IMISCOE 12th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NCCR – On the Move 1st Annual Conference
“Right, Democracy and Migration – Challenges and Opportunities”

Call for papers for the panel on

**Highly Skilled or Highly Wanted Migrants? Conceptualizations, Policy Designs and Implementations of High-skilled Migration Policies**

**Organizers:** Dr. Metka Hercog and Laure Sandoz, MA
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The proliferation of selective migration policies has sparked new interest in academic research on highly skilled migration. Several studies observe the importance of policy changes on the structure of migration flows throughout time and assess the link between the increasing skill-focus of immigration policies and growing flows of skilled migrants to leading industrialized countries. Another strand of literature focuses on the reasons behind policy changes, listing processes of technological advancement, population ageing and globalization of production as the main causes for kindling international competition for talent. Yet, while several authors dealing with comparative methodologies analyse differences and similarities between immigration regimes intended to attract highly skilled workers, hardly any work problematizes the conceptualization of skills. Whom are these regimes aimed at? Given that immigration policies differ considerably among each other, it is obvious that there is no common agreement on the definition of high skills.

This panel offers an opportunity to delve into the construction of migrant categories through policy design and policy implementation. It also proposes to widen the focus beyond immigration authorities in order to include various actors that are in one or another way involved in the process of selecting, supporting or employing highly skilled workers. The aim of the panel is to bring to the surface the indistinct objectives of immigration policies, and to analyse the interplay between policies, discourses and practices. More precisely, we would like to discuss the argument that the definition of highly skilled migrants depends more on how potential migrants are viewed by interest groups than on migrants’ characteristics. Contributions using comparative or multi-method approaches are particularly encouraged.

The contributions can be theoretical or empirical, and they can touch upon the following questions: What are the disparate interpretations of what constitutes a highly skilled migrant among involved stakeholders? How are these interpretations reflected in policy design and implementation? What is the role of non-governmental and private actors, considering among others multinational companies, recruitment agencies and lobby groups, in shaping discourse and practices about highly skilled migrants? How do differential interpretations and practices impact different groups of migrants?

Please send the abstract of your proposed contribution by **4 January 2015** to the organizers (metka.hercog@unibas.ch and laure.sandoz@unibas.ch). The abstract, of a maximum 250 words, should specify the main research questions, methods and findings. We are discussing the possibility of a special issue on selected contributions. The notification of acceptance will be made by **11 January 2015**.

The notification of acceptance of the panel by IMISCOE organisers is **15 February 2015**.