



Sociological talks

How are migration-related diversity and social inequalities addressed by contemporary welfare institutions?
Current research and recent debates

Summer semester 2021

Vincent Dubois (Université de Strasbourg)

The institutional experiences of migrants as a case for the study of the relationship between lower classes and institutions

This talk presents an ongoing research project (LOwer Classes and Institutions – LOCI), which main objectives are to analyze the roles that public institutions play in the restructuring of the lower classes as a social group, and to shed light on the forms of control and disempowerment of institutions over individuals and groups. Unlike most works which, like those on street-level bureaucracy, approach bureaucratic relations essentially from the point of view of agents' work, it focuses on publics, their trajectories, experiences and points of view. Contrary to most studies which, if they address the public, do so from the point of view of a type of institution or program (unemployed, welfare recipients, patients, etc.), it approaches the relationship to institutions in a global manner, beyond institutional boundaries. In addition to the importance and interest of the migrant population per se, its study is particularly relevant in this project for two main reasons. First, migrants have experienced institutions in their home country, and their primary institutional habitus has been shaped in this context. As a result, they are likely to have imported ways of looking at and dealing with institutions as they arrived in their new country of residence. They are also likely to draw spontaneous comparisons between the various national contexts they have experienced. These profane comparisons are of interest to us insofar as they question the taken-for-grantedness of institutions, and reveal what matters to people regarding institutions. Second, migrant trajectories consist to a significant degree in institutional careers, that is, in a succession of institutional experiences and statuses that relates to personal trajectory, and in a succession of points of views on these two combined series of changes. Applying for a visa or for asylum, successfully or not, fearing police checks, waiting in refugee camps and detention centers, taking steps to find housing, employment, school, access health care: immigration and settlement in a country are marked by numerous stages that provide a myriad of opportunities to be confronted with institutions. Here I posit that the way in which these steps and confrontations take place shape what I would call the secondary institutional habitus of the migrants, with long lasting effects on their relationships to institutions. Trust or fear and defiance, gratitude or resentment may result from these experiences. This will be the occasion to address the controversial question of "institutional racism", by analyzing discriminatory practices as they are experienced, identified and described by individuals exposed to them.

Tuesday, 01.06.2021, 5.00-6.30 pm

Department of Sociology, Rooseveltplatz 2, 1090 Vienna, ONLINE

Link: <https://univienne.zoom.us/j/91027747946?pwd=YmVETmUzdVdxVk9qOG9GNERwMjRjZz09>