

# **Reshaping Europe: Migration and Its Contexts**

## **Austro-Finnish Seminar**

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Academy of Finland, Main auditorium

### ***Abstracts***

*(listed according to the alphabetical order)*

#### **Finnish Trade Union Responses to Labour Migration**

Rolle Alho, University of Helsinki

It is often stated that the position of trade unions vis-à-vis immigration is ambivalent. On the one hand, unions world-wide have expressed solidarity with migrant workers and defended their labour and social rights, and made efforts towards their social integration. On the other hand, certain unions have seen immigration as an external element of competition for jobs and social services, and have therefore called for a protection of the domestic labour market.

With regards to the Finnish context, an example of a measure to control and regulate immigration was the enforcement of a transition period in 2004, during which a work permit was required for EU-8 nationals in order to work in Finland. At the turn of the millennium Finland was a country of high unemployment, and there was a fear – elaborated by the mass media – of an exodus of workers from the neighbouring low-wage country Estonia, in case Estonia joined the EU. The transition period (that was abolished in 2006) was strongly rallied for by fractions of the Finnish trade union movement.

A more proactive response by the Finnish trade union movement to labour migration however, was the establishment of an information centre in the capital of Estonia in 2002. The rationale of the centre is to inform prospective labour migrants from Estonia to Finland regarding working life in Finland, in order to prevent the use of Estonians for social dumping in the Finnish labour market.

Generally speaking, the official stance of the Finnish trade union movement today is that Finland needs more immigration – mainly due to future demographic challenges. A central question for unions is how to deal with an increasingly ethnically diverse and mobile labour force. My aim is to present the aforementioned Finnish-Estonian case of transnational trade union action, and briefly draw a parallel to the situation Austrian unions are facing as regards Hungarian cross-border workers in Burgenland Austria.

## **From Theories to Practices: Collaborative Media Research Projects in the Service of Migrant Communities, Case “Migrant Voices” in L.A.**

Minna Aslama

University of Helsinki / the Social Science Research Council

Recent years have witnessed a new wave of in public-interest activism and advocacy around media-related change, notably in the U.S. but also as elsewhere in the world. Consequently, also academic community has responded by analyzing such activities as a social movement, e.g. in providing historical accounts of its developments and by describing and categorizing its different strands. However, it has been argued that

“while social movement theorists, media researchers, and activists often share a broad set of questions – those that focus on the complex, two-way relationship between media and social movements – the work of scholars and activists remains largely in separate domains.”<sup>1</sup>

The Necessary Knowledge for a Democratic Public Sphere (‘NK’) program of the Social Science Research Council program focuses on building a stronger culture of collaboration between scholars, advocates, practitioners, and policymakers in the field of communications and media policy. One of the Program’s core functions is to offer grants that are intended to foster collaboration between the producers and users of research. Focusing initially on US-based issues, the program has funded projects that vary in scope, size, topic, approach and nature of collaboration; ranging from a research project on community wireless projects around the world to a critical evaluations of media ownership regulations in the U.S. and in Brazil. The grants criteria specifically encourage the use participatory methods. Several of its projects address underserved communities, such as migrant communities.

This presentation will tell and illustrate the success story of a grant project in service of migrant communities, one that starts from theory and ends in practice. The case in point is a collaborative research project called “**Migrant Voices: Communication for Social Change with Garment Workers and Day Laborers in Los Angeles**”, by the University of Southern California, The Institute of Popular Education of Southern California, and the Garment Worker Center (Los Angeles, CA).

Immigrant workers in the city of Los Angeles have very limited access to channels of broadband communication. They are rarely engaged even by local radio or low-power radio stations. The project used the ‘Communication for Social Change’ research methodology<sup>2</sup> to analyze the technical, organizational, and policy requirements for a hybrid radio/net/telephony project by and for immigrant workers. The participatory research process produced three outputs: a concrete media project, popular education

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<sup>1</sup> Hoynes W. (2005). Media Research and Media Activism. In Croteau, D. W. Hoynes & C. Ryan. *Activists, Academic and Social Movement Scholarship*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press., pp. 100.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., <http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/pdf/socialchange.pdf>.

materials, and overview of media policy challenges and implications from the perspective of immigrant workers.

## **Immigrants in Finnish Workplaces - Integration and Well-being**

Barbara Bergbom, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

### **Introduction and objective of the study**

Workplaces are gradually becoming more culturally diverse in Finland. However, there is yet not much research on immigrant employees' social integration into work communities or well-being at work in Finland. The purpose of the study was to gather information and broaden the understanding of the integration or inclusion of immigrant employees in multicultural workplaces, as well as what factors contribute to immigrants' well-being at work. An additional aim was to get a picture of how occupational health care units have responded to the fact that the organizations they are serving have become multicultural.

### **Methods and subjects**

A total of 208 employees with an immigrant background as well as 600 of their Finnish colleagues responded to a questionnaire study (response rate 52 %). The majority of those surveyed worked in the transport, health and social work, or education sectors. In addition employees in five health care units were interviewed on the accommodation of immigrant workers in occupational health care practices.

### **Results and conclusions**

The majority of respondents perceived the interrelations between immigrant and host national employees as good. However, there were clear differences between different immigrant groups. Employees from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa felt socially more isolated than others. The immigrant respondents had not used the occupational health care services of their workplace as often as their Finnish workmates. Furthermore, they more often found it difficult to describe their problems to occupational health care staff. The interviews with the occupational health care staff showed that occupational health care service units had not yet consciously taken into account the multicultural environment of their customer companies, in either their own actions or in the planning of their operations. More conscious efforts are needed in multicultural workplaces to support the well-being of all employees.

## **Media, Migration and the Politics of Belonging**

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Media and communication technologies have redefined the conditions of the migrant experience with reference to the immediacy of connection and the urgency of its implications. Migrants forge affiliations between the national and the global within very complex and diverse media environments. The media scripting of the contemporary immigrant experience will be the central theme of this talk to elaborate on three areas: how issues of migration are drafted into public view, the discourse and performance of difference and the forging of transnational cultures. Through examples drawn from both the U.S. and Europe, I argue that new technologies both amplify and accelerate the debate about the national body, modernity and the transnational forms of public presence. The links between mobility, connectivity and global media underscore the fact that immigration debates have to be situated in terms of their larger transnational implications and within the neoliberal context of globalization.

## **Integration of Immigrants in the Finnish Labour Markets**

Elli Heikkilä

Institute of Migration

This paper discusses employment of immigrants in the Finnish labour markets and the differences in labour market performance according to immigrants' different characteristics like gender, education, economical sectors and country of birth. The data consist of the gross-stream data of the whole immigrant working-age population from the period of 2002–2003. Also specialized stock data are used in the analysis for the years 1995, 2000 and 2004. These periods represent different economical cycles in the Finnish labour markets. Finland's high unemployment level during the depression in the beginning of the 1990s affected also very high unemployment figures for the immigrants. During the recent decade, the employability of immigrants has improved due to recovery of economic life in Finland.

Finding a job in Finland's labour markets is difficult for working-aged immigrants, since still many are unemployed or outside the labour force. In the future, Finland will need work-based migrants to compensate for the labour deficit due to large age groups having left the workforce. Finland needs immigrants for a variety of sectors, and competes for them with other ageing societies. Redistribution of immigrants in all regional levels – from global to local – is critical for regional advancement.

## **Immigrants and Precarious Labour Markets in Helsinki**

Markus Himanen, University of Helsinki

Jukka Könönen, University of Joensuu

The presentation is based on a research project focused on migrants' experiences with the Finnish immigration administration and their working life. We are especially interested in how the immigration administration produces precarity, i.e. how different permit categories and administrative procedures affect migrants' life possibilities and their position in the labour market. The research is based on about 50 in-depth interviews with migrants living in Helsinki metropolitan area.

In the research we regard migrants neither as representatives of some specific ethnic culture nor through categorisations based on either the time of residence or the reason of migration but as persons whose life is conditioned and controlled by different restrictions on movement and residence. Accordingly we analyze migrant work through concrete work conditions, concentrating on the work tasks, working hours and conditions of employment, which we believe characterize precarious work in metropolis.

The starting point of the research project is the concrete everyday experiences of migrants in a global metropolis. Their position is bound to the nature of the new border controls and to an overall transformation of labour market and the nature of work itself. The precarious position of migrant labour is produced through the management of the flow of people: borders of Europe are being relocated in city space. How do the characteristic concepts of new work such as flexibility and insecurity relate to migrant work and what do the experiences of migrants tell us about the world of the new work?

To highlight these themes we present some experiences and life stories of migrants in precarious positions in Helsinki. These experiences force us to reconsider the relevance of some basic concepts that are used both in immigration policy and immigration research such as the difference between humanitarian and labour migration, typical and atypical work, security orientated and labour orientated immigration policy.

## **MIGRATION & MEMORY: Presentation of a young research field and of selected findings in the Austrian context**

Dr. Christiane Hintermann

Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for European History and Public Spheres

Both migration and memory are subjects that attract a great deal of scientific interest. However, bringing the two topics together in one research approach is still very much a minority concern. Questions such as 'Is migration history part of the post-World-War II narrative in Europe?' or 'How is the rich migration history of Europe remembered in the

public national histories of different European countries?’ are rarely raised from the scientific community and don’t play any role in public political debates on migration and integration issues.

In my presentation I would like to give a more theoretical introduction on the interconnections of migration, memory and history on the one hand. On the other hand I am going to exemplify the approach by presenting preliminary findings from an ongoing research project at the *Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institute for European History and Public Spheres* in Vienna in cooperation with *Malmö University* in Sweden. In the project we are questioning the representation of migration history and the history/ies of migrants in the institutionalized and public memories of Austria and Sweden. And we analyze discourses and narratives on the topics of migration and integration dominant in the majority societies in a historic perspective.

The central research questions are:

- In which ways are the history of labour migration as well as the migrants themselves, and their histories collectively remembered and represented in textbooks and museums/migration exhibitions of Austria and Sweden?
- In which ways are the (labour) migrants written into national memories? Are they constructed as part of the national or European self, or as the outsider/the others?
- Did these various representations change over time?

## **Undocumented Migrants and Asylum Seekers in the News: Illegals, Victims and Few Heroes**

Karina Horsti

Post doc researcher, CEREN, University of Helsinki

Media coverage of immigration plays a role in the creation of national imaginary and identity. However, since immigration and asylum policies are increasingly shifting to supranational decision making in the European Union, the issue should also be analyzed from the perspective of Europeanization. What are the old and new identities constructed in the news coverage of asylum seekers and refugees?

Previous research on news of asylum seekers stresses frame of illegality. However, a closer textual analysis shows the diversity in news journalism. Illegality is the most recurrent frame in Finnish news related to asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, but the migrants are also framed as victims and as heroes –in reportage genres migrants are sometimes quoted, named and given a social status compared to the routine news coverage where they are framed in more non-personified fashion. Victimization tends to be connected to gender and culture. Some migrants, like women, children and people who adapt to Western or Finnish lifestyles, are accepted for public victim role as objects of charity and public campaigning.

Media’s role in generation of compassion and politics of pity is often either celebrated with optimism or treated with pessimistic suspicion. On the one hand, by showing distant suffering for Western audiences living in safety, media are believed to bring knowledge and create feelings that urge people to do something. On the other hand, media present a construction of reality, which does not equal with the closer events and problems people experience in their Western lives.

## **Health Care in NowHereland – Improving Services for Undocumented Migrants in the EU**

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Right to health care has been recognized as a fundamental human right by various international instruments ratified by European Countries (PICUM 2007, Pace 2007), and is especially important for socially disadvantaged and vulnerable people.

Although the EU member states do acknowledge the right for health care for everybody, different national laws and policies are in place that restrict the access of UDM to health care e.g. to emergency care. In general, undocumented migrants (UDM) face considerable barriers in accessing services. Health of undocumented migrants is highly at risk due to difficult living and working conditions often characterised by uncertainty, exploitation, and dependency.

Health care organisations and professionals find themselves in a paradox situation: if they give care, they may act against legal and financial regulations, if they don't give care they violate human rights and exclude the most vulnerable.

Also, the status of UDM leads to a paradox situation for people as access to health care may threaten their existence - they might get visible to the system and be imprisoned and expatriated.

The paradox cannot be dissolved on practice level, but has to be managed somehow by different players and organisations. NGOs play an important role in taking over the management of health care provision by providing resources and bridging the gap between policy frameworks and peoples needs.

In the framework of a European Project (Jan. 2008 – Dec. 2010) a group of experts from research and practice will identify and assess contextualised (for policy frameworks and clientele needs) models of good practice for health care for undocumented migrants. It builds upon compilations of

- ) policies in EU 27 (national level)
- ) practices of health care for undocumented migrants (regional and local level, collected in a public database)
- ) experiences from NGOs and other advocacy groups from their work with undocumented migrants (from European to local level)

## **The Finnish Diversity Barometer**

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### Introduction

The term *diversity* is used to describe social entities (workplaces, neighbourhoods, cities, student bodies, etc.) with members who have identifiable differences in their backgrounds or lifestyles. Diversity may refer to differences in racial or ethnic classifications, age, gender, religion, physical abilities, and sexual orientation as well as in other identifying features. *Multiculturalism* which supports the idea that diversity is valuable and desirable holds that recognizing and promoting these diverse cultures may aid communication between people of different backgrounds and lifestyles, leading to greater understanding, knowledge, and creativity.

With ageing workforce and increasing number of immigrant workers, multicultural work environments have become a common part of the landscape in many European countries. In Finland, 26% of the employed people say that there are people with an immigrant background working in their workplace. Dealing with cultural diversity represents a new challenge for managers, supervisors and staff members, while workplace diversity as an issue is spreading around the EU.

### Aim and design of the study

The Finnish Diversity Barometer was constructed in order to explore the Finnish HR-managers' attitudes to workplace diversity. Altogether 449 managers (65% women) representing both private and public sectors participated in the study. The HR-managers were selected for the study because they were thought to have a *gate-keeper role* when promoting diversity in Finnish companies and workplaces.

In organization and management literature, it is typical to list six primary dimensions of diversity: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/attributes, 'race' and sexual orientation (Bairoh, 2007 <http://dhanken.shh.fi>). All these elements of diversity were explored in this study.

The aim was to get a view on how workplace diversity was seen by the HR-managers and how workplace diversity was expected to change in the future. The Barometer was carried out in 2007.

In addition, qualitative focus-groups interviews were conducted in five workplaces in which different elements of diversity were discussed. The chosen workplaces represented transportation, media and education field as well as social enterprise and IT-technology (Haapanen, 2007 [www.monikko.net](http://www.monikko.net)).

### Results

The responses among the Finnish HR-managers to workplace diversity were positive. Diversity was seen as a resource which improves staff creativity and productivity. Diversity was regarded as beneficial for their company's image and their customers.

Diversity was also seen as a competitive factor when organizations were competing to recruit and maintain competent people.

Age and ethnicity were rated as the most important elements of diversity, and their role was seen to be increasing in the future. Also gender and family situation were regarded as core elements of workplace diversity, while religion and sexual orientation were seen as the least important in this regard.

In very few organisations any concrete diversity initiatives had been started. In most workplaces (70%) an equality plan had been done as required by the Finnish legislation. A common view among the HR-managers (74%) that various religious symbols of diversity did not belong to the workplace. One third acknowledged that a foreign name could be a hindering factor in recruiting process.

#### Discussion

The overall responses to workplace diversity were positive among the Finnish HR-managers. However, very few diversity actions had been initiated. The approaches of the HR-managers to managing diversity can be characterized as practical and pragmatic.

Theoretical researchers on diversity and multiculturalism have lately become increasingly critical about listing demographic and other differences between people (Bairoh, 2007). The critics say that this approach may strengthen old stereotypes about age, gender roles, ethnicity, etc., even if the initial goal was the opposite. Keeping this criticism in mind, it is important to gain better understanding of how people with identifiable differences in their backgrounds and lifestyles, work and live together in the rapidly changing world.

#### References

- 1) Bairoh, Susanna (2007) Current Debates on Classifying Diversity Management: Review and Proposal. Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration (<http://dhanken.shh.fi>).
- 2) Haapanen, Ari (2007) Monimuotoisuusbarometri -ikä ja monikulttuurisuus haasteena ja voimavarana. Monikko -hanke ([www.monikko.net](http://www.monikko.net)).

## **Winds of Change? Finnish Media Coverage of Immigrants**

Ullamaija Kivikuru, University of Helsinki

The media coverage of immigration, racism and xenophobia has been monitored in Finland for almost 10 years. The results up to 2007 are fairly easy to conclude: very little has been reported on new minorities in the Finnish media, the reporting has been strongly authority-oriented – the newcomers have not often been able to get their own voices heard. However, the reporting has been politically correct. The media have chosen to keep quiet rather than to say anything controversial, if the reporting has not focused on serious crime. Some exotic details concerning habits and cultural aspects have occasionally been included especially during the past 10-15 years. The media of the Swedish-speaking minority have reported slightly more and more positively about other minorities, perhaps with a nuance of paternalism.

When the present government was formed in 2007, it included in its programme a clearly immigration-friendly statement, and a minister with a special task to promote

employment-bound immigration was appointed. The aging population needed immigrants to fill the cadres of the working life. That meant also a change in the reporting. The stories on the theme were more frequent, and the theme was even politicized. Contradictory reports were published on the debates about the need for immigrant workers – high-level politicians disagreed about it. The church took an active stand against the deportation of a few asylum-seekers; and they were hidden by parish workers in various parts of the country. All this received coverage, but so did also reporting on crimes committed by immigrants. Ugly racist comments are still quite rare in conventional journalism, but they are easily found in website debates which otherwise as well serve as tension-releasers in the society.

We are not even near the extensive and diverse Swedish reporting on minorities and immigrants, but no doubt the Finnish media are on their way to the same direction. The dominant journalism on immigrants and immigration can hardly be called as multicultural yet, but it is more diversified than a few years back. A nasty interpretation would be that the media, number one in formal freedom of expression according to Press Freedom Index, actually started paying more attention to immigrants after they had received a “permission” from the side of the government. A more justified interpretation would probably be to point out that the media, always hunting for novelties, in fact are quite a conservative institution which changes its course slowly and carefully. But some kind of change of course has taken place now.

## **The Politics of Complex Diversity in Europe and in the Nordic Context**

Peter A. Kraus, University of Helsinki

The concept of complex diversity points at a social and political context in which diversity has become a multi-dimensional and fluid empirical phenomenon. At the same time, it calls for a thorough discussion of the normative framework we rely upon when we talk about intergroup relations, integration or recognition. The paper will focus on the main ethno-national and cultural expressions of complex diversity in present-day European societies and offer a critical interpretation of the dominant approach to diverse identities which is connected to the official discourse on integration in Europe. Diversity is recurrently celebrated in this discourse, yet the term is often used in a superficial and biased way. If we want to grasp the potential complex diversity has for sustaining a reflexive identity politics, we have to tackle its challenges from the perspective of a situated freedom. It has to be assessed to what extent such a perspective is compatible with the view of citizenship which underlies the construction of Nordic welfare states such as Finland.

## **Undocumented Worker Transitions: Compiling evidence concerning the boundaries and processes of change in the status of work and undocumented workers in Europe (UWT)**

Manfred Krenn, Working Life Research Centre

The lecture will present first results from the ongoing Undocumented Worker Transitions (UWT) project - a research project in the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-framework programme with seven participating countries (UK, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, Spain and Austria). The international research focuses on undocumented and under-documented migrants, whose migration status limits or prevents their working. The link between work and migration flows is at its heart.

Recognising that gender, age and ethnicity are key factors in understanding migrant and refugee flows, UWT analyses migration and work trajectories in a differentiated way to better understand the process and to deepen knowledge of how legal status interacts with migrant labour market positions. Core of the project are 210 qualitative in-depth interviews with irregular migrant workers in the seven countries. The lecture will present first results from the Austrian study based on 30 qualitative in-depth-interviews. It is focused on the working conditions in irregular jobs in different sectors and gives an overview on the transitions of migrant workers between different jobs and statuses with regard to the Austrian restrictive migration laws. Furthermore the impact of status transitions on employment and working conditions will be addressed.

## **Immigrant Families and the Organisation of Care**

Teppo Kröger, University of Jyväskylä

At the same time when increasing migration is reshaping Europe, ageing of the population is bringing most countries within and outside Europe considerable new challenges. The earlier heavily gendered informal family care model where old people were cared mostly informally by women at home is not working anymore as the number of 'the oldest old' is increasing rapidly and at the same time when women are joining the labour market in large numbers permanently. As a consequence, the provision of care has risen up as an urgent and a long-term policy issue on the political agenda. Some of the European countries are more prepared for the increasing needs for care than others; usually Nordic countries are referred to as providing the largest and most covering services. However, there is considerable variation within the Nordic region, Denmark being currently the 'most Nordic' country in this respect, in contrast to both Finland and Sweden.

It is necessary to address both issues, both major social transformations together as migration and ageing are taking place simultaneously. Most usually when migration and care are discussed together, migration is seen as a means to solve the problem of increasing care needs within European countries. Migrant women coming from Eastern European countries or from South-East Asia are serving many old European persons as

care workers either in the formal or in the informal economy. This development is not without its problems concerning, for example, work conditions and labour market rights of these women. This presentation will nevertheless mostly concentrate on the other side of the 'migration and care' coin: the situation of families from ethnic minorities, already living in European countries. How are these families organising the care for their members? What kind of resources do they have, what kind of difficulties do they face? How do European care systems manifest themselves to immigrant populations? The presentation is based on findings from a European research project titled "SOCCARE: New Kinds of Families, New Kinds of Social Care".

## **Dynamics of Migrant Labour in Rural Areas**

Ulla Partanen & Hilikka Vihinen

MTT Economic Research

The demographic structure in Europe will change in the coming decades, and migration has thus become a major determinant of the future in the EU. The dynamic population growth in neighbouring areas together with Europe's prosperity and political stability will ensure that Europe is an alluring destination for immigrants. In addition, the EU enlargements have increased the immigration from the new Member States. The internal mobility of workers within the EU will not change demographic trends for the EU as a whole, but it opens up better opportunities for higher rates of participation and employment. The full potential of intra-EU mobility is not yet harnessed, as transitional arrangements still restrict the mobility of the citizens from the new EU countries. Migration has long been considered only as an urban phenomenon. Strong migration flows to rural areas are a new phenomenon in Europe, but they have already had a positive impact on peripheral and rural areas. There are several reasons for the new migration flow to rural areas. The out-migration and ageing of the rural population have created significant demands of labour, which cannot be satisfied. On the other hand, the native population does not often have the needed motivation to work for low wages and under poor working conditions. Furthermore, agriculture is not the only activity in the European rural areas. Manufacturing, tourism, housing expansion, new consumption patterns connected to leisure and recreation are new developments in the countryside. The Member States of the EU have different degrees of success with labour market and social integration. The problems of rural regions and agriculture in Europe require policies to regulate and monitor migration as well as take care of social justice and economic efficiency.

## **The Role of Immigrant associations in the Integration Process**

Sanna Saksela

CEREN/SSKH, University of Helsinki

Previous studies have shown that immigrant associations can act as bridge-builders for the inclusion of immigrants by participating in the decision making process and by acting as a representative voice for their group. This paper discusses some of the results of the study.

The objective of my PhD study has been to explore *what kind of role immigrant association's play in the integration process of immigrants into Finnish society*. In other words, do immigrant associations support societal inclusion of immigrants into their receiving society? Furthermore, how do the immigrant associations strengthen their ethnic identity? These questions are explored within the framework of the migration process, i.e. by taking into consideration the influence of the immigrants' background, the living-conditions and the opportunities provided by the receiving society. The institutional governance consists of legal directives and of the decision making power exercised by civil servants. There is still a lack of studies of immigrant associations in Finland. My study aimed to fill the gap by providing a descriptive illustration of the organisational landscape of immigrant associations and by presenting an analytical exploration of the connection between the institutional setting and immigrant associations.

## **FINNISH IMMIGRATION POLICY AND THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY**

Johanna Suurpää

Ombudsman for Minorities

Introduction: the mandate of the Ombudsman for Minorities covers combating discrimination against ethnic minorities + the promotion of the rights of foreigners in Finland. Independent status within the Interior Ministry.

Finland at major crossroads. Immigration policies previously concentrated on the reception of refugees and family reunifications. Finland has one of the most challenging demographic structures - now turning from an exceptionally homogeneous society into a country of labour based migration. Government policy is now encouraging this development.

Important to safeguard equality and non-discrimination in this process - display experiences encountered in the practice of the Ombudsman for Minorities.

## **Finnish integration policy and political participation of immigrants**

Marjukka Weide

CEREN, University of Helsinki

In the seminar presentation, I will approach the Finnish integration policy at two levels: 1) the formal rights of immigrants and 2) the scope to which political integration is dealt with in a few central integration policy documents. In my Ph.D. research (a part of the project proposal for which this presentation is based on), I will conduct a comparative study – but it is not yet decided which countries apart from Finland to include.

Finland granted the right to political party membership as well as municipal electoral rights to all resident foreigners in the beginning of the 1990's. Only a half of the EU member states facilitate political integration in this way. Finland is even ranked fourth closest to best policy for political integration by the Migrant Integration Policy Index.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Finnish integration law (493/1999) has been criticized by researchers<sup>4</sup> for its narrow emphasis on labour market integration. Also my tentative document analysis suggests that the treatment of political integration is relatively vague. I argue that there exists certain cautiousness around political participation of immigrants in the texts, and present a “surface level”, administrative explanation for it. Other approaches (e.g. critical and cultural) remain yet to be explored.

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<sup>3</sup> MIPEX 2nd edition (2007), [www.integrationindex.eu](http://www.integrationindex.eu), printed 24.7.2008.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Leena Suurpää (2002, 208–213).