

Mapping Migration in South East Europe

The project aims to construct a Geographical Information System (GIS) and web-site on Migration in South East Europe. The partners are The Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford and The Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King's College London, while the site could be hosted by any of the partners.

The GIS offers the opportunity to provide the vast store of written material, ranging from the popular to the academic, as well as a considerable amount of historical data and archive material consisting of population census data and surveys, contemporary maps, writings, memoirs, records, photographic archives and bibliographies, covering the last hundred years of the 20th century in South East Europe, in an accessible and effective way for a broad spectrum of users, ranging from those with a popular interest, to policy makers and those conducting serious scholarly research.

Population migrations were among the decisive factors contributing to the dynamism of Balkan history. As the Ottoman Empire collapsed, an increasing awareness of national identity clashed with severe border changes. Since 1989, forced migration, crisis interventions, economic instability, ethnic tensions and the torn social fabric, pose challenges for sustainable development policies, both human and economic. As well as illustrating how states have attempted to shape and control migration, this project will consider how migration is challenging traditional concepts of citizenship, sovereignty, national security and existing international humanitarian law. The purpose of the project is to present certain sub-themes, i.e. International Law and Relations, History, Economic and Human development, Complex emergencies and interventions, Foreign Policy of states, Migration issues, Religion, in order to study the political, economic, demographic, planning, social and cultural asymmetries shaping migration policies and practices. It also aims to understand the causes and consequences of the kinds of social, economic and political breakdown involved in complex emergencies and forced migration, the political and practical aspects of crisis intervention; and of the processes of rehabilitation and reconstruction, in order to provide policy makers with the tools to analyse the causes and consequences of civil conflicts, as well as the ability to consider better alternatives of external interventions.

Once the cartographic information is in electronic form, it is dynamic and can be displayed and analysed in many different ways. Basic topographical data can be overlaid with the specific sets of features of interest for a particular purpose. The specific sets of features are termed *themes*. The underlying topographical data would be the same but the features of interest, the themes, would form data sets, which are spatial as a result of their relationship with the underlying topographical data. Modern GIS technology thus provides the means of overcoming the limitations of more traditional forms of information processing such as

relational databases, which were not designed for spatial or temporal modelling, and are limited in the representation and handling of non-western scripts (for example the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets). Place names, political boundaries and population data, suitably themed, would form spatial and temporal data sets which could be then subject to analysis.

The building of a GIS on South Eastern Europe is supposed to draw from all the abovementioned sub-themes. Once in a GIS, the relationships between individual name spaces can be studied, using formal queries to create new maps of spatial relationship, interaction and change. Specific patterns of political dominance, social and ethnic tensions and development strategies may be shown by particular patterns of name space relationship. Since the end of the 19th century, place names have been changed many times and entirely new names have been introduced, often associated with new patterns of settlement and land use, which have not been adequately mapped. The “rationalisation” and “nationalisation” of Balkan place names in the newly created independent states has been a standard practice, and there are many linguistic cross-representations of particular place-names in different “minority” languages and scripts, which has led to much confusion. Any future project aims to examine contemporary migration as a dynamic process, where different subjects leave their traces in space to be explored through time, using identity issues categories.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT:

- A central aim of this study is to reject the reductionist attitude to place names and spaces brought about by politically inspired pressures and attempts by international bodies to standardise place names on maps following international law agreements and/or military and development interventions.
- To provide a theoretical and historical grounding in the principal concepts involved in the study of territory and international boundaries, as well as forced migration.
- To examine the creation and maintenance of international boundaries on land and sea, and to illustrate the issues raised by the presence of trans-boundary natural resources, including human beings.
- To study the processes involved in boundary and territorial dispute resolution.
- To understand the causes and consequences of the kinds of social, economic and political breakdown involved in complex emergencies and forced migration, the political and practical aspects of crisis intervention at different levels; and of the processes of rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- To provide policy makers with the ability to analyse the consequences and the causes of civil conflicts as well as the ability to consider what kinds of external interventions might best ameliorate these consequences and address these causes.

The project has already started being implemented as a pilot study, Mapping migration in the Kastoria region, currently constructing a Geographical Information System (GIS) and website, hosted by King's College London Centre for Computing in the Humanities. The partners are The Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford and The Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King's College London. Material for the particular pilot study has been taken from the Research Centre for Macedonian History and Documentation, Thessaloniki. The study focuses on a section of the geographical region of Macedonia, more precisely the region of Kastoria, part of the Monastir Vilayet during the Ottoman empire, named prefecture of Kastoria and Florina when incorporated within the Greek state (1913), then becoming district of Kastoria following the end of the II world war and the Greek Civil war (1948).

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12/6/2002