

## Introduction: 4<sup>th</sup> Turkish Migration Conference

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Turkey as a sending country is quite well known with the history of mass labour migration as well as refugee flows from Turkey from the 1960s onwards (Kirişçi, 2003; Sirkeci, 2006; Sirkeci et al., 2012). Mixed motivations drove migration from Turkey and several forces dominated the flows in different periods: “First by the effects of a rapid urbanisation of the country in the 1950s; second, the export of excess labour in the 1960s; third, family reunifications in the 1970s and 1980s; fourth, refugee movement in the 1980s; fifth, asylum-seekers in the 1990s; and sixth, irregular migrants in the 2000s” (Sirkeci et al., 2012, p. 35). It is well established that a large number of people of Turkish origin are living outside Turkey; mainly in Germany, France, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria and Switzerland, although it is not possible to accurately count the population (Sirkeci & Esipova, 2013, p. 5).

Immigration is as important as emigration for the history of Turkey and the country has been an important destination since its foundation in the 1920s (Kaya & Erdoğan, 2016; Kirisci & Avci, 2006; Pusch & Sirkeci, 2016). Even mass refugee influxes are not new for the country as there were such experienced in the past, either through international treaties (see 1922-26 Compulsory Population Exchange between Turkey and Greece) (Sirkeci & Utku, 2017) or as a result of conflicts among Turkey’s neighbours.

In particular, Turkey’s proximity to the Middle East, one of the most conflicted regions of the world, and permeable borders paved the way for the inflows. In the past, Turkey became ‘the most popular destination’ for those coming from Iraq due to its geographical proximity and shared border (Sirkeci, 2005, p. 204). Today, the similar patterns and reasons support the arrival of different movers.

The year 2011 showed once again that Turkey is one of the major countries for different types of immigrants. In addition to the immigrants received, there were also on-going emigration flows to Europe; a pattern that has continued through 2016. Although it is not a new phenomenon for this country to receive and send immigrants, the volume and speed of the flows of the migrants combined with the international concern prompted both national and international attention to this subject. This rising attention also spread to academia. Those working on migration focusing on Turkey enlarged their research areas and included new topics, such as media discourse, public opinion, the integration issue. It is now clear that the study of migration of Turkish migration is a central part of the ongoing development of migration studies and more vital than ever.

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Against this backdrop, we organised the first Turkish Migration Conference in 2012 which was hosted by the Regent's Centre for Transnational Studies in the Regent's Park Campus of Regent's University, London. The success of the first conference convinced us to continue the tradition. Since then the Turkish Migration Conferences have grown to become prestigious and high profile; attracting eminent academics, researchers, activists, professionals, early career researchers, students and the wider public. The conference experiences will now be turned into an international conference series organised in different countries and in collaboration with leading universities. The last Turkish Migration Conference was held in Vienna from 12th to 15th July, 2016 and the next conference will take place in Athens, Greece with a wider global scope in 2017.

The pieces collected here are just a sample of the work that was presented at the 2016 Turkish Migration conference. Our meeting, the 4th symposium on Turkish migration, brought together scholars from around the globe to share their research and debate mobility. As in our earlier symposia, we explored demography, sociology, culture and art as they are related to mobility. New this year was an increasing awareness of the "return" of Turks to Turkey from Germany, the challenges faced by Syrian refugees who have settled in Turkey or are passing through the country on their way to Europe as well as issues facing Kurdish minorities, Roma and other minority groups living in or transiting through Turkey.

This collection is challenged by two competing poles. One pole is centered in xenophobic nationalism. Around this pole, migrants and refugees are described as criminals, religious fanatics and "moochers" who challenge the working class and the freedoms that come with life in the West. The second pole laments the insecurity that migrants and refugees face. Around this pole, movers are described as victims who lack so much at home. In this example, migrants and refugees are moving because there are no jobs and few prospects for work; civil liberties are proscribed and banned in the face of state imposed limits and there are no opportunities to strike out on a unique path to the future. Complicating both poles is the 24-hour news cycle that denies us the opportunity to understand and analyze. Instead, we are forced to pick one pole or the other. In either case, the outcome dehumanizes the mover, signals their pathos and emphasizes why they are different.

These papers are a corrective to the limits of these poles and to any other models that seek to dehumanize migrants and cast refugees as the victims of processes they cannot control. Our research challenged the xenophobia of the nationalists and explains insecurity not as an outcome of victimhood but as a process that is founded in history and contextualized by the experiences and abilities of the individuals, their families and communities and more.

Our interests range across the social sciences and the humanities and engage with experiences and theories that contextualize mobility and look beyond the limits of the news cycle to answer fundamental questions about mobility and Turkish migration. These papers create a framework for understanding a dynamic system and support comparative work, theory building and more.

In these examples, Turkish migrants become movers and using a framework that is rooted in anthropology, demography, literature, geography, political science and art we contextualize their motivations. Directionality cannot be assumed; drivers

cannot just be checked off a list, and the pulls and pushes that worked in the past as Turks traveled to jobs in Germany in 1960s and 1970s are not the same today.

These papers are one part of a changing narrative around migration. The voices represented define some of the very best work taking place around the world and exploring the outcomes of mobility for Turkish movers, refugees and members of ethnic minority groups who are engaged in migration.

### **Turkish Migration Conference 2016**

The Turkish Migration Conference 2016 was organised in collaboration with the University of Vienna and supported by Gifford Center for Population Studies at the University of California Davis, Manisa Celal Bayar University Center for Population and Migration Research, Regent's University Centre for Transnational Studies at Regent's University London, Global Policy and Strategy in Ankara, Hornig Coffee, Vienna Convention Bureau, Danube University Krems and Transnational Press London journals. It was a product of substantial hard work from beginning to end, while preparations stretched back over a year to the previous conference held in Prague, Czech Republic.

Due to the Turkish Migration Conference's success, the appeal and interest from potential participants have grown exponentially over the years. Therefore, hundreds of papers were peer-reviewed thanks to a large number of experts volunteering from different disciplines and from different countries. These included the committee members and participants from the 2016 and previous conferences as well as many others who were not able to attend the event in Vienna.

Following a rigorous peer-review process, the conference programme was drawn with 72 sessions and 2 workshops. Altogether the conference accommodated over 350 presentations by over 400 authors and co-authors from all over the world. As the number of papers indicates, the topic of Turkish migration was addressed comprehensively, enabling discussion of the topic by a variety of disciplines. The scope was very wide to include migration questions including security concerns, the gender issue, public administration, return migration, legal issues, participation, diasporas, education, art and literature, development, identity, public opinion, media discourse, migrant workers, internal migration, religion, the minority question, ethnic groups and agriculture. It is important to point out that the conference showed there is a burgeoning literature regarding Syrian movers too. The researchers on this topic mainly focused on the drawbacks of the migration management of Syrians and public perceptions of them. In that sense, the sessions on Syrian migration also provided a platform to generate ideas and suggestions for future policy development and implementation.

The conference started with the welcoming speeches by co-chairs Ibrahim Sirkeci and Jeffrey Cohen who focused on the importance of migration studies in a changing and moving world. Karen Phalet from KU Leuven, the keynote speaker, shared her research comparing the perspectives and experiences of Muslim minority children in different European societies. This was followed by a well-attended roundtable discussion that was led by Gudrun Biffel from Danube University Krems, Austria and entertained Philip Martin from University of California Davis as the keynote speaker.

The Turkish Migration Conference 2016 also included two additional training workshops. These workshops were organised by experts on migration. The first workshop led by M. Murat Yüceşahin from Ankara University, focused on making use of factorial modelling in Migration Studies. The training explored the key points of conducting factorial modelling while carrying out a research. It was a useful session for those in the field and struggling with the methodological problems while dealing with the topic of ‘harmonisation’. The second workshop focused on data regarding the health of migrants in Turkey. This training guided for the researchers who are interested in health records and statistics.

A novelty in the 2016 conference was, the Gypsy movers track. Studies focusing on Gypsy movers contributed to and enriched the content of the conference. Overall the studies presented this year were more diverse and distinctive in scope. In this compilation, we are drawing on the papers presented to the Conference and presenting them only with a light touch editing as they were prepared and presented by their authors at the conference.

We are looking forward to seeing even larger number of distinguished academics attending the conference in Athens, next year. It is time to pen the date in your diaries: 23-26 August 2017, Harokopio University, Athens, Greece; please check: [www.migrationcenter.org](http://www.migrationcenter.org).

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