Stefan Kordel | Marika Gruber

Migration Impact Assessment

A Toolbox for Participatory Practices

Nomos

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Foreword

Migration research has expanded remarkably during the recent years – both in terms of its scale and scope. As a phenomenon, migration has not only increased, but also become more nuanced and complex. Consequently, in addition to the various types of mobility and the cultural diversity of groups involved in migratory flows, the wide range of actors and stakeholders either directly or indirectly involved in the various phases of the migratory processes, levels of social and cultural diversity have grown. These unprecedented transformations with their multifaceted social, political, and economic consequences in both communities of reception and origin have fulled the importance in having reliable information and deeper knowledge about migratory patterns and the subsequent accommodation of diversity issues both by policymakers and scholars alike.

Amidst the prevalent lopsided, harmful – at times xenophobic social climate surrounding migration, depicting it oftentimes as security threat to be fought against, what tends to get overshadowed is migration is not only a normal, but also a positive phenomenon. It is rather the very framing it as a "problem", a "threat" or a "crisis that has fed fear, mistrust and hatred, and in so doing disallowing us to see – not to mention, capture – it its benefits. With a mounting shortage of workers, the resulting struggling labour market, growing debt, unfavourable demographics stemming from an ageing population, declining birth rates, and a cumulative brain drain, the European societies would appear to be in need of more migrants. While migration is, alas, back on the agenda, the discussion seems to be driven by emotion more than a reason – and political imperatives primarily by short terms economic needs.

Why the migratory challenge has been mounting has, however, less to do with the human mobility as such and more about its inefficient management and governance. Inefficient management tends to fuel public perception that erroneously sees migration as out of control and demands for policies stopping than facilitating human movement. A key part of the challenge stems from the observation that many scholars and stakeholders involved migration management alike lack the appropriate means or know-how to conduct their work efficiently. To gain reliable information and deeper knowledge about migratory patterns, needed for the subsequent ac-

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commodation of diversity issues migration brings along, adequate methods and tools are indispensable.

The formal policies aside, the migration landscape has changed so profoundly that the lessons of the past with respect to coping with increased diversity may no longer be applicable or relevant. Therein lies the underlying premise of the present handbook. With it, the Editors highlight and seek to tackle the absence of a comprehensive collection of methods and practical, user friendly tools for migration management fashioned for a broad range of practitioners. The handbook provides as a research and evidence based, demand oriented, migration governance practices advocating for a closer collaboration between scholars working on migration and the various stakeholders with practical expertise – and needs. The handbook pays a particular attention to the peculiarities in conducting evaluations and assessments in diverse rural and mountain areas, where the migratory dynamics – as well as those of the host society – tend to be remarkably different from the more commonly studied major urban areas.

The inclusion of migrants in rural and mountain territories is a multi-level and multidimensional process which needs to involve newcomers and receiving societies equally, but which also seeks to blur the social boundaries between these groups. The participatory methods adapted here underline that inclusion must be considered as a non-linear and reciprocal interaction through which new population groups negotiate new cultural meanings and concrete rights of citizenship with existing populations, within systems of socioeconomic, legal, and cultural relations that need to be considered in their essential features. Social innovation and continuous negotiation are the main aspects of these processes of inclusion and mutual recognition, which require dedicated policies at different territorial levels based on a new understanding of being local and of belonging. In this way, the handbook formulates empirically grounded recommendations and puts forth practical solutions to improve the local governance of migration in light of the peculiar needs and resources of rural and mountain regions.

This book has been developed as a toolbox for applied and practice-oriented migration impact assessment and evaluation. It provides an interdisciplinary collection of methods, designed to be used by researchers, but which can be used as a learning tool and reference for anyone interested in migration research methods, including students, policymakers and other professionals and practitioners. What follows is essentially a product of collaborative research stemming from the project 'Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European

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Rural and Mountain Areas' (MATILDE), which received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 870831. This international research consortium of 25 partner institutions has sought to improve knowledge on the social and economic impacts of migration processes towards European rural and mountain areas.

Jussi P. Laine, University of Eastern Finland

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Developing a handbook for practitioners as a target group needs a continuous involvement of both, researchers with whom one could reflect conceptual presuppositions or challenges in the implementation, and actors who deal with assessments in their practical work. We would like to thank both groups for their valuable inputs Dr. Tobias Weidinger, David Spenger, MA (both FAU Erlangen-Nuernberg), Lukas Schorner, MA and Dominic Sauerbrey, MA (both ex FAU) as well all as Christina Lobnig, MA (ex Carinthia University of Applied Sciences-CUAS), Jessica Pöcher, BA, and Kathrin Zupan, MA (ex CUAS) for their text contributions on conceptual frameworks or selected self-evaluation tools and methods, developed in the course of the MATILDE project. Second, we thank our colleagues from the project, both scientific and local partners for the testing in the settings of their respective local case studies, and, thirdly, practitioners, e.g. Mag. Caroline Manahl (okay.zusammen leben). Finally, we would like to thank Maggie Studholme for her excellent proofreading service, and Dr. Sandra Frey from NOMOS publishing house as well as Prof. Dr. Anna Mratschkowski as editor for the series on migration and integration for their continuous support.

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction
Stefan Kordel, Marika Gruber 13

2. Methodological presuppositions and challenges
Stefan Kordel, Marika Gruber 21

2.1. Positionality of researchers 23

2.2. Becoming familiar with the locality 26

2.3. Ethical issues 27

3. Data collection techniques 29

3.1. Municipality Profile
Marika Gruber 29

3.2. Qualitative (in-depth and narrative) interview
David Spenger, Cristina Dalla Torre, Stefan Kordel 32

3.3. Focus group
Tobias Weidinger, Cristina Dalla Torre, Marika Gruber 38

3.4. Open Space Technology (OST) and participatory workshop
Dominic Sauerbrey, Tobias Weidinger 43

3.5. Observation
David Spenger 49

3.6. Mobility mapping
Tobias Weidinger, David Spenger, Stefan Kordel 53

3.7. Social mapping
David Spenger, Stefan Kordel 58

3.8. Participatory photo/video talk
Stefan Kordel 64

4. Data analysis 69

4.1. General approach
David Spenger, Stefan Kordel, Marika Gruber 69

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748939412-1, am 17.08.2024, 14:53:17
Open Access – (cc) BY – https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/agb

4.2. Data analysis methods
David Spenger, Tobias Weidinger 71

4.3. Participatory data analysis
Marika Gruber 75

5. Dissemination and stimulating transformation with research
Marika Gruber, Stefan Kordel 79

6. One Pager
Marika Gruber, Stefan Kordel, Christina Lobnig, Jessica Pöcher, Kathrin Zupan 83

6.1. Municipality profile 83

6.2. Qualitative interview 85

6.3. Focus group 87

6.4. Open Space Technology (OST) 89

6.5. Observation 91

6.6. Mobility mapping 93

6.7. Social mapping 95

6.8. Participatory photo/video talk 97

7. Bibliography 99

https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748939412-1, am 17.08.2024, 14:53:17
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