



Invited Academic Seminar: Innovation in city-level reception of asylum seekers and refugees: Neighbourhood connections, wellbeing and skills

28th June 2018 9.30-14.30, Het Huis, Boorstraat 107, Utrecht

Cities are recognised as sites in which reception and integration of asylum-seekers and refugees occur, and as spaces where innovative strategies can be developed. This academic seminar comes at the mid-point of one such innovation, the Utrecht Refugee Launchpad (U-RLP), an initiative led by Utrecht City Council in collaboration with a range of partners. The intervention aims to develop a more dynamic, socially inclusive and 'future-proof integration process' (whether in the Netherlands or elsewhere) for asylum seekers and refugees. Its novel approach bucks the trend of dominant approaches to reception, by embedding the initiative in the local neighbourhood through co-housing and co-learning, offering skills training and network-building opportunities to neighbourhood participants as well as centre inhabitants. These, and other supportive strategies, are expected to enhance participants' wellbeing, allowing for personal growth and the experience of more future-oriented narratives and temporalities than offered by dominant approaches to asylum seeker and refugee reception.

The event brings together members of the U-RLP research team and its international advisory board with local academics. Its goals are to reflect on early findings from the project evaluation and gain knowledge and insight from research on similar interventions in other European and Dutch cities. Respondent-led debates will explore topics including:

- *Neighbourhood connection:* How can cities address anti-immigrant sentiment, local hostility and tensions against asylum-seekers within new initiatives? What is the role of municipalities in communication with local residents? What opportunities and challenges do novel co-living and co-learning strategies offer for reception, longer-term integration (here or elsewhere) and participants' wellbeing? What sorts of strategies for generating social connection work, and on what scale? What spaces and sites work best for encouraging interaction, mutual recognition and respect?
- *Skills and wellbeing:* What opportunities and challenges are presented by offering skills training (e.g. language and entrepreneurship) as part of the reception experience? How best can mentoring and integration in local business networks work to enhance the future labour market prospects of refugees? How do these different approaches work alongside psychological support interventions to facilitate opportunities for agency and narrative (re)construction? What are the pros and cons of these interventions for current wellbeing and future prospects of asylum seekers and refugees?

In considering these questions, we seek to learn from knowledge and research on similar initiatives at the city level, as well as from academic research addressing broader normative questions on the role of cities in migrant reception and integration. We will also consider some of the methodological challenges and innovations that are required of empirical research and evaluation of such initiatives, to develop the contributions of research in this field.

Format

9.30h: Coffee and registration

10h: Welcome by Chair. *Dr Sarah Spencer, COMPAS, University of Oxford.*

10.10h Short presentations (10 minutes each) from a range of cities on research on innovative local initiatives

Dr Caroline Oliver, Dr Karin Geuijen, Dr Rianne Dekker (Roehampton University, London): The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad: Interim findings of the research and evaluation

Dr Meta van der Linden (Erasmus University, Rotterdam): The Bridge project: evaluating an integration programme for Syrian refugee families in Rotterdam: the 'Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam' (SNTR) - an initiative by the 'Stichting De Verre Bergen' (SDVB).

Dr Pascal Beckers (Radboud University, Nijmegen): Researching the effectiveness of the use of positive psychology to foster mental health and labour market participation of refugees in Nijmegen.

Adriaan Oostveen (Regioplan): Evaluating policy for permit holders: Accelerated participation and integration of refugees: the Amsterdam approach

11h: Respondent-led discussion and debate on *neighbourhood reception* (Prof Ash Amin & Prof Barbara Oomen)

11.45h: Respondent-led discussion and debate on *skills and wellbeing* (Dr Hein Roelfsema, Dr Yvette Baggen)

12.30h: Lunch

13.30h: Methodological challenges of research and evaluation agendas (Prof Alice Bloch & Dr David Parsons)

14h: Closing discussion: Observations and questions for future research agendas (discussion led by Dr Peter Scholten)

14.30 Close

Organisation

The event is organised by the URLP project's research and evaluation team: Dr Caroline Oliver (University of Roehampton, London), Dr Karin Geuijen (Utrecht University), Dr Rianne Dekker (Utrecht University) and Dr Sarah Spencer (University of Oxford). Confirmed attendees include the international research advisory board, Professor Ash Amin (University of Cambridge) Professor Alice Bloch (University of Manchester) Professor Peter Scholten (Erasmus University, Rotterdam) Dr David Parsons (Leeds Beckett University, P & A Research Consulting). It is free to invited participants, and lunch and refreshments are provided, with thanks to the City of Utrecht.

Attendee List

1. Sarah Spencer (University of Oxford)
2. Caroline Oliver (Roehampton University)
3. Karin Geuijen (Utrecht University)
4. Rianne Dekker (Utrecht University)
5. Niene Oepkes (City of Utrecht)
6. Jan Braat (City of Utrecht)
7. Ash Amin (University of Cambridge)
8. Alice Bloch (Manchester University)
9. David Parsons (Leeds Beckett University)
10. Peter Scholten (Erasmus University, Rotterdam)
11. Meta van der Linden (Erasmus University, Rotterdam)
12. Pascal Beckers (Radboud University, Nijmegen)
13. Adriaan Oostveen (Regioplan)
14. Hein Roelfsema (Utrecht University)
15. Yvette Baggen (Utrecht University)
16. Barbara Oomen (University College Roosevelt)
17. Mariëlle Zill (Utrecht University)
18. Ilse van Liempt (Utrecht University)
19. Halleh Ghorashi (VU, Amsterdam)
20. Maria Rast (VU, Amsterdam)
21. Daniel del Torres (UIA Expert)
22. Choukri Abourida (Eigen Haard)
23. Sarah Miellet (Utrecht University)
24. Julia Muller (University of Oxford)
25. Meghan Rens (Erasmus University, Rotterdam)
26. Imara Antonius (City of Utrecht)
27. Lilis Rodriguez (City of Utrecht)

Photographs



Public seminar



Academic Symposium

28 June 2018

14:30-16:30

Het Huis, Boorstraat 107, Utrecht

14:30

Registration & Coffee

15:00

Opening of the Academic Symposium

Deputy Mayor Maarten van Ooijen (TBC)

15:05

Short Introduction to Plan Einstein

Niene Oepkes, Project Manager

15:15

Key Findings in the Interim Research Report

Caroline Oliver, Principal Investigator Roehampton University.

15:25

Academic Reflection by the OXFORD Advisory Board

Sarah Spencer, Director, Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, COMPAS,
University of Oxford (Chair)

With contributions from Advisory Board Members:

Ash Amin, Professor of Geography, University of Cambridge

Alice Bloch, Professor of Sociology, University of Manchester

David Parsons, Specialist in Public Programme Evaluation, Leeds Beckett University

Peter Scholten, Professor of Public Policy and Politics, Erasmus University Rotterdam

16:30

End of the Academic Symposium