

Return migration, circularity and possibilities for enhanced mobility regimes

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Abstract

Free mobility regimes may stimulate emigration and return migration, thus increasing overall levels of circulation. Also, as empirical studies show, growth in return migration naturally occurs following economic crises, when receiving countries impose restrictive asylum policies or when sending countries encourage return through diaspora policies. However, many migrants tend to re-migrate after returning (reverse returns). Particularly when they are forced to return – often without preparedness and voluntariness – the re-migration tendency – at least at an aspirational level – is particularly prominent. Re-migration, circularity of returnees and transnational lives are often the case despite policy expectations for sustainable reintegration of returnees and sedentariness of people. Against this background, this presentation focuses on the potential links between return migration and free mobility regimes by raising both empirical and policy questions. Empirical questions include: 1) To what extent do free movement regimes accommodate the realities on the ground about return/re-migration circles between sending and receiving countries 2) How do free movement regimes respond to people's own trajectories about mobility? Related policy questions include: 1) Is there any way to shift increasing policy attention and high-cost investments in return and reintegration programs of receiving countries to strengthen regional free mobility regimes? 2) Can the regularization programs targeting irregular migrants be taken as an example for creating more 'inclusive' free mobility regimes?

Biography

Zeynep Sahin-Mencutek is Senior Researcher Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), Germany and Research Affiliate, CERC Migration, Toronto Metropolitan University. Mencutek's research interests stand at the intersection of international relations, migration and governance studies. Currently, she leads a cross-regional research project on return and reintegration that focuses on Western Balkans, the Middle East, and Western Africa. Previously, she held an international fellowship at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research in Duisburg (2019-2020). She served as an assistant professor and achieved the rank of associate professor in International Relations in Turkey. She was a Senior Researcher for the Horizon2020 project titled RESPOND: Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond. Her book, *Refugee Governance, State and Politics in the Middle East* (Routledge, 2018) explores how refugee governance differs across countries and why they diverge, looking in particular at Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. She published several articles in internationally refereed journals, chapters in international collected volumes, book reviews and policy reports.