

Research Project: Refugee Accommodation in Germany

Full title: Between objects of management and active subjects. Constitution of space, processes of subjectivation and strategies of empowerment in refugee homes in Germany

Summary:

During their asylum procedures, refugees in Germany are given accommodation. However, there is a wide variety in the reality of housing: from gyms or containers over old military barracks to well-equipped houses or single apartments in conventional apartment houses.

Due to the rising numbers of refugees seeking asylum in Germany, a lack of infrastructure and accommodation became obvious at the latest in 2015. While in 2012/2013, as a consequence of the refugee movement and protests in Germany in those years, the perspective of refugees and their accommodation were (more) visible in the public discourse, with the worsening supply conditions and bottleneck of the past years, their perspectives and situation have faded into the background.

However, the question of accommodation, supply and integration of refugees is central for a democratic society. Refugee homes generate a specific social structure that has a deep impact on the refugees' identity and agency. For that reason, this project focuses on the subjective perspectives and experiences of refugees in regard to their housing situation. The aim of the project is to produce a differentiated and comprehensive picture of refugee accommodation in Germany from a (1) spatial-sociological, (2) subject-theoretical (3) action-theoretical perspective.

The project has three main lines of question:

- 1.) Production of space: Which specific spaces are constituted in the context of refugee accommodation?
- 2.) Production of subjects: Which types of subjects are fostered in certain arrangements of space?
- 3.) Production of agency:
 - How does a specific constitution of space and subjectivity affect the agency of the refugees?
 - Which strategies do the refugees, employees of the refugee homes, volunteers and full-time supporters of the refugees carry out in order to expand their agency?

These questions will be answered through a multiple-method study:

- semi-structured interviews and informal talks with (groups of) refugees, employees of refugee homes, volunteers, professional charities, representatives of the authorities,
- participant observation,
- participatory research methods,
- expert interviews,
- document analyses.

The project is funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and runs from 2016 until 2018.

If you have any questions or if you are interested in participating in the project, please do not hesitate to contact me by email, vey@ztg.tu-berlin.de or telephone, 030-31426066.