

Press release

Double Diaspora Delight: Sussex wins major awards on 'Diaspora, Migration and Identity'

The University of Sussex has been awarded over £750,000 by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of its 'Diasporas, Migration and Identities' programme. Funding goes towards two projects, one in Anthropology, and the other in Geography, both of which will be associated with the Sussex Centre for Migration Research.

The first project, on "Cultural Geographies of Counter-Diasporic Migration: The Second Generation Returns 'Home'" is coordinated by Professor Russell King (Geography), working with Prof. Ivor Goodson (Brighton University) and Dr Anastasia Christou. The project is a comparative study of Greek Americans, Greek Germans and British-born Greek Cypriots who are returning to Greece and Cyprus. It will look at how second-generation Greeks abroad construct images of their homeland, and how these images are challenged upon 'home-coming'. In particular, how do returnees react to the discovery that the 'pure' Greece (or Cyprus) that they remember or were told about by their parents has been radically altered by globalisation and mass immigration in recent years? To what extent is the very notion of diaspora transformed by these 'counter-diasporic' movements? And how does this encounter change their sense of who they are, and of where 'home' is?

Meanwhile, the second project, entitled "Home and Away: Experiences and Representations of Transnational South Asian Children" is coordinated by Dr Katy Gardner (Anthropology), working with Dr Kanwal Mand. This project seeks to explore the experiences of belonging, place and diaspora amongst South Asian children in East London, many of whose families maintain close transnational links with their places of origin. Despite a growing literature on 'South Asian youth', little attention has been paid to date to children, even though they are likely to have significantly different perceptions to adults on questions of belonging. A key question is how children aged 8-13 experience and represent transnational lives, whether this involves travel to the 'homeland', or being part of families and communities in which people constantly move. The aim is to theorise the ways in which transnational migration is both reproduced and changed through children's imaginings, cultural practices and forms of representation.

Both projects use innovative methodologies to engage with research participants, including video, photographic and audio recordings of Greek returnees' life histories, and a series of arts, story-telling and writing workshops leading to a book and exhibition based on South Asian children's experiences.

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