

Panel Proposal and Call for Papers APAD 2018 Roskilde

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Title: The Role of New Communication Technologies and Social Media for Migrant Mobilities, Networks and Social Spaces

The global distribution and appropriation of new communication technologies such as mobile phones, the Internet and social media around the world has had an immense influence on migration. The mobile phone has become a “migrant essential” and migrants use ICT before, during and after their migration to plan and organise their trip, to contact escape agents, to orient themselves en route and to keep in touch with family and friends. With the help of the mobile phone as recording tool, they are able to report, make public, remember and process what has happened. After arriving, ICT becomes important for their integration in the host countries. In this way migrants are able to claim their rights for asylum, to orient themselves, to learn the language, to find work, to build new social networks, to send money home and struggle for citizenship.

Migrants have as such become “medial migrants” (Hepp 2011) and the “connected migrant” has to be conceptualised through their ability to create a social space of “connected presences” in which they find themselves here and there at the same time. Through their multi-belonging and multi-locality (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013) they are able to recreate ties with their home while creating new contacts in the host country (Diminescu 2008).

The negative sides of ICT are the digital divide and restricted access to new technologies and the use of the mobile phone as a powerful tool of suppression and exploitation of those who are in control of borders and nations. Smugglers use refugees’ phones to extort relatives, phones are stolen and destroyed to hinder communication during passages, are used as

medium of surveillance and control by governmental and policing institutions and their use is often restricted in refugee accommodation.

In a recent study the UNHCR has shown that mobile phones and Internet connectivity can improve refugees' well-being and transform humanitarian aid (UNHCR 2016). Accordingly refugee institutions have helped to improve access to technology and information for refugees around the world.

The Panel seeks to analyse the meaning and functions of these moving networks and transnational social spaces, to unravel the influence of new communication technologies on migrant mobility and find out how they change migration processes as well as the biographies, lifestyles and social networks of those en route. We aim to look at the positive as well as the negative sides of migrants' use of ICT.

We are encouraging papers that analyse the use of ICT from migrants and refugees around the world either from a theoretical and/or empirical approach from a wide range of disciplines which can have a special focus on the time before, during and after migrating or liminal spaces like refugee camps and asylum houses. We are especially interested in ethnographical studies which have a clear actor's centred approach and analyse the unfolding relations and ambiguities of these human-technology connections.

The Panel encourages papers which will touch on the following questions:

What role does social media play for the planning and organising of migration/mobility?

How do migrants use ICT for their (successful) integration in the host countries?

How does ICT, in giving access to a wide range of information, images and imaginaries, foster or hinder migration?

How does ICT transform migrant networks? What role does the transformation of migrants' networks play for their own biographies and lives in the host countries?

When and why do migrants trust or mistrust information and medially created ties?

How do migrants, through the use of ICT, actively anticipate their future?

What role does ICT play in claiming and obtaining citizenship?

How can the "connected migrant" be conceptualised theoretically?