

Els de Grauw

Current Projects

Els currently has under way two research projects:

One project is a comparative study of city immigrant affairs offices in the United States, with a focus on New York City, Houston, Detroit, and Louisville. An increasing number of cities have created such offices in recent years in efforts to tackle local immigrant integration challenges. Yet not much is known about these offices and whether this institutionalization of cities' commitment to immigrant wellbeing actually advances immigrants' civic and political integration. The objective of this project is to determine why city officials have established these offices, who has advocated for or opposed them, what functions they do or do not fulfill, what capacity they have to represent different immigrant groups in local politics, and how they work with civil society actors to promote immigrant integration. The fieldwork for this project includes archival research and conducting interviews with the staff currently and formerly affiliated with these offices as well as other relevant stakeholders, including state and local elected and appointed officials, community advocates, and representatives from grant-making institutions.

A second project, which I conduct with Shannon Gleeson (UC Santa Cruz) and which is funded by the National Science Foundation, is an institutional analysis of the implementation of the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, a federal administrative directive that offers qualified young undocumented immigrants a 2-year renewable stay of deportation and the ability to apply for a legal work permit. The objective of this study is to determine how local political and civic context shapes the implementation of the new labor rights for noncitizens resulting from DACA. To this end, we examine the implementation of DACA in three metropolitan regions: the San Francisco Bay Area, the Greater Houston Area, and the New York City Metro Area. More specifically, we compare the implementation of DACA in the largest central city and two outlying high-immigrant suburbs in each region. In each region, we are interviewing federal, state, and local government bureaucrats to determine how variation in political and civic context shapes the implementation strategies and practices they adopt. We are also interviewing representatives from civil society organizations and consular offices to determine how they hold government bureaucrats accountable and advocate for 'DACA-mented' workers. Finally, in each region we are interviewing DACA grantees to determine how their interactions with government bureaucracies, civil society organizations, and consular offices influence their legal consciousness and willingness to mobilize their new and existing labor rights.