

Colloquium Series
Sociology of Transnationalization
“The Transnational Lens”

Solidarity in Abandonment: The Local Communities Response to Refugee Influx in Serbia

Robert Rydzewski*
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan

In this presentation, I examine the impact of incoming migrants, NGO workers and the appearance of the refugee camps in local landscapes. Building on ethnographic observation and unstructured interviews with the inhabitants of Preševo in Southern Serbia, who have gone through ethnic conflicts, difficult post-Yugoslav transformation, migration and exile themselves, I examine their experience of the utter chaos of liminality caused by the so-called long summer of migration. I ponder here whether someone's own humiliation and emigration experience might provoke empathy with other marginalized border-crossers. I show that in the space of disorder and confusion, not only solidarity but also new work opportunities and international attention to a neglected community appeared. I describe local community ambiguous humanitarian and entrepreneur attitude towards passing population and the state reaction to it. I analyze these practices within a context of the inflation of the ex-Yugoslav states' position in the hierarchy of international mobility regimes and ethnopolitics, that have contributed to the feeling of state negligence, marginalization, and disenchantment.

Wednesday, 18th January 2023
16:15 – 17:45

Bielefeld University
Room: X-C3-107

*Robert Rydzewski defended his PhD 2020 at the Institute of Anthropology and Cultural Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, where he works as assistant professor. His research interests focus on the migration movement at the external EU borders, the EU border regime, ethnic

relations, and pro-refugee social movements. Currently, he works on a monograph about the migratory Balkan route in Southeastern Europe and with the pro-migrant activists he runs a project on the cooperation between pro-refugee grassroots groups and formal entities in Poland.