



Section:

Evaluating Policies of Immigrant Integration and Their Outcomes: A Critical Assessment from a Multilevel Perspective

Panel 2:

The Political Mobilisation of Ethnicized and Racialized Minorities through the Arts: A Comparative Perspective

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Accidental Activists: When arts practices are unintentionally political

Recent scholarship has been devoted to the role of arts practices of ethnicized and racialized minorities in inter-cultural and inter-ethnic relations/integration, highlighting their political impact on the society (e.g.: fostering *encounters*, Vertovec 2009). While endeavoring to have arts practices recognized as political action, scholars warn against considering *everything* as political action (Lafleur and Martiniello 2008). The other component of this risk is artistic practices that are considered to be political and meet the criteria of different forms of political action (e.g.: *confrontational, deliberative, pragmatic*, Mattern 1998), but were not intended to be such by the artist. Similarly, those actors who provide the structural and relational means and conditions for artistic processes to take place (defined as *transversal enablers*, Wise 2009) are also often identified as political activists. This undesired categorization is common in the case of actors who are members of minority communities, and as such are often assumed to be activists in support of a cause for their 'group' and made the object of political assignments (Eyerman and Jamison 1998).

These categorizations warrant further investigation and in this paper we explore the utility of the theoretical underpinnings/definitions of what constitutes political action through the arts when it comes to 'accidental activists' - artists who did not intend for their work to be considered political action. Using examples from fieldwork in Belgium, we apply common theoretical constructions to these cases of unintended political action in order to better understand the role of artistic intention in the categorization of political practice.