

Workshop Call for Papers: Exploring Vulnerability(ies) and Resilience: Learning from Populations on the Move

Organizers: Aslı İkizoğlu Erensu, Meriç Çağlar, Souad Osseiran

This workshop invites doctoral and early career researchers as well as artists to submit proposals that question the notions of vulnerability and resilience in the context of migrant and refugee lives in the MENA, Turkey, and Southeastern Europe. Vulnerability has become particularly acute across these regions in face of the global economic recession following the Covid-19 pandemic and the continued protractedness of displacement, and most recently in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Vulnerability lends itself to diverse intersecting fields, whereby it can be discussed not only in social, economic, and legal terms but also in contextual versus categorical discussions. On the one hand, migrants and refugees experience (lived or contextual) vulnerability as a result of the unequal power relations they enter and deploy strategies to achieve ontological security under diverse conditions beyond their control (Quesada et al. 2011). On the other hand, humanitarian and state institutions have developed measurable, categorical formulations of vulnerability and resilience that are used in the distribution of aid, provision of and access to services, and the assignment of status (Mendola & Pera 2021). These formulations are applied to “vulnerable groups” among refugee and migrant populations and specifically target women, children, or LGBTIQ+ persons (UNHCR et al. 2016; Yılmaz 2018; Baklacioğlu 2017; Kivılcım 2017; Ticktin 2017; Andrijasevic 2010; Smith & Waite 2018). Migrants and refugees in return may be forced to mold themselves to fit those formulations as part of their struggle for survival, engaging in strategic essentialisms (Spivak 1988) and performing vulnerability to prove their “deservingness” to official actors, namely state or civil society organizations (cf. Smith & Waite 2018; Crawley & Skleparis 2017; Çağlar Chesley, 2020).

Yet, vulnerability (and resilience) can also be thought of as a universally shared aspect of being (Butler 2016; Fineman 2008). From such a perspective, migrant and refugee lives may necessitate alternative re-organizations of social life that acknowledge and address (ontological and other forms of) vulnerability not as a problem or limitation of “others” but as common ground for building a community.

This workshop aims to move beyond a binary conceptualization of vulnerability and resilience by analyzing how vulnerability, agency, and resilience are interrelated or co-produced by multiple factors, actors, practices, policies, and laws (cf. Lewis et al. 2014; Quesade et al. 2011). We seek submissions exploring how (and if) refugees and migrants experience vulnerability in their daily life and the multiple ways they cope with structuralized insecurity, whether by accessing and/or creating networks, mobilizing different resources to navigate bureaucracies or the labor market. We encourage submissions focusing on intersecting and complex structures that underlay the power relations at play (cf. Landolt & Goldring 2013; Lewis et al. 2014) and which situate the overlapping categories of gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation. Submissions that critically examine the various ways deservingness, the figure of the victim, and essentialist gender roles are (re)produced by different stakeholders (cf. Sigona 2014; Giametta 2018; Andrijasevic 2010) are welcome.

We invite participants to join us to reflect on the tools to respond to the current moment where vulnerabilities are amplified and take new forms in protracted displacements under a global economic recession, following the Covid-19 pandemic, and most recently in the aftermath of a disastrous earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Submissions should focus on one or more of the following themes:

- Spatio-temporal engagement with vulnerability or resilience
 - liminal legal statuses
 - vulnerabilities en route, in hotspots, camps, or urban settings

Vulnerabilities as a consequence of deportability or within the deportation corridor

- temporalities of vulnerability or resilience

- Interrogating the institutionalization of vulnerabilities and resilience
- Logic of humanitarianism and politics of vulnerability
- Deservingness, precarity, and the intersection with concepts of welfare
- Protest and solidarity engaging, transforming, or refuting vulnerability
 - solidarity among refugee and migrants
- Engaging theoretically with vulnerability and resilience with respect to
 - struggles for justice
 - discussions on the ethics of care
 - relationship to neoliberalism and the individualization of responsibility for social life
- Engaging with vulnerability across the citizenship divide

Interested participants should submit a working title, abstract (max. 300 words), and short biography (max. 200 words) via email to vulnerability.migration.workshop@gmail.com before March 27, 2023. Please indicate in the email if you intend to participate online or in person. We welcome non-traditional presentation formats.