

Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems (THEMIS)

Examining Migration Dynamics: Networks and Beyond

24–26 September 2013

Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford

Keynote speakers include:

Thomas Faist
(Bielefeld University)
Douglas Massey
(Princeton University)
Ewa Morawska
(University of Essex)

The conference

Why do some migrants set off the movement of thousands of people, while others are followed only by a few, or remain virtually alone in the destination country? Some answers can be found in the variation in economic and social conditions in different places. Another vital part of the puzzle relates to the historical, social and cultural practices of migration: those who move now are following in the footsteps of those who left before. This conference examines how enduring patterns of migration emerge, are sustained and decline; the mechanisms by which the migration processes of yesterday influence those of today; and the role of the migrant as a social actor in the face of these historical and social processes.

This THEMIS conference will take an inter-disciplinary approach to migration dynamics drawing on comparative studies of international and internal migration processes. We welcome contributions covering both origin and destination countries/regions. There will be three main themes:

• **Emergence and development of migration systems:**

What explains the emergence and establishment of migration systems? With time, the initial moves of pioneer migrants might result in relatively stable patterns of migration which exhibit their own dynamics. Cumulative causation, the emergence of a system, may not however be concerned with passing a threshold in numbers; low levels of migration between particular localities, either in the international or internal domain, may also be associated with system dynamics. We invite papers exploring the evolution and the life of migration systems – their beginnings, development, and sustenance, but also their potential weakening and decline.

• **Feedback processes in migration:** Migration between localities is influenced by a set of factors not limited solely to conditions posed by these two contexts – that of origin, and that of destination – but also including previous histories as well as social and cultural conditions of movement. It is important to examine a range of

mechanisms by which these feedback processes operate. This enquiry takes us beyond a narrow focus on networks to include interactions such as those with the state, employers, travel agencies, educational establishments and new connections created by social media and ICT. We invite papers concerned with these various forms of feedback and its transmission, critically re-thinking the role of migration networks and their composition, as well as examining emerging forms of indirect feedback, and their potential contribution to the evolution of systems over time.

• **Migrants as social actors:** How is the migration of an individual intertwined with the migratory movements of others? The role of agency of migrants is often missing from an analysis of migration systems. Such agency, in an interplay with other structural factors, helps to explain why, once started, migration processes tend to gain their own momentum. This theme challenges the determinism which pervades much of the earlier work on systems and incorporates a richer analysis of the agency of social actors in migration processes. We invite papers exploring the role of pioneer migrants, or how early migrants shape subsequent migrations, as well as papers highlighting the rich texture of various migration cultures.



Submission of abstracts

We invite contributions within the three conference themes. We also welcome papers covering overarching issues that straddle the themes, for example: the methodological challenges of multi-sited and mixed methods research, or the relationship between broader social theory and migration processes.

Submissions should be clearly marked as falling into one of the following five areas:

- Emergence and development of migration systems
- Feedback processes in migration
- Migrants as social actors
- Methodology
- Cross-cutting

Abstracts of up to 300 words maximum to be submitted by **15 January 2013**

Notification of acceptance to be made by **March 2013**

Submission of full papers in English required by **1 August 2013**

For more information, including instructions for submission of abstracts and details about registration please visit www.imi.ox.ac.uk/research-projects/themis/conference2013

Contributions from scholars in the global South are welcomed.

If you have any queries relating to the conference, please email themis@qeh.ox.ac.uk

The THEMIS project

The conference is being organised as part of the culmination of the THEMIS project – Theorizing the Evolution of European Migration Systems. This four-year project funded by NORFACE has been a collaborative venture between researchers at the International Migration Institute, University of Oxford (UK), the Peace Research Institute Oslo (Norway), the Department of Sociology, Erasmus University (Netherlands), and the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, Lisbon University (Portugal). We also closely collaborate with partners in Ukraine (National Academy of Sciences, Kiev), Brazil (Universidade do Vale do Rio Doce, Governador Valadares) and Morocco (National Institute of Statistics and Economics, Rabat).

This project set out to understand the development of migration systems and to answer the question: why do some migration processes, once started, tend to gain their own momentum? This question has implications for migration theory, trying to bridge the divide between theories explaining the initiation of migration processes and those explaining their continuation. For more details see: www.imi.ox.ac.uk/research-projects/themis

Funders

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