SESSION ABSTRACT

Hierarchies of Citizenship: Migration and the Political Economy of Provisioning
Karasz, Daniele (AG Migration, DGSKA, Vienna, AUT); Albrecht, Judith (AG Migration, DGSKA, Vienna, AUT); Diallo, Souleymane (AG Migration, DGSKA, Vienna, AUT); Selim, Nasima (AG Migration, DGSKA, Vienna, AUT); Kremmel, Katrin (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT)

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German Anthropological Association

Workshop of the AG Migration, co-organized with the AG Public Anthropology

Migration regimes always produce categorizations that sort people into different groups of migrants and distinguish them from ‘non-migrants’. These categories are conferred with differing rights and obligations in relation to the access to welfare provisions.

In Europe, it is a supranational asylum system that interacts with its national counterparts to produce a variety of legal categories, ranging from ‘asylum seeker’, ‘refugee’ to ‘irregular or illegal immigrant’ In many countries of the so-called Global South, criteria for service provisions are constantly redefined within evolving political economic regimes and in response to the changing inflow of migrants. As a result, social inclusion and exclusion are produced through bureaucratic practices, also driven by a variety of non-state institutions ranging from international organizations, NGOs, religious institutions, to local grass-roots organizations in the field of welfare provision arrangements.

This workshop aims to explore the complex entanglements of citizenship, migration regimes, as well as the moral and political economy of provision arrangements in various regional and institutional settings. By taking a closer look at the opportunities and constraints for ‘migrants’ and ‘non-migrants’ in the context of provision arrangements across different regions and decades, we want to develop a common reading of ‘migrant’ and ‘non-migrant’ experiences of precarity, tensions and forms of resistance to legal categories. To address these issues, the workshop invites contributions that focus on the processes of categorization itself and debate the enacted distinctions in relation to (dis-) continuities of access to provisions (such as housing, health care, education, etc.).

Rather than presenting conference papers, participants will be invited to submit think pieces (ca. 5 pages) that will be circulated among participants. The document should also present gaps and uncertainties, rather than already sustained findings only.
cooperation with AG Public Anthropology, we will explicitly discuss creative ways of making our debates accessible to the wider public.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Tuesday, September 29, 2020 | Slot 1 | Room 1
Tuesday, September 29, 2020 | Slot 2 | Room 1
Tuesday, September 29, 2020 | Slot 3 | Room 1
Wednesday, September 30, 2020 | Slot 1 | Room 3
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Daniele Karasz: “It cannot work with this kind of people!” - Social housing policies and (un)derserving migrants in Vienna

Katrin Kremmel: “this isn’t proper work”: Unpaid Labor in Asylum and Integration Practices

Franziska Reiffen: Beyond migrant exceptionalism: access to state support and documentation in Buenos Aires

Elçin Turan: Contested Agency, Migrants, Women Agricultural Labourers and the Changing Patterns of Clientelism in Turkey


Lieke Van der Veer: Moral citizenship regimes and contentious group-making

Ala Uddin: Othering the Migrant Workers in Bangladesh: The Context of COVID-19 Pandemic

Magdalena Suerbaum: Positioning migrant mothers in the German asylum regime

Mafalda Carapeto: Representations of the State: The Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service through the experiences of migrants

Veronica Ferrari: The Life and Afterlife of a Syrian Passport: Rethinking legal categories through the figure of the wanted citizen

Hanna Berg: Challenging common understandings of the refugee as a knowable figure

Sélim Clerc: Negotiating the categories of migration in Geneva

Robin Harper: Studying the emic experience of categorization, the in-between and the hierarchy of status and precarity of permanent residency status in the U.S. and Germany

Judith Albrecht: Trauma, Citizenship and the Imagined German Welfare State
SESSION PAPERS

“It cannot work with this kind of people!” - Social housing policies and (un)derserving migrants in Vienna

Karasz, Daniele (AG Migration, DGSKA, Vienna, AUT)

The think piece focusses on implicit understandings of migrants in the planning and implementation of Social Housing estates in Vienna. The special interest lies on the “social sustainability” policy implemented in the framework of the SMART housing program. The latter offers very convenient, new built apartments for rent. As a substitute for the very little residential units, housing cooperatives have to provide a large number of communal rooms. The think piece builds on my professional experience as person responsible for social sustainability in Vienna. Since 2019, in one estate, I have been responsible for the design and equipment of a multiplicity of communal rooms, such as sport rooms, learning spaces, community kitchens, etc. This process was planned as participatory.

In Viennese social housing, the term “social sustainability” is of great importance. It comprises a heterogeneous set of variables, such as everyday suitability of design elements; the flexibility of use; participation of future residents in planning; as well as the fostering of a long-lasting residential community and of social mix. Herby, the term “social sustainability” frequently camouflages a special focus on migration and migrants. Building on my experience, the think piece will describe how this, officially hidden aspect, did actually shape the planning and management of communal of rooms as well as the implementation of participatory procedures. The paper will describe how during this process the official category “low income” transformed into the category “migrant”; thereby, the residents converted from deserving housing provision and communal rooms to not deserving them. Special emphasis will be put on a long struggle I had had with the building management, if to finally open the community rooms (fundamentally an obligatory part of the housing policy) for “this kind of residents” or not. Hereby, the position as planner oscillated between being an “asset” to realize a “successful” project and being a “naïve troublemaker” misunderstanding the implicit common sense.

Main questions:

How do outspoken and implicit categories relate in provision arrangements?

Which leeway of action does this interplay offer to “migrant” residents, planners, bureaucrats etc.?
“this isn't proper work”: Unpaid Labor in Asylum and Integration Practices

Kremmel, Katrin (University of Vienna, Vienna, AUT)

In the spring of 2015, a citizens’ initiative in a small municipality in the West of Austria announced that it had invented and granted “municipal asylum” to two asylum seekers, in order to protect them from deportation through national authorities. Meanwhile, a second initiative began to look after the “integration” of the men concerned by involving them in voluntary work assignments. While both initiatives clearly positioned themselves in relation to the law and legality, they did so with very different effects.

In this think piece, I discuss interview material with “volunteering asylum seekers and refugees” and so-called “Ehrenamtliche” (citizens volunteering in refugee care) to trace the different emic categories of unpaid labor involved in both initiatives, delivered by migrants and non-migrants alike. By so doing, I a. look into the role of unpaid labor for contemporary provision arrangements for asylum seekers and refugees in Austria and their historical trajectory; and b. I discuss the different subject positionalities of the asylum seekers, refugees and citizens engaging in these unpaid labor practices, their

Beyond migrant exceptionalism: access to state support and documentation in Buenos Aires

Reiffen, Franziska (Mainz University, Mainz, GER)

Argentina’s migration legislation grants migrants the access to basic services such as health care and education, independently from their residency status. When it comes to the access to state welfare programs that provide subsidies for housing or basic alimentation, the situation is more complicated. In Buenos Aires city, access to state support often depends on two conditions: documentación (documentation), i.e. an Argentine ID, and radicación (settlement), which means a minimum time of officially acknowledged presence in the city. Documentation and settlement as conditions for the access to state support reflect specific notions of belonging, re-establishing who is a citizen vested with full rights and who is not — making the “undocumented” and the “unsettled” exceptional cases.

Both conditions are obstacles for many, among them migrant newcomers who recently arrived in the city, “undocumented” migrants as well as people who live in the streets, who often lack documentation as well and whose way of life defies the notion of “settlement”. For international migrants, obtaining documentation can be a bigger challenge, depending on where they come from and how they have entered the country. At the same time, for some of these migrants, the long aspired “documento” and, thus, their official recognition as Argentine citizens offers them the possibility to leave the country, to become “migrants” elsewhere.

The Argentine case invites to reflect on a set of questions: Which “exclusions within citizenship and exclusions from citizenship” (Anderson 2019) are reproduced through the welfare regime? How do people live with, but also challenge these
categorization through their actions? Finally, in which way might this specific case enable us to critically re-visit the exceptionalisation of migration?

Contested Agency, Migrants, Women Agricultural Labourers and the Changing Patterns of Clientelism in Turkey

Turan, Elçin (University of Cologne, Mugla, TUR)

The General Directorate of Migration Management in Turkey reports there are 3.6 million registered Syrians as of 26 March 2020, with a legal status of “under temporary protection”. Although many Syrians enjoy certain rights under the temporary protection regime, they are still not considered to be “refugees” due to Turkey’s retention of the geographical limitation clause in the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees. There are also thousands of Syrians with residence permits without temporary protection status and an unknown number of Syrian irregular migrants. An important turning point regarding the legal status of Syrian refugees has come with recent amendments to the Turkish citizenship law. I see this as an outcome of recent migration flows but also political concerns of the president Erdoğan and ruling party to gain power and to implement neo-Ottomanist policy. It is important to note that citizenship is exceptional, that is based on the capital criteria and financial capital. Yet, it is apparent that offering Turkish citizenship to Syrians has come with the change in policies and an understanding that they are no longer “guests,” accepting that most of them are going to stay in Turkey either longterm or permanently.

In my presentation and ongoing project called “Contested Agency, Migrants, Women Agricultural Labourers and the Changing Patterns of Clientelism in Turkey”, the agency of women agricultural workers will be analyzed in the context of patronage and clientelism as it evolves at (i) the micro-level of interaction orders in the village and (ii) the macro-level of patronage policies of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). The main question is how the women agricultural workers negotiate agency – the capacity to act, access agricultural work and define their role as workers - in the face of changing forms of patronage and clientelism. In the context of increasing migration processes to Turkey and a huge influx of extremely cheap labor and new forms of exploitation of Syrian refugees, I will present my preliminary findings on the contested agency formations in Syrians and Turkish agricultural worker groups divided by nationality, language and the current anti-Syrian xenophobia.

European HIV citizenship? Health care, social welfare and European border regimes in Berlin.

Lewicki, Pawel (Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt, Frankfurt, GER)

Literature on EU citizenship is referring to this category as an aspirational and imaginary, connected to creation of symbolic space of belonging (the EU). In my research on marginalized HIV positive migrants from Poland in Berlin, EU citizenship is bound to freedom of movement, settlement and employment set out by the EU
directives and translated into local solutions regarding EU migrants. However, anthropologists show that, as an unstable category, citizenship is regulating access to rights and recognition, enabling identity claims and negotiating responsibilities also in relations to different, multiple ways in which bodies— and in this cast it’s the HIVs—are emerging (see Krause et al 2019). The question that I would like to pursue in my presentation is how an HIV citizenship—defined by Davis et al (2019) as “negotiated and influenced by intersectional experiences of community, health systems, illness and treatment” and a mixture of biological citizenship and therapeutic citizenship—is pushing the boundaries of EU citizenship in Berlin. How does the experience of HIV shape EU citizenship and how it structures therapeutic communities and assumption of rights and recognition? How is good life and well-being negotiated through HIV and citizenship: European and national citizenship and HIV citizenship understood as therapeutic and biological? What do we learn from a perspective on multiple HIVs about emerging inner-EU border and migration regimes and about life of people that these notions affect? I will base my presentation on empirical material gathered through my following of HIV-positive, homeless migrants from Poland in Berlin to various places—to doctor’s office, to municipal office, social welfare office and JobCenter, to an anti-HIV organization. In these places HIV is emerging in a different way shaping and conditioning access to health care and social welfare. In these places often the boundaries of both national and the EU citizenship are pushed through claims to HIV citizenship.

**Moral citizenship regimes and contentious group-making**

*Van der Veer, Lieke (Radboud University Nijmegen, Nijmegen, NIE)*

This contribution discusses bureaucratic categorization practices regarding newcomers in Rotterdam (the Netherlands). Local integration policies and funding schemes lean in to the European trend to mainstream integration policies that generically target all residents. By indiscriminately seeking to address the interests of “migrant” and “non-migrant” populations alike, the city moves away from targeted policies that benefit or burden specific migrant groups. This trend means that organizations that are considered ‘mono-ethnic and/or mono-religious’ will generally not be granted subsidies. In practice, however, local integration policies and funding regimes do employ categorizations regarding which migrant groups are ideally helped by local grassroots organizations—and thereby determine which migrant groups may access the services these organizations offer.

Based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2018, this contribution examines the ways in which the organizers of emerging refugee support organizations—who often have a refugee background—anticipate these local integration policies and funding schemes. Whilst speculating on their chances to qualify for subsidy, grassroots organizers attempt to assess which target groups are congruous with generic policies. By engaging in this paradoxical attempt, they let go of some of the migrant groups they were initially thinking of helping—including particularly precarious populations—and explicitly include non-migrants in their activities instead. This contribution analyzes these phenomena in the context of two conflicting moral citizenship regimes that grassroots organizers are equally drawn to:
‘active citizenship’ (premised on the idea that good residents feel responsible for formerly public tasks) and ‘activist citizenship’ (premised on the idea that good residents challenge the existing order).

Othering the Migrant Workers in Bangladesh: The Context of COVID-19 Pandemic

Uddin, Ala (University of Chittagong, Chittagong, BGD)

Since the mid-1970s, international migration for employment has been an effective livelihood strategy of Bangladeshi youths. These migrants play a significant role in the Bangladesh economy, while remittances constituted about 10-12 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). In recognition, they are considered as ‘remittance heroes’ in Bangladesh. However, since the beginning of the year, the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has overtaken the entire world with an overwhelming impact on migration and remittance. As an immediate effect, the pandemic has ravaged global jobs markets and forced millions of Bangladeshi migrants to return home, adversely affecting the flow of inward remittances. Concurrently, the remittance heroes encountered a behavioural shift in Bangladesh.

Given the situation, based on telephonic interviews and news updates, this paper intends to offer an insight into how the Bangladeshi people have treated their migrant workers amid the coronavirus pandemic. Until the beginning of March, Bangladesh was almost unaffected by the coronavirus. While migrants began to return since early March from coronavirus-affected countries (e.g. KSA, Qatar, Italy, and China), they have been attended differently—from airport to their homes at different villages. They have been blamed for ‘bringing’ the contagious virus, and considered as a potential threat for the country. At airport, they were ‘misbehaved’ as ‘unwelcomed’ returnees, and asked for self-quarantine. While they were largely ‘unexpected’, in order to maintain visible surveillance and keep the rest villagers in ‘safe distance’ from the migrants (‘virus bearers’), local security forces hoisted red flags on the top of migrants’ houses. In a precautionary manner, local youths posted warning messages on social media. In my interview, I found that locals consider them ‘presumably safe’, once there were no overseas returnees at their areas. Internal migrants also face an unfamiliar attitude, who work in cities, and now staying (‘stay at home’) at their village homes during the government-imposed nationwide lockdown. In the changed situation, unlike the past, now the locals do not maintain pre-existing relationship with the migrants as friends or relatives, instead suspect them as ‘bearers’ of the deadly virus. As a consequence, both the internal and international migrants experience ‘otherness’ in their own society, where they were sought-after citizens in pre-COVID-19 Bangladesh. The post-COVID-19 will define and determine the relationship.

Keywords: COVID-19, coronavirus, pandemic, Bangladesh, migrants, remittance, othering
Positioning migrant mothers in the German asylum regime

Suerbaum, Magdalena (Max Planck Institute, Göttingen, GER)

Migrant women who are mothers often hold ambivalent positions within the German asylum regime. As mothers, they are entitled to certain rights and resources. Conversely, they often experience discrimination and specific forms of exclusion because of being mothers. This paper seeks to disentangle the complex processes of categorisation of newcomers who are labelled both ‘mothers’ and ‘non-citizens’.

In this paper, I will present the cases of women who came during or after the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015 to seek asylum and whose legal status in Germany is related to their role as mothers. It is the “triangular relationship of the mother, the child and the […] state” (Shandy 2008: 803) that I seek to analyse. I focus on the so-called ‘Schwangerschaftsduldung’ (ban on deportation based on pregnancy) and discuss the conditions of women who are only permitted to stay in Germany because of their child’s legal status. A child can receive citizenship or permanent residence if the father holds citizenship or a settlement permit in Germany. Material I present in this paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Berlin among refugees and asylum seekers that took place in two phases of ten and six months between winter 2017 and spring 2020.

I suggest that women, whose role in front of the German state is defined as that of a mother and a non-citizen, are in danger to become subject to precarity, exclusion, and discrimination due to their specific status. At the same time, they are entitled to specific rights and formats of support if they comply to implicit and explicit expectations of behaviour, that is, if they perform deservingness and adhere to specific ideas of motherhood (see Ramsay 2017). I am interested in the specific legal statuses that are available for mothers in the German asylum regime and seek to analyse how these impact on the women and define the relationship with their children.

Representations of the State: The Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service through the experiences of migrants

Carapeto, Mafalda (Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, POR)

The communication here presented is part of my Phd research and falls within the scope of representations of the State and State practices. In order to explore how the Portuguese State deals with migrants, this presentation aims to acknowledge how the migrants, in Portugal, think about the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service, SEF. SEF is a security service within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, that in the context of internal security policy, is responsible for applying the act number 23/2007 of 4th July that has defined the new legal framework for the entry, permanence, exit and removal of foreigners from national territory.

SEF is frequently the first meeting between migrants and the Portuguese State, often when they are still in their country of origin preparing their migration project, this is what they resort to in order to obtain information about documentation and other matters. In this sense, my interest is in understanding how the personal experience of
migrants contributes to the construction of their social representation about the
referred institution and therefore about the Portuguese State.

Through exploratory analysis of the first interviews and informal conversations, with
migrants who reside or have already resided in Portugal, I seek to understand how
SEF is thought of as a State institution by those who need their services to access /
remain in national territory.

The Life and Afterlife of a Syrian Passport
Rethinking legal categories through
the figure of the wanted citizen

Ferreri, Veronica (Leibniz Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, GER)

The paper reflects on the entanglement between Syrians’ experiences of citizenship
in Syria and displacement/asylum in Lebanon and Germany by examining the life and
afterlife of the Syrian passport across different borders, migration regimes and
bureaucratic apparatuses. I introduce the figure of the wanted citizen (muwatin matlub).
The wanted citizen is an emic category used by Syrians and the regime to
indicate that a person is considered a threat in relation to different aspects of Syrian
political life—for instance, defecting conscription or participation to revolutionary
activities. Being wanted used to entail the risk of arrest and the impossibility to obtain
a passport inside Syria and in any Syrian embassy. This ban was lifted on April 2015,
at the time when the price of a passport doubled. The liberalisation of the passport
became the passe-partout for many Syrians to leave Lebanon in the hope to reach
Europe, transforming the document into a medium through which the precarity of
displacement could be interrupted. Yet, the meaning and function of the passport
changes again for Syrian refugees in Germany. Whereas those entitled of subsidiary
protection are required to renew the Syrian passport—regardless of whether they
used to be wanted citizens; Syrians with full protection reluctantly must provide the
passport to the German authorities to obtain German citizenship. By drawing on on-
go ing ethnographic fieldwork between Lebanon and Germany begun in mid-2014, my
intention is to initiate a conversation about how emic discourse and categories used by
migrants and refugees themselves, can help us to rethink categories, connections
and modes of thinking centred on global or European migratory regimes and legal
systems. What happens when we approach these structures through migrants’ first-
hand experiences and emic discourses? And, how can we translate such
experiences in light of our familiarity with these migratory regimes, legal systems and
the categories they produced and reproduced?

Challenging common understandings of the refugee as a knowable figure

Berg, Hanna (Graduate Institute Geneva, Geneva, CH)

Today displacement is always counted from the moment of arrival, thus reducing
refugees to becoming exclusively humanitarian subjects (Azoulay 2019). In this
sense, scholarly concern often naturally evolves from arrival, while moments leading
to displacements become treated as “background information” or “root causes”
(Malkki 1995). By engaging with both archival and ethnographic fieldwork, this think
piece seeks to understand how (historical and contemporary) bureaucratic, political and social everyday processes around the legal status of the refugee can challenge common understandings of the refugee as a knowable figure. More specifically, engaging with correspondence preserved at the UN archive in Geneva regarding the emergence of the first refugee document in the end of the first World War, informally known as the Nansen stamps, together with ethnographic work conducted with Syrian refugees living in urban spaces in Jordan 2018, it attempts to combine processes in which the social category of the refugee was yet to be defined with empirical understandings of how Syrians negotiate their lives around their legal status as refugees. Doing so, this piece challenges any 'ontological' understanding of the refugee a knowable figure in contemporary time, and hopefully thus resonates with other similar studies problematising dialectic understandings of social categories, such as citizens/refugees or migrants/non-migrants. In this respect, rather addressing different ways in which humans who are forced to flee become doomed to embody the role as a refugee, exploring the processes of the making of this category by combining ethnographic fieldwork with an ethnographical reading of the archive, is an attempt to reconstruct that very prism through which it has become an ontology for human beings to be measured against in the first place.

**Negotiating the categories of migration in Geneva**

*Clerc, Sélim (Graduate Institute Geneva, Geneva, CH)*

In January 2020, a collective of unaccompanied young migrants (MNA) from Maghreb and local activists occupied the “Grütli”, a cultural center in Geneva. This event exposed the challenges faced by this population in interacting with the State and claiming for their rights. My master's thesis focuses on how the State negotiates the categories of migration in Geneva, Switzerland, by focusing on practices and representations mobilized by the local State and social workers in Geneva in the management of MNA, through ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviews.

Young people migrating alone from Maghreb who do not have legal residence are “tolerated” in the Swiss territory only by virtue of their status as minors, as their countries are deemed “safe” by the federal government (i.e. not eligible for refugee status). Their access to State protection and resources is therefore contingent on their recognition as minors. In the absence of documents, their minority needs to be assessed through a set of verification practices that constantly puts into question the deservingness of their status. In the eyes of the State and of social workers, MNA’s rights are constantly put into doubt. In the moral economy of migration, MNA’s deservingness is constantly compared to other categories, competing for limited State resources: unaccompanied asylum seekers, unaccompanied young girls from Maghreb, or non-migrants in child foster care.

My analysis takes a closer look at the politics of categorization, particularly the production and challenging of the category of “unaccompanied minor migrant” by various actors. This always ephemeral category is situated at the intersection of racialized and gendered figures of the “migrant” and of “the child”. Therefore, it
conveys opposite notions of vulnerability and threat in the context of the permanent oscillation between compassion and repression, a distinctive feature of the “humanitarian government”.

During the workshop, I would like to discuss some questions that emerged from my fieldwork and interviews: what are the the State's strategic uses of doubt and ignorance? What role do social workers, situated simultaneously inside and outside of the State, play in constructing and challenging these categories?

**Studying the emic experience of categorization, the in-between and the hierarchy of status and precarity of permanent residency status in the U.S. and Germany**

*Harper, Robin (York College, New York, USA)*

Citizenship acquisition is a task-achievement, developmental process, morphing arriving immigrants into citizen-members through socialization, language acquisition and civic engagement. Classic immigration states and increasingly new immigration states provision access to naturalization to those meeting eligibility requirements, demanding membership and swearing allegiance. By traversing the citizenship border legal fiction, the same person is treated differently by the state, society and often themselves. This categorization shift transforming aliens into members of the polity may never transpire, paralyzing migrants as politically-stunted outsiders. In light of globalization and reborderization resulting from covid-19 and domestic political pressures, how do immigrants experience the inclusion/exclusion of the citizenship border and the limbo of noncitizenship? How do opportunities, identity, and civic engagement affect desire for acquisition of immigrant/citizenship status? Using a dataset of 150 interviews with permanent residents and naturalized citizens in the US and Germany in 2004-2010 and 2016-2020, I am exploring the emic experience of categorization, the in-between and the hierarchy of status and precarity of permanent residency status. Initial findings suggest that previously US and German permanent residents perceived their rights and risks equivalent to citizens, often confronting alien-status only at border-crossings. In contrast, recent data especially among US migrants, reveal migrant perceptions as unmoored from ‘citizens-in-waiting’ lumped with undocumented and lower-status migrants, subjected to capricious state policies.

I would like to participate in the workshop in order to develop the themes emerging (and inchoate) from my data, especially such issues as the inclusion/exclusion of the citizenship border and the limbo of noncitizenship; the emic experience of categorization, the in-between and the hierarchy of status and precarity of permanent residency status; and the meaning of time and local governments in the naturalization process and citizen-making immigrant experience.

**Trauma, Citizenship and the Imagined German Welfare State**

*Albrecht, Judith (AG Public Anthropology, DGSKA, Berlin, GER)*

Based on ethnographic research between 2015 and 2020 the paper critically investigates the connections between trauma, resilience, citizenship and practices of
legal justice and social care in Germany. A public debate about the unjust treatment of families of murder victims started during the National Socialist Underground Trials in 2018. One of the longest trials in German postwar history ended with a life sentence for the sole survivor of a neo-Nazi terrorist cell, but failed to answer questions raised by victims’ relatives. Critical voices of journalists and activists pointed out that the process that started in Germany with the NSU trial is unlikely to be truly finished until the institutional racism in the country is faced and addressed accordingly (Eliacik 2018).

In addition to structural racism, the paper also reveals other patterns of violation and injustice, which are interwoven in the German legal system and contradict the constitutional promise of a welfare state. They also play a prominent role in the suffering of families of murder victims.

The paper puts the encounter and conversation between Marion, a German citizen, and Farshid, a Pakistani citizen, who was seeking asylum in Berlin, as a starting point of reflection. Both lost their daughters through murder. Their experiences in dealing with their trauma and their search for justice are at the center of this presentation. The presented case study investigates how traumatic experiences shear affected persons away from their expected connections to others and how society relates to the traumatized person. Power asymmetries in encounters with state representatives and bureaucrats, Questions of citizenship, economic resources, access to legal and medical care, as well as language, belonging, informal networks and the logic and rules of the different legal procedures (asylum and criminal trial) shaped and influenced the narratives of their traumas and the strategies of their resilience. While both shared the traumatic loss and were exposed with their trauma and vulnerability to a lack of state empathy, their experiences differed in various ways. In the case study, I follow their different experiences and introduce their strategies to live on and gain back agency in their lives, while being confronted with institutional mechanisms that execute the duty of care through governmental and bureaucratic control.

Undocumented refugees in Brussels: Categories of migration and citizenship

Sontag, Katrin (University of Basel, Basel, CH)

My current research project deals with the situation of several hundred homeless, undocumented migrants and refugees in Brussels, who are mostly trying to reach the UK, as well as activism and support by local citizens. The focus is thus on migrants who are at that point of time categorized as “illegal”. Because of this, they also do not fit into any categories of the welfare system (as asylum seekers on the one hand or homeless people on the other). The categories of the migration regime often change with time, for example people who are now undocumented may have been asylum seekers before. In Brussels, the term “transmigrants” is frequently used. Unlike in migration research, it is here used to indicate that migrants are moving on and thus do not need to fit into the system. Categories and status play a crucial role.

Local citizens have stepped in to bridge the complete exclusion from welfare and are running several big projects, such as an emergency shelter for 350 men, home
hosting, a shelter for women, regular meals in a park, clothes distribution, training and other activities.

My approach so far has been to look at the situation as acts of citizenship (after Isin) in an urban setting – thus looking at the agency and the acts of those involved, migrants and citizens, and the ways in which they transform local spaces and possibilities (by conducting participant observation, conversations and interviews). Yet, even though this perspective offers the possibility to focus on transformations, resistance and agency, the point has also been made that it should not cover up lacking rights and continuing exclusion in legal terms.

My questions for the workshop would turn around categories that are used for mobile undocumented people (just like “undocumented”), who cannot be part of the asylum or welfare system, as well as acts of citizenship or urban citizenship and the question of acknowledging self-ascriptions, resistance, agency, as well as exclusion through the migration and citizenship regime.