

Panel 37: Welcoming Neighborhoods – Conditions of Social Cohesion in Super-diverse Communities

Panel Convenors: Ulrike Hamann (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin), Nihad El-Kayed (Humboldt Universität zu Berlin)

Research team: Christy Petropoulou, Orestis Pangalos, Naya Tselepi, Myrto Tsilimpounidi, University of the Aegean, Greece, **Presenter:** Naya Tselepi

Mapping migrations & new communities in Lesvos:

enclosures & ‘commonings’

The recent massive migrations from Middle East and Africa to Europe, together with their intertwined discourse of ‘refugee crisis’, have largely affected Greece in the years of the ‘economic crisis’, from 2009 and beyond. As part of the eastern Greek and European borders and due to its historic role, Lesvos island is no stranger to these migrations. At the same time, Lesvos is performing as a geographical as well as a political ‘enclosure’ to them; with the ‘hotspot’ of Moria as the prevailing one. Meanwhile, Lesvos has been a valuable case study of the multiple expressions of humanitarian response and solidarity; from local, European to international volunteers, activists and aid professionals. What is usually overlooked in similar academic researches is the impact of these moving populations on the local communities. Furthermore, it shouldn’t be ignored that the migrant routes and ‘doors’ in European countries are gradually closing, thus, the migrants are ‘stuck’ in the hotspot of Moria. Together with the fact they rarely want to stay in Greece, the new scenery of a ‘forceful integration’ becomes clearer and augments the sense and practice of ‘enclosure’ on the island.

All these geographical and political ‘enclosures’ are spaces where multiple populations and entities co-exist providing, thus, to the ‘new communities’ of Lesvos new super-diversified characteristics. Given this high diversity, the ‘new communities’ provide the space for tensions and conflicts; internal and external ones, as well as, paradigms of cooperation and conviviality. ‘Lesvos Solidarity’, ‘Mosaik’, ‘One Happy Family’ and ‘Mikros Dounias’ (‘small world’), are certain practices of everyday life that bring together migrants and locals in new forms of communicating, relating, sharing and struggling; what we call practices and acts of ‘commoning’.

Contributing to that, our presentation will draw from the reality of Lesvos since summer 2015 as has been researched and actively experienced by the authors. It will focus on how the intertwined crises; migrations; the high diversity, as well as, the ‘forced integration’ met on the island: i. have increased tensions and conflicts; ii. have motivated emergent expressions of solidarity, and recently; iii. are giving boost to practices and acts of ‘commoning’. In addition, it will give light to the factors appearing in the newly formed communities that strengthen conviviality, in the light of common imaginaries for the future.