

Europe divided? Public debates and civil society responses during the refugee crisis in Austria and the Czech Republic

AKTION CZECH REPUBLIC – AUSTRIA

Project no. 78p23 – final report

Project abstract

This project is proposed to deepen existing cooperation and prepare future joint research of Masaryk University and the University of Vienna. It addresses the refugee crisis in Europe and responses to it by the media and civil society actors in a comparative perspective: Austria and the Czech Republic are selected as case studies representative of Eastern and Western European societies. Including the organisation of workshops and a public lecture, the project also aims at producing a joint paper to be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Project realization

The primary goal of the proposed project was to expand current cooperation between Masaryk University and University of Vienna. For that reason, we have followed three main aims:

- 1) organization of two workshops,
- 2) organization of a public lecture,
- 3) working on the joint publication.

We have successfully fulfilled these aims. During the main timeframe of the project (01. 02. 2017 – 31. 07. 2017) we have organized two workshops (in Brno and Vienna), organized a public lecture by Tobias Spöri and worked on a publication (a peer-reviewed paper). In addition, during the extension of the project (01. 08. 2017 – 31. 12. 2017), we have organized two meetings of participants in Brno and Vienna to further discuss the future of the cooperation.

Activities

Workshops

The purpose of the workshops was to bring together scholars of both universities working in the fields of political science, communication science and social movements studies in order to deepen already established cooperation and to prepare the joint action in research and

education. During workshops, the team members presented their work, ideas and proposals, which led to in-depth group discussions on how to develop and elaborate on the design of the planned joint research. Each presentation was scheduled for 75 minutes: 35 minutes for presentation, 15 minutes for the discussant and 25 minutes for Q&A.

Invited academics and colleagues in the field, who offered valuable critical feedback, also attended both workshops. The result of the workshops was a set of ideas and a plan to propose a bilateral project in the beginning of 2018, with a possible coordination for the European project in the next years.

Workshop in Brno

Date: 19 April – 21 April 2017

Attendees:

Researchers (project team): Vladimír Hyánek (Masaryk University), Alena Kluknavská (Masaryk University), Jiří Navrátil (Masaryk University)

Students (MA and PhD., project team): Jana Bernhard (University of Vienna), Olga Eisele (IHS, Vienna)

Guests: Martin Guzi (Masaryk University), Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky (Masaryk University), Štěpán Mikula (Masaryk University)

Presentations:

1. *Jana Bernhard* (University of Vienna). “Europeanized Public Spheres during times of Crisis? Social Networks of Public Claims regarding the 2015 Refugee Crisis in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia”
2. *Jiří Navrátil*, Milan Hrubeš, and Alena Kluknavská (Masaryk University, University of Hradec Králové, and Masaryk University). “Fear and Loathing in the Czech Republic: Political Elites – Civil Society Interaction in the Public Discourse on the Refugee Crisis”
3. *Jiří Navrátil* and Alena Kluknavská (Masaryk University). “Counter/Mobilizing on the migration crisis in the Czech Republic and Slovakia”
4. *Jana Bernhard*, Alena Kluknavská and Hajo Boomgaarden (University of Vienna, Masaryk University, and University of Vienna). “Claiming the crisis: Mediated public debates about the refugee crisis in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia”
5. Round table: Discussion about current and future cooperation. Inclusion of external guests to the debate. Led by *Vladimír Hyánek* (Masaryk University)

6. Round table: Reflections on workshop. Discussion about joint project and planned proposal.
7. Presentation: *Olga Eisele* and *Alena Kluknavská* (IHS, Vienna and Masaryk University). “Europe divided? What we learned so far”

Workshop in Vienna

Date: 31 May – 2 June 2017

Attendees:

Researchers (project team): Hajo Boomgaarden (University of Vienna), Alena Kluknavská (Masaryk University), Jiří Navrátil (Masaryk University)

Students (MA and PhD., project team): Jana Bernhard (University of Vienna), Olga Eisele (IHS, Vienna)

Guests: Jakob-Moritz Eberl (University of Vienna), Anita Gottlob (University of Vienna), Tobias Heidenreich (University of Vienna), Tobias Spöri (University of Vienna)

Presentations:

1. *Jakob-Moritz Eberl* and Tobias Heidenreich (University of Vienna). “Introducing REMINDER. (The Role of European Mobility and its Impacts in Narratives, Debates and EU Reforms)”
2. *Olga Eisele* and Hajo Boomgaarden (IHS, Vienna and University of Vienna). “Tango on a Tightrope? – An Investigation of Media-Politics Dynamics in EU Crisis Management” (Discussant: Tobias Spöri; University of Vienna)
3. *Anita Gottlob* (University of Vienna). “Risk Frames, Risk Perception and Voting Behaviour in the European Union: a case of the Refugee Crisis” (Discussant: Tobias Heidenreich; University of Vienna)
4. *Jiří Navrátil* and Ondřej Čísař (Masaryk University and Charles University). “Parties in the streets: conservative movement politics in Poland and Hungary” (Discussant: Alena Kluknavská; Masaryk University)
5. Round table: Discussion about current and future cooperation. Led by *Hajo Boomgaarden* (University of Vienna). “Recent challenges for studying media-politics-public opinion relationships: a short debate”
6. Round table 2: Discussion about joint project and planned proposal. Preparing the first draft of the proposal.
7. Discussion: “What happened so far: the first draft of the project”

Public lecture

We also organized a public lecture on the topic of migration, civil society and the media, which was open for students and academic public and its aim was to disseminate knowledge on this topic. We have invited Tobias Spöri from the University of Vienna who specializes in civil society matters in Eastern Europe and through his presentation was also able to give us a comparative perspective with Western Europe.

The lecture was organized in cooperation with the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University, which offered the venue to organize the event. We planned the lecture as a kick-off event of the workshop in Brno. We consider the lecture to be a success.

Date: 19 April 2017

Topic: The Refugee Crisis and Civil Society: Comparing Responses in Eastern and Western Europe

Research stay

The project included a one-month stay of Alena Kluknavská at the University of Vienna. The stay helped to coordinate and effectively work with Austrian partners on the research ideas. It created a perfect opportunity and a place for the research stay, as it allowed A. Kluknavská to discuss and consult the ideas in a professional and inspiring environment. She was also able to consult the topic and engage in general discussions on mobilization in the public sphere. It thus helped the project to advance the theoretical and methodological approach and receive critical feedback. A. Kluknavská also attended the research talks organized by the Department of Communication, University of Vienna, which offered multidisciplinary insights.

Publication

During the project, we have also finished a comparative paper, which we have sent for peer review to the Journal of Refugee Studies (<https://academic.oup.com/jrs>). The paper, titled "Claiming the crisis: Mediated public debates about the refugee crisis in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia", is co-authored by Alena Kluknavská, Jana Bernhard and Hajo Boomgaarden.

Extension of the project

The project was extended until 31. 12. 2017. This allowed us to continue the cooperation in the fall of 2017 and deepened already established collaboration between our institutions. The aim was to organize the meeting of project participants to further discuss results achieved during the project. During the extension of the project we set up two meetings –in Brno and Vienna. The Brno meeting took place on 08. 12. 2017 and the Vienna meeting took place on 12. – 13. 12. 2017. During these meetings, the achieved results and future cooperation between the participants were discussed. Particularly, the possibility, conditions, and details of proposing a joint project in the first half of 2018 were presented and explored.

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