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“Redefining Citizenship: Exploring 'Local Citizenship' and Urban Governance for the Un(der)documented Immigrants in Athens and Dublin”

This paper starts with an alternative conceptualization of citizenship, specifically focusing on the local level. It explores both the normative aspects and empirical manifestations of ‘local citizenship’. Employing a comparative multi-sited ethnographic approach, it focuses on the migrant policies of Athens and Dublin, particularly concerning their un(der)documented migrant populations. The study utilizes Reflexive Thematic Analysis through NVivo software, incorporating semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

The empirical findings from these case studies reveal that, despite the overarching centralised governance model in both countries, the local level can have a unique agency. However, the extent and nature of this local agency are significantly influenced by the governance model, political considerations, and pragmatic responses. The study identifies Dublin's approach as a ‘pragmatic assimilationist paradigm’, marked by projectisation and ‘multi-actor government’. This paradigm reflects the challenges of Irish governance, characterized by high centralization in policy formation at the national level, yet decentralized and fragmented service provision at the local level through outsourcing and privatization. In contrast, Athens adopts a ‘pragmatic guest-resident paradigm’, also characterized by projectisation and ‘multi-actor government’. This model is shaped by Greece's historical context and centralized governance model, alongside Athens’ specific political dynamics and pragmatic responses. Normatively, the article reveals that realizing local citizenship policies, or policies embodying the local citizenship ethos for un(der)documented immigrants, requires an inclusive local immigrant policy paradigm, a multi-actor governance approach involving diverse stakeholders at the local level, and collaborative multi-level governance encouraging local autonomy.

The project aims to enrich local citizenship theory by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration between migration and urban studies. It provides comparative policy-relevant data pertinent to urban governance theory, facilitating a comprehensive discussion on the evolving role of cities in immigration within diverse contexts. The research contributes to the academic literature by offering a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing migration governance and policy in Athens and Dublin, underscoring that local-level policies are closely tied to each city's unique context and the interplay of various levels and actors.

Sofia Ntaliou is a PhD candidate at the School of Social Justice, Social Policy, and Social Work at University College Dublin. Her research explores local citizenship for un(der)documented immigrants, focusing on Athens, Greece, and Dublin, Ireland. Holding an MSc in Human Geography from the University of Amsterdam and an MEng & BEng in Spatial Planning from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Sofia has a rich background in studying urban social movements, immigration, and providing support to immigrants both professionally and personally.

Sofia has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards like the IKY Performance and Behaviour Award, the Geographical Society of Ireland Travel Award and the UCD Graduate Research and Innovation Fund. Additionally, she serves as a Project Affiliate to the Soli*City project at Toronto Metropolitan University and has been a member of the Geographical Society Ireland (GSI) Postgraduate Network, the American Association of Geographers, and the Migration, Citizenship, and Political Participation standing committee of IMISCOE. Sofia’s professional experience includes tutoring and presenting her research at numerous international conferences, showcasing her commitment to addressing vital social issues and promoting support for immigrant communities.