MIM Master Essay Award 2015

The MIM Master Essay Award stimulates and recognizes excellent master essays in the field of migration studies at Malmö University. The field of migration studies connotes to processes of mobility, inclusion and exclusion and its varying expressions in politics, policies, places, institutions as well as people’s everyday lives. Eligible for the 2015 Award were those who defended their thesis in the academic year of 2014/15.

We have received several nominations for the MIM Master Essay Award. The authors of these essays, which all were of high quality and involve valuable contributions to the field of migration studies; such as the contact theory, Europeanization, re-migration or highly skilled migration. These are written by Karolina Vainilkaite, Marta Oltedal Lyngstad, Beint Magnus Aamodt Bentsen, Nahum N. Welang, Tove Andersson and Katarina Mozetič. A specially assigned assessment committee has come to the conclusion that the winner for 2015 is Katarina Mozetič who has written the master thesis “Being highly skilled and a refugee. Experiences of non-European physicians in Sweden”.

The thesis refines the categories of ‘refugee’ and ‘highly skilled migrant’ by exploring the experiences of medical doctors who came to Sweden as refugees from non-European countries. The thesis is based on seven in-depth semi-structured interviews. By employing the concept of mixed migration, Mozetič highlights the complex criss-crossing of the interviewees’ identities as both doctors and refugees. She points to the tension between processes of identification, categorization, self-understanding and social location, which is further enhanced by the translocational positionality. The thesis concludes that these individuals’ migratory trajectories cannot be ranked as either forced or voluntary, but have to be conceptualized in terms of mixed migratory movements. In the same
vein, the thesis points to the processual nature of identity as always partly self-constructed and partly determined by the external categorizations, and hence pleads against the essentialization of migrants’ identities, be it that of a ‘refugee’ or ‘highly skilled migrant’.

Migration studies tend to rely on given assumptions about who arrives as a refugee on the one side, and about the migration process for those migrants who are highly skilled on the other side. This essay contributes to blurring these stereotypical distinctions. This is a valuable contribution. Throughout, the essay is both theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich. By her interviews with non-European physicians in Sweden, Mozetič also shows how theoretical stereotypes are reproduced in the identities of individual migrants. She proposes conceiving migratory movements as mixed, rather than simply as forced and unskilled vis-à-vis voluntary and skilled. While this might seem obvious, it is also a reminder that is much needed in today’s debate on forced migration and current refugee situation.