Transnational nationalism. Far-Right Nationalist Groups in East Central Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries

Results in Brief

Transnational activities of far-right nationalist organisations

The operations of far-right nationalist organisations often involve activities and collaborations that transcend national borders. Research funded under a Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSC) Individual Fellowship combined historical and ethnographic data to explore the processes involved in these interactions.

The nuances of present-day far-right activism
Project research was based on three main premises. Rather than studying far-right groups separately and then comparing them, Dr Pasieka explored relations and exchanges between different groups. Here, “Transnat_farright sought to understand the processes through which various nationalist – collective and individual – actors imitate, inspire, but also constrain each other.”

The fellow then related present-day developments with similar phenomena in the 1920s and 1930s. Considering the patterns of far-right cooperation in that period, the focus was on “examining to what extent the 1930s, broadly understood, constitute a source of inspiration for present-day activists.”

Finally, the research focused on movements and organisations that are not political parties per se, and which attract youth. Dr Pasieka underlined the importance of learning more about these actors and how they influence related sentiments and activities.

Historical and ethnographic research

Ethnographic study of the far right is not without its difficulties. “That’s why in my project I combined ethnography of contemporary far-right movements with archival research on far-right nationalist actors active in the 1930s,” Dr Pasieka explains.

To compare present-day developments with those in the 1930s, archival research took place in Vienna, Warsaw, Lviv (a Polish city until 1939) and Trieste. These cities were multiethnic before World War II and therefore proved interesting venues for investigating the extent of transnational-nationalist orientation of various nationalist activities.

Fieldwork was carried out in Italy and Poland, and in a southern part of Slovakia inhabited by the Hungarian minority. The fellow first had to establish contacts and gain or negotiate access to relevant groups and settings. Fieldwork then involved participant observation at various events organised by far-right groups, from big festivals and demonstrations to small-scale socialising events.

New insights and future avenues

Project findings have been presented at numerous international conferences and workshops in Europe and the United States. They offer new insights into the subject and complement existing studies that tend to focus on political parties and rarely apply an ethnographic methodology.

In the 2017 publication ‘Taking far-right claims seriously and literally: Anthropology and the study of right-wing radicalism’, Dr Pasieka tackles a series of methodological
and ethical problems entailed in studying the far right. For example, in the paper she discusses the question of how to render a fair picture of research participants even when in disagreement with them.

The fellow will draw on experiences gained in this fellowship in a new project: Living right: an anthropological study of far-right activism. Although still focused on transnational exchanges, this research will be primarily related to various civic activities undertaken by far-right actors.

**Keywords**

Transnat_farright, far right, transnational, ethnographic, nationalist organisations, far-right activism

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**Closed project**

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