"From National Territory to Supranational Real Property?": Territorial Effects of Foreign Retirement Migration in Turkey (Sezgi Durgun)

This research proposal attempts to investigate the phenomenon of retirement migration and its “territorial effects” in Turkey. What is termed as the “retirement migration” is a kind of movement based on the second home development of retired Europeans in the holiday resort areas such as Spain, France or Greece. This movement is usually considered as one of the products of globalization and the emergence of the new transnational ways of life. It is also seen as a process that eventually integrates national and local economies within the international property market. Since June 2003, when Turkey legally opened up its real estate market to foreign buyers, it is estimated that more than 25,000 foreigners had purchased land for residential or commercial development. Some take it as evidence that retirement migration has changed its former route, (Spain, Italy, Greece, and France) moving towards the coastal areas of Turkey where prices are much more reasonable. After the announcement of the EU accord reforms there has been an increasing debate over the economic and political opening up process in Turkey. In this context the seemingly new path of retirement migration gave rise to the debate over “property sales to foreigners”, and created significant political repercussions in Turkish domestic politics. Subsequent to the annulment of the 2003 Law in July 2005, during the 6-month period of legal uncertainty, the market that focused on foreign buyers came to a standstill. However, local Land Registry Offices continued to process applications in anticipation of the new law. The way this topic is discussed in the Turkish public and political sphere signals that it will turn out to be “national matter”. Some conspiratory minds take it as a “security alert”. The widespread worry can be formulated as follows: Is our national territory becoming a supranational property?

Given the context above, this research will analyze the politicization of retirement migration in Turkish public and political discourse whilst doing a field research for examining both the view of the “resident foreigners” and the view of the local community. Inspired by the theories regarding migration, retirement tourism and transnational space this research endeavors to elucidate new understandings of international human mobility and its territorial effects on national scale. It will also borrow from theories of nationalism that problematize the “space” and spatial dimension as the kernel of the nation which can take forms as “terra nostra” and “Sacred territory”. This proposal aims to situate the phenomenon of retirement migration in Turkish context and look at the issue from two perspectives: a) national political and public discourse (media & publications) b) local discourses & experiences (local sources, inhabitants and foreign residents)