

ON THE BIRTH AND PROFILE OF THE NORDIC JOURNAL OF MIGRATION RESEARCH

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When Nordic Migration Research (NMR) was launched in 2008, there was total agreement among the founding members that one of the primary objectives of the organization was to establish a high-quality, interdisciplinary Nordic journal for research on international migration and migration-related issues in an international and transnational setting. Accordingly, the NMR statutes define the aim of the *Nordic Journal for Migration Research (NJMR)* as “devoted to publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed research in different aspects of international migration and ethnic relations, such as integration, ethnicity/race, culture, religion, marginalization, citizenship, nationalism, discrimination and racism”. The statutes further specify that the *NJMR* aims to develop into “a forum for both applied and theoretical research, [seeking] to attract high-quality, original contributions from both Nordic and non-Nordic countries”, and that an important part of its mission and *raison d’être* would be to focus particularly, although not exclusively, on the areas mentioned above with respect to their relevance to and impact on “the Nordic countries in a global perspective”.

This formulation also reveals a significant aspect of the rationale that the NMR Board has consistently pursued in arguing for the need

to add yet another international journal into an academic landscape that is already, as some would argue, sufficiently replete with journal publication outlets. The Board being well aware of such counterarguments, considered them seriously and ended up taking issue with them on at least three counts.

First, we found that although there are indeed quite a number of journals devoted to publishing research on migration, many (not all) of them are weighted towards empirical case studies informed either by lessons to be extracted for the political handling of problems in different national contexts or by migrant perspectives on the treatment of ethnic minorities by receiving countries.

Second, in our estimation there is no journal specifically dedicated to research on migration and integration in a Nordic regional perspective, something which is historically understandable and legitimate, but which is no longer a problem that can be neglected. Migration to all the Nordic countries has increased significantly in recent years, and in light of the fact that the region consists of welfare states built on relatively similar economic, cultural and political assumptions, it is interesting as well as imperative to study the specific interactions between increased migrant flows and similar, but also different, social and political models for the handling of access, labour–market integration, sociocultural adaptation, acquisition

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of citizenship and so forth, both in and across the countries of the region. For the same reason, we want to highlight comparative and intercultural studies, and we wish to publish contributions grounded in innovative theoretical and conceptual reflections that can help overcome the pitfalls of methodological nationalism.

And third, the academic field of migration research is by now a boom industry, populated by an increasing number of scholars hailing from a great variety of scholarly disciplines. It is a field spawning an ever-proliferating wealth of books, articles and media contributions. This has happened because of an intense and enhanced global interest in migration and integration questions over the past 10-15 years, resulting in research groups and entire departments focusing on these issues to an ever greater extent, and for reasons having more to do with endogenous developments within universities and in academic environments globally: competition for funding and visibility has intensified dramatically, and as a consequence the pressure on scholars to boost their “productivity” has skyrocketed. More than ever before academics must obey the “publish or perish” dictate and are being scrutinized and evaluated regularly on that basis. This pressure – and the resultant growth in output – cries out for more quality outlets for sound, innovative, sometimes even path-breaking new research. *NJMR* sees an important role for itself in this context.

The epithet “Nordic” in *NJMR* indicates, as already hinted, a regional thematic priority in the selection of articles and special issues that we choose to publish. However, it is important to emphasize that neither does it imply any preference for Nordic authorship, nor is the preference exclusive of other areas and other interests. In fact, *NJMR* warmly welcomes contributions dealing with, for example, migration theory, methodological questions, comparative studies and policy-oriented analyses, and will also occasionally publish case studies focusing on localities, countries and regions outside the Nordic area. The overriding concern is to ensure that all contributions maintain a high level of quality, novelty and topicality. To guarantee that this happens, all contributions received or solicited will initially be screened by the *NJMR* editorial board and, if the result is positive, subsequently undergo a double peer-review process. If a contribution successfully passes that stage, it will be subjected to a rigorous language editing process, before it is eventually included in an *NJMR* issue. Throughout the process, editors will maintain close contact with authors, in order to keep them updated on developments and to interact with them continuously to ensure the optimal end result for publication.

NJMR will publish three or four issues per year in an electronic, open access format. Issues may be “standard” or “special”, the former comprising four or five articles as well as a book review section and occasionally review articles as well. The latter – special issues – will be thematically focused and will gather together a cluster of articles on the same theme, problem or process. Special issues will most often be guest-edited by scholars external to the *NJMR* editorial board, but board members may also occasionally assume the role of editor. Special issues will naturally heed all the indicated criteria for

the selection of articles, and will in addition be concerned with ensuring a high degree of internal linkage and cohesiveness among the individual contributions. Moreover, the electronic publishing format allows us to include the occasional “ordinary” article even in special issues. In that case, it will be clearly indicated if an article should not be regarded and read as part of the special issue, but as a stand-alone contribution in its own right.

In a variety of ways, *NJMR* in itself is a manifestation of constructive inter-Nordic collaboration. Not just by being one of the concrete results of the cooperative efforts that NMR represents, but also because it stands on the shoulders of and marks the “Nordic” continuation of two hitherto independent national journals, namely the *Norsk Tidsskrift for Migrasjonsforskning (NTMF)* and the *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration*. Both these publications have elected to close down their independent activities in favour of supporting this larger inter-regional and international venture – decisions that call for respect and deserve accolades for far-sighted and courageous academic leadership. *NJMR* will do all that it can to live up to the hopes and expectations thus placed on it and to develop into one of the natural outlets for quality scholarship on questions of migration, ethnicity, nationalism, integration and cultural diversity in the Nordic countries.

This first issue is neither “standard” nor “special”, but has been specifically designed as an opening issue consisting of four invited contributions by high-profile, internationally distinguished scholars on migration, representing both the interdisciplinary diversity of thematic and theoretical issues that *NJMR* wants to spearhead and the intense and long-standing interest in and engagement with the Nordic region: Grete Brochmann and Anniken Hagelund from Norway, Nils Holtug from Denmark, Peter Kraus from Finland and Yngve Lithman from Sweden. Their contributions – briefly introduced below – stand for all the characteristics that *NJMR* would like to adhere to throughout: high quality, innovative scholarship, topicality of focus and interdisciplinary perspectives. In this sense, the contributions to this issue set the tone and point the way forward.

II

We open this first issue of *NJMR* with Nils Holtug’s article, “The ethics of immigration policy”. Arguing that political discussions and policies cannot avoid pre-supposing or invoking certain values, Holtug focuses on the issue of open versus closed borders – a classical theme in the political philosophy of citizenship and immigration. After reviewing the values behind different normative stances on borders – with a particular focus on the three core liberal values of democracy, liberty and equality – Holtug points out the inconsistencies between the values and the practices of liberal Western states.

Grete Brochmann and Anniken Hagelund draw our attention to integration challenges in the Scandinavian welfare state in their article “Migrants in the Scandinavian welfare state: the emergence of

a social policy problem". Analyzing Denmark, Norway and Sweden comparatively with a focus on immigration control policies, integration policies and general social policies, they find that – despite differences in dominant discourses in the three countries, such as economic sustainability, social cohesion and poor welfare policy outcomes – the labour market is being increasingly viewed as the principal area for integration in all three countries; hence, the logic of the active welfare state.

In his article "The multilingual city", Peter Kraus discusses the challenges of multilingualism, with an empirical focus on the cities of Helsinki and Barcelona. After a historical overview of ethnic diversity in various European cities around the turn of the 20th century, the author argues that what we know about the results of the nation states' cultural standardization attempts may be a myth. Placing into this picture the linguistic diversity that has resulted from modern migrations into European cities, Kraus finds that the recognition of linguistic identities plays a major role in linking the "dynamics of complex diversity and citizenization".

In the final article, Yngve Lithman depicts how discourses about "immigrant problems" have changed over time, by using Sweden as the main example. As demonstrated in his article, Lithman's discussion is also valid in other contexts beyond Sweden. Lithman claims that the way immigrants have been viewed has changed from what he calls non-stationarity to stationarity, the former concept referring to pragmatically oriented problem-solving discourses and the latter denoting essentializing discourses seeking the reasons for problems in the immigrants themselves. Lithman argues that this is a general trend in Europe, and explains the emergence of this trend with increasing Europeanization, the ongoing re-articulation of the social contract and the introduction of immigrant issues in new ways to the political life.

The four authors who have contributed to this issue address some of the most pressing research and policy issues that the Nordic states and societies face today. With regard to research topics, they cover a relatively broad spectrum of the currently most debated topics in the Nordic region: values behind immigration

policies, diversity and identity politics, emergence of new social policy problems and the politics of migrant youth. In other words, values, diversity, welfare and youth are the core themes of focus in this issue. With regard to the different levels of governance, the articles mention the European Union, states, cities, and transnational groups. When it comes to policy challenges, the four articles are attentive to the areas of immigration, integration, diversity, identity, multilingualism, multiculturalism, social welfare and migrant youth. The argumentation is consistent, original and thought provoking throughout, based on both empirical fact and theoretical stringency. Thus, the contributions to this first issue serve as a beacon to be followed by contributors to future issues of *NJMR*.

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