

CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop

Migration processes and information and communication technologies in Turkey

10-11 June 2021, Istanbul and *online*

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have provoked major and rapid changes in almost all aspects of our lives over the past two decades. International migration, understood as the cross-border movement of human beings who change their “usual” countries of residence, is one area in which it has been possible to observe the multi-level and multi-faceted impact of ICTs. Scholars from different social science disciplines have studied such influences extensively, especially since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In a European context, the 2015 surge in asylum-seeker numbers prompted an increase in studies of the multiple uses of ICTs in migration contexts.

Researchers have emphasized the importance of ICTs as resources for migrants during their journeys and in dealing with precarious conditions and challenging situations. Smartphones, for instance, are essential tools used by migrants when planning their movements, for arriving to their destination, and in maintaining contact with family, social networks and other actors. More broadly, ICTs are also used by migrants, NGOs and governments to collect and disseminate information relating to different aspects of migration processes. Such tools facilitate the social and economic integration of migrants in host countries. In addition, several studies have shown that ICTs are effective instruments helping to sustain families, communities and diasporas across borders.

At the same time, ICTs have enabled migrants as well as advocacy and support organisations to develop various forms of digital activism against restrictive migration policies. They also allow migrants to remain politically active in their countries of origin. Such forms of activism have led some scholars to rethink mechanisms of collective action and revisit related concepts such as repertoires of action.

Of course, the contributions of social science literature have not been limited to the analysis of enabling or empowering practices or activism as mediated by ICTs. More recently, researchers have highlighted the ambivalent capacity of digital technologies, including their use by states to generate new constraints for migrants. In particular, recent scholarship has analysed how institutional actors are making more extensive use of digital technologies to control, limit and prevent migratory movement. For example, biometric data stored through

databases is used on a wide scale to identify ‘undesirable’ migrants and stop them crossing borders, and to facilitate their deportation when they are already present in host countries.

These recent but rapid developments in the study of the use of ICTs in migration processes are most often conducted in the context of destination countries, usually within the EU. Despite the fact they are playing a crucial role in migratory dynamics, transit countries have so far attracted little attention when it comes to the role of ICTs in migration processes. Turkey is a striking example in this regard. The complex position of this country in relation to migratory movements is well established in migration studies. Turkey is simultaneously a country of immigration, emigration and transit. Moreover, following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, it has become the host country of the largest refugee population in the world. Although Turkey has been the subject of substantial interest on the part of migration scholars, the role of ICTs in migration processes has not been analysed in detail in its context.

With this in mind, our workshop aims to bring together scholars from different disciplines to give fresh impetus to the study of ICTs’ impact in migration processes in the case of Turkey.

Papers based on theoretical and empirical insights might address, *but are not limited to*, the following topics:

- different uses of ICTs by migrants, NGOs and other stakeholders, including institutional actors in Turkey
- digital activism and digital advocacy networks with regard to migrants’ rights
- the use of ICTs in migration control
- migrants’ agency and ICTs
- digitalisation in humanitarian action
- the ethics of research with regard to the use of ICTs by migrants and other individual and institutional actors
- epistemological and methodological issues in research related to the role of ICTs in migration processes.

We welcome abstracts of no more than 500 words (including authors’ names, titles, emails and institutional affiliations) by 10th April 2021 at the latest. All proposals must be submitted to ibrahim.soysuren@unine.ch and gar.workshop@gmail.com. The authors of accepted proposals will be informed by 15th April 2021. The deadline for submission of first drafts of papers will be 1st June 2021.

This workshop relates to the following *NCCR on the move* research project: “*Digital empowerment: unpacking ICTs-mediated practices of asylum seekers in Turkey and refugees in Switzerland to cope with (im)mobility conditions*” (IP37).