German Post-World War Reparations

On November 29, IES Director Jeroen Dewulf welcomed Spiros Stavrinakis from Luxembourg University to the IES lecture series. Paravantes presented a lecture entitled "Is Pay or Not to Pay?: War and After Reparations and their Impact on European Integration". The focus of the lecture was Germany's relationship with Greece and Poland, who have demanded reparations from Germany in compensation of their time under German occupation during World War I. The recent financial and political crises in Europe have once again sparked the topic of German reparations to its formerly-occupied territories. As Paravantes pointed out in his lecture, the issue centers on who owes what to whom (if anything at all). Paravantes argued that because reparations are such an "emotional wound", it must be used carefully and should also be distinguished from the term compensation. Reparations is when a government pays money to another government while compensation is the act of paying individuals. Much was discussed about Greek and Polish claims to reparations from Germany, including statements from Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras who has brought up the issue, most notably in January 2015. Meanwhile, the Polish claim that the German government owes them because both the Treaty of Versailles and the Yalta Conference established that Germany would pay reparations. Paravantes stressed that had these issues of reparations been taken care of on time, they would not be affecting Germany's relations with Greece and Poland today. Also mentioned in the talk as contributing factors to the situation today were the London Agreement that stated that no claims for World War II would be asked of Germany until investigation. During the Q&A session, the lively discussion focused on clarifying the treaties and conferences that allowed Germany to hold off making reparations.