

## **The *Here and Now* in Forced Migration: Everyday Intimacies, Imaginaries and Bureaucracies**

An international workshop organized by the  
Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

**22-23 October 2020**

This workshop draws attention to **the here and now** in forced migration contexts. While a focus on the present can never be separated from the past and future of migrants' memories, nostalgias, hopes and dreams, we recognise an analytical value that lies in this temporal idiom. We are interested in exploring the different ways forced migrants perceive and experience the 'here and now' and how this manifest in, emerges from and shapes the **everyday intimacies of family and kin relations**, in the framework of **bureaucratic encounters**. Among the predicaments forced migrants face in their new social settings are the bureaucracies they must tackle to secure legal statuses and basic needs (often in a language and logic different from their own), the pressures of making and sustaining kin, as well as economic livelihoods. We will examine the 'here and now' in the lives of forced migrants as a place and time that greatly demands their attention, energy, emotion, and resources. As such, the demands of the present determine forced migrants' (in)ability to stay or decision to return, impact their well-being and reconfigure the **imaginaries** related to the new setting and across transnational space.

Forced migration does not impact on individuals alone but affects their whole family (Bolzman 2014). Likewise, the strategies people employ to deal with the pressures of the 'here and now' are deeply intertwined with the ways they enact meaningful relationships. These relations may provide a source of motivation and "an inhabitable space of welcome" (Willen 2014), however, they may also evoke feelings of guilt, self-loathing and depression (Horton 2009, Madziva & Zontini 2012). Similarly, bureaucratic procedures and requirements often shape the lives of forced migrants to a suffocating extent. Documents, letters, and official papers are emotionally laden – they evoke fear and uncertainty when they are absent, useless, and leave one 'undocumented' (Hull 2012, Navaro-Yashin 2007).

By adopting the temporal lens of the 'here and now', the workshop aims to reveal the nuances of forced migrants' lived experiences and subjectivities when dealing with family life and bureaucratic encounters. The imaginaries they bring with them in their journeys, related to past memories and those ascribed to the new place, play an important role in this process. We shall explore these different dynamics and their interconnections.

We especially welcome paper proposals grounded in qualitative and ethnographic work that:

- Explore how everyday intimacies on the levels of family and kin relations influence, alter, solidify or even break down in relation to bureaucratic processes in forced migration contexts

- Analyse the experiential and affective dimensions of the bureaucracies specific to forced migrants' legal status upon arriving at the new social setting and how it might be subject to change
- Deal with the ways in which the 'here and now' could be stretched indefinitely and how it reconfigures the imaginaries of 'home' and 'family'
- Consider how people experience the 'here and now' at different yet fluid moments in the lifecourse
- Delve into non-biological bonds created through kinning practices by forced migrants in their new social settings

Papers may focus on different forms of forced migration, including protracted displacement, the experiences of asylum seekers, refugees, internally-displaced persons, trafficked persons, and those who have been forced to *move* against their will as a result of persecution, conflict, or insecurity (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 5). We seek to critically reflect on the terms and categories we use through our focus on thick descriptions and experience-near accounts. Specifically, we are interested to go beyond the more Eurocentric, heteronormative idea of the 'nuclear' family.

### **Time, Place and Important Dates**

The workshop will take place at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Ethnic and Religious Diversity in Göttingen, Germany, on 22 and 23 October 2020. **Professor Ilana Feldman** (George Washington University) will give the keynote speech.

Participants should send their **abstracts of 300 words** by **15 February 2020** to: Dr Magdalena Suerbaum and Dr Victoria Kumala Sakti at: [thehereandnow2020@gmail.com](mailto:thehereandnow2020@gmail.com)

Decisions will be made and communicated by 1 March 2020. Expenses will be covered for those selected to participate in the workshop.

Please note that we plan to publish a special issue/edited volume. In order to facilitate formative discussions, we require contributors to submit manuscripts for circulation prior to the workshops. The deadline for submission of manuscripts will be June 31, 2020.