



PAPERS BARCELONA 2018 CONFERENCE

Panel 65: Local innovation in asylum-seeker and refugee reception.

Part 1: Case studies of local innovations, based on forging connections

Chairs: Caroline Oliver (University of Roehampton, London) and Jacqueline Broadhead (Centre on Migration, Policy & Society, University of Oxford)

Discussant: Tiziana Caponio (FIERI and University of Turin) and Francesca Campomori (University of Venice)

Panel Abstract:

The panel will examine local approaches to reception for asylum-seekers and refugees, considering examples of innovation within the field. Speakers will present research on new approaches that engage both newcomers and receiving communities to enhance reception experiences and integration opportunities through the creation of shared, intercultural spaces in European cities. Drawing on conceptual work on multi-level governance and the ‘local turn’ in integration policy (Caponio & Bockert 2010) the panel will consider different examples of proactive and strategic policy and how this is manifested in local mobilization around the design and development of different types of reception arrangements. Attention will be paid to how these initiatives are negotiated and enacted within national contexts that have seen cuts in the wake of austerity and disaffection with multiculturalism (Ambrosini & Boccagni 2015). We will reflect on lessons learned from arrangements developed from civil society, as well as through wider learning through transnational city networks, considering how these multiple influences have informed strategy and research. We present early findings of evaluations of two ‘Urban Innovative Actions’: the Utrecht Refugee Launchpad and the CURANT project in Antwerp, as well as learn from the Inclusive Cities project (COMPAS, Oxford) and further examples of innovation from the Mediterranean regions to advance understanding in this field. It is expected that a journal Special Issue or book will be a longer-term outcome of the panel. References Ambrosini, M. and Boccagni, P. 2015. ‘Urban Multiculturalism beyond the ‘Backlash’: New Discourses and Different Practices in Immigrant Policies across European Cities’. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (1). Caponio, T. and Borkert, M. 2010. *The Local Dimension of Migration Policymaking*. IMISCOE Reports. Amsterdam University Press.

Paper 1:

Authors: Caroline Oliver (University of Roehampton, London), Karin Geijen (Utrecht University School of Governance) and Rianne Dekker (Utrecht University School of Governance)

Title: Local innovation to overcome the challenges of asylum seeker reception: the Utrecht Refugee

Launchpad

The dominant approach to asylum seeker reception is characterised by enforced passivity for asylum seekers, leading to delayed integration for those granted asylum. The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad (URLP) is an initiative led by Utrecht city council, in collaboration with a range of partners, including universities, co-housing and refugee NGOs and a social enterprise, that aims to develop a more dynamic, socially inclusive and 'future-free integration process' for asylum seekers. The project brings asylum seekers together with local young people in a disadvantaged community to live and learn together, through co-housing with local young people from the neighbourhood, English language classes and entrepreneurship programmes offered to inhabitants from both the centre and local neighbourhood. The aims of the project are to generate social bonding among participants, reduce local hostility, equip participants with new skills to facilitate integration there or elsewhere, and encourage a reframing of asylum seekers' narratives. This paper will present findings from research into the first year of the project. We offer insight into multiple perspectives on the innovation drawn from surveys, interviews and participant observation, including from policy and civil society actors involved in setting up the project, people in the neighbourhood, the young people living in the centre and asylum seekers themselves. We consider the extent to which this experiment is working out as planned, draw learning from the findings of the research so far, and briefly reflect on the challenges of conducting research into this local level innovation.

Paper 2:

Authors: Stiene Ravn (University of Antwerp) and Rilke Mahieu (University of Antwerp)

Title: Urban innovation in refugee reception and support: lessons from the ground from an on-going cohousing and case management project in Antwerp

While there has been a significant influx of refugees in the city of Antwerp (Belgium's largest city after Brussels) for decades, numbers rocketed in 2015 due to the Syrian refugee crisis. This situation has led to an unprecedented sense of urgency among local policy makers, triggering innovative action on the city level. In this paper we discuss the CURANT (Cohousing and case management for Unaccompanied young adult Refugees in Antwerp) program. This large, three-year European-funded project is led by the city of Antwerp in partnership with local social service agencies, various local NGOs and a mental health care center. It targets unaccompanied young adult refugees (ex-Unaccompanied Minor Refugees, UMRs), a group often neglected in social policies and academic research. A remarkable aspect in the program is the organised befriending and cohousing element: refugees are matched to and cohabit with local citizens in accommodation provided by the project. In this paper, we discuss preliminary findings after the first year of project implementation. In our analysis, we give central attention to the participants' (refugees and housemates) experiences and perspectives, while also assessing to what extent these correspond to or conflict with project goals, assumptions and strategies. Our analysis draws on a longitudinal multi-method methodology, including in-depth interviewing and participant observations.

Paper 3:

Authors: Marielle Zill (Utrecht University)

Title: Walk in! Hereinspaziert! Alternative forms of asylum accommodation and everyday experiences of

interaction and social mixing between asylum seekers and neighbourhood residents in the Grandhotel Cosmopolis

Asylum centres are understood to be ‘closed’ spaces, both due to their spatial separation from residential areas, and due to their material, institutional and symbolic borders. Civil society initiatives have created alternative forms of accommodation that seek to promote asylum seekers’ inclusion into the ‘host society’. This paper analyses the effects of alternative forms of accommodation on everyday contact and interaction between asylum seekers and neighbourhood residents by drawing on the case of the Grandhotel Cosmopolis, an asylum seekers’ centre, as well as café and hotel in the city of Augsburg, Germany. Data was collected via observations and semi-structured interviews between September 2016 to July 2017. Being an example of ‘social mixing’ at a small scale, the Grandhotel Cosmopolis is generally regarded as a model asylum seeker accommodation. In this article I argue that the creation of a ‘social mix’ within this particular case is based on civil society’s perceptions of asylum seekers’ needs. The results of this case study show how different expectations of contact and everyday interaction exist between neighbourhood residents and asylum seekers. While neighbourhood residents generally welcomed the opportunity for intercultural exchange within the Grandhotel, actual experiences of contact and everyday interaction between neighbourhood residents and asylum seekers were limited to the spaces of the Grandhotel itself or its direct surrounding streets and did not result in personal knowledge or intercultural friendships that went beyond this particular space. Still, asylum seekers’ and neighbourhood residents’ experiences of interaction contributed to a sense of comfort and localized belonging.

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