



Facing migrants exclusionary urban policies

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Since the so-called migration/refugee crisis that started in 2015, Europe has become increasingly hostile to foreign residents. National governments have adopted progressively restrictive policies and a growing number of local governments have embraced exclusionary measures and the populist surge, in many cases reversing the welcome policies they had adopted in previous years. Contrary to all evidence that sees the flow of people towards European cities as inevitable for several years to come, migration continues to be addressed as an emergency.

The costs of urban inclusion are often overestimated, while the benefits of diversity are rarely considered. Perception by public opinion is more and more distorted, negatively influenced by the media and the populist parties using migrants as a scapegoat for unresolved issues. As a consequence, migrants are increasingly seen as the culprits of growing unemployment, social housing shortage, low-quality education and micro-criminality.

For migrants the result is greater socio spatial segregation, reduced possibilities to access public housing and basic urban services, open conflicts with natives for resources and assets perceived as scarce. In response to exclusionary policies, more and more local initiatives are launched to cater for the needs of migrants and refugees. In many cases this 'welcome movement' represents not only the mobilization of pro-migrants activists, but also politically motivated initiatives that aim to oppose the populist wave.

The Special Session welcomes presentations of case studies, research methods and theoretical approaches that reflect on the impact initiatives realized by the civil society can have in countering exclusionary urban policies.

We seek contributions that engage with the multifaceted challenges migration poses to urban governance and the planning, policy and design interventions facilitating the living together across differences and the reduction of inequities within cities.

Proposals exploring these issues also in small and medium size cities are highly encouraged.