“People should feel welcome here”

Difficulties, challenges and opportunities of the discursive concept ‘Welcome Culture’

von Cathrin Mund

‘Willkommenskultur’ (welcome culture) served as a political key word at the peak of the German refugees’ discourse in 2014/15. A public discourse that meanders between descriptions of a new openness and tolerance and old patterns of describing migration, such as othering, stereotypes and the distinction between good and bad migrants. The article uses the discourse as an entry point and asks, against a post-migrant background, if or to what extent the concept ‘Willkommenskultur’ can contribute to the idea of a post-migrant society. It presents the results of the empirical analysis of interviews conducted with actors working or volunteering in the field of migration. The interviews have been analysed with regard to their understanding of ‘Willkommenskultur’ in their institutional and private practice. The analysis shows a strong self-positioning of the actors within the discursive field and a critical perception of the discourse, exposing the discourse’s policy driven argumentation, disregarding hegemonic arguments and developing own anti-hegemonic approaches towards alterity. Finally, the interviews display the potential of working experiences for anti-hegemonic approaches, they reveal rural strategies to overcome hegemonic ideas – and they show a demand for post-migrant institutions.


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