Doing Migration in Authoritarian and Nondemocratic Settings:

Biopolitics, Othering and the Black Box of Knowledge Production

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Migration studies today are increasingly critical and reflexive of the ethnonationalist and exclusionary logics of migration governance institutions and related xenophobic discourses. Emphasizing the processual and constructed nature of migration and mobility (e.g. 'doing migration/mobility'), these studies have so far focused mainly on European contexts as 'contexts of destination'. Authoritarian contexts have been considered either as immobile or as 'sending' contexts of movements to 'the West'. Although critical scholars from such nondemocratic settings have published relevant academic reflections on authoritarian migration-making, their voices often remain unnoticed in the field of European migration studies.

The proposed workshop suggests addressing this gap and paying explicit attention to migration- and integration-making in authoritarian and nondemocratic states in order to better understand complex forms of spatial relocation and membership that are related, for instance, to violent war and 'enforced passportization' (e.g. the Russian invasion of Ukraine), pushbacks at the EU borders (Belarus–Poland) or enforced immobilization (Belarus, China, Iran) as authoritarian biopolitics of mobility, immobility and migration governance. This focus will make it possible to study national adaptations of the global migration and mobility governance standards, as well as the uniqueness of authoritarian forms of population governance, including their political and social consequences for the targeted populations. This conceptual benefit provides added value for international migration studies in three ways.

First, focusing on nondemocratic and authoritarian contexts is extremely important in studying complex political conditions of one-time and long-term, but also of temporary and circular movements from authoritarian states (e.g. Belarus, Iran) to nonauthoritarian states (e.g. Poland, Great Britain), as well as between authoritarian states (e.g. Kazakhstan and China). This is also the case because the authoritarian politics of spatial movement may imitate the migration politics of the EU countries while at the same time explicitly relying on the anti–human rights programs of exploitation and punishment of newcomers (e.g. Qatar).

Second, particular attention to the peculiarities of authoritarian socialist (e.g. China) and post-socialist states (Hungary) must be paid to provide insights into the complexities of transnational patterns of family-making and diaspora lives. This is also because migranticized groups from formerly socialist nondemocratic states (e.g. Hungary, Russia, China) are often suspected of spreading nondemocratic ideologies in the 'receiving' European countries, which in turn may influence EU states' politics of family reunion, and because receiving states' diaspora politics may use 'civilizing' politics of diaspora governance in this regard.

Third, the focus on the specificity of nondemocratic and authoritarian forms of migration-making makes it possible to comprehensively study creative everyday survival strategies of individual movers and their family members in contexts of movement, settlement and place-making (e.g. current movers from Ukraine). By going beyond the groupist assumption of an 'ethnic similarity' of movers from the same authoritarian state, we can study the complex subjectivities of refuge, asylum, exile and diaspora lives in a way that includes constant individual and collective reflection and reinterpretation of authoritarian power (e.g. Hungarian, Turkish, Iranian movers). Consideration of political and social consequences of nondemocratic

power apparatuses at the level of individual subjectivities and diasporic formations will allow us to reveal not only individual and collective strategies of subordination and acceptance of authoritarian power but also creative resistance politics.

Finally, we need to examine major challenges in academic and nonacademic knowledge production in this field of study. For example, political knowledge production on migration-making (e.g. statistics, law specification and other administrative data) often remains a black box, with either inaccessible or problematic data (e.g. on deportees from Ukraine to Russia or on the pushback from the Belarusian borders). In addition, challenges in academic knowledge production include: (i) researchers' inability to travel to authoritarian states; (ii) difficulties in accessing the empirical field in such states; (iii) obtaining 'emic' interpretations of movers' and stayers' coping strategies, given that some movers may fear negative consequences (e.g. for their family members) from the respective nondemocratic states; and (iv) insufficient recognition of (critical) academic research produced in authoritarian contexts by local researchers.

Against this background, our workshop invites contributions that address some of the following questions:

- What concepts allow precise analysis of authoritarian and nondemocratic biopolitics of migration and mobility?
- What approaches help us to compare migration and integration politics of democratic and nondemocratic states? What will be the conceptual benefits of such a comparison?
- How can we relate transnational approaches to migration and mobility, as well as the recent 'mobility turn' and 'reflexive turn' in migration studies, to the analysis of migration-making in authoritarian and nondemocratic contexts? What might be the benefits of such a conceptual synthesis?
- What are specific forms of migrant othering that characterize current authoritarian and nondemocratic states? What are differences from and similarities to other migrants in the context of EU-European migration governance?
- What political and social consequences do nondemocratic and authoritarian forms of migration governance have for individual and kinship coping strategies of movers and of diaspora and migrant organizations?
- What forms of solidarity and conviviality can be identified in the context of authoritarian 'receiving' states and in respect to 'migrant communities' from the authoritarian states in democratic contexts?
- What methodological tools should we use to reflect critically on administrative practices of knowledge production regarding migration in authoritarian and nondemocratic contexts?
- How can we overcome the challenge of overgeneralizing authoritarian contexts and 'their' mobile populations and avoiding reification of the 'civilized'/'noncivilized' dichotomy in studying such contexts?
- How can we meet challenges of accessibility, interpretation and other barriers in academic knowledge production regarding migration-making?

We are planning a publication on the topic and will be interested to receive your short abstracts (max. 150 words) and bio notes by about 2 of December to *anna.amelina@b-tu.de* and *karolina.barglowski@uni.lu*