

Digital Workshop – 14.06.2023 – 2-5pm

Solidarity practices in mid-sized and small cities and rural areas – developments since 2015/16

As part of the international partnership project "Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity, and Hospitality in a Global Perspective", we kindly invite you to a digital workshop on solidarity practices for refugees in small and medium-sized cities and rural areas.

We want to shift the focus from the already well-researched urban areas and large cities as places of solidarity, to small and medium-sized cities as well as rural areas. On one hand, they are the places where many migrants and refugees integrate into civil society, participate in economic and social life and develop a sense of belonging. But, on the other hand, they are also the places that have special challenges in store for newly arrived people.

In our workshop, that will take place on June 14 from 2 to 5 p.m. via BigBlueButton, we want to discuss various cases from small and medium-sized cities and rural areas in Denmark and Germany and use the synergies of our research. For further questions and registration, please send a mail to: theresa.wagner@uos.de.

Program

- **Welcome** and introduction by the organisers
- **Panel #1 Solidarity Practices in Denmark**
 - Ana Maria Macias Garcia, University of Aalborg: *Solidarity with Ukrainian refugees in a rural area in Denmark*
 - Mashudu Salifu, University of Aalborg: *Innovative and pragmatic solidarity approaches in dealing with the crises*
 - Discussant: Helen Schwenken, Osnabrück University
- **Break (15 min)**
- **Panel #2 Solidarity Practices in Germany**
 - Hanne Schneider, Universität Chemnitz: *Civil society and solidarity practices in the reception of refugees in rural areas of Germany.*
 - Theresa Wagner, Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies, Osnabrück University: *Eight years after the peak of "welcome culture"- solidarity structures in four mid-sized cities in Germany*
 - Discussant: Martin Bak Jørgensen, University of Aalborg
- **Wrap-Up**

Presentation #1 – Solidarity with Ukrainian Refugees in a rural area in Denmark

The rural area in question has approximately 300 inhabitants, and the research focuses on the emotions of the volunteers and their impact on their work and the life of the community. The presentation focuses on understanding how the volunteers' emotional experiences influence their work/relationships with the refugees they work with, as well as the broader community dynamics. Although the research is not yet completed, there are some preliminary results: The presentation offers insights into the challenges and opportunities of volunteering in a small, rural community, particularly in the context of refugee support. By exploring the emotional dimensions of volunteering, my research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of volunteers, and their impact on the community they serve.

Presentation #2 - Innovative and pragmatic solidarity approaches in dealing with the crises

With the recent crises – the migration crisis, the Covid-19, and the Russia- Ukraine war – as a point of departure, this presentation discusses how cities across Europe appear to have developed not only innovative but pragmatic solidarity approaches in dealing with the crises. Aalborg as a city is not immune to the migrant rights, housing, and care challenges associated with the crises. Aalborg and Danish municipalities have taken a distinct and pragmatic solidarity approach in dealing with the Ukraine refugees. Indeed, Aalborg is not a rural municipality; however, its solidarity approach to the Ukrainian refugees is not radically different from the rural or mid-size cities in the country. Against this background, this study seeks to examine Aalborg city acts of citizenship and solidarity towards the refugees from Ukraine and what could be done in possible future crises.

Presentation #3 – Civil society and solidarity practices in the reception of refugees in rural areas of Germany

For a long time, rural areas as arrival regions of refugees have not been at the center of research. However, especially in Germany, rural communities have received a large share of refugees through decentralized distribution policies. Thus, civil society actors have become increasingly involved in the reception of refugees. Therefore, the presentation provides insights into empirical data and experiences from research projects in several rural districts in Germany since 2018. The presentation highlights three aspects: 1) rural structures and specificities of civil society initiatives, 2) the challenges of cooperation between state and non-state actors in small and medium-sized municipalities, and 3) solidarity initiatives that exist beyond large cities. We will also discuss recent "crises" (Covid-19, War in Ukraine) and how they change the conditions for civil society.

Presentation #4 – Eight years after the peak of “welcome culture”- solidarity structures in four mid-sized cities in Germany

In 2015 and 2016, civil society engagement for refugees experienced a peak phase in Germany. How has this commitment developed since then against the backdrop of the Corona pandemic and the war in Ukraine? The presentation focuses on the experiences of those individuals involved, civil society networks and the exchange between civil society and public administration. As part of the research project "Activated civil society. An Analysis of the Sustainable Impact of Civic Engagement on Social Capital and the Common Good in Germany," we examined what remained of the strong civic engagement in 2015/16. To this end, developments in engagement with refugees since 2015 will be traced in four medium-sized German cities. Three central phases that local engagement for refugees has gone through since then will be presented: 1) a phase of transition from temporary emergency aid to longer-term support; 2) the Corona pandemic with massive restrictions on public life; and 3) the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine, which represented a further caesura in the field.