rate for Istanbul has turned to negative for the first time after many decades. Thus, according to TURKSTAT data, the number of people departing from Istanbul exceeded those who immigrated to the city in 2015-2016. For Istanbul, like many metropolises of the Asian continent, the demographic magnitude has been the consequence of massive internal migration since the second half of the 20th century. However, these data show that internal migration has been decreasing, whereas international migration is increasing. Paradoxically the foreign population is not taken into account in the national statistical calculations. For instance, the Syrian refugees which constitutes more than half a million in Istanbul is left out in TURKSTAT data. In this paper, I will also focus on internal migration movements and present main characteristics of in-flows and out-flows to and from Istanbul. The analysis of the statistical data tells us about certain main tendencies such as de-industrialization and return migration: 1) As the industry moves out of Istanbul, the active population migrates to new manufacturing centres, such as Kocaeli and Tekirdag. This can also be observed in the fact that those who leave are predominantly the active population, whereas the elderly is more stable. 2) Some of the population that came with internal migration is returning to their places of origin, such as Ordu and Giresun. In conclusion, I aim to reflect what does escaping the city means from a well-being perspective and discuss why the metropolises like Istanbul is not considered anymore as a place for well-being for various social groups.

David Henig (Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology, School of Anthropology and Conservation, University of Kent)

Title: *Reorienting the 'Balkan Route': Islam, Education and (Post-) Cold War Genealogies of Mobility on the fringes of West Asia*

'The Balkan route' figures in many contemporary debates on migration to the European Union (EU). The region is characterised in these debates as a transitory corridor, a source of human trafficking, or even as a bedrock of radical Islamic threat on the EU's external border. These accounts not only demonise particular types of migrants based on categories of racialised religious difference, but also valorise specific forms of mobility, and horizons of aspirations oriented towards the EU. Against this backdrop, this paper traces less salient, and yet enduring horizons of aspirations, well-being, and geographies of mobility that are embedded in, and formed by multiple orientations and geopolitical/historical entanglements of Muslim lives along the Balkan Route traversing Ottoman/Post-Ottoman, Cold War/Post-Cold War spatiotemporal thresholds as an arena of interaction and aspiration. In this paper, I focus on the role of education as an enduring force in sustaining alternative corridors of mobility and circulation, criss-crossing the Balkans and West Asia, and how participating in these networks produces active agents in a transregional world. Drawing on life histories, ethnographic fieldwork and archival research, this paper elucidates shared threads of cultural intimacy and shared practices of cultural circulation. Ultimately, the paper attempts to provincialise and historicise the arguments about the East-West flows.

Yunlong Jia (Doctoral Researcher, Department of Anthropology, Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Title: *A Precarious Good Life: Fortune and Illicit Trips of Iranian Migrants in Turkey*

The Iranian diaspora has been a long-standing phenomenon since the outbreak of the Islamic revolution. Despite researches on the migration strategies and trajectories of long-distance migration from Iran to West Europe and North America, the everyday dynamics among Iranian migrants merit a closer examination. From an inter-Asian perspective, my research focuses on the Iranian communities in Turkey, Istanbul in particular. I explore the migratory experiences of Iranian people today in relation to the conditions and endeavours to achieve a good life on the move. For many Iranian people, migration is a process leading to prosperity. Regardless of the possible outcomes, along this process, migration also incurs precarity. In the context of the Iranian people in Turkey, such precarity is often articulated through the illicit status and conducts such as the violation of regulations concerning migrants. On one hand, illicit activities provide Iranian migrants with access to various opportunities which are essential to sustain a good life. On the other hand, illicitness also creates tension between the quotidian life and the illicit liminal stage. Oscillating between the good life and precarity which are at the same time induced by the illicit conducts, the migratory worlds of Iranian migrants are, in this process, constructed and reconfigured. By using an ethnographic research method, I therefore, wish to dismantle the distinct migratory worlds of Iranian migrants in Turkey and shed light on the complex relationship among well-being, illicitness and migration.

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 15:30 Panel 6: Politics, Space and Identity

Chair: **David Henig** (Anthropology, University of Kent)

Naveed Ahmad (Shinwari) (Doctoral Researcher, Department of Anthropology/ Asia Centre, University of Sussex, Managing Director, Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme, Islamabad, Pakistan)

Title: *Young Pashtun migrants, the city, and the demand for justice*

Grounded in ethnographic fieldwork, this article examines the relationship between forced migrations, the collective use of social media, and the city. In Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) live various acephalous Pashtun tribes; they have much in common, in their dress, language, culture, religion, and shared ancestry. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, these tribes have not been granted full citizenship; they are regulated under the colonial relic of Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) introduced in 1901. Islamist militancy in the wake of 9/11 and subsequent military operations in the FATA displaced nearly 20 per cent population. The government settled the displaced population in camps whilst a large number, who could afford, had opted to rent houses in cities. Despite numerous vulnerabilities, this migration of FATA's Pashtuns has triggered politics of non-violent protests, situating the cities as sites for legalisations and claims for the equal citizenry. Two important movements have emerged during past two years i.e. FATA Youth Jirga and Mehsud Tahaffuz Movement; both have different political objectives, nevertheless, their strategies are identical. They are non-violent, overwhelmingly led by young Pashtun migrants, demanding equal citizenship within the federation of Pakistan, and use of city and social media as 'spaces' for their activism, mobilisation, and political participation. Social media and life in cities played a consequential role in developing young Pashtun tribesmen's understanding of feminist values and political activism, their status within the federation, and the meaning of their Pashtunness. Felt ignored, exploited, and treated unequally in the share of the economic development of Pakistan, these young Pashtuns movements have successfully attracted the

attention of other Pashtuns of settled districts of Pakistan, attempting to reclaim the wider category of Pashtun and challenging the narrower tribal identities. Moreover, interesting these young educated Pashtuns seem to have shown their reactions to Taliban and other Islamist groups due to everyday violence and destruction in their homeland. This paper explores how the city has served as a 'space' and key mediator for these Pashtun migrants to actively engage with the state, access social media, and use the politics of grievances attracting Pashtun communities across Pakistan.

Magnus Marsden (Professor of Anthropology, Department of Anthropology; Director of the Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Title: *Seeking Health: The multidimensional aspects of health tourism between Afghanistan and India*

This paper is a proposal for the need for future work on the experiences of so-called "health tourists" from Afghanistan in India and other Asian countries. Over the course of conducting fieldwork in Afghanistan since 2005 and also working with traders from the country in various Asian and European settings, I have often been informed of visits that my informants have made to New Delhi in order to cure illnesses or to visit doctors to attend regular check-ups. An important aspect of such conversations relates to the basis upon which individuals and their families make the decision to visit India (rather than other countries in Asia such as Pakistan or Turkey), as well as seek the guidance of particular clinics and hospitals within the country. I have also been struck however by the wide-ranging nature of the experiences of my friends and informants in India. On the one hand, Afghan health tourists to India appear to combine urgent medical visits to New Delhi with the staging of family excursions: importantly, such excursions (*chakar*) often involve travelling with female family members in a manner that represents an important break in these people's normal travel routines. On the other hand, spells spent in New Delhi's hospitals and clinics and in the rented accommodation used during such visits also provides ample opportunities to establish relationships with other mobile co-nationals-relationships, I suggest in the paper, that often have important implications for these peoples' activities and social networks in Afghanistan. By exploring these concerns, the paper suggests the potential that a study of such forms of mobility offers into better understanding the mixing of activities in Asia's 'sites of interaction' (Amrith and Harper 2014).

Saideh Saidi (Research fellow at Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies in Tehran; Lecturer at Shahid Beheshti University)

Title: *Seeking Refuge in Europe: The Experience of Afghans in Iran Who Attempt in Re-migrating Irregularly*

Afghans continue today to represent one of the largest forced displacements of population and protracted refugee situations since World War II and Iran as one the main host countries in the world for millions of Afghans with equivalent numbers of unregistered immigrants for decades. In European migrant crisis in 2015 based on UNHCR report 41 percent of asylum seekers arrived in EU border were Afghans who migrated from Iran. This paper tries to answer why and how Afghan immigrants in Iran who live for years decide to re-migrate especially through irregular networks, what are their resources and pre-existing networks and what are the main challenges they encounter in transit countries (mainly Turkey and Greece) and their strategies to survive? The goal was not to document the intricacies of each national context but rather to situate the perspectives and circulation patterns of Afghans in a larger context. This research is

based on qualitative method which consists of 87 semi-structured interviews and participant observations with Afghan immigrant families from 2012 to 2017. Data were collected in three fields. The majority of interviews were done in Iran (Tehran and Mashhad). To have a better idea about their lives in transit countries 30 interviews were done in Turkey and Greece as main transit countries for Afghans heading to Europe. Wellbeing for people of concern in this research, is a far reaching phenomenon. Displacement and exile neither resulted in integration nor in a definitive return to Afghanistan. After 4 decades of residing in Iran, Afghans still have been seen as temporary members of the society, either from their point of view or Iranian mindset. The absence of prospects, reduced access in areas of education, health and citizenship are main challenges they dealt in Iran. Expansion of telecommunication and the role of virtual networks prompt a redirection of movement to other regions, especially Europe. Therefore, deteriorating conditions are forcing Afghan youngsters to seek help from “human smuggling industry” to re-migrate irregularly and resort to even riskier routes. Vulnerability of unaccompanied minors and expansion of traumatic experiences, physical harassment and sexual abuse especially for female migrants are two main challenges for Afghan irregular migrants in transit countries. Albeit, hardship of living in limbo, limitation of movement, deportation, limited resources for a large number of asylum seekers, family split (in order to benefit from family reunification by going ahead toward preferred destination), are another challenges Afghans encounter in transit countries.

15:45 – 17:15 Panel 7: Well-being and Sociality

Chair: **Diana Ibañez Tirado** (Research Fellow, Department of Anthropology; Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Paul Anderson (University Lecturer in Middle Eastern Studies Assistant Director, HRH Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge)

Title: *Striving for wellbeing: Syrian cosmopolitanism in a diasporic context*

Traders of Syrian nationality who have migrated to the city of Yiwu in southeast China since 2011 have recently articulated a notion of Syrian identity that they associate with cosmopolitanism and distinguish from Arabness. This distancing from Arab identity is surprising given the role Syria has played through much of the last century as a hub as Arab nationalist thought, sentiment and activism. The emerging subjectivity of “Syrian, not Arab” has been shaped by the dynamics of the regional Syrian conflict, which has strained Arab nationalist solidarity, not only through the militarisation of tensions between Arab states and their proxies, but also as Syrian refugees and traders seeking to escape the war reflect on their negative experiences in neighbouring Arab countries. The assertion of a Syrian “culture” and “civilisation” as distinct from and superior to the “Arabian world” can also be seen as an attempt to contest the emerging regional hegemony that has seen a marked shift, since 2011, of intellectual, cultural and political power from the Levant to the Gulf. Viewed historically, the articulation of a distinct, ethnically mixed, Syrian culture and civilisation draws on the ideas of mid-20th century Syrian nationalists, which were revived and recirculated by the Syrian Ministry of Expatriates under Bashar al-Asad in the 2000s, as the regime sought to integrate Syrian diasporas economically and politically into a transnational nation-state (Baeza and Pinto 2016). However, the circulation of these tropes of civilisation among Syrian traders in China post-2011 also needs to be understood as part of the way in which these migrants strive for wellbeing in a diasporic context. I consider the effect on the possibility of migrant well-being

of the “war on terror”, and the consequent need of this merchant community to negotiate a more favourable insertion into global hierarchies of racialised identity which associate Arab-Muslim with terrorism. Foreign merchants in China can suffer the effects of these hierarchies when attempting to check into hotels, and through global attempts, led by the United States in September 2017, to restrict currency and bank transfers of certain predominantly Arab Muslim nations. Traders in Yiwu contest their location in this racialised hierarchy by identifying as Syrian; by distancing Syrian identity from the Islamic State by drawing on the notion of conspiracy; and by characterising Syria as a site of cosmopolitanism. In this construction, Syrian culture is marked by curiosity towards foreigners; ignorance of and indifference towards confessional identity; and a preference for seeing “religion” not as confessional identity but as moral praxis, namely honest and civil “interaction”. This case-study of inter-Asian migration therefore explores the relation between wellbeing and the categories used to designate migrants. It also explores the role that migrants and traders can play in fostering new conceptions of national identity – predicated on expansive circuits of mobility and cross-cultural interaction rather than exclusivist and bounded notions of regional and national identity (see Marsden 2016; Aslanian 2014).

Filippo Osella (Professor of Anthropology and South Asian Studies, Department of Anthropology, Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Title: *The unbearable lightness of trust: migration, trade and everyday lives of Indian export agents in China*

Based on fieldwork in China, Dubai and India, in this paper I explore how relations of trust are produced through practices of conviviality and complicity in which knowledge and information about trade are simultaneously disclosed and withheld. Such a politics of concealment and revelation underpins not only relations that export agents cultivate with suppliers and buyers—as well as the wider transnational social networks which sustain trade—but also circles of friendship and mutuality amongst export agents themselves. Circles of friendship, and “contacts” more generally, are cultivated not only as an essential tool for successful trading careers, but also as the affective and practical terrain of sociality which animates the everyday migrant lives of export agents. Reflecting on previous research on bazaar merchants in South India, I will argue that the nature of trade—often entailing straddling various degrees of legality and illegality—is such as to require the careful management of distrust and suspicion within a rhetoric or aesthetic of mutual trust, in which affective relations and economic interests are simultaneously conflated and separated from each other.

David Sancho (Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Anthropology, Sussex Asia Centre, University of Sussex)

Title: *‘Facing life together’: Neoliberalism, Happiness and everyday friendship in Dubai*

This paper is concerned with the role of friendship in the life of a group of South Indian skilled migrant friends in Dubai – the self-address Eagle family. The paper considers wider questions about the reach of neoliberal government rationalities and the extent to which these can recast identity and social life. It takes on the dominant discourse of ‘happiness’ being promoted in Dubai, a central mechanism of neoliberal governance. Happiness in Dubai is underpinned by a conceptualisation of the self as a consumer or a socially disembodied enterprising individual. I juxtapose this notion with the ways in which my informants experienced and conceptualised happiness. I show that far from being recast by Dubai’s vision of happiness, their experiences

of happiness were crucially bound up with everyday friendship. I discuss how friendship networks foster the development of transnational identities and experiences of self-realisation alternative to the ones promoted in India or Dubai, yet ever so crucial to the success of the economies and politics of both places. Thus, rather than being contrary to or an imperfect feature of the neoliberal project, migrant friendship emerges as a foundational feature of global capitalism.

17:15 – 17:30 Concluding Remarks

CONFERENCE CLOSES