

IMISCOE Research Initiative (RI): Refugees in European Localities: Reception, Perceptions and Policies

12th IMISCOE conference Rights, Democracy and Migration, Geneva, 25-27 June 2015

Call for Papers for a research panel session on “Refugee Migration and Local Demarcations”

In view of increasing refugee flows and incidences of hostility against refugees throughout Europe, the research initiative “Refugees in European localities: Reception, Perceptions and Policies” has set out the goal to provide for comparative case studies of the reception situation on the local level throughout Europe. Our research focuses on the process of arrival on the local level on the one hand, including management strategies of the local administration, the development of public discourse in the locality, and on reflections of the reception situation from the migrants’ perspective. On the other hand, we are also analyzing the situation after denial of residence status and the process of withdrawal.

In the context of those research aims, we are organizing a research panel session that tackles the latest developments in the field of refugee migration and local response. Especially during the year 2014, we could observe that the growth of refugee flows throughout Europe and the increasing public debate on their equitable distribution challenges social cohesion within European countries, regions, municipalities and neighborhoods. Apparently, the social fabric of European societies is already severely challenged by modernization processes which brought about transformations of labor markets and social systems, demographic decline and social divide. In this climate of individual uncertainty, the phenomenon of refugee flows seem to serve as a trigger for channeling a variety of concerns and emotions, including xenophobia, racism, social envy and the well-known NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) phenomenon. This collective feeling of excessive demand results in movements like the PEGIDA movement (Patriotic Europeans against the islamisation of the western world) in Germany, where people from all parts of society gather to collectively articulate their concern that “the other” will gain control over their way of living. In their argumentations, they easily find means to rationalize their emotions and concerns, by mixing facts and fantasies on refugee migration with ongoing public discourses on societal changes in the context of demographic decline, religious heterogeneity and declining social cohesion. This collective public strategy goes in line with political discourses that stress neoclassical argumentation in the debate on immigration, and thereby draws a demarcation line between welcome and deserving and not welcome and not deserving migrants. In this context, we also need to question our role as researchers, as our usual ways of conceptualizing migration reproduces those demarcations, for example using typologies differentiating between productive (labor, education) and non-productive (flight, marriage, adventure) migration motives.

In our panel session we would like to address those demarcations, inviting contributions that address one of the following aspects:

- Approaches: which theoretical approaches are suitable to deal adequately with the migration and integration processes of refugee migrants? How can we avoid politically defined categories in our research design and methods?
- Practices: assuming that zones of contact and of friction are configured in the local context we would like to understand which kinds of conflicts arise, how they are conceptualized, and how they are solved? Examples may cover all fields of local economies and public services, such as housing markets, education systems or labor markets.
- Public discourses and response: What kind of public reactions and discourses can be identified, and how are those discourses connected with larger and more fundamental issues, such as: social cohesion, demographic changes and individual uncertainties? Which counter-reactions can be observed, such as solidarity movements of varied arts of the population or self organized movements of asylum seekers?

Papers may provide for conceptual issues, case studies or preliminary results from ongoing research on the topic. A selection of papers will feed into a special issue.

We are able to offer small subsidiary funding for those researchers without their own travel funds. In case you need subsidies, please indicate so when submitting your proposal.

Paper proposals should include an abstract of one page maximum and a short biographical note of the author(s). Please send your proposals to Jeroen Doomernik (J.M.J.Doomernik@uva.nl) and Birgit Glorius (birgit.glorius@phil.tu-chemnitz.de) no later than January 15. Decisions on the papers will be taken until February 15.

Organisers of the panel:

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Birgit Glorius, associate professor at Chemnitz University of Technology, Institute for European Studies, Chair of Human Geography of East Central Europe, Chemnitz, Germany

Dr Jeroen Doomernik, assistant professor at the University of Amsterdam, Dept. Of Political Science and researcher at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) Amsterdam, Netherlands

About IMISCOE:

IMISCOE is the largest European network of scholars in the area of migration and integration. The focus is on comparative research and joint research projects. The annual IMISCOE conference is a key-moment in the agendas of most migration scholars in Europe. In addition, IMISCOE contributes to the training of young researchers and their exchange throughout Europe. Also IMISCOE plays an important role in the mutual dialogue between researchers and society (policy, politics, civil society).

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