



FACULTY OF ARTS
Charles University

Report on defence of dissertation thesis

Academic year: 2023/2024

Student's name and surname: Laura Nicole Brody
Student's ID: 43175687

Type of the study programme: doctoral
Study programme: European Joint Doctorate Migration and Modernity: Historical and Cultural Challenges (EJD MOVES)

Study ID: 655508

Title of the thesis: Memories of an Aegean Borderscape: Belonging to Imvros (Gökçeada/Ιμβρος)
Thesis department: Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures (21-UALK)
Language of the thesis: English
Language of defence: English
Supervisor: Mgr. Miroslava Horová, Ph.D.
Reviewer(s): prof. Dr. Giorgos Tsimouris
doc. Nico Carpentier, Ph.D., mimořádný profesor Univerzity Karlovy

Date of defence: 11.04.2024 **Venue of defence:** Praha
Attempt: regular

Course of defence: Dissertation topic: Memories of an Aegean Borderscape: Belonging to Imvros (Gökçeada/Ιμβρος)
11:15 The candidate was introduced by both main supervisors, Dr Mirka Horová and Dr Assaf Dahdah, praising the candidate's dedication to the project and the topic, professionalism, and timely submission of the individual chapters. They congratulated her on an impressive result.
11:20 The candidate presented a brief summary of her dissertation. Zoning in on the Aegean island of Imvros – 'Gökçeada' in Turkish and 'Ιμβρος' in Greek – this dissertation applies an interdisciplinary mixed methods approach to the study of competing hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives of identity and belonging in the Imvriot borderscape. Primary source data for this dissertation draws on 42 semi-structured interviews and 31 mental maps collected from first, second and third-generation members of the Imvriot diaspora who agreed to participate in a one-year 'grounded theory ethnography' conducted in Turkey and Greece between August 2021 and August 2022. By tracing diverse 'borderescaping' practices which have occurred on Imvros since its post-WWI cession to the newly-created Turkish nation-state and the exemption of its Greek-speaking inhabitants from the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange, it highlights a noteworthy shift between 'hegemonic borderscape' and 'counter-hegemonic borderscape' eras occurring on the island roughly in the early 1990s. Whereas the former is linked to the multifaceted impact(s) of Turkish nation-building on the forced displacement of Imvros' Greek-speaking inhabitants – and thus the parallel creation of the Imvriot diaspora – primarily between the

1960s and 1980s, the latter is linked to the still-unfolding diasporic return movement which has been partaken in by some members of the Imvriot diaspora since the early 1990s. By delving into the personal memories of research participants, the dissertation illustrates the paradoxical manner by which the competing yet intricately intertwined hegemonic and non-hegemonic border imaginations of Gökçeada and Ίμβρος – each imbued with unique socio-political myths of belonging to space/place – have simultaneously intervened in and (re)shaped the lived experiences and spatial imaginaries of the Imvriot diaspora throughout both ‘hegemonic borderscape’ and ‘counter-hegemonic borderscape’ eras. Moreover, a firm rooting of both the creation and return of the Imvriot diaspora in ‘borderscaping’ practices respectively emanating from the exclusionary aspects of ‘political belonging’ to Gökçeada and a sense of visceral ‘belongingness’ to Ίμβρος ultimately demonstrates that ‘belongingness’ – albeit at times portrayed as a less-socio-politically relevant form of belonging – may constitute just as powerful a force as ‘political belonging’ in the catalysation of substantial socio-political change. By integrating the contexts of diaspora creation and return into a recently expanding body of literature on ‘borderscapes’, the dissertation also responds to ongoing needs to adopt new pathways for the study of ever-evolving migration trends – in this case shifting patterns of diasporic homeland engagement – linked to the fluid realities of a continually globalising world. It also contributes to the filling of empirical gaps regarding the intergenerational impact(s) of the 1923 Greco-Turkish population exchange specifically on exempt national minorities – rather than on exchanged minorities – in both Turkey and Greece, as well as to the expansion of an at-present slim body of literature regarding the Imvriot diaspora’s intergenerationally diverse – and perpetually transforming – relationship to its Imvriot homeland throughout the three previous decades.

11:35 The examiners – Prof. Giorgos Tsimouris and doc. Nico Carpentier – presented the main points from their reports; praising the overall competence and suitability of the dissertation, including the framework, the methodology, the choice of literature, and the engaging nature of the thesis. They recommended a broader contextualisation of Greco-Turkish relations, which would have helped the project, and could be beneficial for the candidate’s future work, and also a more detailed commentary on the limits of the chosen framework, not only on the candidate’s positionality.

11:55 The candidate thanked the examiners for their feedback and suggestions, and answered questions from the reports, focusing especially on the decision to adopt the borderscape approach and the reasons for it (focusing on the micro-level experiences) and the diversity of the island that exceeds the chosen approach; the genesis of the thesis and the individual chapters and the challenges involved; the issue of myth and the collective trauma of displacement; the importance of fieldwork discoveries that demonstrate more recent transformations and the evolution of the diasporic return movement and are not covered in so much detail in previous literature; the role of minorities in the nation state building; the importance of citizenship and political belonging and exclusion; and the role of women and their role in carrying the diaspora movement forward.

12:15 The floor was opened for general discussion, which focused in particular on the following points: the benefits and limits of the chosen theoretical and methodological approaches (the grounded ethnography and micro experiences); the contact with local diaspora organisations as part of the candidate’s fieldwork; the positionality of the candidate and its impact on the project; and the development of the research questions and the aligning with the approach and methodology with engagement with the community and the interviewees.

12:25 The chair announced another closed session, and the candidate

was asked to leave. The committee undertook an open ballot vote about awarding the distinction and the result as a unanimous decision to award the distinction.

12:40 The candidate was called back and the result of the viva, a PASS with DISTINCTION, was announced.

Minutes: Petra Johana Poncarová

Result of defence:	pass (P)	
Chair of the board:	prof. PhDr. Martin Procházka, CSc.
Committee members:	doc. Nico Carpentier, Ph.D., mimořádný profesor Univerzity Karlovy
	Assaf Dahdah, Dr.
	Dr. Bahriye Kemal
	Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels, Dr.
	prof. Dr. Giorgos Tsimouris