

FFVT Expert Workshop

„Forced Migration and Dynamics of Political Mobilisation: conceptual approaches, comparative and case studies“

4 May 2021; 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. CET

Call for Abstracts

This Workshop invites scholars to look into forced migration from the angle of political mobilisation. Originating from social movement research, mobilisation denotes sustained collective initiatives to bring about or prevent social or political change, operating outside – yet in close interaction with – formal political institutions, whose orientation and leadership they may directly challenge (Khoshnevis & Benford 2017). With this concept in mind, the Workshop attempts to leave the constraints of policy relevance in refugee studies behind, which have “encouraged researchers to take the categories, concepts and priorities of policy makers and practitioners as their initial frame of reference for identifying their areas of study and formulating research questions” (Bakewell 2008, p. 432; cf. also Stierl 2020).

Political mobilisation focuses on strategic action by individuals or groups towards extending their support base for aims that are directed towards social change (Mayer 1991). The mobilising actors often are ‘authentic’ groups – those affected by discrimination or injustice (Roose 2013; Shadmehr 2014). The angle of mobilisation research hence allows for studies on the agency of individuals and groups under existential pressure, the exploration of the range and limitations of social and/or political engagement, and the change ensuing movements bring about. It also allows for examining cases where actors make efforts to mobilise groups they consider as being affected from injustice to include them in a social movement (Roose 2013).

In the context of forced migration, the mobilisation of exile or ‘diaspora’ groups towards or against social or political change in their countries of origin or residence has already yielded some insights (Milner 2011). Exiled groups may mobilise others - from the same place of origin as well as groups within their host countries - to engage for socio-economic development, post-conflict reconstruction (Lapshyna 2020) and/or political change, for conflict resolution, or for armed struggle in their countries of origin (Koinova 2017). The mobilisation of exiled groups may lead to their formal inclusion in peace negotiations whereas others are excluded (Zunzer 2004; Pfaffenholz 2015; Meininghaus & Mielke 2019). It can also enhance tensions in the country of origin when individuals returning from exile are appointed to leading positions in transitional governments (Grawert 2007).

Mobilisation can also start from groups in the country of origin and involve those living in exile. In these contexts, research on political mobilisation would look into transnational networks as they create the potential to connect groups scattered over different places (Østergaard-Nielsen 2006). Protests at closed borders as seen in Turkey, on the Balkans and in Central America indicate another pattern where refugees and forced migrants temporarily mobilize to enforce desired onward movement.

Another type of political mobilisation in the context of forced migration pertains to movements forming in response to arrivals of refugees or migrants, such as the “radical right” (Caiani & della Porta 2018), which has been mobilising significant numbers of European citizens against refugees arriving in Europe during the past years. Increased competition for economic resources, employment, and social services caused by the arrival of large numbers of refugees often causes hostility among local groups not only in Europe but also in regions of the Global South where societies receive high numbers of refugees. Public discourses, in particular incitement by politicians, can enhance xenophobia and lead to the mobilisation of large groups against the ‘Others’.

A third variation tends to occur in divided societies where the arrival of large numbers of refugees can trigger political mobilisation within the receiving society and cause or enhance communal conflict that may turn violent but does not necessarily involve refugees directly (Böhmelt et al. 2019).

In contexts of state repression or armed conflicts within a society, some individuals or groups may engage in changing the social or political conditions and mobilise larger groups for their cause. Others may make the decision to leave the country, whereas further groups may not have the option to flee and therefore endure adverse conditions, including displacement by government forces or non-state armed groups. The research angle of political mobilisation helps to understand the agency, conditions and temporary options that encourage, limit or deny political engagement. The concept of “exit, voice and loyalty” (Hirschman 1970; Burgess 2012) may be a useful analytical perspective, among others.

Approaches to study mobilisation have taken into account resource mobilisation and framing, political opportunity structure, collective action as well as agency and legitimacy (Tarrow & Tilly 2015, Baumgarten & Ullrich 2012). Social movements resulting from political mobilisation are characterised by high symbolic integration and low specification of roles while using variable forms of organisation and action to pursue the aim to induce, prevent or revert fundamental social change. Networking and coordination are crucial for mobilisation to gain visibility and impact of a social movement (Raschke 1988; Roth & Rucht 2008).

We invite conceptual contributions as well as case studies to address the question:

Which factors cause political mobilisation in the context of forced migration, and which dynamics and outcomes can be identified?

Contributions may answer some of the following more specific questions:

Why and how has political mobilisation occurred in societies of origin of large numbers of refugees, and what have been outcomes of mobilisation?

Abstracts may address situations where people managed to flee outside the state's borders whereas others were displaced internally and/ or engaged politically or in militant groups. Agency and decision-making dynamics, changes over time, political engagement in the original society followed by political mobilisation from exile, violent and non-violent movements are some of the aspects that can be covered here. Resulting changes in societies and / or politics should be addressed, too.

Which factors have led to political mobilisation in societies receiving large numbers of refugees? Who are the actors? Which political processes, dynamics and outcomes can be identified, and (how) are refugees involved?

Here the focus can be on the political mobilisation of exiled groups or among refugees in or outside camps, of anti-refugee movements and/or movements in support of refugees, as well as mobilisation for communal conflict or civilian and armed movements in societies receiving refugees. (Im)mobilisation among second or third-generation migrants whose ancestors had been refugees may also be covered here. Related abstracts should moreover identify changes that mobilisation has brought about.

How and where has international political mobilisation been related to forced migration? Which actors, dynamics and outcomes have occurred?

Here research on international social movements referring to refugee protection or against the acceptance of refugees can be presented; approaches could be on opportunity structures, narratives or framing of issues related to forced migration that have led to political mobilisation. The focus should again be on the actors, dynamics, political processes and outcomes of the mobilisation.

Further aspects related to mobilisation in the context of forced migration can be addressed, too, conceptually or based on case studies or comparative analyses.

We kindly invite you to **submit an abstract of about 500 words until 12 April 2021**. We will give feedback until 16 April and let you know if your abstract has been selected for a presentation of about 20 minutes as a contribution to the Workshop.

The Workshop will be organised in three panels with presentations and discussions. In the end we will discuss how to proceed with the results. Options could be preparing a special issue or research proposal based on the workshop inputs. Abstracts (with contact data and short bio) should be submitted to the following email address: event@ffvt.net

*This Workshop is part of a FFVT Expert Workshop series that had started with a Workshop exploring the conceptual intersections between Peace & Conflict Research and Forced Migration & Refugee Studies in April 2020. The workshop series is part of the project "Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer" (Flucht- und Flüchtlingsforschung: Vernetzung und Transfer FFVT), which is funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, Germany. The aim of the joint project of the four partners Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC), Centre for Human Rights Erlangen-Nürnberg (CHREN), German Development Institute (GDI) and Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) is to strengthen forced migration and refugee research through national and international networking. You can find more information about the project at <https://ffvt.net/en>.

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