Project title: Vulnerabilities Under the Global Protection Regime. How Does the Law Assess, Address, Shape and Produce the Vulnerabilities of the Protection Seekers?

Acronym: VULNER

Abstract: ‘Vulnerability’ is increasingly used as a conceptual tool to guide the design and implementation of the global protection regime, as illustrated by the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (the ‘New York Declaration’) and the subsequent adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (the ‘Global Compact for Migration’) and of the Global Compact on Refugees. However, ‘vulnerability’ lacks a sharp conceptualisation and still needs to be accompanied by a thorough understanding of its concrete meanings, practical consequences and legal implications. This research project aims to address these uncertainties from a critical and comparative perspective, with a focus on forced migration. It will provide a comprehensive analysis of how the ‘protection regimes’ of select countries address the vulnerabilities of ‘protection seekers’. The select countries are in Europe (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Norway), North America (Canada), the Middle East (Lebanon) and Africa (Uganda and South Africa). The analysis adopts two different yet complementary perspectives. First, the way the ‘vulnerabilities’ of the protection seekers are being assessed and addressed by the relevant norms and in the practices of the decision makers will be systematically documented and analysed through a combination of legal and empirical data. Second, the various forms and nature of the concrete experiences of ‘vulnerability’ as they are lived by the protection seekers, including the resilience strategies and how they are being continuously shaped in interactions with the legal frameworks, will be documented and analysed through empirical data collected during fieldwork research. Ultimately, the very notion of ‘vulnerability’ will be questioned and assessed from a critical perspective. An alternative concept, such as ‘precarity’, may be suggested to better reflect the concrete experiences of the protection seekers.

Research Consortium: The research consortium is led by Dr. Luc Leboeuf (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology). It comprises the University of Louvain - UCL (Sylvie Sarolea), Martin Luther University Halle–Wittenberg (Winfried Kluth), Ca’ Foscari University in Venice (Sabrina Marchetti), the Norwegian Institute for Social Research (Hilde Liden), and the Centre for Lebanese Studies (Maha Shuayb), as well as a partnership with a Canadian research team led by Delphine Nakache from the University of Ottawa, which includes McGill University (François Crépeau) and York University (Dagmar Soennecken). Population Europe, the network of population experts hosted by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (Andreas Edel), will be in charge of disseminating the research results.

Duration of the Research: The research will last for three years and will start as of February 1, 2020.

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