

## **Lora Koycheva (UCL SSEES Mellon Fellow September 2012 - August 2014)**

### **Biography**

I have a BA in Cultural Studies from Columbia College Chicago (May 2006) and a PhD in Anthropology from Northwestern University (December 2012), but I have also been trained as a creative writer, a television journalism broadcaster, a linguistic anthropologist, and, more recently, as a demographer. Although I am US-educated, I have also studied in Italy, Spain, and Germany; and my most recent academic home has been in the UK.

### **Research**

While always anthropologically informed, my research is characterized by my (occasionally obstinate and recklessly inspired) resistance to confining my intellectual inquiries to a single methodological or theoretical domain.

I work on issues of language, materiality, and representation and how they enable (or preclude, as the case may be) various experiences, manifestations, and meanings of normalcy -- be it through the lens of legal studies, food studies, urban studies, everyday politics, or social and biological reproduction -- and these interests are reflected in my doctoral dissertation, titled *Speculative Normalcy: Time, Agency, and Ambiguity in Changing Bulgaria*.

A key principle in my intellectual practice is to follow my operative research question where it takes me, even if that means finding myself on unfamiliar disciplinary grounds. This often requires of me that I slow down and reconcile widely (and perhaps wildly) divergent literatures: from the language of mathematics to folklore monsters, from complexity theory to political philosophy, all (usually) via my regional expertise in Southeast Europe. The historical demography of the Ottoman Empire and Sephardic communities are an ongoing project. The study of semiotics is a long-term pursuit and the anthropology of science a new and powerful fascination.

Most recently, my work for the Andrew W. Mellon programme at UCL was on the topic of 'Area Studies Old and New,' where I focused on how natural and numerical language-based representations of peoples, places, and practices generate areas as analytical arenas, and what the implications are for area scholarship.

Approaching the topic from a philosophy of language and mathematics perspective, I am currently competing several essays the continued significance for natural languages in area studies scholarship particularly in an age where quantitative scholarship is more heavily relied on for policy making. My efforts are well-represented by an international workshop I organized for the program (see more details here: <http://languageandquantification.wordpress.com/>). I am also working on several articles on protest suicides in Bulgaria and turning my dissertation into a book about the the political anthropologies of life in chaos.

### **Teaching**

Courses I taught and co-taught at UCL SSEES:

Interdisciplinary Area Studies I

Advanced Approaches to Basic Questions in the Humanities and Social Sciences

People and Populations: An Interdisciplinary Perspective. (I designed and taught this course specifically for the Mellon Programme and with its main theme in mind).