Abstract:
Contemporary debates on the relationship between migration and development focus extensively on whether migrant remittances stimulate the economy or create dependencies in sending countries. Lauren Duquette-Rury’s book project, Voice and Exit, shows that migrant remittances also produce dynamic political consequences in migrants’ places of origin, which have been largely obscured in scholarly accounts. Prof. Duquette-Rury explains the ways in which remittance resources create political opportunities for organized migrant groups to engage in social welfare provision in their hometowns in Mexico complementing, challenging and substituting government public service delivery. Voice and Exit unearths a paradox at the center of exercising voice and exit concurrently: the decision to emigrate to the United States creates the opportunity to mobilize remittances and exercise voice in a core function of local government at home – the provision of social welfare. However, because migrants participate in the economic, social and political affairs of their hometowns in absentia, social and spatial proximity constrict their ability to effectively navigate and negotiate pre-existing political structures and systems of social relations. Exit, and the remittance resources that endow migrants access to local authorities and bargaining leverage beyond borders, differentially amplifies the voices of organized migrant groups and members of their social network to the exclusion of others. Although migrants are ‘of’ their hometowns and maintain meaningful sentimental attachments motivating their cross-border investments they are no longer denizens ‘in’ these communities, which complicates maintenance and construction of social connections necessary for inclusive political participation in local democracy.

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