



The urbanization of asylum

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Recent years have seen a growing focus on the role of multiple urban actors in shaping policies and practices towards refugee reception and accommodation across Europe. Driven in part by attempts to account for the complexities of governance in contexts of displacement, this work has drawn attention to diverse relations between local governments, humanitarian organizations, private contractors, NGOs, and public and private service providers. This presentation critically considers three trends in these urban configurations of asylum: (1) how asylum seekers and refugees have been positioned within urban economies of value extraction; (2) how cities have been sites of considerable experimentation over the containment of asylum seekers and refugees, with flexible infrastructures of accommodation such as repurposed hotels, shipping containers and civic buildings a key development; and (3) the frictions of government and solidarity that urban asylum foregrounds. These are frictions between local and national governments in their use of discretion and support for asylum seekers and refugees on the one hand, and between community initiatives to support refugees as neighbours and the patterns of bordering and control practiced by varied state and non-state actors on the other.