

Call for Papers

“Exploring Civic and Political Engagement within Festivals Thematizing Migration and Ethnic Diversity”

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[Keywords:](#) festivals, migration, ethnic diversity, civic and political engagement, visibility, encounter, agency

The possibility of strategic utilization of festivals for various civic and political ends – by some referred to as “festivalization” (Cudny 2016; Roche 2011) – has recently sparked a renewed interest in the study of festivals across disciplines (Bennett et al. 2014; Giorgi et al. 2011; Haynes & Mogilnicka 2022; Koefoed et al. 2022; Quinn et al. 2021; Swartjes & Berkers 2022). The highly organized nature of contemporary festivals – coupled with their extensive media and public visibility – makes it possible to endow them with specific social and political agendas much more overtly than in the past (Bennett et al. 2014). As Giorgi and Sassatelli observe (2011), almost all contemporary festivals carry political messages, and some are even organized with the specific intention of creating sites for contestation and democratic debate. There seems to be a general agreement that festivals represent social spaces largely determined by institutional power but still open to different ways of meaning-making by festival participants. However, no special issue has thus far explored the range of this meaning-making comprehensively, nor has it considered festivals as sites of civic and political engagement concerning migration and ethnic diversity. This special issue aims to address this gap from a comparative perspective. By sharing the general conceptualization of urban festivals as instances of ‘cultural public sphere’ (McGuigan 2005), the contributors will shed light on how societal negotiations about Otherness, belonging, visibility, and representation of immigrants and ethnic minorities that are facilitated by festivals vary from country to country and city to city, depending on contextual conditions.

In this special issue, we approach festivals as relatively open sites of knowledge production that emerge in a complex setting of actions, narratives, discourses, and images/ imaginaries. The multiple actors involved in their production and consumption include immigrants and ethnic minorities, artists and cultural practitioners, policymakers, civil society representatives, and audiences. Accordingly, we are interested in exploring the range of meanings these actors attribute to the festival, together with the range of individual and collective goals they pursue within the festival setting. With this special issue, we aim to offer a more comprehensive understanding of festivals’ intended as well as unintended outcomes and their role in societal negotiations about migration and ethnic diversity.

We invite contributions that critically examine the proposed nexus of festivals, migration, ethnic diversity, and civic and political participation from the perspective of different disciplines and geographical locations. While we are interested in a multifaceted conceptualization of the topic, we particularly welcome studies based on qualitative research methods with an ethnographic focus. Such a methodological approach will contribute to a better understanding of the pragmatics of the actors involved in the festivals we are interested in.

This will allow for the collection of nuanced individual cases on one issue, but at the same time, it will examine them from a theoretical perspective that allows for comparisons between them beyond policy issues. We take an international and interdisciplinary comparative view on the subject and would like to learn about colonial histories, social imaginaries and spaces, political opportunities, and actors' meaning-making, exploring the links between festivals, migration, and cultural diversity.

We invite theoretical and empirical contributions on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- different modes of representation and visibility management of immigrants and ethnic minorities by festivals;
- multi-directional and/or conflicting agencies of different participants in festivals related to migration and ethnic diversity;
- the role of festivals in the production of social and urban imaginaries concerning migration and ethnic diversity;
- festivals as sites of civic and political participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities;
- social, cultural, and symbolic encounters that occur through festivals celebrating ethnic diversity;
- festivals as sites of entrepreneurship in connection with ethnicity.

We invite submissions that explore these topics and welcome contributions from a range of perspectives and disciplines with a focus on qualitative research methods, especially ethnography. We encourage researchers from various disciplines and career stages to contribute to this special issue. The expected word length of the full manuscript should not exceed 9,000 words. Images are welcome; please include relevant copyright permissions.

To discuss the papers, we are organizing a for potential contributors, organized in cooperation with IMISCOE's Standing Committee "Superdiversity, Migration, and Cultural Change (DIVCULT)" and hosted by the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the University of Vienna. It will take place on-site in Vienna on March 25–26, 2025.

Please send extended abstracts of a maximum of 500 words (excluding listed sources) and a short biographical note of 150 words to: jvana.rapos.bozic@fss.muni.cz, mark.simon@uni-bielefeld.de, joanna.jurkiewicz@hu-berlin.de until **February 9, 2025**.

We will send notifications of accepted abstracts **by February 17, 2025**.

Full articles will be expected by **August 1, 2025**.



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