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Workshop, Barcelona, July 2018

Birgit Glorius & Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas,
TU Chemnitz & CIDOB Barcelona

e-mail: birgit.glorius@phil.tu-chemnitz.de;
bgarces@cidob.org

Introduction

In the beginning of July, a considerable part of our consortium headed to Barcelona to attend the annual IMISCOE conference, followed by a CEASEVAL workshop, which was hosted by our partner CIDOB in their office rooms in the heart of the old town.

The annual conference of the #IMISCOE network focused on “Europe, migrations and the Mediterranean: human mobility and intercultural challenges”, and took place on the Ciutadella Campus of #Pompeu Fabra University. The conference consisted of more than 130 sessions. The CEASEVAL-consortium organized two paper sessions and one workshop in order to discuss ongoing research with the wider IMISCOE committee. Two of the sessions were hosted by the IMISCOE standing committee #RELOCAL (Refugees in European Localities: Reception, Perceptions and Policies), led by Birgit Glorius (#TUC) and Jeroen Doomernik (#UvA).

The first paper session “Evaluation of the Common European Asylum System under Pressure and Recommendations for Further Development (CEASEVAL): Insight and first results” was started by Albert Kraler (ICMPD), who presented first results from ongoing research on harmonisation in the area of asylum in the EU. He especially discussed the term “solidarity” and its meaning for specific policy fields and actors. As a first insight of the teams’ findings, he elaborated on the facets of solidarity, such as loyalty, trust, fairness and necessity, and discussed specific types of solidarity such as “flexible solidarity” or “conditional solidarity”. As a preliminary conclusion of the research mainly carried out in WP2 and 6, he argued that solidarity for most stakeholders was most feasible in terms of sharing resources rather than people. He also stressed the multi-level aspects of solidarity and the territorial nature of refugee regimes as conditional.



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Those reflections were expanded by the second speaker, Tiziana Caponio from #FIERI, who presented conceptual thoughts and first results from the fieldwork for WP3. Focusing on the terms “harmonization” and “convergence”, she asked the question if harmonization in legal terms can be managed without convergence in the implementation of regulations and policies. She discussed two central hypotheses for the emergence of multi-level-governance arrangements (the institutional hypothesis and the agent-driven hypothesis) with respect to different venues of multi-level governments in terms of grade of centralization of politics and connectivity of governance levels.

Her thoughts were a perfect basis for the next speaker, Jeroen Doomernik from #University of Amsterdam, who focused on the local as a venue for a Common European Asylum System. Stressing the role of cities rather than nations as an agent of change, and giving insight into a Dutch best practice example of refugee reception (#Plan Einstein), he highlighted the effects of local action on the horizontal level (such as transnational urban networks), which could also impose new dynamics to other governance levels.

The last contribution by Birte Nienaber, Claudia Paraschivescu and Lucas Oesch from the #University of Luxembourg focused on conceptual thoughts and first outcomes of WP4 on borders and the mobility of migrants. Using fieldwork results from Luxembourg, the presenters gave insight into the materiality and functions of borders and bordering processes. They highlighted that – especially in the context of an open border regime in the Schengen region – borders can only be made visible by mechanisms of control, and explained the filtering function of borders. Based on results from migrant interviews, they stated that the presence of borders did rather not influence their interviewees’ mobility, but that their mobility fuelled the creation of borders. This observation gave a general hint towards the role of structure and agency in the context of refugee migration towards and within Europe.

The second paper session was devoted to WP5 on the discursive component of the Common European Asylum System. As fieldwork was already far developed, the presentations gave insight into the diversity of politicization processes on migration in Europe. The panel was started by the leader of WP5, Blanca Garcés-Mascreñas from #CIDOB, who elaborated the theoretical concept of politicisation, following De Wilde et al.’s approach, who identified as main indicators for politicisation the growing salience of a topic, the divergence of opinions and the appearance of new actors. On this basis, CEASEVAL partners carry out research on politicisation processes by examining public attitudes, political debates and media discourses in the case study countries.

The second speaker, Birgit Glorius from Lead Partner #TUC presented results from a secondary analysis of cross-national survey data, notably the Eurobarometer, to identify different patterns of politicisation among EU countries and try to understand the main drivers as well as possible consequences. Notwithstanding the variances of public opinion and how these were framed in

the respective countries, the research revealed that there was a common understanding among European citizens that the question of asylum and refugee migration should be preferably addressed on a supranational level. The data analysis showed that the increasing salience of migration in the media and public/policy discourse, which switched to a negative polemic in many countries, affected the public opinion, but that it didn't distract the public attention from important domestic issues which need to be solved by the national governments. Birgit concluded that public and political discourses which concentrate on the migration issue for the sake of catching votes do not respond to the needs of the citizens and will further weaken the confidence of the European public in their political leaders.

The following presentation by Endre Sik from #Tarki presented an example of extreme politicization, elaborating on the mechanism of creating "moral panic" in Hungary via campaigns of the national government. His paper explored how the Hungarian government framed the migration discourse and how the Fidesz-KDNP party coalition instrumentalised the refugee crisis as a moral panic button (i.e. a state-organised (and financed), repeated, large scale and multiple channelled form of moral panic generating activity) to increase the popularity of the government after its popularity decline 2014. By using Hungary as a showcase for politicization processes, Endre showed the relevance of the sphere of communication for the governance of asylum.

The last paper of the session by Cecilia Estrada-Villaseñor and Juan Iglesias Martínez from #Universidad Pontificia Comillas presented first results from an ongoing research on the discursive representation of refugees in the written press in Spain. The aim of their research is to show how selectivity of media representation creates selective perceptions of reality among media consumers. In this way, the society that consumes information is not fully informed of what is happening; that is why the study draws a map that shows the representation and treatment of the refugee category contrasted with the editorial line of two newspapers of different vision.

The two well attended paper sessions presented the conceptual frames and first results of CEASEVAL and supported the dissemination of results among the wider scientific audience. While the presentations consisted of already well elaborated papers, the CEASEVAL members took the opportunity to use the format of a "workshop" to present very initial findings from their research within WP 4 on Borders and the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the European Union. Organized by the Luxemburgish Team, Partners from Turkey (Damla Bayraktar Aksel /#Koç University), Germany(Birgit Glorius /TUC), Spain(Elena Sanchez-Montijano/CIDOB) as well as the Luxembourgish hosts presented fascinating insight into their research, consisting of interviews with border agencies and migrants and participant observation at borders.

Finally, Ferruccio Pastore (#FIERI) chaired a semi-plenary with the title "Beyond the 'refugee crisis': real partnerships or just containment?" which wrapped up some of the overarching

ideas of CEASEVAL and transported them on a higher scale of observation by focusing on the external dimension of EU migration and asylum policies. The speakers Catherine Woollard (#ECRE), Ibrahim Awad (Professor of Global Affairs and Director, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo) and Anna Terron (President, Instrategies, Barcelona) presented their views, derived from their specific disciplinary, professional and geographical background. Ibrahim Awad pointed out the repercussions of EU Asylum and migration policies to the African countries and claimed that the policies from the north would undermined the development of liberal democracies in the south. He plead for a shifting of the debates and suggested that – instead of sticking to questions of legitimacy of migration and securitization debates – initiate a debate on access to education. Catherine Woollard and Anna Terron joined in and pointed to the political structuration of asylum and migration politics, which in most countries is in the hands of the ministries of the interior, which quite often focus on the pathological parts of migration and respond with the contention of mixed flows. This, as Catherine Woollard argued, would lead to the prevention of people in need for shelter from shelter. This very well visited semi-plenary brought the urgency of the migration and asylum question to the fore and again showed the possible impact of CEASEVALs research for the further development of new policy approaches that are so urgently needed.

Following the IMISCOE conference, on July 5th 2018, the partners of the CEASEVAL project organized a research workshop in Barcelona to discuss the development of their research and share some of their preliminary findings. Which countries have been more solidarity-oriented since the beginning of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015? What role have the mass media played in the politicisation of the arrival of refugees? Has the public opinion changed during the European debates on migration? How are different Member States interpreting and applying the CEAS? How is the reception accommodation governance in each country? Hosted by CIDOB, this meeting also served to identify the different problems each partner was having during the research process: while some exposed the lack of cooperation of their national authorities, especially regarding interviews with officials and border agents and participant observation at the borders, others shared some of the strategies they followed to get access to data. In this regard, the retreat served both as a space of reflexion and as an indispensable coordinating tool.

Stay with us to find out more about the results from our research!



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