

## 18. Welcoming spaces? Opportunities and challenges for newcomers

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Session format: Traditional (call for abstracts and individual presentations of around 15 minutes)

Current migration scholarship documents conflicting and probably correlated trends. On the one hand, restrictive migration policies, anti-homelessness and anti-begging regulations restriction and privatisation of public space, disappearance of interstitial spaces and repressive measures against undeclared work has made life harder for newcomers. On the other hand, scholars also noted a proliferation of initiatives and NGOs aimed at welcoming newcomers. Initiatives aimed at (co-)creating ‘welcoming spaces’ are often citizen-driven but can equally be the outcome of initiatives by local governments, NGOs, businesses, or they can be migrant-initiated. Going against ‘anti-migration’ currents, such initiatives are often highly contested. Their success seems to depend on combinations of collective action, multi-stakeholder collaboration and institutional innovations. However, given the local scale of most of these initiatives, the dispersion in space and political sensitivity, much of what is happening around these ‘welcoming spaces’ remains under the radar. Also, such initiatives are well documented in large metropolitan areas. This session focuses instead on the development of the welcoming capacity of secondary cities, of towns, of villages, or of ‘shrinking regions’ that are undergoing demographic and economic decline.

In this session, we welcome papers analysing these trends over time, focusing on the evolution of policy or of infrastructure targeting newcomers or used by newcomers. How do ‘welcoming spaces’ appear and evolve? How can local initiatives be upscaled? Have some categorical differences (of age, gender, status, etc.) become more or less relevant in shaping these ‘welcoming spaces’? Finally, do revitalisation, inclusive and sustainable development of shrinking regions or less urbanised areas improve hospitality towards newcomers and increase opportunities for migrants to build meaningful lives?

The session is related to two distinct research projects. The first is the Horizon 2020 project WELCOMING SPACES, composed of different universities, stakeholders and research centres located in five European countries. The second is named ‘Urban (In)Hospitality: What place for precarious newcomers in European cities’ and is funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.