

CALL FOR PAPERS, 19TH IMISCOE ANNUAL CONFERENCE, June 29 - July 1, 2022, Oslo, Norway

Cultural and artistic organisations as spaces of belonging for young refugees and asylum-seekers.

Panel convenors: Mattias De Backer (KU Leuven & University of Liège), Ilse van Liempt & Rik Huizinga (Utrecht University)

Young refugees and asylum-seekers often find themselves in precarious positions: insecure housing, a lack of social networks and employment restrictions, coupled with a lack of money, mean that many occupy the public spaces of cities and towns where they seek refuge. Their presence in these spaces has been strongly problematised in European immigration debates. There has, by contrast, been far less debate on how young refugees can mobilise their own histories, voices and agencies, how they can contribute to the development of convivial public spaces and to what extent this can enhance their integration and participation in society.

In many European cities, arts and cultural initiatives often provide a platform for refugee and migrant voices, playing an important role in their encounters in/with public space and with other people. While formal state-actors in the arrival infrastructures (Meeus et al., 2019) often have as primary aim to provide material and practical support, soft infrastructures and social networks are essential in offering migrants a sense of belonging (Boost & Oosterlynck, 2019). Little research, however, has focused on how cultural and artistic organisations provide belonging, intimacy, comfort and hope, as spaces of “artistic conviviality” (Rovisco, 2020). Yet, these aspects are primordial for (young) people in diaspora. Music, imagery, dance, role play and movement can help refugees and asylum-seekers to retain their identities and share migration narratives of personal pasts and futures in accessible ways.

Furthermore, in these cultural and artistic spaces, young refugees and asylum-seekers can engage in artistic practices which in themselves can be vehicles of belonging and place attachment. Place-attachment can be considered a positive affective-emotional bond between people and places (Altman & Low, 2012), “the main characteristic of which is the tendency of the individual to maintain closeness to such a place” (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). Artistic production, as the production of a sense of home and belonging, in this sense becomes a tactic, an action of resistance in the absence of a proper locus (de Certeau, 1984, p. 37).

The analysis of how novel forms of arts-based engagement can be developed that foster senses of migrant belonging will inevitably also draw attention to how artistic production is responsive to the multiple and multilocal sensorial geographies of being in the place-world (Casey, 2001). In this panel, we understand the city as a contested sensorial space for encounters as well as borderings/exclusions (van Houtum & van Naerssen 2002), drawing on academic work on 'sensing the city' (Howes 2005, Pink 2012, 2015) and the wider literature on citizenship, hospitality and public space (Amin 2002, Isin 2008, Low 2005, Mitchell 1993, Sennett 2017). The search for spaces of intimacy, privacy, freedom, hope and belonging (De Backer, Dijkema and Hörschelmann, 2019) is also part of our investigation alongside the tactics refugee youth use to claim a place of their own.

Lastly, in this panel we are also interested in contributions discussing ethical and methodological aspects. Research into artistic practices of young refugees and asylum-seekers

necessarily draws attention to participatory, creative and sensorial research methods (Pink 2015) for exploring their experiences of public and semi-public spaces.

For this panel we invite researchers to submit proposals for research papers on topics focusing on, but not limited to, the following questions:

- What roles do artistic and cultural organisations play in refugees' and asylum-seekers' arrival?
- How can young asylum-seekers and refugees find a sense of belonging and a "place like home" in these organisations?
- How might artistic practices draw attention to experiences of arrival as multi-local and temporal processes?
- How and to what extent are young asylum-seekers' and refugees' artistic expressions practices of home-making and place-attachment?
- How can the study of artistic practices of belonging and place-making be facilitated via the use of creative, participatory and sensorial research methods?

Applicants should submit a 250-word abstract, including a preliminary title, to Mattias De Backer (mattias.debacker@kuleuven.be), Ilse van Liempt (i.c.vanliempt@uu.nl) and Rik Huizinga (r.p.huizinga@uu.nl) no later than 24 November, 2021. Submissions accepted by the session convenors will be announced on 3 December 2021 (of course, the final confirmation will be sent out by the conference organisers later on). Presenters of accepted papers will also need to register for the Annual Conference.

Please contact the conference organisers if you have any questions. For more information about the 2022 Imiscoe Annual Conference, please visit <https://www.imiscoe.org/news-and-blog/news/network-news/1349-19th-imiscoe-annual-conference-june-29-july-1-2022-oslo>

This panel is part of the HERA-funded European research project EYRASPS, on the Everyday Experiences of Young Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Public Spaces. More information about the project can be found here: <https://refugeeyouthinpublicspace.sites.uu.nl/>