



Multiscalarity, diversity & fluidity – CEAS discussed at the IMISCOE Conference in Malmö

Birgit Glorius, TU Chemnitz

birgit.glorius@phil.tu-chemnitz.de

Introduction

The IMISCOE conference in Malmö gave us a good opportunity to disseminate results from our CESEVAL project and also to hold a research meeting, which we used for preparing the synopsis of our results. IMISCOE is Europe's largest network of scholars in the area of migration and integration, and the annual conferences, which are always organized by one of IMISCOE's institutional members, gives floor to enriching debates and an overview on what's coming up in our research field.

The 2019 [IMISCOE](#) conference in Malmö was titled “Understanding International Migration in the 21st Century: Conceptual and Methodological Approaches” and provided a large number of panels which focused on concepts and methods in migration and integration research. The conference was opened with a keynote lecture by Douglas Massey on “Immigration Policy Mismatches and Counter-productive Outcomes: Unauthorized Migration to the U.S. in Two Eras.” Starting from very recent shocking images from detention camps for irregular immigrants at the U.S.-Mexican border, Douglas Massey reached out into a fascinating reflection on several decades of immigration into the U.S. and how those movements were publicly framed. He showed the continuity of albeit varying policy measures which proved to be inadequate to respond to the realities of migration and frequently resulted in unintended consequences.

Throughout the conference, topics such as mobility processes, reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugee politics and related issues dominated the portfolio and thus showed the ongoing relevance of our research. Members of our consortium gave papers on multi-level governance of asylum seekers with case studies from Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and the Netherlands, showed politicization processes taking the example of Hungary, and discussed the question of how to move beyond classical concepts of solidarity, responsibility sharing and alternative solutions to protracted displacement.

As one of the milestones of our project, Martin Wagner (ICMPD/Vienna), Ferruccio Pastore (FIERI, Turino), Jeroen Doomernik and Vincenzo Gomes (UvA, Amsterdam), presented the first results from the three stakeholder workshops which were held in [Amsterdam](#), [Milan](#) and Vienna



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CEASEVAL in May/June this year. The idea of these workshops was to test scenarios for the future Common European Asylum System and to get national and local feedback. The workshops focused on the dilemma of secondary movement in the EU, on scenarios related to reception and on the issue of solidarity and responsibility sharing. After Martin, Ferruccio, Jeroen and Vincenzo had highlighted the main results from these workshops, we invited a number of discussants to comment on the findings and then opened the general discussion.



Throughout the debate, the **multi-scalarity** of the topic was highlighted once again. For example, it was pointed out that questions regarding refugees and asylum must be approached from a global perspective, and that practical activities have to transform from a low-funded humanitarian response into a long-term development response. On the other side of the scale, the **potentials of the local level** for the reception and integration of refugees were highlighted, with impressive examples of pragmatic humanitarianism which resulted in a large number of good practices and also active statements of solidarity, such as recent offers from the municipal level towards taking in contingents of those migrants who were rescued in the Mediterranean. The stakeholders noted that if the Member States are not able to provide a sustainable and equitable asylum and migration framework, the local level should be considered as alternative venue and actor for providing asylum.



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Regarding the position of the European Union, the **diversity** of EU member states was highlighted, leading to the assumption that a complete harmonization of reception practices and conditions throughout Europe is not realistic. The EU should rather respect the diversity of EU member states and use the potentials which can be found in the respective nation states regarding the implementation of European solidarity. In this respect, one discussant from the Baltic States, which so far show little engagement regarding the resettlement of refugees, pleaded for alternative options for showing solidarity. This would be more efficient, and also fair from the perspective of refugees.

The last point of the general debate related to the question of secondary movements and thus the contrast of **fluidity and containment** of migration. On the one hand, and this was also shown in our research on “borders and the mobility of migrants”, the autonomy of migration is ruling out attempts of containment. Thus, in order to avoid secondary movements in the EU, stakeholders saw the externalization of initial reception as sole solution. On the other hand, stakeholders stressed that EU leaders knew well about the fluidity of refugee movements, and that hence secondary movements were seen as an “automatic” solution in order to avoid stress at the initial entry points into the EU.

All in all, the IMISCOE conference once again offered a perfect platform for the exchange of ideas and the intensification of scientific networks. As one practical outcome of our networking activities with other H2020 projects, coordinators of the H2020 projects [ADMIGOV](#), [TRAFIQ](#) and [RESPOND](#) will participate in the opening panel discussion of our final conference “[Refuge Europe – a Question of Solidarity](#)” at October 1 in Chemnitz.