

Programme

CESSMIR conference: ‘Looking back, moving forward: migration studies in times of societal transformation’

14 – 16 September 2026, Ghent University, Belgium



Overview parallel sessions

Timing and location

Monday September 14 – Wednesday 16 September 2026

Henri Dunantlaan 1 & 2, Gent BE

Monday September 14

PhD pre-conference

08.30 Registration PhD pre-conference

09.00 PhD workshop: How to navigate migration research in an increasingly politicized and, at times, challenging research and policy environment

10.30 Coffee

Main Conference

10.00 Registration

11.00 Opening keynote Nando Sigona: Migration studies at a critical conjuncture

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Parallel sessions 1

15.00 Coffee

15.30 Parallel sessions 2

17.00 End conference day

17.30 Walk 'Walking Gate Areas: Hidden Pasts, Present Futures' with historian Tina De Gendt

Tuesday September 15

09.00 Registration

09.30 Parallel sessions 3

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 Keynote Martina Tazzioli: Hijacking migration containment within the conjuncture

13.00 Lunch break

14.00 Parallel sessions 4

15:30 Coffee break

16.00 Parallel sessions 5

17.30 End conference day and conference drinks

17.30 Reception

Wednesday September 16

09.00 Registration

09:30 Parallel sessions 6

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 Closing roundtable: From Impact to Social Justice? Doing research on migration in a polarised climate

13.00 End conference

Introduction

Dear colleagues and friends,

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, CESSMIR invites researchers, practitioners, NGO representatives, volunteers, activists, and policymakers to join a three-day conference exploring migration studies in a rapidly changing societal landscape.

This conference marks a decade of CESSMIR's commitment to advancing the study of migration and refugees. It aims to create a vibrant space for dialogue, reflection, and collaboration. Together, we will look back at major developments of the past ten years and envision new paths forward, strengthening the connections between research, practice, and societal impact.

Practical information

Programme

This programme offers an overview and detailed descriptions of all activities taking place throughout the conference.

Venue

Most sessions will take place at Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent, BE.

- Rooms starting with 2.x are located on the second floor.
- Rooms starting with 3.x are located on the third floor.
- Auditorium 1 is located on level –1
- The registration desk is situated in the central entrance hall.

Food & catering

- All catering (coffee breaks and lunches) will be served in the back area of Auditorium 2.
- The conference reception will take place at Room 0.1 and garden, Henri Dunantlaan 1, Gent BE

Arriving by train

From Gent-Sint-Pieters Station, take bus 9A or 9B from platform 19 to busstop Gent Beneluxplein, which stops at Henri Dunant 2.

Arriving by car

Parking is available free of charge in the underground parking of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences.

About CESSMIR

The Center for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR) is an interdisciplinary consortium aimed at societal impact at Ghent University. About 200 researchers from 25 different departments are part of it, along with many non-academic partners.

We encourage interdisciplinary research projects and teaching, we organize training for researchers, practitioners and policy makers, and we maximize stakeholder involvement throughout the research process.

For more info, please visit our [website](#) and our [LinkedIn](#).

Contact

For any questions or need for assistance during the conference, please contact us at:

- **Email:** cessmir2026@ugent.be
- **Phone:** Floor Verhaeghe: +32 499480694

Kind regards

CESSMIR Team

Overview parallel sessions

Stream 1: Ethnoracial inequalities in education	Stream 3: The multilingual borders of migration	Stream 5: Rethinking borders, solidarity and migration law
Stream 2: Ethnoracial inequalities in health(care)	Stream 4: Entanglements of religion, race and migration	Stream 6: Decolonial approaches to migration studies, narratives, practices

Monday September 14

From 13.30 until 15:00: Parallel session 1

Religion, race and migration: Politics of exclusion, protection and inclusion	Re-imagining concepts and methods	Urban solidarity under pressure? Unravelling the urban politics of precarious migration through an infrastructural lens	Decolonial methodologies	Wellbeing and belonging of unaccompanied young people
Panel – Room 2.2.	Panel – Room 2.3.	Symposium – Room 3.2.	Panel – Room 3.3.	Symposium – Room 3.6.

From 15.30 until 17:00: Parallel session 2

Religious pluralism: migrant lives and racialised faith in public spaces	The role of communities and intermediate actors in migrants' access to healthcare	Inquiring the past, present and future of solidarity	Enfoques y métodos artísticos aplicados a los estudios migratorios (Arts-based approaches and methods in migration studies)
Panel - Room 2.2.	Panel - Room 2.3.	Symposium – Room 3.2.	Panel – Room 3.3.

Tuesday September 15

From 09.30 until 11: 00: Parallel session 3

Belonging, Bias, and Opportunity: Educational experiences for teachers and students	Identity work and multilingual meaning-making	Systemic racism in healthcare	Resistance and solidarity at and beyond the border
Panel – Room 2.2.	Panel – Room 2.3.	Panel – Room 3.2.	Panel – Room 3.3.

From 14.00 until 15:30: Parallel session 4

Social and linguistic dimensions of educational inequality	'We have the solution – but how do we get it sold? (How can we achieve a science and human-rights-based European asylum policy in an era of political radicalisation?)	The role of language (support) in asylum policy and procedures	Healthcare access for undocumented migrants	Art as Decolonial Epistemology: Reconfiguring Knowledge in Critical Migration Studies
Panel – Room 2.2.	Dialogue session – Room 2.3.	Panel – Room 3.1.	Panel – Room 3.2.	Symposium – Room 3.3.

From 16.00 until 17:30: Parallel session 5

Connecting the dots: Newly Arrived Migrant Students' experiences across language, wellbeing, and (dis)ability	Multilingual and intercultural boundaries in helping encounters for migrants	How to tackle inequalities in mental healthcare for newcomers and minoritized groups (both in access & treatment)	Navigating legal uncertainty and precarity	Affective Frontiers of Anthropological Fieldwork with Migrant Communities
Dialogue session – Room 2.2.	Symposium – Room 2.4.	Dialogue session – Room 3.1.	Panel – Room 3.2.	Dialogue session – Room 3.3.

Wednesday September 16

From 09:30 until 11:00: Parallel session 6

Mapping the debate on human rights and migration	Socio-legal migration research at street level	Storytelling and Migrant Narratives.
Symposium – Room 2.3. (Stream 5&6)	Panel – Room 3.2.	Panel – Room 3.3.

Location: Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent, BE

Plenaries

Opening keynote Nando Sigona: Migration studies at a critical conjuncture

Monday September 14, 11:00

Auditorium 1, Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Over the past two decades, migration studies has expanded in scope and depth, becoming increasingly canonized through academic journals, research centres, and international networks of experts. In an increasingly multipolar world marked by war, climate crises, and systemic inequality, the drivers of displacement are intensifying—particularly in the Global South, where the majority of forcibly displaced people reside. At the same time, migration governance in the Global North has become more restrictive and securitized, often reinforcing racialized narratives and exclusionary politics. This talk reflects on whether, how, and to what extent migration studies has been able to respond to and reflect these transformations. It considers how theoretical and methodological innovations—including reflexive and decolonial turns—have enabled scholars to better understand the entanglements of mobility, inequality, and everyday life.



Nando Sigona is professor of International Migration and Forced Displacement and director of the Institute for Research into International Migration and Superdiversity at the University of Birmingham, UK. Nando is a founding editor of the peer reviewed journal *Migration Studies* (Oxford University Press) and lead editor for *Global Migration and Social Change* book series by Bristol University Press. His research interests include: the migration and citizenship nexus; undocumented migration; naturalisation, denaturalisation and statelessness; Romani politics and anti-Gypsyism; asylum and EU; Brexit and intra-European mobility; and child and youth migration. Prof. Sigona has published in a range of international academic journals across disciplines.

Keynote Martina Tazzioli: Hijacking migration containment within the conjuncture

Tuesday September 15, 11:30

Auditorium 1, Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Over the last few years, critical migration scholarship has challenged ways of seeing migration like a State, has foregrounded the colonial legacies of the global politics of mobility; migration scholars have engaged in a “reflexivity turn”, calling for de-migrantise migration studies, and have problematized their positionality at the border. However, migration scholarship nowadays struggles in coping with the frantic changes in migration policies and the ongoing geopolitical turmoil. Scholarly works that aim at producing critical knowledge about the border regime should start from the present “migration conjuncture”, in which migration is no longer a drive for broader social struggles and mobilisations and where migrant persons are targeted by policies apt at debilitating them and eroding their lives.

Thus, this presentation asks, what does it mean to re-articulate critical migration scholarship by mobilising a conjunctural analysis (Hall, 1976)? In fact, the centrality of migrant struggles over social reproduction activities and the increasing criminalisation of humanitarianism make hard nowadays to flatten a critique of the border regime onto binary oppositions – for instance, between humanitarian and activist interventions, or between claims for abolishing camps and one the one side and struggles for improving migrants’ living conditions. The laborious task of re-articulating a critique from within the conjuncture is not narrowed to targeting the actors responsible of border violence, nor can it resort to the myth of a “pure” radical politics. Rather, this presentation suggests a different pathway: this consists in “hijacking” (Garelli, Tazzioli, 2013) the epistemic-political assumptions of “migration management” envisioning an emancipatory politics of mobility that challenges the “organised abandonment” (Gilmore, 2007) by taking into account the ambivalences of humanitarianism, in a time of both withdrawal and criminalisation of humanitarian support, and of dismantling of life-support infrastructures.



Martina Tazzioli is Associate Professor in Geography at the University of Bologna (Italy). Her research focuses on migration and borders in Southern Europe and Mediterranean region. She is the author of “Border abolitionism: migration containment and the genealogies of struggles” (2023). The Making of Migration. The biopolitics of mobility at Europe’s borders (2019), Spaces of Governmentality: Autonomous Migration and the Arab Uprisings (2015) and co-author of Tunisia as a Revolutionised Space of Migration (2016).

Closing roundtable: From Impact to Social Justice? Doing research on migration in a polarised climate

Wednesday September 16, 11:30

Auditorium 1, Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Scholars of migration-related phenomena are increasingly asked to demonstrate the 'impact' of their research on both policy and practice. This confronts them with a conundrum: while many scholars in this field are engaged in working towards societal transformation and social justice, they find themselves in a heavily polarised climate in which meaningful changes are hard to obtain. As a whole, migration studies has recently been subjected to contradictory critiques: from being too liberal and 'woke' for right-wing populists that are rising to power across the globe, to being inherently 'colonial' and structurally racist for critical scholars and activists on the left. In this panel debate, we explore how scholars of migration, mobility and racism can and should reposition themselves in face of the current political climate. How should we respond to the public 'obsession' with migration? How can we address structural racism within the university? And how can we rethink how we teach and do research in a way that moves beyond the institutional requirements of generating 'impact', and contribute to social justice?



Blanca Cordero Diaz is a Research professor at the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities of the BUAP (Mexico). Throughout her career, she has explored the forms of exploitation inherent in flexible labor; the class experience of transnational migrant workers from rural areas and their subjectivities. Empirically, she has studied migrants from Puebla in New York. She has written several book chapters and articles in specialized journals on these topics. Since 2011, she has addressed the issue of Central American migration transiting through Mexico, migrant struggles, and Central American caravans. Her latest book, *Latin America in Motion: Migrations, Limits to Mobility, and Their Overflows* (Traficantes de Sueños, UACM, 2019), co-authored with Amarela Varela and edited by Sandro Mezzadra, presents an approach that explores the subjective dimensions of migration, even in the most brutal forms of violence experienced by migrants moving through the region.

Laura Stielike is a postdoc at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS) at Osnabrück University. She investigates the digital transformations and moral economies of migration-related knowledge production in politics, academia, and civil society, currently focusing on digital resistance and counter-knowledge against anti-migration discourse. Laura also writes on reflexive methodologies, academic care work, and the power of language. Her PhD from FU Berlin provided a postcolonial analysis of the 'migration&development dispositif' regarding



Cameroonian migration to Germany. Laura co-edits the Journal of Migration Studies and the Inventory of Migration Terms. She teaches migration, digitalisation, intersectionality, postcolonialism, and discourse analysis.



Sibo Kanobana is an associate professor of sociolinguistics and postcolonial theory at the Open University of the Netherlands. He is also an author and editor. He is the co-author of *Bastaards van onze kolonie. Verzwegen verhalen van Belgische metissen* (2010), the editor of the essay collection *Zwarte bladzijden. Afro-Belgische reflecties op Vlaamse (post)koloniale literatuur* (2021), and the author of *Witte orde. Over ras, klasse en witheid* (2024) and *Lumumba's droom. Wat zijn gedachtegoed ons vandaag kan leren* (2025). He served as an editor at *rekto:verso* from 2016 to 2024.

Yasmine Kaied is a doctoral researcher and teaching assistant in the Department of Orthopedagogy at Ghent University, where she is affiliated with the Disability Studies research group. Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Elisabeth De Schauwer, she investigates how inclusion, diversity, and decolonisation can take shape within higher education. Her work examines how students who deviate from dominant normative expectations experience higher education, and how educational institutions can make their pedagogical practices, knowledge production, and structures more inclusive and just. In addition, she is involved in various university initiatives related to diversity, inclusion, and interfaith dialogue.



Moderator: **Robin Vandevoordt** is associate professor of migration studies at CESSMIR (UGent), where he has conducted and supported ethnographic research on the everyday politics of borders, solidarity, and policies of migration and 'integration'. His research interests cut across the topics of social movements, humanitarianism, social work, migration law, and urban policies. At Ghent University, Robin teaches postgraduate courses on Social Movements & Solidarity, the Politics of Migration, and on Producing Knowledge About Migration.

PhD activities

PhD workshop: How to navigate migration research in an increasingly politicized and, at times, challenging research and policy environment

Monday September 14, 09:00

Room 3.1, Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Migration researchers today – whether working in academia, civil society, policy, or other sectors – navigate a field that is becoming increasingly politicized and therefore, at times, challenging. This context affects their research practices in multiple ways: from securing funding to sharing research findings and everything in between. Organised by Sophie Bols (Ghent University), this workshop brings together two experts who experience these pressures from different institutional positions: Dr Laura Smith-Khan (University of New England) and Dr Ben Whitham (Refugee Action).

In conversation, the speakers will reflect on the structural challenges that shape contemporary migration research. Among other things, they will discuss differences in research funding between academic and NGO settings, how they approach ethical considerations, their outreach and communication strategies, and the forms of impact they can or wish to realise. Laura and Ben will further examine how a shifting political and policy landscape affects their day-to-day research practice. They will consider how changing policy priorities, increasing polarization, and institutional constraints influence their work, and how they nonetheless strive for impact. They will discuss the strategies they have developed to meaningfully carry out their work within the current political climate.

The workshop concludes with an interactive Q&A, inviting participants to share their own experiences, concerns, and strategies. The aim is to offer PhD researchers concrete tools to navigate a research field that is – given the current political climate – urgent, but also institutionally challenging and often emotionally demanding.



Dr Laura Smith-Khan SFHEA is a Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of New England (Australia). She is also the first ever external affiliated member of the Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees, Ghent University (Belgium). She is co-founder of the Law and Linguistics Interdisciplinary Research Network and incoming Co-Editor in Chief of the Australian Journal of Human Rights (UNSW). Laura was previously a Chancellor's Research Fellow in the Faculty of Law at the University of Technology Sydney and was the 2022 recipient of the Australian Academy of the Humanities' Max Crawford Medal, Australia's most prestigious award for achievement and promise in the humanities. Her award-winning research examines the inclusion and participation of minoritized groups in legal settings, especially migration processes, addressing inequality.

Dr. Ben Whitham is Policy and Engagement Manager in the Movement Building and Lived Experience department at Refugee Action – a UK-based NGO supporting people seeking safety and campaigning for a better asylum system – and a Research Associate in the Department of Politics and International Studies at SOAS, University of London. Prior to joining Refugee Action, Ben was a full-time academic for eight years. He has published widely on austerity, Islamophobia, migration, asylum, and UK foreign and security policies. He is currently writing a fourth edition of his textbook *Global Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023) and a new introductory textbook on international relations theory. Ben's latest report for Refugee Action, published in April 2026, is *Locked Out and Locked Up*, which presents the findings of his cross-border research into lived experiences of asylum and systemic racism in the UK and northern France. Outside of his paid work, Ben remains a regular volunteer supporting people on the move around Calais and Dunkirk.



Organiser: **Sophie Bols** is a doctoral researcher at the Centre for Law, Families and Diversity and the Migration Law Research Group at Ghent University. Her PhD research examines how the European Union's legal strategies on border governance produce and reinforce gendered constructions of racialised migrant masculinity.

Coffee and tea for PhD students

Monday September 14, 10:30

Hallway Auditorium 2, Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Optional activities

Walk ‘Walking Gate Areas: Hidden Pasts, Present Futures’

Monday September 14, 17:30

Main income, Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent, BE

Who can imagine a city without its super-diverse hubs? But what’s their story? How have newcomers, activists, and grassroots organizations in these ‘gate areas’ shaped and reshaped urban life over the past two centuries? From the gate towers of the 19th century to the social mazes you’ll find there today, gate areas are full of hidden histories—narratives that challenge dominant ideas about the past, the present, and the future.



For the past seven years, public historian Tina De Gendt has been ‘re-negotiating’ the urban past of her hometown Ghent in a bottom-up project called The Square Kilometer (commissioned by City Museum STAM), which received the European Heritage Award in 2024. In this walk, Tina will not only take you to a part of Ghent far off the tourist trail, but also offer some insights on how to use public space as a forum for democratization of our relationship with the past.

Conference reception

Tuesday September 15, 17:30

Room 0.1 and garden, Henri Dunantlaan 1, Gent BE

Parallel sessions

September 14 – September 16 2026

Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Monday September 14, 13:30 – 15:00 ([Detailed version](#))

STREAM 4: Religion, race and migration: Politics of exclusion, protection and inclusion

Room 2.2.

Chair: An Van Raemdonck

Tinashe Chimbidzikai (Leiden University)

Beyond Ma/Kwerekwere Framing: Proposing Religio-Racial Bordering and African Migrant Exclusion in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Anika Kabani (University of Oxford)

Islam-as-Explanation: Gendered Asylum, FGM/C, and the Politics of Protection

Jinpu Wang (Metropolitan State University) and Yu Xiang (Minnesota State University)

Divergent Paths of Religious Incorporation: Pre-Migration Habitus and the Making of Faith among Chinese Migrants in Ghana

Diallo Mariam (UCLouvain)

Imagining Elsewhere: Race, Religion, and the limits of Belonging among Fulani youth in Brussels

STREAM 5: Re-imagining concepts and methods

Room 2.3.

Chair: Ruben Wissing

Erika Severyns (Ghent University)

Inclusion Under Constraint: Community Music within Carceral Migration Regimes

Sophie Bols (Ghent University)

Discursive Constructions of Racialised Migrant Masculinity in the Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights

Guilherme Marques-Pedro (University of Groningen)

Past the Dominions of the Demoi: Toward a Geography of Solidarity beyond Borders

Ezenwa E. Olumba (Aston University)

Beyond the Dehumanisation of (Im)mobility: An Ubuntu Vision for Migration Studies

STREAM 5: Symposium 'Urban solidarity under pressure? Unravelling the urban politics of precarious migration through an infrastructural lens'

Room 3.2.

Chair: Robin Vandevoordt

Thomas Swerts (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Ilker Ataç (Fulda Hochschule), Sarah Schilliger (ETH Zurich), Robin Vandevoordt (Ghent University), Carola Vasileiadi (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Sol Ballet (Ghent University), Marlies Casier (Ghent University), Julija Kekstaite (Ghent University), René Kreichauf (VUB), Félicien de Heusch (University of Copenhagen) and Amy Foerster (Pace University)

STREAM 6: Decolonial methodologies

Room 3.3.

Chair: Giacomo Orsini

Tamunodein Princewill (Loughborough University)

Coded Language: Black Feminist Reflexivity and Migration Studies

Rossella Marino (Ghent University)

Beyond opportunism: critical reflections on de-returneering externalisation research

Lucia Mrázová; Tim Leibert (The Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography)

Decolonising integration policies - reclaiming migration: labour shortages, right-wing populism and the politics of exclusion in Europe

Melati Nungsari, Kirstine Varming and Shre Maha Manohar (Asia School of Business)

Survival Loops: Refugee Coping Strategies in Protracted Crises

STREAM 2: Symposium 'Wellbeing and belonging of unaccompanied young people'

Room 3.6.

Chair: Tessa Ubels

Ilse Derluyn (Ghent University)

The mental health of young unaccompanied refugees on the move

Linda Tip (University of Brighton)

The role of digital technology in wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee youth

Tessa Ubels (University of Brighton)

The reality of participatory research with unaccompanied refugee youth: Reflections on a co-research approach

Maebh Healy and Guilherme Fiorini (University College London)

Voices from the Baobab: Experiences of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Among Young Unaccompanied Refugees and Asylum Seekers

STREAM 4: Religious pluralism: migrant lives and racialised faith in public spaces

Room 2.2

Chair: Liza Franke

Anne Brit Hatleskog (VID Specialized University)

More than decorations? Buddhist artifacts, lived religion and experienced stigma among women working in Thai massage in Norway

Anneke Newman (ULB)

Unpacking 'religiophobia' to better understand Islamophobia: A comparison of educational dynamics in Europe and West Africa

Alina Achenbach (University of Groningen)

Local or Global Student Intifada? – A Consideration of Migrancy-as-Knowledge through the Case of the Palestine Solidarity Movement in the Netherlands

Louise Hantson (VUB)

Public Islam in Rural Catalonia: Local Politics and the Limits on Religious Pluralism

STREAM 2: The role of communities and intermediate actors in migrants' access to healthcare

Room 2.3.

Chair: Sorana Toma

Ellen Burstein (University of Oxford)

Ethnographic fieldwork exploring the relationship between migrant community organizations in Oxford, UK and the British National Health Service

Viktor van Versendaal (Osnabrück University)

When Language Speaks for Skills: The Mis/Recognition of Foreign-Trained Physicians in German Hospitals

Floor Puttemans, Titia Hompes, Leontien Jansen and Brigitte Schoenmakers (KU Leuven)

Perinatal mental health screening and referral in Flanders: perspectives of women from migrant backgrounds in Flanders and the role of acculturation.

Joana Isabel Teixeira de Sousa Ribeiro (University of Coimbra)

Inequalities on the move: the Interplay among Migration, Healthcare Workers and Professional Governance

STREAM 5: Symposium 'Inquiring the past, present and future of solidarity'
Room 3.2.

Chair: Robin Vandevoordt and Thomas Swerts

Julija Kekstaite (Ghent University)

Entanglements of Global and Local Histories and Orders: Pro-Migrant Advocacy in Lithuania's Borderlands

Tristan Solf (Border Violence Monitoring Network)

Ruptures, failures, frictions: (Re)situating 'research' in solidarity work

Marlies Casier (Ghent University)

What lessons in taking up people on the move's plight? Political memory work with the Plateforme Citoyenne de Soutien aux Réfugiés in Brussels and the Plateforme des Soutiens aux Migrant.e.s. in Northern France

Vincent op 't Roodt (Göttingen University)

Contesting the Erosion of Law: Legal Struggles Against Border Violence in the Aegean?

STREAM 6: Enfoques y métodos artísticos aplicados a los estudios migratorios
(Arts-based approaches and methods in Migration Studies)

Room 3.3.

Chair: Elisa Robbe

An English translation will be provided during this panel.

Colectivo Ambigú Trashumante

Prácticas de Arte Útil, movilidad comunitaria y narrativas decoloniales sobre migración.

Anastasia Kromberg Landeros

Entre la Jarilla y Düsseldorf: des- y re-territorializaciones de cuerpos-territorios entre despojo, búsqueda y reconstrucción.

Julieth Niño Luna (The University of Santiago, Chile)

Prácticas artísticas y configuraciones espaciales en las fronteras nortes de Chile y México

Estefanía Salas Ramírez (Dr. José María Luis Mora Research Institute)

Hacia una epistemología histórica latinoamericana migrante-centrada

STREAM 1: Belonging, Bias, and Opportunity: Educational experiences for teachers and students

Room 2.2.

Chair: Wendelien Vantieghem

Brent Theys (Ghent University), Ruben Vanderline (Ghent University) and Noel Clycq (University of Antwerp)

Role models, recognition and learning: an investigation into the professional networks of teachers with a migration background

Timo Van Caneghem (Ghent University), Joana Pipa (ISPA), Mieke Van Houtte (Ghent University), and Jannick Demanet Ghent University)

How Teacher Expectations and Recommendations on Tracking and Grade Retention Are Biased: A Quasi-Experimental Video Vignette Study in Flemish Secondary Education

Sofie Beunen and Wendelien Vantieghem (Ghent University)

Empowering young people in vulnerable situations in their study choice process and academic pathway: an impact study among alumni of a weekend school intervention

Eren Aslı Tekin (KU Leuven), Jessie Hillekens (Tilburg University), Katrín Árnadóttir (University of Konstanz) and Karen Phalet (KU Leuven)

When do ethnic majority youth see ethnic discrimination? The role of minoritized identities, interethnic friends, experiencing and witnessing victimization

STREAM 3: Identity work and multilingual meaning-making

Room 2.3.

Chair: Marie Jacobs

Abigail Rudorwashe Benhura (Women's University in Africa)

Migration and Multilingual Identities: Navigating Mirages of Belonging

Mohamed Irfan, Birgitte Schoenmakers, Antoon Cox, Heidi Salaets and Marc Sabbe (KU Leuven)

Negotiating Meaning in a Third Language: Qualitative Insights from After-Hours Clinical Encounters

Hend Aly (University College London)

Language and everyday navigation of inequality in Lavapiés

STREAM 2: Systemic racism in healthcare

Room 3.2.

Chair: Hilde Depauw

Hyojin Im (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Discrimination as a Structural Determinant of Refugee Healthcare Access: Intersectional Evidence from the United States

Vincent Lorant and Camille Duvieu (UCLouvain)

Do you want to know your biases ? Drivers of ethnic biases in primary care in Belgium

Saloua Berdai Chaouni (VUB)

Reimagining care under racism

Sarah Derveeuw, Sorana Toma, Katrien Vanthomme and Sara Willems (Ghent University)

Structural racism: Exploring Neighbourhood Context and Ethnoracial Inequalities in Cancer Screening Uptake using Belgian Administrative Data

STREAM 5: Resistance and solidarity at and beyond the border

Room 3.3.

Chair: Sol Ballet

Chiara Martini (University of Milan) and Giovanni Marenza (University of Genova)

"Making the Border Fail (a bit)". Solidarity Practices against EU Border Regimes in Bulgaria.

Laura Stielike (Osnabrück University)

Beyond the Echo Chamber? Social Media as Digital Spaces of Resistance and Counter-Knowledge Production against Anti-Migration Discourse in Germany

Adele Del Guercio (University of Naples L'Orientale)

Solidarity as a means of rethinking restrictive immigration policies: the role of NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea

Chirine Chalak (Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Analysing The Faultline Between Authority & Solidarity: Policing, Impacts, Adaptation At The French-Italian Southern Border.

Tuesday September 15, 14:00 – 15:30 ([Detailed version](#))

STREAM 1: Social and Linguistic Dimensions of Educational Inequality

Room 2.2.

Chair: Fanny D'hondt

Felistus Tafdzwa Makumbe (Women's University in Africa)

Tangled Tongues in Primary School Transitions- a case of Zimbabwean migrant children learning in the UK.

Elias Herman Kruithof (VUB)

How both social class and ethnoracial origins shape educational attainment among sons and daughters of immigrants. A reassessment with Belgian census data.

Mira Wyns, Chloé Lybaert and Sarah Van Hoof (Ghent University)

Accent bias and accent anxiety in secondary and higher education in Flanders

STREAM 5: Dialogue session 'We have the solution – but how do we get it sold? (How can we achieve a science and human-rights-based European asylum policy in an era of political radicalisation?)

Room 2.3.

Chair: Robin Vandevoordt

Ruben Wissing (Ghent University), Joost Depotter (Flemish Refugee Action), Jean-Louis De Brouwer (Egmont Institute & USL-B), Julie Lejeune (European Council on Refugees and Exiles), Alberto-Horst Neidhardt (European Policy Centre) and Femke de Vries (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland)

STREAM 3: The role of language (support) in asylum policy and procedures

Room 3.1.

Chair: Katrijn Maryns

Zoe Nikolaidou (Södertörn University) and Hanna Sofia Rehnberg (Uppsala University)

Constructing SOGIESC identities in asylum interviews: Chronotopes in bordering encounters

Maxime Maréchal (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Between epistemic and linguistic borders. The ambiguous position of interpreters in the bureaucratic evaluation of asylum claims

Felix Bockel (Umeå University)

What is migration represented to be? Legal problem representation in the ECtHR's case law on pushbacks

STREAM 2: Healthcare access for undocumented migrants

Room 3.2.

Chair: Sarah Derveeuw

Camille Guiheneuf (Institute of Health and Society)

Alternative organizations: a pathway to improve healthcare access for undocumented migrants

Rafaela Pascoal (University of Palermo)

Between endowment and entitlement to access to healthcare: acts of citizenship of undocumented migrant women in the Sicilian healthcare system

Sarah Melsens (Dokters van de Wereld), Katty Creytens (Belgisch Netwerk Armoedebestrijding) and Ellen Verryt (Dokters van de Wereld)

Universal Access to Healthcare in Belgium? Not for undocumented migrants

Valkyria Dantas Rattmann (University of Liège)

Navigating Precarity: Health-Related Struggles and Coping Strategies among Brazilian Female Cleaning Workers in Brussels

STREAM 6: Symposium 'Art as Decolonial Epistemology: Reconfiguring Knowledge in Critical Migration Studies'

Room 3.3.

Chair: Elisa Robbe, Giacomo Orsini and Alexandra Sanchez

Dominika Mikołajczyk (University of Groningen)

From Voice to Sonus: Sound Culture as Method for Memory and Migration Research

Khaoula Stiti

Seven Cards: Artefacts of Time

Anya Naumova (University of Groningen)

Art as a Relational Method for Exploring Youth Perceptions of Migration

Lerato Islam (University of Auckland)

Thinking With- Worldbuilding as a decolonial creative approach to knowledge production

STREAM 1: Dialogue session: ‘Connecting the dots: Newly Arrived Migrant Students’ experiences across language, wellbeing, and (dis)ability’

Room 2.2.

Chair: Chloé Lybaert

Steven Delarue (Onderwijscentrum Gent), Nathalie Vandenameele (Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen), Bart Deygers (Ghent University), Sarah Devos (Ghent University) and Elisabeth De Schauwer (Ghent University)

STREAM 3: Symposium ‘Multilingual and intercultural boundaries in helping encounters for migrants’

Room 2.4.

Chair: Marie Jacobs, Lotte Remue and Katrijn Maryns

Kristina Gustafsson (University of Helsinki)

Multilingual participant support for people with migration experiences and disabilities.

Simon O'Donovan (Ghent University)

Transience, language, and migration outside of the states gaze: the methodological consequences

Laura Smith-Khan (University of New England)

Communicating in Diversity: Migration Law Practitioners’ Interactions with Their Clients.

Anna Sourdille (University of Vienna)

Who counts as ‘us’? Peer interpreting and inclusion/exclusion in queer refugee counselling

STREAM 2: Dialogue session ‘How to tackle inequalities in mental healthcare for newcomers and minoritized groups (both in access & treatment)’

Room 3.1.

Chair: Ilse Derluyn

Ama Kissi (Ghent University), Herbert Roeyers (Ghent University), Ondine Dellicour (ULYSSE), Annelies Van Diest (PC Sleidinge) and Hilde Depauw (Ghent University)

STREAM 5: Navigating legal uncertainty and precarity

Room 3.2.

Chair: Ellen Desmet

Cecilia Manzotti (University of Sussex)

Seeking asylum in Europe: Nationality as border

Maciej Grześkowiak (Ghent University)

The Gap Between Temporary Refuge and Asylum: A Critical Analysis of the Entrenchment of the EU Temporary Protection Regime for Ukrainian Refugees

Nazia Hassan (KU Leuven)

From Separation to Reunification: Migration journeys of Afghan unaccompanied refugee minors and their families

Alix Ernoux and Luc Leboeuf (University of Liège)

Multidisciplinary Age Assessment for Migrants in Belgium: A Paradigm Shift or 'Business as Usual'

Anja Van den Durpel (Ghent University)

Criminalisation of migration and the enhancement of free passing of exploitation

STREAM 6: Dialogue session: 'Affective Frontiers of Anthropological Fieldwork with Migrant Communities'

Room 3.3.

Chair: Elisa Robbe, Giacomo Orsini and Alexandra Sanchez

Sofia Cash (Ibero-American University)

Affectives frontiers of anthropological fieldwork with migrant communities

Marwa Neji (Ghent University)

Decolonizing Migration Studies Facing the Rise of Nationalism in Europe: An Epistemological Conceptualization

Chirine Chalak (Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Solidarity towards migrants and antiracist practices in Morocco

STREAM 5&6: Symposium 'Mapping the debate on human rights and migration'
Room 2.3.

Chair: Thomas Spijkerboer

Thomas Spijkerboer, Salahadin Ali, Ahmed Elsayed, Alex Geraki Trimi and Ana Luz Manzano Orti
(Ghent University)

STREAM 5: Socio-legal migration research at street level
Room 3.2.

Chair: Sophie Bols

Alina Petith (University of Urbino)

Law as a Site of Power: The Discursive Construction of Gender-Based Violence in Asylum Proceedings

Emma Vescovi and Claire Lefort-Rieu (University of Liège)

Governing Deportation Through Law and Practice: Ethnographic Perspectives on Control and Non-Compliance in Belgium

Ellen Desmet (Ghent University), Karel Arnaut (KU Leuven), Ilse Derluyn (Ghent University) and Katrijn Maryns (Ghent University)

UNPACKing critical moments in asylum interviews

Seb Rumsby (University of Birmingham)

Playing the system? The everyday politics of recent Vietnamese migrants navigating the UK's shifting migration policies

Theodora Rontzova (KU Leuven)

How Tight is the Lawyer's Suit? An ethnography of "lawyering" in the Greek Asylum Procedure

STREAM 6: Storytelling and Migrant Narratives

Room 3.3.

Chair: Alexandra Sanchez

Tina Reynaert (Ghent University)

Laughing Back: Performing Satire, Mimicry, and Resistance in the Zollhausboys' Songs

Chun Hong Yan (University of Southampton) and Manni Man Lai Cheung (University of Cambridge)

Examining Migrants' Sensitive and Unheard Experiences in Contentious Times through Digital Story Completion

Ifrat Jahan (EMMIR)

Exploring Identity and Belonging: A Migrant Artist's Life Story in German Theatre

Raffaello Khan O. Augustin (New York University Abu Dhabi)

Empire in Stone and Silence: Imperial Nostalgia and Diasporic Counter-Memory in Madrid's Philippine Monumental Landscape

Leen Al Massalma (University of Oxford)

Building the Nation, the Home and the Future: Agency at the Displacement-Revolution Nexus

Detailed parallel sessions

September 14 – September 16 2026

Henri Dunantlaan 2, Gent BE

Monday September 14, 13:30 – 15:00 ([Short version](#))

STREAM 4: Religion, race and migration: Politics of exclusion, protection and inclusion

Room 2.2

Chair: An Van Raemdonck

Tinashe Chimbidzikai (Leiden University)

Beyond Ma/Kwerekwere Framing: Proposing Religio-Racial Bordering and African Migrant Exclusion in Post-Apartheid South Africa

This paper examines whether the trope of ma/kwerekwere, a xenophobic slur aimed at African migrants in South Africa, still adequately captures contemporary exclusion. Based on ethnographic research with Zimbabwean Pentecostal migrants in Johannesburg, it argues that exclusion increasingly operates through religio-racial bordering, a process that fuses racialisation, moral governance, and aspirational belonging to produce layered outsiderhood. Rather than being driven solely by ethnicity-based nationalism, exclusion is spatially uneven, locally produced, and digitally mediated. Religion functions not merely as identity but as a moral technology that recalibrates race, respectability, and deservingness, creating “piety-coded” hierarchies within Blackness. The paper highlights three dynamics: Pentecostal prosperity imaginaries shape aspirations for middle-class respectability while aligning with local norms that police behaviour and faith, remapping racial boundaries through religious respectability; street-level and digital movements such as #PutSouthAfricaFirst and Operation Dudula recode economic grievances into nationalist-racial claims about purity and entitlement to urban space; and these processes intersect with necropolitical governance, where moral sorting and states of exception expose migrants to slow violence and precarious living conditions. The central contribution is the concept of religio-racial bordering, which shows how religious idioms actively produce racial difference, integrate moral economy with urban bordering, and accelerate through digital publics. While ma/kwerekwere remains historically resonant, it is analytically limited, obscuring how religion reshapes race and aspiration to generate differentiated exclusions within shared Blackness.

Anika Kabani (University of Oxford)

Islam-as-Explanation: Gendered Asylum, FGM/C, and the Politics of Protection

This paper examines how the promise of sanctuary in the United States is entangled with regimes of surveillance and securitisation that uniquely shape the experiences of asylum seekers of Muslim heritage. Drawing on two years of ethnographic fieldwork with attorneys, legal advocates, and asylum seekers from the Muslim-majority world, I explore how legal

actors and claimants navigate the contradictory terrain of asylum adjudication – where refuge is offered in principle but is conditioned by secular-liberal ideals and national security anxieties. I argue that asylum seekers from Muslim contexts are compelled to perform what I call secular relatability – a mode of self-presentation that downplays religious and cultural identity in order to appear proximate to modes of being narrativised as Western in general and American in particular, and thereby deserving of refuge. Focusing specifically on West African women seeking asylum on the grounds of having undergone female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and/or forced marriage, I show how legal advocacy often mobilises Islam-as-explanation, a framing that attributes persecution to reductive religio-cultural stereotypes, and how this is negotiated by the women navigating this framing. These framings, while instrumental in securing protection, simultaneously reproduce hierarchies of belonging: they ask that asylum seekers distance themselves from an imagined oppressive Islam in order to move closer to the imagined secular modernity of the West. This paper interrogates the contradictions, negotiations, and desires that emerge from this gendered dynamic, asking what forms of safety, recognition, and exclusion are produced through migration, and ultimately, what implications that has for how we think about migration as a conditional space of Muslim visibility, vulnerability, and negotiation, and secularity and belonging.

Jinpu Wang (Metropolitan State University) and Yu Xiang (Minnesota State University)

Divergent Paths of Religious Incorporation: Pre-Migration Habitus and the Making of Faith among Chinese Migrants in Ghana

This paper examines the divergent religious trajectories among new Chinese migrants in Ghana, a context characterized by a plural and socially embedded religious field. Drawing on ethnographic evidence, I identify three distinct orientations: (1) migrants who engage in flexible and situational religious practices as part of their transnational livelihood strategies across different social and temporal contexts; (2) migrants who report sincere and exclusive conversion to Christianity or Islam and refuse further switching; and (3) migrants who consistently reject religious participation altogether. Rather than treating these orientations as individual preferences or post-migration adaptations alone, I argue that such divergence is produced within migrants' transnational livelihoods, shaped jointly by their pre-migration trajectories and their ongoing economic and social practices in Ghana. Specifically, migrants' class background, educational experiences, and occupational histories inform their dispositions toward belief, authority, and social embeddedness, while their engagement in particular sectors, networks, and everyday interactions in Ghana further conditions how religion is encountered, evaluated, and mobilized as both a moral framework and a social resource. By situating religious practice within the making of transnational livelihoods, this paper reconceptualizes religious conversion not as a singular event but as a differentiated and ongoing process, structured by habitus and mediated by the practical demands of cross-cultural economic life.

Diallo Mariam (UCLouvain)

Imagining Elsewhere: Race, Religion, and the limits of Belonging among Fulani youth in Brussels

This paper reports on a study exploring the lives of young Guinean Fulani (Peul) adults belonging to the 1.5 and second generations. The study aims to understand how their experiences of belonging and identity are shaped in a context marked by racialization, Islamophobia, and exclusion. It draws on qualitative interviews (N=40) conducted between March and July 2025 with young adults aged 20 to 29 living in Brussels. Using Levitt and Schiller's (2004) framework of "ways of being" and "ways of belonging," the paper analyzes how these young adults enact and negotiate identity in everyday life, beyond static understandings of ethnicity and nationhood. Although formally recognized as Belgian citizens, many still express limited attachments to Belgium, citing persistent racialization and the inescapability of their Blackness as barriers to full belonging. As a result, they imagine alternative futures elsewhere. These aspirations go beyond their country of origin (e.g., Guinea) and often include neighboring West African countries like Senegal or Côte d'Ivoire—perceived as offering better economic opportunities, cultural familiarity, and free religious practice. Some also consider non-African Muslim-majority countries. These transnational imaginaries reflect layered responses to structural inequality and exclusion. Identification with Fulani ethnicity offers a sense of continuity, but is mobilized in diverse ways depending on religious, generational, and socio-economic positioning. The study emphasizes how transnational imaginaries emerge not in the absence of citizenship, but in response to its insufficiency. Hence, rather than challenging citizenship as a legal construct per se, it interrogates its limits as a lived experience in racialized societies.

STREAM 5: Re-imagining concepts and methods

Room 2.3

Chair: Ruben Wissing

Erika Severyns (Ghent University)

Inclusion Under Constraint: Community Music within Carceral Migration Regimes

Critical migration scholarship has demonstrated how bordering practices extend beyond material borders into welfare systems, asylum procedures, and everyday life (De Genova, 2017; Walia, 2021). Yet less attention has been paid to how participatory cultural initiatives operate within, and might reproduce, these regimes of migration control. Drawing on a critical review of 61 studies on community music with international migrants, this paper examines how legal-administrative bordering, carceral infrastructures, and racialised governance shape community music work in reception settings. While community music is often framed as fostering inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and social cohesion, I argue that such initiatives frequently function within the constraints of asylum systems, dispersal regimes, and surveillance. Legal categories such as "asylum seeker" or "refugee" structure participation, while diversity discourse obscures the racialised and colonial logics underpinning migration governance. Cultural celebration, in this context, risks becoming a depoliticised form of solidarity that obscures material structures of exclusion. At the same time, I identify practices that move beyond reformist inclusion toward more transformative solidarities and abolitionist imaginaries. By situating community music within broader regimes of racialised migration governance, this paper contributes to interdisciplinary discussions on solidarity and

humanitarian initiatives. It argues for rethinking solidarity not as a form of (conditional) cultural inclusion within existing frameworks, but as a practice that seeks to resist the structural conditions that produce exclusion in the first place.

Sophie Bols (Ghent University)

Discursive Constructions of Racialised Migrant Masculinity in the Jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights

In many areas of migration law, judicial decision-making continues to reproduce implicit assumptions about gender and race, shaping which subjects are discursively recognised as belonging, deserving, threatening, or vulnerable, and thereby influencing access to asylum and human rights protection. Yet gender is rarely used as an analytical category to examine cases concerning migrant men. Because gender is frequently conceptualised through the experiences of women, racialised men are compelled to articulate their marginalisation primarily through race. This renders the gendered dimensions of their experiences largely invisible and leaves their intersectional positioning analytically underdeveloped. This paper addresses this gap by analysing how the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) constructs racialised migrant masculinity in its jurisprudence on border detention. Focusing on key judgments concerning the Röske transit zone, it examines how gendered and racialised discursive practices shape the interpretation of migrant men's claims under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Using Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the paper conducts a comparative critical discourse analysis of *Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary* and *R.R. and Others v. Hungary*. The findings show that doctrinal shifts in the Court's case law are accompanied by changes in its discourse. These discursive shifts reconfigure migrant men's subject positions, normalise hardship, narrow the recognition of vulnerability, and align the Court more closely with securitised state narratives. An intersectional, gender-attentive analysis is therefore essential for understanding how the Court (re)produces particular narratives about racialised migrant men that shape their access to asylum and human rights protection and influence the trajectory of human rights doctrine.

Guilherme Marques-Pedro (University of Groningen)

Past the Dominions of the Demoi: Toward a Geography of Solidarity beyond Borders

Land has always been a source of solidarity, as much as of division, among humans. The way in which space permeates our self-perception as both individual and collective subjects is key to our understanding of being together: solidarity never happens in a vacuum. Following my previous research into what I called 'performative peoplehood', this paper advances the concept of 'placehood' to describe not the uniqueness of given spaces to our life experience, but rather the feeling of belonging to a place in a way that cannot easily be outstripped from our very condition as a social being. Understood in this existential way, territory becomes part of a politics of eternal welcoming, a *terra nullius* of regulated but unbordered openness, instead of an object to be owned at the expense of others. The paper sheds light on historical alternatives to sovereign territorial jurisdiction as a practice of political bordering and exclusion that has always fictionalized our sense of belonging to a place as necessarily equivalent to the claim that 'this place belongs to us'. The assumption at play here is that it is

the straightforward functional equivalence between the "populus" - metaphorically conceived in the western political imaginary as a community of land owners - and the populist leader - as responsible for securing territory in their sake - is what justifies the recurring practices of territorial aggrandizement by authoritarian regimes. In order to explore that research avenue we must first understand the historical relation between (popular) sovereign jurisdiction and state borders. Do the latter necessarily follow from the former? If so, must we conclude that a world without peoples would be a pre-condition for a world without borders? Can we move past the populist confusion between belonging to a place as a community and making a given place the fixed and inviolable belonging of the demos? How can we open up democracy to those outside of the 'dominions' of the demo?

Ezenwa E. Olumba (Aston University)

Beyond the Dehumanisation of (Im)mobility: An Ubuntu Vision for Migration Studies

I am not a 'migrant'. I am a human being who has moved and continues to move. This article draws on the African philosophy of ubuntu, which asserts that 'I am because you are', to reflect on how a relational understanding of humanity informs my positionality as a migration scholar and as someone who has experienced (im)mobility. Ubuntu challenges the use of politicised categories such as 'alien', 'illegal', 'failed asylum seeker' or 'left behind', which dehumanise and criminalise mobility and people on the move, and reduce them to mere labels. If we are because others are, and since everyone has moved (personally or through the journeys of their ancestors), then such terms diminish not only those they target but all of us. Thus, migration studies must resist the normalisation of such exclusionary narratives by: (a) proactively challenging laws and policies that criminalise human mobility and immobility; (b) cultivating imaginaries of unity through teaching and mentoring the next generation of leaders; and (c) engaging beyond academia to reach policymakers, citizens and activists across the spectrum about our shared humanity. This vision reframes migration studies not simply as a critique but as a proactive discipline dedicated to cultivating ethical and collective responsibility and collective belonging, grounded in the principles of ubuntu.

STREAM 5: Symposium 'Urban solidarity under pressure? Unravelling the urban politics of precarious migration through an infrastructural lens'

Room 3.2.

Chair: Robin Vandevoordt

Thomas Swerts (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Ilker Ataç (Fulda Hochschule), Sarah Schilliger (ETH Zurich), Robin Vandevoordt (Ghent University), Carola Vasileiadi (Erasmus University Rotterdam), Sol Ballet (Ghent University), Marlies Casier (Ghent University), Julija Kekstaite (Ghent University), René Kreichauf (VUB), Félicien de Heusch (University of Copenhagen) and Amy Foerster (Pace University)

Over the last decade, cities have attracted increasing attention as political arenas where precarious migration is governed, negotiated and contested (Ataç et al. 2023, Darling and Bauder 2019). The literature on sanctuary cities has focused on how local governments and

bureaucracies in North America and the UK engage in ‘municipal activism’ by developing inclusive urban citizenship policies and practices towards precarious migrants despite restrictive national policies (Bazurli and de Graauw 2023, Kaufman et al. 2022, Kreichauf and Mayer 2021, Nicholls 2024, Spencer and Delvino 2019). The related literature on solidarity movements and initiatives has in turn demonstrated how citizen supporters and migrant communities successfully mobilize themselves across European and North American cities to generate place-based solidarity practices and claim urban citizenship (Agustin and Jørgensen 2019, Ataç et al. 2016, Nyers 2019, Swerts 2017, Schilliger 2020, Vandevoordt & Fleischmann 2021). While both literatures highlight the potential that cities hold to renegotiate citizenship at the urban scale, the negotiation processes and shifting power dynamics between actors involved in the local politics of precarious migration deserves more attention. Drawing on an upcoming Citizenship Studies special issue, this symposium advances current debates by introducing an infrastructural perspective to the study of urban solidarity and precarious migration. The recent ‘infrastructural turn’ in migration research shifts attention from the ‘usual suspects’ of urban politics like local governments toward a broader array of actors including NGOs, welfare associations, social movements, faith-based organizations and migrants themselves (Kreichauf and Mayer 2021, Lin et al. 2017, Meeus et al. 2019, Xiang and Lindquist 2014). Taken together, these actors constitute what Ataç et al. (2023) conceptualize as “urban support infrastructure for undocumented migrants”, characterized by their own internal logics, power dynamics and rules of the game. The composition and accessibility of these infrastructures critically shape precarious migrants’ mobility and their capacity to claim forms of urban citizenship (Felder et al. 2023, Van Doorn et al. 2024). Combining these insights with theoretical concepts from field theory (see Bourdieu 1990; 2014, Nicholls 2024) and recent scholarship examining solidarity infrastructures, this symposium seeks to theorize and empirically trace the changing contours of the ‘infrastructural fields’ (Vasileiadi and Swerts 2024) wherein precarious migration and urban citizenship are negotiated. The symposium will include both short pitches by researchers drawing on case studies from Europe, the U.K. and the U.S., as well as an open discussion of common themes emerging from these cases.

STREAM 6: Decolonial methodologies

Room 3.3.

Chair: Giacomo Orsini

Tamunodein Princewill (Loughborough University)

Coded Language: Black Feminist Reflexivity and Migration Studies

This paper advances a decolonial approach to migration studies by examining both the lived practices of black migrant women in the UK and the epistemic conditions under which their experiences are researched, interpreted, and narrated. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork with black migrant women, it explores the methodological, ethical, and political dimensions of conducting research from a hybrid insider–outsider positionality. Grounded in black feminist theory and black feminist geographies, the paper reflects critically on the production of knowledge through shared racialised, gendered, and migratory identities between researcher and participants. Particular attention is paid to the analytical phase of semi-structured

interviews, where moments of presumed mutual understanding often signalled through coded language produce both analytical richness and epistemic risk. While such moments can deepen trust and enable the articulation of otherwise unspeakable experiences, they also raise questions about authority, interpretation, and the translation of embodied, relational knowledge into academic discourse. The paper argues that decolonial reflexivity must extend beyond fieldwork into analysis itself, demanding sustained attention to how positionality shapes thematic prioritisation, meaning-making, and scholarly voice. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates on decolonising migration studies by linking everyday migrant practices, research methodologies, and broader struggles over knowledge and power. Ultimately, the paper calls for migration research that are more accountable to black women's lived realities, and for scholarly practices that actively resist colonial epistemologies while supporting more just and solidaristic futures.

Rossella Marino (Ghent University)

Beyond opportunism: critical reflections on de-returneecising externalisation research

The governance of return migration intersects with the southward externalisation of Western borders. Western intervention does not end with returning illegalised individuals, but extends to involving so-called returnees in awareness campaigns against irregular migration, vocational training, employment schemes, and business support. These initiatives promote the idea that it is preferable to 'make it' at home rather than through migration (Marino 2023). The decentring turn in migration governance research (Tryandafillidou 2020) has expanded studies on these dynamics, often arguing that returnees participate mainly out of opportunism (e.g. Alpes and Sylla 2024; Maâ 2021; Maâ, Van Dessel and Vammen 2022; Rodriguez 2019; Shaidrova 2022). This article goes beyond this claim. First, I argue that within neoliberal and neocolonial capitalism, the aspiration to 'make it' at home represents a genuine political project, not merely an economic choice. I compare cases of returnees in The Gambia and Southern Italy mobilising around success at home, highlighting the transformative potential of transcontinental solidarities. I also reflect on the ethics of attributing opportunism to Global Majority actors as relatively privileged Global North-based researchers. At the same time, I examine the tensions within this argument. I reaffirm the need for a materialist critique of returnees' participation in externalisation and draw on decolonial perspectives to interrogate the risks of equating struggles in the Global North and South. I further address the ambiguities of grounding resistance in national and local imaginaries. Overall, the article explores the ethical, political, and analytical challenges of 'de-returneecising' research on externalisation, in relation to the ethics of discussing opportunism and the possibility for transcontinental solidarity in a neocolonial world as well as the contradictions of seeing a potential trend towards nationalism as liberatory.

Lucia Mrázová and Tim Leibert (The Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography)

Decolonising integration policies - reclaiming migration: labour shortages, right-wing populism and the politics of exclusion in Europe

Practicing decolonial approaches to migration in increasingly hostile and anti-migrant environments requires navigating complex tensions between theory and reality. Drawing from

fieldwork in a small district in former eastern Germany, this research examines how researchers and practitioners can maintain decolonial commitments when faced with shrinking resources, restrictive policies, and widespread hostility toward migrants. Our experiences reveal critical challenges: How do we practice advocacy when bureaucrats first need convincing of migrants' basic humanity? How do we support street-level bureaucrats who themselves face mounting pressure and funding cuts? The research process itself becomes an act of resistance, requiring constant negotiation between academic ideals and practical constraints. In this hostile environment, decolonial practice demands tactical flexibility while maintaining core principles. We found that supporting overwhelmed bureaucrats, building coalitions across traditional divides, and amplifying migrant voices requires sustained relationship-building despite diminishing scope for action. The researcher's role shifts from detached observer to strategic ally, navigating ethical tensions between scholarship and advocacy. Key strategies include: reframing migrants as knowledge-holders rather than subjects; creating spaces for bureaucrat reflection on systemic pressures; building networks that survive funding cuts; and developing advocacy approaches that challenge colonial logics while acknowledging local political realities. Success requires accepting incremental change while maintaining transformative vision.

Melati Nungsari, Kirstine Varming and Shre Maha Manohar (Asia School of Business)

Survival Loops: Refugee Coping Strategies in Protracted Crises

This paper examines how refugees in protracted displacement navigate overlapping and recurring crises, drawing on longitudinal qualitative research with refugee community leaders in Malaysia during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022). While dominant migration narratives often oscillate between portraying refugees as passive victims or as threats, this paper develops the concept of “survival loops” to capture how agency, coping, and constraint are entangled in contexts of legal precarity and structural exclusion. Based on four rounds of in-depth interviews over two years, the analysis traces how refugees employ a wide range of problem-focused, emotion-focused, meaning-focused, and social-support-based coping strategies over time. Although many of these strategies provide short-term relief and enable day-to-day survival, the absence of legal recognition, access to formal employment, healthcare, and state support limits the scope for proactive and transformative coping. As a result, refugees become trapped in survival loops: cycles of reactive and often inadequate coping that reproduce vulnerability and generate long-term and intergenerational harm. Situating refugee coping within the broader political economy of displacement in a non-signatory transit country, the paper challenges Global North–centric resilience frameworks that individualize adaptation while obscuring structural responsibility. By foregrounding refugees as reflective and strategic actors operating under severe constraints, this study contributes a decolonial perspective on wellbeing, agency, and crisis governance. The findings highlight the ethical and practical implications for migration research, policy, and humanitarian practice, emphasizing the need to move beyond celebrating resilience toward dismantling the structural conditions that make survival, rather than flourishing, the dominant horizon of refugee life.

STREAM 2: Symposium 'Wellbeing and belonging of unaccompanied young people'

Room 3.6.

Chair: Tessa Ubels

This symposium brings together research from various disciplines (including social pedagogy, psychology, social work and sociology) to explore wellbeing and belonging of unaccompanied refugee youth. It is based on the shared understanding that the lived reality of these young people is characterised by uncertainty, exclusion and trauma and is shaped by restrictive migration regimes. Looking at the different stages of their migratory journeys in different contexts (including Libya, Greece, Italy, Belgium and the UK), these stressors strongly impede the ability to create a home and future for oneself. At the same time, the research looks at the agency of unaccompanied refugee youth and the protective factors (such as familial contact, communities, support organisations) that may improve their wellbeing. As the presentations draw on a wide range of methods, including in-depth interviews, workshops, questionnaires and participatory methods, the symposium does not only look at the empirical findings of each presentation, but also reflects on the process of 'doing' research with unaccompanied refugee youth and to what extent research can(not) give a sense of control and reduce power imbalances. There will be total of four speakers. Prof Ilse Derluyn discusses how the long and complex migration trajectories of unaccompanied minors impact young refugees' mental health longitudinally. Finally, Dr Tessa Ubels critically reflects on the reality of participatory research with unaccompanied refugee youth. The goal of this symposium is to create understanding of the various factors and circumstances affecting wellbeing and sense of belonging of unaccompanied refugee youth, and to consider next steps relating to research, policy and practice that will protect and improve their wellbeing.

Ilse Derluyn (Ghent University)

The mental health of young unaccompanied refugees on the move

Young unaccompanied refugees (minors migrating without their parents) often go through difficult journeys from home to host country, which might impact their long-term mental health impact. In this presentation, I will present findings from the ERC-SG ChildMove (www.childmove.com) study in which we documented the experiences of unaccompanied minors during their trajectories to and throughout Europe, and how these experiences impact young refugees' mental health on a longitudinal basis. The study followed a large group of unaccompanied minors (n=298), starting from four different countries (i.e., Libya, Greece, Italy and Belgium), over a period of two years, wherever they went. Through repeated in-depth interviews and self-report, quantitative questionnaires on wellbeing, we documented their traumatic experiences and other daily material and social stressors, and their mental health. Data were analyzed via growth curve modeling. Unaccompanied minors have very long and complex migration trajectories during which they all experience a variety of traumatic experiences and other stressors, such as lack of social support and racism. These experiences impact their mental health (i.e., symptoms of depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress) on the long term, with an increasing negative impact of social stressors (i.e., racism), and a

protective impact of familial contact and stable documentation. The mental health of young refugees migrating without their parents is strongly threatened by the repeated and severe traumatic experiences and other stressors they go through throughout their migratory journey. Policy and practice therefore need to respond to this detrimental situation, in particular to foster these youngsters' long-term development and integration trajectories in host countries.

Linda Tip (University of Brighton)

The role of digital technology in wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee youth

In March 2025, there were 6,540 unaccompanied refugee children in the UK: minors who migrated without their caregivers. There are increasing concerns about their safety in the UK, where hundreds of unaccompanied young people went missing from hotels and reception centres. Research has also repeatedly found poor mental health among this group, often linked to post-migration factors. There is an urgent need for a deeper understanding of their lives, to improve their welfare and reduce risks of harm. Critical to this is understanding their engagement with digital technology. Young refugees increasingly use digital technology: it is a key tool to meet their needs during their flight, and to support them to establish and maintain social connections and integrate in their new country. However, it also exposes them to risks. Investigating their digital worlds is important in examining safeguarding risks, but it is also crucial to investigate how their digital engagement relates to their sense of belonging, social integration and wellbeing. This understanding will enable those responsible for their care to better support and safeguard their wellbeing. This presentation outlines the results of pilot research into the role of digital technology in wellbeing of unaccompanied refugee youth in the South of England, including workshops and interviews with 33 young people and qualitative questionnaires with people involved in their care. It will also present initial findings of a larger follow-on project throughout the UK. Results emphasise the significance of digital technology and social media for unaccompanied refugee youth, indicating the importance of maintaining social connections, learning, and identity development. Potential risks associated with their online engagement are also highlighted, emphasising a need for tailored support in developing safe and responsible digital behaviours.

Tessa Ubels (University of Brighton)

The reality of participatory research with unaccompanied refugee youth: Reflections on a co-research approach

Participatory and co-creative methods are increasingly used in research with marginalised groups, including young people with a refugee background. These methods are used as an alternative to extractive research (where researchers collect data for their own benefit without 'giving back' or properly involving participants) to offer a sense of agency and control to the communities we work with and reduce some of the power imbalances. In our research project about digital technology use by unaccompanied refugee youth in the United Kingdom, we use multiple layers of participatory methods. This includes working with co-researchers with lived experience who are involved in most stages of the research process, as well as involving participants in workshops to reflect on the research results and co-create relevant outputs. In

line with the literature that critically reflects on the ethical challenges involved in participatory research with young people on the move (Chase et al., 2020; Gilodi et al., 2025; Huizinga et al., 2025; Santana de Andrade et al., 2026), this presentation draws on reflexive notes and observations to analyse the extent to which participatory research is truly possible in the current climate of adverse migration policies and the structural limitations of academic research. By providing an honest account of the interactions between the research team and participants, we respond to broader debates about the ethics of knowledge production. This paper aims to contribute to the existing literature by explicitly incorporating the perspectives of the co-researchers, who occupy an ‘intermediary’ position between the rest of the research team (who have academic positions and lack of lived experience) and the participants.

Maebh Healy and Guilherme Fiorini (University College London)

Voices from the Baobab: Experiences of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Among Young Unaccompanied Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking minors (URASMs) in the UK experience disproportionately high levels of psychological distress compared to their accompanied and non-refugee peers. A growing body of literature demonstrates the psychological vulnerability of this population and the subsequent need for suitable, culturally sensitive, and well-researched mental health interventions, yet there has been widespread concern about a lack of clinical understanding regarding how to appropriately treat URASMs’ mental health. Psychodynamic psychotherapy, a modality grounded in Western thought and worldview, remains embedded within UK services working with URASMs. Despite this fact, there is no existing research that asks how young refugees themselves experience this modality. The current study aims to explore how URASMs experience psychodynamic psychotherapy within a UK clinical setting. Using a qualitative design, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 6 URASMs who have completed or are currently engaged in psychodynamic psychotherapy in the UK. Data will be analysed using reflexive thematic analysis within a social constructivist framework to explore participants’ lived experience. As the first study to centre URASMs’ own accounts of psychodynamic psychotherapy, this research seeks to extend clinical and theoretical understanding of culturally situated therapeutic practice. By foregrounding young refugees’ perspectives, the study aims to contribute to ongoing debates about the application of psychodynamic theory in contexts of forced migration, and forge a path toward patient-centred, rather than patient-directed care. Findings may inform service development, clinician training, and policy concerning mental health provision for refugee youth in the UK and other Western contexts.

STREAM 4: Religious pluralism: migrant lives and racialised faith in public spaces

Room 2.2

Chair: Liza Franke

Anne Brit Hatleskog (VID Specialized University)

More than decorations? Buddhist artifacts, lived religion and experienced stigma among women working in Thai massage in Norway

We have, over the last decades, seen an increased and highly gendered migration from Thailand to Europe, including Norway and massage parlours have become a visible part of the street life in every city or small town. Traditional Thai massage is acknowledged by UNESCO as a cultural heritage and is intangibly rooted in the principles of Buddhism and closely linked to the temples and the monks. As an everyday-practice, Thai massage is a tacit knowledge among most Thai women, passed on from generations. Western countries seem to have welcomed Thai massage as an exotic addition to therapeutic treatment and since it does not require much language skills or formal education it is a way into the Norwegian labor market for Thai women. Studies show that Thai women experience stigma and sexualised stereotypes as it is a general association that Thai massage also means providing sexual services to the customers. The aim of this paper is to foreground the women's agency in their transnational practice of religion as they challenge experienced stigma from the Thai migrant community, making them keep distance to the social and spiritual fellowship from their local Buddhist temple. My data show that Buddhist artifacts and symbols in massage parlors are more than just decorations, but part of important religious rituals. Data material consists of fieldnotes and 21 semi-structured interviews with 12 women with experience from Thai massage. The findings will be discussed using theories of agency, stigma and lived religion. To further unpack the structural conditions of the women's lives I will use a transnational lens for my analysis.

Anneke Newman (ULB)

Unpacking 'religiophobia' to better understand Islamophobia: A comparison of educational dynamics in Europe and West Africa

In recent years, scholars have devoted increased attention to theorising the adverse educational experiences of individuals in European contexts who face discrimination based on a combination of both their race and religion. In France, Belgium and the Netherlands, such research often starts from the experiences of Muslims of SWANA heritage and their intersectional experiences of Islamophobia and Arabophobia. My paper speaks to this same debate – namely, unpacking Eurocentric 'race-religion constellations' (Topolski, 2018) and their impacts on minorities in Europe – but does so from a different epistemological vantage point and, in doing so, arrives at different theoretical conclusions. To clarify, my paper will

draw on two connected forms of empirical data. The first are my auto-ethnographic experiences within academic spaces in the UK and Belgium shaped by my positioning as a white female agnostic and later Muslim-by-conversion. This positionality resulted in my experiencing and witnessing 'religiophobia' whose character was not marked by racism per se. Second, I draw on 15 years of ethnographic research on education in Senegal in West Africa. In this context, where 98% of the population is Muslim, Islamophobia is not present at an interpersonal level. Yet, side-lining of Islamic knowledges occurs within national education policies due to French colonial legacies which demanded strict secularism (*laïcité*). Based on these insights, I argue that, the 'religiophobia' aspect of Islamophobia in Europe (and, indeed, elsewhere) is under-theorised compared its racial logics. I propose that there is value in treating 'religiophobia' and 'racism' as distinct categories for analytical purposes – as doing so helps us to better understand their intersections. I propose two novel theoretical concepts – 'coloniality of secularity' and 'secular erasure' – to advance our understanding of the complexity of Islamophobia and its impact on European educational and academic spaces.

Alina Achenbach (University of Groningen)

Local or Global Student Intifada? – A Consideration of Migrancy-as-Knowledge through the Case of the Palestine Solidarity Movement in the Netherlands

In a critical re-evaluation of migration studies as part (as well as tool) of a biopolitical apparatus that continues to separate and (racially) essentialize some populations as 'migrant' (van Reekum and Schinkel 2024) – in implicit opposition to a settled, rooted population – many migration studies scholars have turned to the study of migrant agency (and more specifically, activism) vis-à-vis that state power. Conscious of the fact that such endeavours bear the danger both of similar essentialisation of migrancy as well as exploitative research praxis that exposes forms of migrant resistance and subversion, this contribution proceeds in two steps: Firstly, I consider how the study of migrant activism is often relegated to what researchers perceive to be causes relevant to the (problematically confined) experience of migrancy; in other words, I show how migrants are thought to protest 'as migrants' only, about the improvement of their migrant status or conditions. Secondly, I turn to the chiefly migrant-led Palestine solidarity student encampments of 2024. By considering how the Student Intifada – with both its global and local relationalities – evokes Palestine as a transnational cause, I demonstrate how Palestine solidarity functions as the chief pretence for state repression of Muslim and racialised communities as well as for the discursive delegitimation of international students. Palestine solidarity activism – and its brutal repression - destabilise imaginaries of EUrope (Heller, Pezzani, and Stierl 2017) as post-racial, post-migrant, and postcolonial space, which finally does not just open up the question of what is (not) named as migrant activism. More fundamentally, it demands a reconceptualisation of migrancy as a form of political agency and epistemic position that both literally and metaphorically unsettles the EUropean political subject.

Louise Hantson (VUB)

Public Islam in Rural Catalonia: Local Politics and the Limits on Religious Pluralism

Research on the governance of religious diversity in Spain has largely centered on urban contexts, particularly in relation to disputes over Islamic presence in public spaces, such as the opening of mosques. Yet, as ethnic and religious diversity expands into rural areas, similar debates have begun to emerge. Despite this, dominant assumptions that conflate rurality with cultural homogeneity and view interreligious encounters as inherently urban have obscured the dynamics of how Islamic expressions are negotiated in rural settings. This paper addresses this gap through ethnographic research in small and medium-sized towns in Catalonia: Ripoll, governed by the far-right Aliança Catalana. The data exemplifies how peripheral municipalities have become active and, at times, trend-setting in governing the public presence of Islam. Local policies increasingly target visible Muslim practices, such as banning public iftars, mosque open days, and restricting religious attire. Adopting a comparative framework, the study combines document analysis with interviews conducted with [x number] local actors, including municipal officials, civil society members, long-term residents, and newcomers. It examines how local governance agendas are formed and resisted. Under far-right administrations, civil society actors and Muslim populations deploy distinct strategies of contestation, including silencing (self-censorship or avoidance), spatial relocation (shifting events to non-municipal governed or less visible spaces), and creative subversion (reframing or disguising religious practices). These responses reveal the complex and evolving negotiations of religious pluralism in rural Catalonia.

STREAM 2: The role of communities and intermediate actors in migrants' access to healthcare

Room 2.3.

Chair: Sorana Toma

Ellen Burstein (University of Oxford)

Ethnographic fieldwork exploring the relationship between migrant community organizations in Oxford, UK and the British National Health Service

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork exploring the relationship between migrant community organizations in Oxford, UK and the British National Health Service (NHS). It considers the role of organized and informal migrant communities in facilitating access to NHS services, exploring what their actions reveals about flows of information between NHS providers and migrant communities, as well as migrant's responsibility for their own healthcare within the UK. I argue that community organizations work to surmount language, access, and/or educational barriers that otherwise would render certain racialized migrant communities outside of entities communicated with by the NHS. The role of community organizations in filling gaps in health access and information betrays a neoliberal deflection of the responsibility for health onto migrants and their grassroots organizations rather than the NHS. That is, the NHS creates a "responsibilization" of migrant health, leaving community leaders to correct, formally and ad hoc, the lapses and deficiencies of an ostensibly universal healthcare system. Broadly, this paper explores how community groups facilitate health information and access within these spaces – and how the responsibility of such groups for their own healthcare challenges the idea of a universalist NHS.

Viktor van Versendaal (Osnabrück University)

When Language Speaks for Skills: The Mis/Recognition of Foreign-Trained Physicians in German Hospitals

Amid growing shortages of nurses and doctors, hospitals in many countries increasingly rely on migrant healthcare professionals, a development that is reshaping everyday work practices and communication and intensifying diversity. While these professionals are politically embraced as “highly skilled migrants”, they frequently face skepticism regarding their skills and suitability, and experience discrimination, and lacking recognition—dynamics that often converge with and manifest themselves in assessments of their language skills. Although research on foreign-trained physicians has examined the crucial role of language in the workplace, language skills have largely been considered an individual attribute or deficit to be remedied. Much less attention has been paid to the interactions and contexts in which language becomes decisive, or the relational, symbolic, and organizational processes through which skills are produced and negotiated in everyday hospital practice. Addressing this gap, this contribution adopts a relational perspective on how language mediates the recognition and evaluation of foreign-trained physicians in hospitals, exploring how organizational normality and professional skills are negotiated through the (de)problematization of language. It draws on theoretical work on the social construction of skills (Liu-Farrer et al., 2021) and a Bourdieusian understanding of capital, conceptualizing language as a form of cultural and symbolic capital. Based on semi-structured interviews with employers and foreign-trained physicians, the contribution focuses on the case of rural hospitals in Germany, where foreign-trained physicians are most prevalent, as key sites where language skills are assessed and negotiated. It shows how language operates not merely as a practical ability, but as a mechanism through which recognition and skills are negotiated in hospital life, becoming both a marker of difference and a proxy for professional competence and legitimacy.

Floor Puttemans, Titia Hompes, Leontien Jansen and Brigitte Schoenmakers (KU Leuven)

Perinatal mental health screening and referral in Flanders: perspectives of women from migrant backgrounds in Flanders and the role of acculturation.

Mental health problems, including depression or anxiety, are common during the perinatal period, i.e. pregnancy until one year postpartum, and can significantly affect (expectant) mothers, children, co-parents and their wider network. Therefore, early identification and treatment are crucial, achieved through routine screening using self-report instruments, followed by referral to specialised care. Despite global recommendations for universal screening, implementation seem to be inequitable. Women from migrant backgrounds in particular are more likely to miss screening but also seem to face higher risks of perinatal mental health problems and seem less likely to access mental healthcare. Previous research has linked missed screening to indicators of ‘lower’ acculturation such as shorter length of stay or older age at migration, relying on a unidimensional, assimilation oriented understanding of acculturation. This approach overlooks cultural maintenance, and other critical aspects of a bidimensional approach to acculturation. To better understand the underlying mechanisms behind screening and referral disparities, this study explored the experiences and vision of

first-generation migrant women in Flanders through a bidimensional acculturation lens, acknowledging both cultural adaptation and maintenance. Fifteen women were recruited through a large-scale research project, Perinatal Risk profiling and Intervention in Leuven (PRIL-study), at the University Hospital of Leuven. Participants were interviewed in a semi structured manner at the hospital or at home, and data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This presentation discusses how migrant women experience and perceive screening, how they envision more equitable and culturally sensitive practices, and how acculturation processes shape their views.

Joana Isabel Teixeira de Sousa Ribeiro (University of Coimbra)

Inequalities on the move: the Interplay among Migration, Healthcare Workers and Professional Governance

The process of professionalization and the transnational professional projects reinstate the question of how different power pressures are being negotiated in the governance system: self-regulation (professional governance), public regulation (state governance) and market regulation (private governance). This paper focus on the debate around 5 d's: disqualification, deprofessionalisation, professional discrimination, de-skilling of international healthcare graduates and the deregulation/ re-regulation professional actors. More than finding out whether professionalism is in crisis, it is essential to understand the internal and external mechanisms that are (re)producing professionalism in its multiple forms of inequalities; and considering, not only a relational and comprehensive approach, but also the specific-context frame, increasingly transnational and neoliberal in its scale and scope of practice. Being this in mind, this article explores the professional inclusion and exclusion of foreign doctors and nurses in a Southern European country (like Portugal) as a case-study. To do so, semi-structured interviews were carried out with healthcare workers and institutional actors, along with document analysis of national and international regulatory frameworks. The presented case-study sheds light on how regulatory frameworks like, for instance, the professional associations, the academic institutions, the EU directives and non-state institutional actors are key factors in the development of more inclusive (or exclusive) regulatory mechanisms working towards the governance of a diversified health workforce. This is even more important in the healthcare professions where intersections between different lines of division - gender, race, citizenship status, place of graduation and level of specialization - shape selective inclusion, and/or exclusion, dynamics (Larson 1977, Parkin 1979, Witz 1992) and differentiated occupational integration paths (Ribeiro 2008).

STREAM 5: Symposium 'Inquiring the past, present and future of solidarity' Room 3.2.

Chair: Robin Vandevoordt and Thomas Swerts

Since the late 1990s we have witnessed a growing investment of the EU and its (aspiring) member-states in fortification and surveillance of its borders, complicating people on the move passage and making them end up 'stranded' in European transit zones. Most governments try to deter migrants from dwelling in these zones through a battery of repressive policies (e.g. systematic identify checks, push-backs and destructions of informal living sites). This does not deter people on the move, but pushes them into ever more destitute living conditions. In response, citizen collectives and established NGOs come to offer assistance and try to put pressure on their governments to respect people's basic rights. This symposium inquires into the experiences of solidarity movements in different European transit zones. It builds on research from solidarity in zones where people seek to enter the EU (Lithuania and the Balkan), zones inside the EU heartland (Brussels), to zones where people on the move seek to exit the EU (Calais and the broader Franco-British border) to reach the United Kingdom. How is solidarity with people on the move evolving over the past decade(s)? What makes that solidarity can be sustained, (quietly) dies or contrary, is being revived? How are solidarity movements engaging with new challenges in a changing European and international political, legal, economic and social environment? How do they adapt and reinvent their solidarity practices, discourses and (possibly) advocacy strategies? The participants in the symposium build on evidence from their own cases to understand and identify both divergences as well as common threads. In absence of crystal balls, bringing together their experiences and insights might help us to think forward about the future shapes activism and hope, and our own roles as researchers within these, might take.

Julija Kekstaite (Ghent University)

Entanglements of Global and Local Histories and Orders: Pro-Migrant Advocacy in Lithuania's Borderlands

The 2021 EU–Belarus border crisis stranded migrants at the Lithuania–Belarus frontier in freezing conditions, exposing the violent realities of Europe's external border regime. In response, Lithuanian citizens mobilized under the slogan "we don't want our border to become a cemetery," forming what became known as Sienos Grupė. Initially imagining their actions as temporary and clandestine humanitarian aid, activists soon politicized their work as the conditions they encountered in the forests contradicted official state narratives. This paper traces the genealogy of Sienos Grupė's advocacy and situates it within the entanglements of global border regimes and local geopolitical realities in Lithuania's borderlands. As the Lithuanian frontier simultaneously constitutes the eastern edge of Schengen and a rapidly militarizing zone in response to Russia's imperial ambitions, borders acquire ambivalent meanings of protection, violence, and resistance. I argue that pro-migrant activism in this interimperial space navigates shifting forms of coloniality, revealing how local advocacy reconfigures global border orders. The case illuminates what it means to think and act otherwise in Eastern Europe's contested borderlands.

Tristan Solf (Border Violence Monitoring Network)

Ruptures, failures, frictions: (Re)situating 'research' in solidarity work

With shrinking humanitarian spaces and increasing criminalisation of solidarity work over the last years, the focus and output of the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) has changed dramatically. BVMN has grown in size, but funding is scarce, member organisations collect fewer pushback testimonies, and the research focus has shifted towards other violent components of border regimes. This paper retraces the steps of a research project with the BVMN Research & Investigations Team (R&I) in 2025. Looking for alternative ways to document border violence, we examined the environmental conditions, as well as interventions in nature by authorities, that enable and structure violence at the Croatian-Bosnian border. This brought together open source investigations, interviews, field visits, and collaboration with BVMN member organisations. This presentation unravels this process: a research conceptualised and funded through university-led collaboration, a case study designed by a small team of remote BVMN researchers, carried out by BVMN and an anonymous member organisation, and disseminated by BVMN. It paints a chronological (visual) roadmap of the conceptualisation, execution, and publication of the project. The purpose of this exercise is twofold. First, it makes incisions throughout this chronology to address the changing nature of criminalisation, solidarity work, and research. In a second step, it aims to undo this chronology. Centrally, the presentation problematises the separation of academic, remote-activist, and field-based solidarity work that is upheld in the research process. With a view to increasing criminalisation and changing institutional atmospheres, it questions the point of such research. Ultimately, this paints a map of ruptures, failures, and wrong directions taken. The point of this exercise is not to categorically denounce border violence research but to critically (re)situate the 'research' dimension in solidarity work.

Marlies Casier (Ghent University)

What lessons in taking up people on the move's plight? Political memory work with the Plateforme Citoyenne de Soutien aux Réfugiés in Brussels and the Plateforme des Soutiens aux Migrant.e.s. in Northern France

This paper concludes a three-year long qualitative research into advocacy for people on the move in European transit zones. Therein I engaged with solidarity actors in Brussels and Northern France to inquire into and reconstruct jointly their political trajectories in seeking – within differing and evolving political contexts – to advance the rights of people on the move in zones of transit. Through desk research, extensive interviews with activists and allies and social media analysis political mémoires were written, not just to recollect past actions (even if important in and of itself), but to understand how particular 'asks' came into being and to identify and discuss the practices and strategies they developed in the hope to obtain (local, regional, national, international) policy change. This ranged from attempts to end unlawful evictions of people's informal living sites; to fighting the criminalisation of solidarity acts; to improving the living conditions of people in transit and pushing public authorities to take-up responsibility through facilitating or providing shelter. My presentation will provide a window into the evolving advocacy for people on the move of the Citizens' Platform (BelRefugees) in

Brussels on the one hand, and the Platform in Support of Migrants (PSM) in Calais on the other. I will discuss commonalities and differences and particularly bring to light what can be regarded as strengths, as well as pitfalls, other migrant solidarity actors could learn from.

Vincent op 't Roodt (Göttingen University)

Contesting the Erosion of Law: Legal Struggles Against Border Violence in the Aegean?

Across the EU's external borders, the authoritarian re-configuration of the legal order drives a weaponized erosion of law: legal protections are progressively hollowed out, while law itself is mobilized to organize exclusion, confinement, and exposure to harm. An emblematic site of this dynamic is the Aegean border regime, where violent pushbacks have become systemic and de-tention in prison-like camps has been normalized under conditions of structural impunity. Since 2015, the islands have transformed into zones of de facto rightlessness – a development set to be reinforced by the Pact on Migration and Asylum through expanded detention, procedural compression, and practical inaccessibility of rights. At the same time, this shift reshapes the juridical field itself: jurisprudence, evidentiary standards, and procedural doctrines are recalibrated in ways that narrow access to justice and privilege state narratives of border control. Drawing on socio-legal studies, legal anthropology, and Ethnographic Border Regime Analysis, this contribution examines how the eroding legal order is navigated and contested by solidarity actors operating within, against, and beyond this fractured legal landscape. Focusing on legal aid organizations, activists, and strategic litigators, it analyses legal struggles as situated practices that unfold within a juridical field increasingly marked by institutional selectivity, epistemic asymmetries, and reactionary political pressure. Empirically, the contribution is based on ethnographic research within a legal clinic on Samos (field phase April-July 2026) engaging with legal and extra-legal practices including counselling, litigation, counter-documentation, and advocacy. A focus lies on recent strategic litigation on pushbacks and reception conditions before the European Court of Human Rights, highlighting how regressive jurisprudence, state denial, and heightened evidentiary thresholds re-shape the possibilities of rights mobilization.

**STREAM 6: Enfoques y métodos artísticos aplicados a los estudios migratorios
(Arts-based approaches and methods in Migration Studies)**

Room 3.3.

Chair: Elisa Robbe

An English translation will be provided during this panel.

Colectivo Ambigú Trashumante

Prácticas de Arte Útil, movilidad comunitaria y narrativas decoloniales sobre migración.

Esta propuesta presenta una instalación artística interactiva basada en la práctica desarrollada por el colectivo Ambigú Trashumante, situada en el Arte Útil y cultura comunitaria que articula enfoques decoloniales para comprender, narrar y acompañar las experiencias de migración en territorios atravesados por desigualdad estructural y desplazamientos históricos,

principalmente en México. Lejos de una mirada extractiva o académica tradicional sobre la migración, los proyectos del colectivo se configuran con una metodología de investigación-acción comunitaria que produce conocimiento desde el hacer colectivo, la adaptación, la movilidad autónoma y la revalorización de saberes locales, experiencias migratorias desde la base social. La instalación estará conformada por el archivo del proceso del colectivo —videos, fotografías, dibujos y materiales gráficos— producidos a lo largo de distintos proyectos y experiencias comunitarias, disponibles en el espacio para su consulta. Desde esta activación, la instalación propone un espacio donde personas asistentes comparten relatos o impresiones vinculadas a la movilidad, el arraigo y el desarraigo reunidos alrededor del café e intervienen creativamente. De esta forma el encuentro se convierte en un dispositivo de resistencia epistémica para habilitar el intercambio horizontal de saberes. Al inscribirse en el Eje 6, esta instalación artística aporta una experiencia concreta de práctica decolonial que articula migración, narrativas, memoria y territorio. Ambigü Trashumante propone el arte, el café y la movilidad comunitaria como herramientas para imaginar formas más justas, situadas y colaborativas de producir y compartir conocimiento sobre la migración. *Tanto la instalación como su activación puede adaptarse en tiempo y forma según la organización del encuentro.

Anastasia Kromberg Landeros

Entre la Jarilla y Düsseldorf: des- y re-territorializaciones de cuerpos-territorios entre despojo, búsqueda y reconstrucción.

La Jarilla, se encuentra en el municipio de Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, México. Pero ya no existe de la misma manera: “No vayas, que no lo vas a reconocer. No lo vas a encontrar.” En búsqueda de sostener la vida, mi familia dejó atrás sus tierras, costumbres, vistas geográficas y formas de mirar el mundo. ¿Cómo es soltar para resguardar la vida? Este trabajo (auto)etnográfico analiza la migración no como simple relocalización de cuerpos, sino como un proceso continuo de des- y reterritorialización, donde territorios, memorias y cuerpos se entrelazan. Dejar atrás no constituye una huida pasiva, sino una práctica ambivalente frente a un orden neoliberal-colonial que jerarquiza vidas y produce desechabilidad. En la búsqueda de una vida mejor se reproducen ciertas lógicas, pero también se rechaza la permanencia en una precariedad asignada, cuestionando la graduación de humanidad basada en la jerarquización territorial de vidas y derechos. Portando el territorio en el cuerpo, los cuerpos-territorios migrantes habitan un espacio donde se confrontan identidades fijas, pertenencias establecidas y jerarquías territoriales. El cuerpo se vuelve archivo y horizonte donde se negocian pérdidas y se imaginan vidas vivibles. Las prácticas de cuidado y acuerpamiento emergen como formas de reterritorialización que sostienen la vida frente al despojo y la negación. Las huellas cuerpo-territoriales se buscan en La Jarilla, el Estado de México, Tequisquiapan, Wuppertal y Düsseldorf. Metodológicamente, la investigación combina entrevistas narrativas, cartografías corporales, mapeos geográficos y medios artísticos para analizar cómo los territorios migran junto con los cuerpos, y cómo se reconstruyen afectos, pertenencias y formas de sostén de la vida más allá de fronteras geopolíticas y a través de distintas escalas de movilidad, tanto internas como transnacionales.

Julieth Niño Luna (The University of Santiago, Chile)

La presente propuesta investigativa está desarrollada bajo una metodología de investigación guiada por la práctica artística que propone el diseño de un conjunto de tarjetas postales como dispositivo que desprenden experiencias migratorias en el continente de América Latina. Se realiza la creación de treinta postales en versión digital en donde sitúo mi cuerpo en un despliegue de acciones corporales que problematizan la migración desde mi propio territorio. Para esta investigación, se ha seleccionado como material de estudio la frontera norte de México-EE.UU. y la frontera tripartita entre Perú, Bolivia y Chile. La relación de estas fronteras se origina principalmente, porque en ambos territorios han confluído los imaginarios históricos de la migración que nos permiten estrechar lazos de sur a norte, de Chile hasta México, como dos geografías que comparten discursos y prácticas relacionadas a las fronteras en los cuales contextualizamos dicho estudio. En este sentido, esta propuesta nos invita a reflexionar de qué forma la investigación como práctica artística contribuye en los actuales debates sobre migración y su relación con la artes contemporáneas.

Estefanía Salas Ramírez (Dr. José María Luis Mora Research Institute)

Hacia una epistemología histórica latinoamericana migrante-centrada

La ponencia propone cuestionar algunos de los paradigmas desde los cuales se ha escrito y pensado la historia migratoria reciente de aquello que nombramos como el Sur Global, con un enfoque específico en América Latina. Se hace una crítica al proceso histórico mediante el cual se consolidó la figura del migrante latinoamericano como un sujeto definido por su condición de trabajador temporal en desplazamiento. Sostengo que esta representación ha operado como un mecanismo de reproducción de las múltiples capas de desigualdad que históricamente han situado a la región en una posición subordinada frente al Norte Global, a la vez que han sido mecanismos por lo que los Estados-nación han esencializado la comprensión de las migraciones y sus sujetos, permitiendo la normalización de procesos de discriminación, violencia y racialización. Frente a este paradigma, la ponencia explora la posibilidad de construir historias migrantes otras, a partir de la construcción, la preservación y el uso de archivos comunitarios migrantes. Archivos como el Bracero Family Archive, creado por la comunidad chicana de Los Ángeles, California o el Archivo Dona Orosina Vieira en la favela de Maré en Río de Janeiro permiten formular preguntas que desbordan las narrativas migratorias centradas exclusivamente en el trabajo, tales como: ¿qué otras formas de migrar fueron imaginadas, practicadas y apropiadas por personas migrantes latinoamericanas a lo largo del siglo XX? ¿Qué proyectos de vida, afectos, aspiraciones políticas, culturales y comunitarias quedan fuera cuando la migración es reducida a un fenómeno laboral? En suma, la ponencia propone una apuesta por redefinir los marcos desde los cuales narramos la historia migratoria, afirmando que migrar no es únicamente trabajar, sino también crear vínculos, producir cultura, imaginar futuros, resistir y reconfigurar pertenencias, entre muchas otras posibilidades.

STREAM 1: Belonging, Bias, and Opportunity: Educational experiences for teachers and students

Room 2.2.

Chair: Wendelien Vantieghem

Brent Theys (Ghent University), Ruben Vanderline (Ghent University) and Noel Clycq (University of Antwerp)

Role models, recognition and learning: an investigation into the professional networks of teachers with a migration background

Across educational systems, teachers with a migration background remain underrepresented in positions of professional recognition and authority, despite increasing diversity in classrooms and schools. In policy and public discourse, they are often framed as symbolic role models for “diverse students”. Yet little empirical research examines how role modelling functions in the professional learning processes of teachers with a migration background themselves. This study explores how these teachers identify, experience and evaluate role models within their professional networks, and how these processes intersect with recognition, learning and inequality. Drawing on participatory mapping and ego-network interviews with a purposive subsample of 20 teachers with a migration background (first and second generation), the study examines which individuals are perceived as role models, which characteristics are valued, and how role modelling is embedded in everyday professional interaction. Using the status–attitude framework, the analysis distinguishes between symbolic recognition as a role model and perceived enacted learning influence in practice. Findings show that role models are rarely identified on the basis of shared ethnicity alone. Instead, teachers emphasise deep-level affinities such as shared professional trajectories, experiences of marginalisation, ethical positioning, and strategies for navigating institutional expectations. At the same time, participants point to tensions between visibility and learning impact: individuals publicly recognised as “role models” do not necessarily function as meaningful learning resources in daily practice. By foregrounding teachers’ perspectives, this study challenges essentialist assumptions about representation and contributes to migration and education research by conceptualising role modelling as a relational process situated at the intersection of ethnocultural inequality, professional learning and recognition.

Timo Van Caneghem (Ghent University), Joana Pipa (ISPA), Mieke Van Houtte (Ghent University), and Jannick Demanet Ghent University)

How Teacher Expectations and Recommendations on Tracking and Grade Retention Are Biased: A Quasi-Experimental Video Vignette Study in Flemish Secondary Education

Students from socio-economically disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to experience grade retention or downward tracking than similarly performing peers (Boone et al., 2018; Klapproth & Schaltz, 2015; Locke & Sparks, 2019). Teachers play a key role in these processes through their expectations and recommendations (Batruch et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2018). This study examines whether teacher judgements about tracking and grade retention are biased by student background characteristics, even when academic performance is held constant. A factorial video vignette experiment was conducted among 1,012 teachers in 46 Flemish secondary schools. Teachers evaluated fictitious students who differed in socio-economic status, ethnicity, name, and language proficiency, while their academic performance was the same across profiles. Teachers reported their expectations about students' future educational pathways and recommended appropriate interventions. The results show clear biases in teacher expectations: Students with higher socio-economic status and ethnic majority backgrounds receive higher expectations for further education. Name cues and language proficiency also influence expectations, pointing to implicit biases in teacher judgement. Interestingly, the most privileged students are more likely to be advised to change programmes rather than to repeat a grade, while recommendations for grade retention do not differ across profiles. Additional analyses suggest that teachers may assume disadvantaged students already to be in lower tracks, as expectations about past performance are also biased. These findings show how teacher expectations and recommendations can contribute to social inequality through subtle decision-making processes. By isolating causal effects of student characteristics, the study highlights the normative nature of educational judgements and underlines the need for reflective and evidence-informed approaches to high-stakes decisions.

Sofie Beunen and Wendelien Vantieghem (Ghent University)

Empowering young people in vulnerable situations in their study choice process and academic pathway: an impact study among alumni of a weekend school intervention

Study choices are crucial transitional moments influencing educational pathways, academic success and professional careers. In Flanders, the transition from primary to secondary education is strongly influenced by socio-economic status (SES) and migration background: vulnerable young people are more often oriented towards the B-stream, with consequences for well-being, feelings of futility and increased risk of early school leaving. However, there is a lack of effective, evidence-based solutions to address social inequality in the transition from primary to secondary education. This research aims to investigate the impact of a weekend school intervention on the educational trajectories and, specifically, the study choice process of vulnerable youth. A weekend school (TAJO vzw) aims to empower vulnerable young people (aged 10-14) with experiential workshops by focusing on talents, critical skills, knowledge and the social network of the youngsters. This study examines whether participants are more likely to enrol in higher-status tracks, experience fewer downward transitions and less early school leaving, whether they engage in more deliberate study choice processes, and whether indirect effects occur via self-image, futility and social capital. Medium-term outcomes are assessed through a mixed-methods study among TAJO alumni (aged 14–18). Quantitative analyses compare educational trajectories with population data, while qualitative focus groups and interviews elucidate the mechanisms underlying observed effects. Preliminary results suggest that weekend school participants are more likely to choose the A-stream and transfer to higher

education (“doorstroomfinaliteit”). Social capital and the process of self-exploration appear to be key mechanisms underlying the intervention’s effects. Positive and high expectations appear to strengthen belief in the future and in the relevance of schooling, counterbalancing feelings of futility.

Eren Aslı Tekin (KU Leuven), Jessie Hillekens (Tilburg University), Katrín Árnadóttir (University of Konstanz) and Karen Phalet (KU Leuven)

When do ethnic majority youth see ethnic discrimination? The role of minoritized identities, interethnic friends, experiencing and witnessing victimization

Ethnic discrimination is widespread across Europe, with major Turkish and Moroccan origin minorities facing persistent educational disadvantage and pervasive anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination. Ethnic bias is engrained in habitual ways of relating across groups, creating subtle yet significant harm for minoritized youth. Ethnic majority group members are often less aware of ethnic inequality and reluctant to see and challenge ethnic discrimination, which contributes to the perpetuation of such harm. Drawing on longitudinal samples of majority youth in ethnically diverse Belgian middle schools (N = 2,283), we examined when and how they develop group-level perceptions of ethnic discrimination. We take a dual explanatory approach from intersecting social identities and intergroup contact with ethnic minority peers. Majority youth may combine their ethnic majority identity with gender- or class-based minoritized identities or share perspectives on intergroup relations with ethnic minority friends. We further explored the role of direct or indirect experiences of victimization in diverse peer networks. Multi-level mediation models showed more perceived discrimination in majority youth with minoritized identities. Both experiencing and witnessing peer victimization predicted increased perceptions of ethnic discrimination over time. Importantly, interethnic friendship indirectly increased awareness through witnessing victimization, and minoritized identities through personal experiences of victimization. Our findings highlight the interplay of intersecting minoritized identities and relational experiences in shaping majority understandings of interethnic relations and highlighting ways to address ethnoracial inequalities in education.

STREAM 3: Identity work and multilingual meaning-making

Room 2.3.

Chair: Marie Jacobs

Abigail Rudorwashe Benhura (Women's University in Africa)

Migration and Multilingual Identities: Navigating Mirages of Belonging

Language is arguably one of the key anchors of cultural identity in most human societies. Amidst the louder discourses on the complex migrants’ integration processes in destination countries, conversations around the impact of migration on language and cultural identities have generally been muted. For African migrants in regional and global contexts, the dynamics of cultural and bi/multilingual identities contend with meanings of belonging which in turn determine their inclusion or exclusion in host communities. For first generation migrants, the

adoption or assimilation of the host nations' language and culture is critical in creating a sense of belonging as well build social cohesion with host communities. As a result, the bi/multilingual migrant is forced to straddle his indigenous language identity against the adopted identity. This paper is premised on the assumption that migrants deploy diverse methods to counter cultural (language) identities' susceptibility to cultural erosion through the retention of their indigenous languages in informal settings. Using the Language and Identity Theory lens, the paper draws on qualitative data from open-ended interviews and social narratives on seven Zimbabwean migrants' experiences in South Africa. This paper seeks to deconstruct perceptions of the migrants' loss of cultural identities by highlighting mirages of belonging common among first generation migrants. It considers cultural identity and complexities of belonging in everyday life as negotiated through the migrants' agency to create cultural spaces and accommodate multilingual identities within host communities.

Mohamed Irfan, Birgitte Schoenmakers, Antoon Cox, Heidi Salaets and Marc Sabbe (KU Leuven)

Negotiating Meaning in a Third Language: Qualitative Insights from After-Hours Clinical Encounters

Background: Evidence from primary care research indicates that effective communication is essential for improving patient adherence to medical advice, satisfaction with care, and overall health outcomes. However, consultations conducted in a language that is not the patient's first language may increase anxiety and cognitive strain, creating barriers to meaningful participation in care. While professional interpreters are considered the gold standard for addressing language discordance in healthcare, their underuse in clinical practice remains well documented. Existing research has largely focused on clinical outcomes such as diagnostic accuracy or patient satisfaction, with limited attention to the interactional dynamics among doctors, patients, and informal interpreters, and how these influence the delivery of patient-centered care in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts.

Research Question: The research question formulated is how do language barriers affect the delivery of patient-centered care in a walk-in after-hours general practice clinic?.

Method: Adopting a linguistic ethnographic approach, this study integrates observational, interactional, and perceptual data from clinical encounters between patients and on-duty general practitioners (GPs) and HAIOS (GP in training). It examines communication strategies employed to overcome linguistic challenges and their reflections on their communicative practices when interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse patients. With semi-structured interviews, we further explore the perspectives of GPs and HAIOS regarding what works for them when interacting with linguistically diverse patients.

Results: Data collection included 60 hours of fieldwork, comprising 16 patient-doctor consultation audio recordings and eight semi-structured interviews with on-duty medical staff (GPs and HAIOS). Interview and consultation data are currently being analyzed, and their findings will be presented at the conference.

Hend Aly (University College London)

Language and everyday navigation of inequality in Lavapiés

Lavapiés is one of Madrid's most diverse neighbourhoods, with at least 80 languages spoken. Speaking any of these languages gives access to specific communities and solidarity networks,

yet Spanish remains a fundamental enabler or barrier in practicing rights. Using ethnography, I focus on diverse perspectives and lived experiences in Lavapiés regarding language and its relation to experiencing and navigating inequalities in everyday life. Fieldwork takes places over 10 months starting in August 2025. It entails immersing myself, as a migrant, in the everyday life, spending considerable time and “deep hanging out” with my interlocutors, conducting participants observation in the city council and NGO language classes, and conducting expert interviews with social workers, local council translators and language teachers. Despite the provision of for free language related services, including language classes, translators and hiring multilingual employees, my interlocutors still experience exclusion, racism, uncertainty when accessing services. This compounds the difficulty of navigating these structures and intensifies precarity. I also delve into the diverse meanings and hopes associated to learning Spanish among my interlocutors. Learning Spanish transcends its necessity for obtaining doctor’s appointments or submitting residence applications. It holds various hopes of becoming a working woman, earning a living, affording a house, overcoming exclusion, and being valued and respected. I foreground diversities and complexities of migrants perspectives and avoids essentialising their experiences and replicating hegemonic world views. To do so, I conduct my research in 3 languages spoken in the neighbourhood. Spanish is one of them. While I have been learning Spanish over the past two years, my aim is not only conducting interviews in one more language, but also to explore the local language learning landscape and share learning moments with interlocutors.

STREAM 2: Systemic racism in healthcare

Room 3.2.

Chair: Hilde Depauw

Hyojin Im (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Discrimination as a Structural Determinant of Refugee Healthcare Access: Intersectional Evidence from the United States

Persistent ethnoracial and migration-related inequalities continue to shape health outcomes and healthcare access across North American and European contexts. While financial and linguistic explanations dominate policy discourse, discrimination, both structural and interpersonal, is increasingly recognised as a determinant of health. Yet few studies have examined discrimination using nationally representative data or operationalised intersectionality quantitatively. This study uses the probability-based Annual Survey of Refugees (2020-22) to assess how perceived discrimination influences healthcare access among refugee newcomers to the United States and how effects vary across intersecting racialised and gendered identities. Data include 4,246 refugees resettled between 2015 and 2021. Multivariate models estimated associations; Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition distinguished compositional from structural inequities; mediation analysis examined discrimination’s role in gender disparities; and a three-way interaction (Discrimination × Race × Gender) operationalised intersectionality. Discrimination emerged as the strongest predictor of healthcare barriers. Decomposition indicated that over half of the disparity was unexplained

by socioeconomic or health characteristics, suggesting structural mechanisms. Interaction results showed that Black, MENA, and Asian women experienced the highest compounded barriers, while White men reported the lowest. These findings contribute to migration and health scholarship by demonstrating how discrimination structures access to care and amplifies inequality across intersecting social positions. The U.S. case offers comparative relevance for European contexts grappling with racialised bordering, welfare conditionality, and anti-refugee sentiment. Implications include reconceptualising “access” beyond entitlement and cost and integrating intersectional analyses of racialisation into migrant health research and policy frameworks.

Vincent Lorant and Camille Duveau (UCLouvain)

Do you want to know your biases ? Drivers of ethnic biases in primary care in Belgium

Healthcare providers' decisions are known to be biased, often resulting in unfavorable treatment for patients with a migration background (PMB). Implicit and explicit biases have been identified as contributing factors to these disparities. However, the origins and implications of these biases remain poorly understood. This study aims to measure the magnitude and determinants of implicit and explicit biases toward PMB and to assess whether medical trainees are willing to receive personalized feedback on their bias results. Between 2021 and 2025, four cohorts of general practice trainees from a Belgian university were invited to complete an Implicit Association Test (IAT) and the Hudelson scale assessing explicit bias toward PMB. The IAT contrasted patients with either a Belgian name or a North-African name, and alternatively, a Belgian face or a North-African face. At the end of the survey, participants were asked whether they wished to receive their individual results and were queried about their political orientation. Over the study period, 680 trainees participated. The majority (68%) exhibited moderate to high levels of implicit bias unfavorable to North-African patients (based on names or faces), with little variation over time. On average, across waves, 60% of respondents requested their individual feedback report. Willingness to receive feedback was not associated with implicit bias levels (D-score) but was less frequent among trainees who endorsed the view that adaptation responsibility lies primarily with ethnic minority patients. Biases against PMB persist among future primary care providers. Willingness to engage with personal bias feedback is shaped more by explicit attitudes toward patient adaptation than by implicit bias levels. These findings highlight the need for tailored interventions to promote awareness and reduce bias in primary care.

Saloua Berdai Chaouni (VUB)

Reimagining care under racism

Racism operates as a chronic stressor that profoundly shapes health and well-being, yet mainstream European health and care systems remain poorly equipped to address these effects. In response, racialized communities across Europe have developed alternative, community-rooted care practices that remain largely invisible within academic and policy debates. This presentation draws on 15 expert interviews with pioneers in anti-racism and decolonial care approaches within racialized communities in Belgium and the UK. These participants, community (health) practitioners, care innovators, and cultural workers, were

engaged as experiential knowledge holders and co-thinkers within a broader decolonial participatory action research (PAR) project on racism, health, and ageing. The interviews focus on their search processes: how they developed care practices responsive to harm caused by racism and which epistemologies guide their work. Findings highlight the centrality of collective care as a counter to individualizing health paradigms, emphasizing shared meaning-making, relational safety, and community healing. Art-based and embodied approaches, such as storytelling, body-based practices, music, ritual, and visual expression, emerge as key methods for processing racialized harm without re-traumatization. Participants also stress the importance of acknowledging ancestral, spiritual, and intergenerational knowledge as legitimate sources of care and healing, challenging Western biomedical hierarchies of knowledge. Finally, making space for joy and pleasure is described not as a secondary outcome but as a care practice of resilience and resistance against racialized suffering. By centering community-rooted expertise, this study contributes to debates on racism, care, and knowledge production, and offers concrete insights into decolonial care practices that move beyond harm reduction toward collective wellbeing and care justice.

Sarah Derveeuw, Sorana Toma, Katrien Vanthomme and Sara Willems (Ghent University)

Structural racism: Exploring Neighbourhood Context and Ethnoracial Inequalities in Cancer Screening Uptake using Belgian Administrative Data

Ethno-racial and migrant inequalities in healthcare uptake are well documented across Europe, yet their neighbourhood-level determinants remain underexplored. Building on the extensive neighbourhood-effects literature, this study situates these inequalities within the structural processes that produce and maintain spatial disadvantage. Neighbourhoods are not neutral spaces: structural racism and institutional discrimination in housing and rental markets have historically shaped settlement patterns, concentrating racialised and migrant populations in socioeconomically deprived areas. While neighbourhood deprivation is consistently associated with poorer health, the effects of segregation and (co-)ethnic density are less clear. Co-ethnic density may foster social support and buffer discrimination, but may also limit access to new health information regarding preventive care. By examining these dynamics, this study contributes to ongoing debates about how racialised geographies shape the conditions under which health inequalities emerge. We use individually linked longitudinal administrative data from the Belgian population and cancer registers, geocoded to statistical sectors, one of the smallest spatial units available in Europe. This rare linkage allows us to examine how neighbourhood deprivation and co-ethnic concentration shape individual participation in Belgium's three population-based cancer-screening programmes, using multilevel logistic regression models that account for selection into neighbourhoods and endogeneity over time. By integrating a structural understanding of racism into the neighbourhood-effects tradition, this study extends research on place and health into the domain of preventive healthcare, demonstrating how structural inequalities are embodied long before disease develops.

STREAM 5: Resistance and solidarity at and beyond the border

Room 3.3.

Chair: Sol Ballet

Chiara Martini (University of Milan) and Giovanni Marena (University of Genova)

"Making the Border Fail (a bit)". Solidarity Practices against EU Border Regimes in Bulgaria.

Over the years, Bulgaria and its border with Turkey have become central sites in the normalization of violent bordering practices, reflecting the European Union's increasingly restrictive and repressive migration governance. Since 2022, the forests of the Stranja region have functioned as a lethal border zone, where people-on-the-move are routinely subjected to violent pushbacks, denied access to asylum procedures and assistance, and exposed to conditions of abandonment that render the border a space of slow violence and death. In this presentation, grounded in our work as researchers and activists in this context, we frame the Bulgarian–Turkish border as a site of everyday bordering, where sovereignty is performed through informalized violence, spatial invisibilization, and the systematic dismantling of legal protections. Against this backdrop, the initiative Safeline Bulgaria has, over the past three years, developed a hotline and search-and-rescue system to support people in distress and facilitate access to asylum procedures. Built on a transnational solidarity network of local and international groups and collectives, the Safeline operates as a deliberate intervention into the violent effects of state and EU border practices, contesting pushbacks and exclusionary controls while advocating for the protection of migrants' fundamental rights. With this presentation we examine the emergence of the Safeline Bulgaria and its everyday practices along the Turkish–Bulgarian border. We situate the initiative as a form of civil society intervention that counters the violence of the EU border regime through concrete, "from below" infrastructures of care and solidarity. Grounded in principles of freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum, the initiative exposes the violent and racist political nature of European migration governance and demonstrates how civil society actors resist and reconfigure border regimes in times of societal and political transformation.

Laura Stielike (Osnabrück University)

Beyond the Echo Chamber? Social Media as Digital Spaces of Resistance and Counter-Knowledge

Production against Anti-Migration Discourse in Germany

Migration has become a highly polarising topic in Europe and worldwide. Digital spaces, in particular social media platforms, have proliferated anti-migration narratives. Algorithm-driven filter bubbles, semi-automated bots and right-wing influencers and politicians have spread misinformation on migration and directed hate-speech at migrantized/racialized people and those trying to defend democratic (post)migrant societies. Digital space can become an echo chamber, increasing polarisation and fragmentation of public debate and thereby threatening democratic societies. However, social media in Germany have recently also become a space for resistance against anti-migration discourse. The satirical Tiktok video "Top 3 hiding places during mass deportation" by influencer Tahsim Durgun in reaction to the far right's secret "Remigration Plan" went viral in January 2024. Likewise, Left Party politician

Heidi Reichinnek's "Brandmauer" speech against the far right-supported parliamentary vote on the immigration control act was viewed millions of times on social media, boosting her party's election results in February 2025. Based on digital ethnographic research on Tiktok and Instagram, my presentation explores how and under which conditions social media can serve as digital spaces of resistance and counter-knowledge production against anti-migration discourse in Germany. Drawing on critical, reflexive and digital migration studies and critical data studies, I further develop the analytical lens of "technoresistance" (Pfeifer and Stielike forthcoming) and examine how technical pre-configurations and online culture shape the ways in which counter-narratives are uttered, circulated and contested in digital space. Recognizing the risk that digital practices of resistance create new echo chambers, I also analyse the conditions under which they can transcend digital spaces and contribute to broader debates on how to defend, reimagine and foster democratic (post)migrant societies.

Adele Del Guercio (University of Naples L'Orientale)

Solidarity as a means of rethinking restrictive immigration policies: the role of NGOs in the Mediterranean Sea

In Italy, the politicization of the debate around immigration has resulted in laws which, in addition to criminalizing people who enter the country without authorization, penalizes those involved in sea rescue. Italy, like other European Countries, has weaponised the ambiguous provisions of the EU "facilitation package" to penalise humanitarian assistance. Since 2017 there has been a war against NGOs engaged in rescue operations in the Mediterranean. As is well known, the rescue of people in distress at sea is a customary international legal obligation. Italy is also required to comply with the "duty of solidarity" pursuant to Articles 10, 11, and 117 of its Constitution. Italian courts have established that any ship captain who disregards the MRCC order to disembark shipwrecked people in Libya, a country that cannot be considered a place of safety, cannot be prosecuted. In the face of attempts by judges to align government guidelines with constitutional requirements, the government has progressively hardened measures that criminalize rescue operations, for example assigning disembarkation ports that are several days' journey from a rescue site. This can have negative consequences for the health of shipwrecked people, and keeps NGO ships away from the central Mediterranean, where shipwrecks, pushbacks and violence against migrants continue to occur. Indeed, NGOs have another important function beyond their primary role in rescuing people at sea, which State authorities often fail to do: they provide eyes for civil society to see what would otherwise remain hidden. I would like to focus my presentation on solidarity-based practices, in particular on the activities of NGOs at sea, which constitute a form of resistance and subversion of border closure policies, as well as a challenge to the dominant political paradigm, which views migrants (and NGOs themselves) as dangerous and undesirable.

Chirine Chalak (Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Analysing The Faultline Between Authority & Solidarity: Policing, Impacts, Adaptation At The French-Italian Southern Border.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impacts of policing civil society actors involved in humanitarian action supporting migrants. It aims to answer the question: How do different

types of civil society actors adapt to different policing modalities? It sheds light on three phenomena: how different forms of policing are implemented at the local level, how they impact civil society actors' material, immaterial resources, solidarity spaces and collective action, and how those actors adapt to it. It uses qualitative methods – observation, document analysis and ten semi-structured interviews with members of the mobility society – in Ventimiglia, Menton and the Roya Valley. Four main adaptation strategies stem from the analysis: sharing alternative narratives, consolidating transnational collaboration, fortifying endemic cohesion and, most importantly, using legal channels to protect their solidarity spaces, to teach volunteers about their rights and how to act in case of abusive policing and to initiate legal proceedings to denounce both the violent behaviour of law enforcement on the ground and the opacity of the authorities regarding "grey zones" of detention at the border.

STREAM 1: Social and linguistic dimensions of educational inequality

Room 2.2.

Chair: Fanny D'hondt

Felistus Tafdzwa Makumbe (Women's University in Africa)

Tangled Tongues in Primary School Transitions- a case of Zimbabwean migrant children learning in the UK.

This paper examines the experiences of Zimbabwean migrant children in the UK, focusing on the complexities of multilingual identity, language policy, and educational transitions within a diasporic context. Zimbabwe's linguistic landscape comprises 16 official languages; Shona and Ndebele are dominant. In this regard, Zimbabwean migrant children face unique challenges in adapting to an English-dominant, monolingual education system abroad. This linguistic approach differs from Zimbabwe's language policy, which focuses on the mother-tongue approach. The prestige of English, reinforced by globalization, contrasts with the need to preserve indigenous languages and cultural identity, creating tension in learners' language development and social integration. This study examines how migrant Zimbabwean children navigate these linguistic and cultural dynamics during primary school transitions in the UK, highlighting the impact on academic comprehension, identity formation, and social belonging. It argues for educational policies and practices that recognize and support multilingualism, incorporating mother tongue maintenance alongside English proficiency to foster inclusive learning environments and smoother transitions for these learners. Such approaches can empower migrant Zimbabwean children to retain their cultural heritage while accessing the social and economic opportunities afforded by English fluency in the UK.

Elias Herman Kruithof (VUB)

How both social class and ethnoracial origins shape educational attainment among sons and daughters of immigrants. A reassessment with Belgian census data.

While social class origins and ethnoracial position are both key dimensions of educational inequality, research examining their joint effects remains scarce. Studies in Continental Europe often ask whether ethnoracial position adds disadvantage beyond social class, finding that much of the observed disadvantage among second-generation youth can be attributed to parents' socio-economic position, particularly in European-origin migrant families such as Italians (Ichou 2013; Phalet et al. 2007). Yet some ethnoracial differences persist after controlling for class. Rather than treating class and ethnoracial position as additive, we conceptualize them as intersecting and mutually constitutive dimensions of stratification (Gillborn, Warmington, and Demack 2023; Kanobana 2024; Richards et al. 2023; Tilly 1998). This study advances research in five ways. First, it examines social class differences within ethnoracial positions, offering a nuanced understanding of heterogeneity within groups (Bucca

and Drouhot 2024; Civitillo et al. 2025). Second, it addresses gendered intersections of class and race in education (Ferry et al. 2025). Third, it uses a multidimensional measure of social origins, combining parental education and occupational class, allowing us to assess how postmigration class interacts with premigration educational selectivity (Blossfeld 2019; Kruithof and Verhaeghe 2024). Fourth, Belgium provides a compelling context, with large ethnoracial inequalities persisting after accounting for social class (Agirdag et al. 2012; Bucca and Drouhot 2024). Finally, we exploit high-quality full-population census data, enabling precise measurement of social origins and apply non-parametric exact matching of children of immigrants to majority peers on multiple family characteristics. By adopting a multidimensional, intersectional approach, we uncover substantial heterogeneity within groups, including penalties, equivalences, and advantages.

Mira Wyns, Chloé Lybaert and Sarah Van Hoof (Ghent University)

Accent bias and accent anxiety in secondary and higher education in Flanders

The student population in Flanders has become increasingly diverse, which had led to a wide range of foreign-accented (Lx) speech. International research has shown that such accents give rise to bias in different domains (e.g. recruitment, Spence et al., 2024; housing, Massey & Lundy, 2001). A study in Germany (Lorenz et al., 2024) demonstrates that students speaking with non-standard accents (both Lx and regional) also experience accent bias in the classroom. In Flanders, however, accent bias in educational settings remains underexplored. Therefore, we distributed a survey across secondary and higher education students. The study aims to examine (1) the extent to which they experience accent bias and anxiety, and (2) how these experiences are influenced by among others ethnicity and regional background. A set of preliminary hypotheses has been established. First, given that research in other contexts has shown that accent bias vis-à-vis Lx accents is stronger than vis-à-vis regional accents (Spence et al., 2024), we expect Lx speakers to report the most bias and anxiety. Second, we expect the effects of regional accents to be particularly pronounced in higher education, as students enter a more regionally diverse environment. Third, since non-standard speech is often linked to lower SES (Kraaykamp, 2005), low-SES speakers are likely to report more encounters with accent bias and anxiety than high-SES speakers. Finally, considering the association of standard language with educatedness (Impe & Speelman, 2007), we expect students in more practically oriented programmes to report fewer experiences of bias and anxiety than students in more academically oriented programmes. At the time of writing, the survey is still being distributed. However, the results will be available by the time of the CESSMIR conference. By focusing on accent bias in education, this study highlights how linguistic differences leads to inequalities in Flemish classrooms.

STREAM 5: Dialogue session ‘We have the solution – but how do we get it sold? (How can we achieve a science and human-rights-based European asylum policy in an era of political radicalisation?)

Room 2.3.

Chair: Robin Vandevoordt

This conference takes place in the very year the new European Pact on Asylum and Migration enters into force. Human rights organisations and migration experts are watching with growing concern as a system is rolled out that is likely to lead to far-reaching externalisation, increased detention, and a rising number of people left without access to protection. Rather than the responsibility-sharing solidarity it was set to establish between member states, the Pact is likely to legalise a permanent state of crisis at the border. The Pact reflects policymakers’ desire to curb the rise of the radical right, the political need to project decisiveness, and the typically European search for consensus between the divergent interests of Member States. Confidence in the Pact’s success is limited — as evidenced by the fact that, even before its implementation, negotiations were already underway to further tighten its provisions. It is the product of the political reality we live in, not of scientific understanding of migration. The Pact we are getting does not move anyone forward. And yet, alternatives exist. Belgian NGOs have developed an alternative model that places international cooperation and protection at its core – explicitly starting from scientific insights, with the help of Dr Ruben Wissing (Migration Law Research Group, Ghent University). Their “Bridge Model” maximises protection and integration opportunities for people on the move and rewards countries that invest in it. Politically, however, this model currently risks being dismissed as little more than a utopian vision. So the question becomes: how do we politically sell the Pact we actually need? Almost everyone working professionally on migration will recognise the frustration of watching policies take shape that seem to disregard research and evidence entirely. Rigorously applying scientific methods does not lead to societal or political impact. We may be right, but we are losing the debate. And those who lose the most are people in need of protection. But this does not have to be the end of the story. Can we shift the debate towards an evidence-based asylum policy that puts protection back at its centre? What happens if we bring together insights from social movements, political and social sciences, and European decision-making to design a winning strategy? By the end of this session, we hope to glimpse the light at the end of the tunnel.

Ruben Wissing (Ghent University) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Migration Law Research Group (MigrLaw) of Ghent University, Belgium. In 2022, he completed his PhD on refugee protection in Morocco through a multidisciplinary lens.

Joost Depotter (Flemish Refugee Action) is the policy and support coordinator at Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen.

Jean-Louis De Brouwer (Egmont Institute & USL-B) is Director of the European Affairs Programme at the Egmont Institute. He teaches Public Law, Political Science and EU Politics at the Saint Louis University of Brussels (USL-B) and the Catholic University of Mons (FUCAM).

Julie Lejeune (European Council on Refugees and Exiles) is the ECRE Director. Previously, she has held various positions in Belgian civil society organisations, the Belgian Federal Migration Centre (Myria) and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions.

Alberto-Horst Neidhardt is a Senior Policy Analyst and Head of European Migration and Diversity Programme at the European Policy Centre (EPC). He is also a visiting professor at the European School of Political and Social Sciences (ESPOL) at the University of Lille.

Femke de Vries (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland) is an advocate and lawyer with 20 years of experience in the fields of human rights, international law, and European and national refugee policy. Through advocacy at VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, she is dedicated to protecting the rights of refugees.

STREAM 3: The role of language (support) in asylum policy and procedures Room 3.1.

Chair: Katrijn Maryns

Zoe Nikolaidou (Södertörn University) and Hanna Sofia Rehnberg (Uppsala University)

Constructing SOGIESC identities in asylum interviews: Chronotopes in bordering encounters

This presentation examines how SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) identities are constructed in asylum interviews, where access to protection hinges on how experiences are interpreted and validated according to institutional norms. The study focuses on how case officers' questions invite applicants to situate their identities in particular times and spaces, and whether and how these invitations are taken up in interaction. The analysis draws on two audio-recorded asylum interviews and follow-up ethnographic interviews, both of which were described by the participants as successful interactions. Methodologically, the study adopts a small stories approach (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2007), viewing identity as emerging across interactionally embedded narrative moments. Theoretically, it draws on the concept of chronotope (Bakhtin 1981; Blommaert 2015) to examine how sexual and gender identities are positioned within configurations of time and space. The findings suggest that elements often associated with the Difference–Stigma–Shame–Harm (DSSH) model (Gyulai et al. 2015) earlier used in asylum interviews are interactionally constructed through chronotopic configurations, in which SOGIESC identities become narratively organised and institutionally intelligible. At the same time, the case officers' questioning broadly aligns with the EUAA's 2024 SOGIESC guidelines, which emphasise flexibility and sensitivity to individual experiences. This leaves room for applicants to construct different kinds of chronotopes that express diverse identity trajectories. The study contributes to research on language and migration by demonstrating how flexible and responsive questioning may structure asylum interviews in ways that enable applicants to creatively navigate time and space to make their experiences recognisable in institutional bordering encounters.

Maxime Maréchal (Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

Between epistemic and linguistic borders. The ambiguous position of interpreters in the bureaucratic evaluation of asylum claims

The concept of epistemic injustice indicates a structural negation of a subject as a knower. It is particularly prevalent in asylum interviews, characterized by a social and a racial gap between claimants and officers. Asylum seekers are indeed subject to both a “testimonial injustice” and a “hermeneutical injustice”: their credibility is radically put into question, and their knowledge is only considered valid whenever it corresponds to the expertise and doctrine of the institution and to the stereotyped representations of agents. In this context, interpreters, whose language skills almost always stem from their own foreign origins, have a very ambiguous role, torn between a sensitivity to epistemic injustice and the requirement to translate literally. This communication will analyse the crucial and highly ambiguous role of interpreters in the deployment of epistemic injustice in a context of restrictive asylum policies. It will also highlight interpreters’ specific agency, who can speak up (or not) when caseworkers misrepresent social realities, but do so in an epistemic margin which is neither recognized in the administrative record of the case, nor in the production of the administrative “truth”. The communication will build on the data of my doctoral research on the administration of asylum in France. In-depth interviews with interpreters (35, covering a total of 43 languages) highlight the variety of their dispositions towards both the institution and its public, depending on their migration background, their racial and gender socializations, and their professional seniority. The communication will also mobilize the observation of multiple asylum interviews (15), particularly those conducted with English interpreters, to analyze the way interpreters deal with the contradictory objectives of making asylum seekers’ voices heard and of turning their stories into simplified bureaucratic evidence.

Felix Bockel (Umeå University)

What is migration represented to be? Legal problem representation in the ECtHR’s case law on pushbacks

Migration is a highly contested and politicized issue across the state parties to the Convention. However, it is not only a social and political phenomenon but also a legal one as it is shaped by the ways in which institutions, in this thesis the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), define, categorize, frame, and represent migration and migrants. “Migration” and “migrants” are not self-evident categories; they are constructed through discourse which defines who is considered a migrant, what migrants represent, and how they should be governed. I intend to present a critical, interdisciplinary exploration of how the ECtHR represents migration and migrants throughout its case law on pushbacks. I am currently working with selected ECtHR judgments from 2012–2025, starting with *Hirsi Jamaa* and other key cases surrounding the so-called “migration crisis” of 2015. My analysis of these cases is guided by Bacchi’s What’s the problem represented to be? approach (WPR), adapted to legal material, to reveal underlying assumptions in legal reasoning, while securitization theory serves as the main theoretical perspective at this point in time. The Court’s case law on the practice of pushbacks has been chosen as it presents legal texts in which dominant narratives depicting migration as types of

crises or threat come to light and where state interests such as security, control, or sovereignty intersect with states' human rights obligations. My research aims to challenge taken-for-granted categorizations and highlights the role of legal discourse in defining, representing, and governing people on the move. For this conference, I would like to present early findings of an analysis of the discursive construction of recurring concepts throughout the case law of the Court, highlighting the power dynamics embedded in legal reasoning.

STREAM 2: Healthcare access for undocumented migrants

Room 3.2.

Chair: Sarah Derveeuw

Camille Guiheneuf (Institute of Health and Society)

Alternative organizations: a pathway to improve healthcare access for undocumented migrants

Existing literature highlights multiple barriers limiting undocumented migrants' access to healthcare, including administrative complexity, top-down governance, fear of control, or discretionary practices at the local level. In response to these structural gaps, organizations have emerged, such as community-led initiatives or non-profit organizations that seek to address issues of access to healthcare. Based on this observation, this PhD research project is developed to address whether and how these "alternative" organizations constitute a pathway to improving healthcare access for undocumented migrants. Situated within the field of public health and grounded in a concern for promoting social justice for communities structurally excluded from national health systems, the research project explores how undocumented migrants collectively organize around health issues and how these initiatives shape access to healthcare as a social determinant of health. This work focuses on examining both existing theoretical knowledge on healthcare access and a concrete example of how operate an alternative organization: the Mutuelle Autogérée des Sans-Papiers (MASP), a community-based organization operating in Brussels. Characterized by bottom-up governance, contextual sensitivity, and close proximity to beneficiaries, MASP challenges conventional, bureaucratic models of healthcare provision. Drawing on my position as a researcher and insider within MASP, this contribution employs a collaborative ethnographic methodology informed by feminist and decolonial epistemologies. By rejecting the figure of the distant researcher, it centers participants' lived experiences and knowledge. To conclude, this research project tends to highlight how alternative organizational practices can reduce health inequalities and contribute to more equitable healthcare systems.

Rafaela Pascoal (University of Palermo)

Between endowment and entitlement to access to healthcare: acts of citizenship of undocumented migrant women in the Sicilian healthcare system

Migration is organized by legal and social categories that limit access to rights, including health services (Bilecen, 2019). From an intersectional perspective, migrant women's wellbeing and access to health are particularly impacted by gender inequality and discrimination (Sannella and Lombardi, 2020). Undocumented migrant women face the lowest healthcare access due

to irregular status and gender, affecting their social, economic, and cultural rights and increasing health inequities (Torres and Young, 2016; Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991). This research contributes to literature on undocumented migrants' well-being by exploring the link between irregular migration and health from a gender perspective, focusing on undocumented migrant women's acts of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen, 2008). Based on the theoretical framework of fundamental causes (Link and Phelan, 1995), this research analyses the perception of street level bureaucrats, through the conduction of fifteen semi-structured interviews, in 2024–2025, on the endowment to health assets of undocumented migrant women in Sicily, by answering the following research questions: (1) how the undocumented status of migrant women affects their endowment in accessing healthcare?; (2) in what way does the socioeconomic status influence the access of undocumented migrant women to health? and (3) how can undocumented migrant women's social capital enhance their endowment to health? The research confirms the existence of fundamental causes hindering undocumented migrant women's access to healthcare, particularly low socioeconomic status and limited cultural capital in the receiving country, which influence multiple disease outcomes, exacerbate differential vulnerabilities through precarious housing and working conditions, while civil society entities support women's acts of citizenship by enhancing their capacity to claim rights through the provision of accurate information on entitlements.

Sarah Melsens (Dokters van de Wereld), Katty Creytens (Belgisch Netwerk Armoedebestrijding) and Ellen Verryt (Dokters van de Wereld)

Universal Access to Healthcare in Belgium? Not for undocumented migrants

The right to health is guaranteed by the Belgian Constitution and international human rights treaties, yet in practice it often remains out of reach for undocumented migrants. Excluded from the regular health insurance system, they must rely on the *Urgent Medical Assistance* (UMA) scheme, a parallel system that functions more as a humanitarian safety net than as an enforceable right. Although UMA is, in principle, intended to cover all medically necessary care, its name leads to persistent misconceptions. Both healthcare providers and eligible individuals often assume that only life-threatening conditions qualify for coverage. Combined with fear of contact with public authorities, this results in persistently low take-up: only about 20% of those potentially eligible to the scheme actually make use of it. Despite this low take-up, the public debate continues to be dominated by a discourse centered on social fraud and stricter controls, even though there is no evidence that UMA encourages excessive use of healthcare services. Moreover, the system fails to adequately address the social determinants of health and coverage for essential healthcare including dental care, orthopedic devices, and necessary medicines is frequently denied. The consequences are severe: delayed treatment, an increased risk of complications and premature mortality, alongside growing pressure on emergency departments. In its 2025 report, the Belgian Court of Audit confirmed the inefficiency and inequality of the current UMA policy. A structural reform is urgently needed to ensure that the right to health is guaranteed as a genuine and enforceable right for everyone.

Valkyria Dantas Rattmann (University of Liège)

Navigating Precarity: Health-Related Struggles and Coping Strategies among Brazilian Female Cleaning Workers in Brussels

Undocumented migrants are known to face health-related issues in their countries of residence, often being excluded from formal healthcare. When considering those working in physically demanding jobs, the literature on social determinants of health demonstrates that this is even more concerning, as the health risks involved in their economic activity make them vulnerable to greater and prolonged health deterioration. In this scenario, migrant communities implement various health-seeking strategies in their countries of residence, aiming to overcome gaps and inequalities in healthcare provision. Therefore, such communities may resort to transnational tactics, rely on kinship connections, and use similar services to those they would find at home. Through interviews and participant observation with undocumented Brazilian cleaning workers in Brussels, this article highlights the accessibility issues affecting this community — including bureaucratic barriers and the group's socioeconomic vulnerabilities — and how they articulate formal and informal social protection tactics to (partially) provide for their healthcare needs. Considering how mobility shapes new healthcare landscapes and inspired by the concept of healthcare bricolage (Phillimore, 2019), these strategies include: engaging in transnational healthcare practices, searching for Lusophone professionals within the Belgian healthcare system, privileging familiar medical practices, and activating networks as health-seeking spaces. The results demonstrate that, besides implementing such tactics to fulfill healthcare needs, these can also originate from a perceived higher quality of the home country's medicines and/or doctors.

STREAM 6: Symposium 'Art as Decolonial Epistemology: Reconfiguring Knowledge in Critical Migration Studies'

Room 3.3.

Chair: Elisa Robbe, Giacomo Orsini and Alexandra Sanchez

Critical migration studies have reshaped how mobility, borders, and belonging are understood; dismantling state-centered narratives, exposing racialized governance, and tracing colonial continuities in border control. Yet even it confronts epistemic violence, the literature often remains tethered to the epistemological architectures it seeks to undo; frameworks that predetermine what counts as knowledge, evidence, and truth (Ticktin and Youatt 2022). This symposium argues that epistemic justice requires more than critique, demanding a decolonial reconfiguration of how migration becomes knowable. We suggest that such a reconfiguration calls for decolonial art-based methodologies—not as add-ons or illustrations – but as foundational epistemic interventions capable of transforming the conditions under which knowledge about migration is produced, validated, and circulate. As decolonial reasoning, art interrupts the authority of detached observation. It collapses the divide between researcher and researched, theory and practice, knower and known. Knowledge emerges collaboratively, through shared labour and world-making. Such processes redistribute epistemic authority and challenge the presumption that theory must precede or subsume lived experience. Art allows experience to theorize. Moreover, decolonial artistic reasoning legitimizes affect, memory,

imagination, and sensory perception as epistemic grounds. It contests the colonial privileging of transparency and full disclosure, insisting that opacity can be a condition of dignity rather than a deficit of clarity. By holding ambiguity, silence, and excess without forcing them into analytic closure, art resists humanitarian and security logics that demand complete visibility. Art also generates counter-archives and speculative cartographies that unsettle dominant temporalities of crisis and emergency. It foregrounds slow violence, afterlives, and futurities that exceed policy categories. In doing so, it expands the conceptual vocabulary of migration studies, by transforming the frameworks themselves. The symposium positions art as decolonial epistemology that reorients how migration is known and, in doing so, transforms the very conditions under which critical migration studies produces know. It asks what does it mean to approach art as a decolonial epistemology? How does art function as a site of epistemic justice, reconfiguring the terms of evidence, theory, and validity in critical migration studies? In what ways can arts-based methodologies foster relational, processual, and accountable modes of knowing that resist turning lived experience into objects of analysis?

Dominika Mikołajczyk (University of Groningen)

From Voice to Sonus: Sound Culture as Method for Memory and Migration Research

The paper “From Voice to Sonus: Sound Culture as Method for Memory and Migration Research” by Mikołajczyk proposes sound as an art-based participatory method for environmental memory and migration research at the Bulgaria–Turkey–Greece border. Contemporary humanitarian and institutional discourses privilege coherent, emotionally legible narratives of traumatic migration that are curated to meet neoliberal expectations of legitimacy and, in doing so, risk reproducing global hierarchies rather than intervening in the conditions that produce displacement. Within this economy, the refugee “voice” is foregrounded as testimony, while political agency is constrained by scripts of victimhood. The project shifts attention away from voice to listening as both research method and spatial, embodied practice. How one moves through space shapes how one listens; conversely, altering listening practices may transform how bodies move through, relate to, and inhabit space. Methodologically, this entails designing situations in which listening is facilitated as a slowed-down, shared, and collective performance of memory. The border is thus activated as an acoustic environment in which human and nonhuman sonic presences intersect and co-produce memory. Drawing on meLê Yamomo’s concept of the sonus, the project distinguishes between sound as mediated phenomenon and sonus as embodied resonance. This distinction grounds the participatory design of a research method that treats sound as a relational event shared among participants whose relationships to the border and to migration differ. Rather than collecting testimonial narratives, participants engage in facilitated listening encounters that explore how sensory reception shapes memory, relation, and belonging. In this way, listening becomes both object and instrument of research, intervening in the conditions that reproduce hierarchies of citizenship and challenging dominant politics of emplacement.

Khaoula Stiti

Seven Cards: Artefacts of Time

This presentation examines seven Belgian residence permit cards as material artefacts of storytelling and counter-narrative. Rather than treating stay cards as neutral administrative documents, I foreground them as objects through which migrant experience, knowledge, and resistance can be centred. Each of my seven cards documents successive migration statuses: five during PhD study, one for job-seeking, and two during permanent employment (yet requiring annual renewal). Together, they reveal how migration governance imposes differentiated temporal regimes—time weaponised differently depending on perceived utility. But more fundamentally, these cards tell my narrative: they contest state-centred accounts by centring the lived experience of waiting, precarity, and cyclical administrative scrutiny. This work employs an embodied methodology: I position my lived experience and material artefacts as legitimate knowledge production, rejecting hierarchies that privilege institutional over migrant perspectives. The cards become sites where I reclaim narrative authority—telling the story of migration control through the temporalities and materiality of lived experience rather than policy documents or administrative logic. By centring my own narrative through these seven artefacts, I contribute to migration studies that foreground migrant knowledge and lived experience. The cards demonstrate how storytelling and material culture serve as forms of self-representation and resistance against migration control.

Anya Naumova (University of Groningen)

Art as a Relational Method for Exploring Youth Perceptions of Migration

“Art as a Relational Method for Exploring Youth Perceptions of Migration,” by Anya Naumova explores how young people in peripheral regions negotiate belonging in contexts where migration is framed as cultural transformation and a threat to national identity. Because narratives of cultural threat operate through emotions, such as fear, attachment, nostalgia, or resentment, sole reliance on survey-based or discursive methods risks overlooking the embodied and relational aspects of meaning-making. Art-based and participatory methods offer tools to access these dimensions by enabling young people to express understandings of heritage and belonging beyond purely verbal articulation (Moralli 2024, 2023; Leung 2025; Ball 2020; Ballard et al. 2019; Barone 2025; Cornish et al. 2023; Green et al. 2021; Godden 2025; Godden et al. 2020;). Rather than treating artistic outputs as illustrative data, the project conceptualises creative practice as a relational event in which the method creates a space for self-expression and collective reflection.

Lerato Islam (University of Auckland)

Thinking With- Worldbuilding as a decolonial creative approach to knowledge production

Decolonial approaches to research challenge extractivist practices that position communities and people as sources of data rather than producers of knowledge. This is especially pertinent in forced migration studies, where, although testimony-based research plays an important role in exposing structural violence, it can also reproduce epistemic injustice. A decolonised approach to forced migration research must look to move beyond approaches that centre narration alone, and instead create conditions in which communities can participate as active knowledge producers. To explore this possibility, I propose worldbuilding as a creative, theatre-based research methodology. Worldbuilding invites participants to collaboratively

design fictional worlds, institutions, services, and possible futures through creative workshops. Rather than asking individuals to recount or justify their experiences, worldbuilding invites participants to externalise their values, critiques, hopes and political insights through speculative design. The imagined worlds function as sites of knowledge production- they synthesize lived experience, structural analysis and future-oriented thinking without requiring participants to disclose personal narratives or perform vulnerability. I argue that worldbuilding also create the conditions for *transcensus*: a mode of collective knowledge production in which diverse perspectives are held in productive relation. In doing so, worldbuilding recognises research participants as experts, refuses deficit-based framings and creates relational, plural and non-extractive spaces of inquiry through a creative, dynamic and reciprocal research space.

STREAM 1: Dialogue session: ‘Connecting the dots: Newly Arrived Migrant Students’ experiences across language, wellbeing, and (dis)ability’

Room 2.2.

Chair: Chloé Lybaert

Reception education for newly arrived migrant students is informed by a range of research perspectives, including language learning, psychosocial wellbeing, and (dis)ability. While each of these perspectives offers valuable insights, they often remain disconnected, resulting in fragmented understandings of students’ experiences and educational trajectories. This dialogue session brings together researchers from three complementary fields: language acquisition and development (Shauny Seynhaeve), psychosocial wellbeing and trauma (Sarah Devos), and (dis)ability (Elisabeth De Schauwer). Through a series of short presentations, they will highlight key findings and emerging questions from their respective research domains. Steven Delarue (Onderwijscentrum Gent) and Nathalie Vandenameele (Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen) will subsequently reflect on these insights from policy and educational practice perspectives. Together, speakers and participants will explore how these different lenses intersect and how a more integrated understanding can contribute to research, policy, and practice in reception education.

Steven Delarue (Onderwijscentrum Gent) is a policy officer for language, multilingualism, and newcomer education, and author of books including ‘Meertaligheid in de klas. Veelgestelde vragen beantwoorden.’ (Academia Press, 2025). In 2016, he earned his PhD in Linguistics from Ghent University.

Nathalie Vandenameele (Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen) is an educational advisor focused on equal educational opportunities for (former) newcomers in primary and secondary education.

Bart Deygers (Ghent University) is an Associate professor Second Language Acquisition & language testing. His research interests include language testing for migration purposes and for the purpose of university admission.

Sarah Devos (Ghent University) is postdoctoral researcher in Health Sociology at Ghent University, working on the Flemish component of the Prevent Too project, an international collaboration investigating inequalities in the use of preventive healthcare, and on social mobility and loneliness in later life.

Elisabeth De Schauwer (Ghent University) is visiting professor within the Department of Special Needs Education at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences with a teaching and research assignment. Her research mainly focuses on the influence of disability on

(pedagogical) relationships within educational and family contexts.

STREAM 3: Symposium 'Multilingual and intercultural boundaries in helping encounters

for migrants'

Room 2.4.

Chair: Marie Jacobs, Lotte Remue and Katrijn Maryns

Kristina Gustafsson (University of Helsinki)

Multilingual participant support for people with migration experiences and disabilities.

"I have learned to highlight the date, time and location. That is what matters the most. I tag the letter on the refrigerator in the kitchen, and my children reminds me, where to go and when". Miriam is a single mother of four children living in Sweden for ten years. She cannot speak Swedish although she understands some, and she cannot read or write. In the quote she explains one strategy she uses for handling official letters, from children's schools, the tax authorities, the Swedish social insurance agency and health and medical care. We have an interpreter in Somali language when we discuss this. Both Miriam and the interpreter participated in a project that took place in a midsize city in Southern Sweden 2023-2025. The project's target group was migrants with disabilities defined as situated in double vulnerable positions as they risked disadvantages and discrimination in relation to their disability and their language skills. The project developed and implemented multilingual participant support, based on the principal of language justice, meaning that people in every situation should be able to listen, speak and make themselves understood in the language they feel most comfortable with. One key for the multilingual participant support is access to trained interpreters and service providers trained in linguistically responsive practice. Hence, they are also targets for the project. The aim of this paper is to describe the experiences among the participants of having multilingual participant support in their contacts with authorities and public services and to critically discuss the methodologies on language justice developed in the project in relation to a wider societal discourse about linguistic justice and monolingualistic hegemonies.

Simon O'Donovan (Ghent University)

Transience, language, and migration outside of the states gaze: the methodological consequences

The methodological approaches used for collecting data on transient migrants outside of/excluded from the formal asylum application process can become bordering events. The research I am currently conducting investigates the impact of transience on identity practices and linguistic repertoires among young male participants outside of the formal asylum process in Belgium. The participants are being provided language lessons (Dutch, English, and French) by volunteers, of whom I am one, at a grassroots initiative called École Maximilien based in Brussels. This backstage context is characterised by a precariousness and diverse migrant population, of whom some have had their applications for international protection rejected, whereas others are yet to make one. The context is ruled by fluidity and uncertainty, for the

migrants, but is also echoed in the temporary makeshift nature of the école and its volunteers. Interestingly, the transient nature of this context challenges the traditional methods used in an ethnographic approach. Therefore, I am attempting to re-tool an ethnographic approach in order to allow the transience of the participants, the site and my own research practices to be analysed. I am employing participatory action research and arts-based research as a methodological approach, allowing a decentring of the researcher and a democratisation of the data production processes. Co-creation, co-design, and co-production of storytelling through voice and visual mediums (e.g. photography) can potentially equip participants to (re)position and reclaim voice in opposition to the performed voice required by the state. This presentation aims to explore the issues surrounding my ethnographic data collection where transience becomes both border and gateway for those traversing the front and backstage contexts of seeking international protection.

Laura Smith-Khan (University of New England)

Communicating in Diversity: Migration Law Practitioners' Interactions with Their Clients.

Communicating in Diversity: Migration Law Practitioners' Interactions with Their Clients. Australia's migration regime is increasingly complex and growing, with over 9.5 million visa applications annually. Around 50% of people living in Australia were either born overseas themselves or had a parent born overseas and over 22% speak a language other than English at home. Both existing research and government procedural guidelines consider linguistic and cultural diversity during 'frontstage' Australian migration encounters between applicants and decision-makers, like Immigration interviews and appeals. However, other actors, including legal representatives, and their impact on procedural communication and the navigation of linguistic diversity, have received much less scholarly and institutional attention. The research that does exist has demonstrated that having access to (high-quality) professional assistance has been identified as a key determinant for the success of visa applications. Legal advisors also influence clients' decision-making and communication with immigration officials throughout the application process, both in written form and during immigration interviews. This includes using their expert 'legal linguistic' skills to present their clients' claims in a form and manner that best aligns with institutional expectations. Therefore, this presentation shares findings from two projects, involving interviews with 18 Australian migration law practitioners, in order to contribute new knowledge about the roles they play in navigating linguistic diversity and institutional communication. It explores their beliefs about and reported practices when it comes to communicating with their clients and mediating their clients' communication with migration authorities. In doing so, it seeks to understand the implications of these beliefs and choices for prospective migrants' participation in Australia's migration regime and ultimately their migration outcomes.

Anna Sourdille (University of Vienna)

Who counts as 'us'? Peer interpreting and inclusion/exclusion in queer refugee counselling

Research on language and migration has documented linguistic inequality, power asymmetries, and gatekeeping in frontstage asylum encounters (e.g., interviews and court hearings). By contrast, the backstage "helping encounters" where migrants seek support and

care remain underexamined. This presentation focuses on one such setting: legal and social counselling for LGBTIQ+ refugees at Queer Base, a Vienna-based NGO that adopts a peer-to-peer approach for their counselling and interpreter provision. Most Queer Base interpreters find themselves in a complex situation: as LGBTIQ+ community members, they interpret for peers navigating an asylum process that scrutinises their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The Queer Base clearing process, usually preceding formal asylum interviews, functions as an internal assessment to determine eligibility for NGO support. This process involves verifying whether individuals genuinely align with Queer Base's target group, significantly influencing resource allocation decisions. By analysing focus groups and interviews with interpreters and staff at Queer Base, I explore how these interpreters navigate their dual positionality – being both members of the LGBTIQ+ community and facilitators in legal and social counselling processes. Against this backdrop, this study aims to address critical questions: How do Queer Base interpreters perceive their role within this process? How do they navigate issues of credibility, distinguishing between 'truth' and 'lying'? Which specific dynamics of inclusion and exclusion are at play? The aim of this investigation is to shed light on the complex boundaries, norms and practices involved in interpreting for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers during backstage encounters, and to contribute to the broader discourse on interpreting for marginalised communities.

STREAM 2: Dialogue session 'How to tackle inequalities in mental healthcare for newcomers and minoritized groups (both in access & treatment)'

Room 3.1.

Chair: Ilse Derluyn

This dialogue session brings together researchers and frontline practitioners to examine how inequalities in mental healthcare for newcomers and minoritized groups can be effectively addressed, in terms of access, quality of treatment, and training for future mental healthcare workers. Grounded in the intersections of migration, race, and health, the roundtable/dialogue session will explore structural barriers, institutional practices, and everyday challenges encountered in diverse care settings. Drawing on expertise from academia (Ghent University) and practice-based organizations (ULYSSE, PC Sleidinge), participants will share insights on culturally responsive care, linguistic accessibility, and the slow, step-by-step institutional work required to make services more inclusive—illustrated, for instance, through ongoing efforts to introduce interpretation tools, staff training in transcultural care, and more diverse recruitment in psychiatric settings. The session will also reflect on the role of education and professional training in preparing future practitioners to work in superdiverse contexts. Through an open dialogue, the panel aims to identify concrete and realistic pathways toward more equitable and inclusive mental healthcare systems.

Ama Kissi (Ghent University) is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Experimental and Clinical Psychology at Ghent University. She is the writer of 'Witte zorg, zwarte leed' (Borgerhoff & Lamberigts, 2025). In 2026, she was elected Psychologist of the Year by Gentse Alumni Psychologie for her research on inequalities within healthcare.

Herbert Roeyers (Ghent University) is Professor of clinical psychology, chair of the study programme committee for psychology and head of the Research in Developmental Diversity Lab (RIDDL) in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Ghent University, Belgium. He studies autism, ADHD and atypical development in preterm born children.

Ondine Dellicour (ULYSSE) is coordinator at ULYSSE, which provides specialized mental health care, psychological support, and social accompaniment for exiled individuals, asylum seekers, and refugees.

Annelies Van Diest (PC Sleidinge) is a psychologist at the psychiatric centrum Gent-Sleidinge.

Hilde Depauw (Ghent University) is a postdoctoral researcher, studying how meaningful conversations about cultural identity are incorporated into psychotherapy and their effects on psychotherapy process and outcome variables. She has a joint PhD in Psychology and Sociology.

STREAM 5: Navigating legal uncertainty and precarity

Room 3.2.

Chair: Ellen Desmet

Cecilia Manzotti (University of Sussex)

Seeking asylum in Europe: Nationality as border

In my presentation, I intend to critically examine the role that asylum seekers' nationality has acquired in the screening and adjudication of asylum applications in Europe. Based on a combination of doctrinal analysis and empirical methods (questionnaires and interviews with asylum decision makers and legal representatives in three European countries), I argue that for those seeking asylum in Europe nationality operates as a border, both in law and informal practices, in three different ways. First, nationality is critical in determining access to the territory of the state, the asylum procedure or its full procedural guarantees, and international protection. Notably, European countries increasingly resort to simplified procedures for applicants originating from countries deemed safe, and under the Pact on Migration and Asylum certain nationalities will have their application assessed at the border, in a situation of de facto detention. Second, just as borders are often contentious, nationality may become a point of contention and negotiation between the applicant and the asylum authorities. On the one hand, the authorities blame applicants for not cooperating in identification procedures and test their nationality claims through various methods. On the other hand, applicants try to comply with the authorities' expectations regarding evidence of nationality, or, conversely, conceal their nationality. Third, as borders are defined by those who hold the power, in the absence of any documentary proof of nationality, the asylum authorities actually determine, in the sense of decide rather than simply verify, the applicant's nationality status. Ultimately, it can be argued that, even when the 'procedural nationality' decided by the authorities

corresponds to the applicant's actual nationality, nationality status is a category created by receiving states and used to include/exclude asylum seekers, rather than a pre-existing status that the authorities simply ascertain.

Maciej Grześkowiak (Ghent University)

The Gap Between Temporary Refuge and Asylum: A Critical Analysis of the Entrenchment of the EU Temporary Protection Regime for Ukrainian Refugees

The aim of this paper is to examine EU-wide dynamics in the evolution of the temporary protection (TP) regime for Ukrainian refugees, including through the case study of Poland. The analysis is conducted through the lens of the 'gap between temporary refuge and asylum', a concept developed in my forthcoming book to describe how temporary forms of protection—conceived as emergency responses to large-scale displacement—become entrenched over time. In response to large-scale displacement, states increasingly favour temporary forms of protection over 'regular' asylum procedures. While such measures have value in crisis situations, in the longer term—with no transition to durable asylum—they cement beneficiaries' deeply precarious legal status. The 'gap between temporary refuge and asylum' thus denotes a legal space in which protection is granted but stability is withheld, and displaced persons remain trapped in a condition of perpetual 'temporariness'. The use of TP in the EU, and in Poland in particular, exemplifies this phenomenon. In 2022, TP was the right emergency response. Four years later, however, continued reliance on this mechanism raises serious doubts as to its legality and appropriateness. The Council of the EU has extended TP beyond the three-year limit, while EU-level guidance on phasing out TP encourages cementing 'temporariness' rather than promoting access to durable asylum. These EU-level tendencies are reflected in the Polish legal framework, which encourages TP beneficiaries to transition to temporary residence permits primarily linked to employment. This approach fails to guarantee legal stability, excludes those unable to obtain such permits, and may encourage premature returns. Drawing on five years of research into the relationship between temporary and durable forms of international protection, the paper contributes to debates on the future of Ukrainian refugees in the EU and on the limits of the normative usefulness of temporary protection.

Nazia Hassan (KU Leuven)

From Separation to Reunification: Migration journeys of Afghan unaccompanied refugee minors and their families

Migration and family reunification form complex trajectories in relation to vulnerable groups, particularly unaccompanied refugee minors (URMs). URMs and their vulnerabilities constitute significant research/and policy concerns in the European context. However, how their migration/separation is experienced by their parents/families and, in turn, how these URMs navigate their families' reunification are least visible in the existing scholarship. This study explores the migration and reunification experiences of Afghan URMs and their families in Belgium. It focuses on the URMs' parental narratives, and investigates how Afghan URMs navigate their families' reunification and related migration-infrastructure across Belgium and native/transit locations. Significantly, it investigates how the reunification processes and

related migration/bordering practices reinforce precarities for the URM and their families. By engaging Hage's concepts; "stuckness" (2009), understood as a state of existential and physical immobility, and "internationalization of the space of viability" (2021), it explores the linkages between parental experiences of uncertainties/and separation (from minor children) and URM's stuckness during their families' reunification processes. Ethnographic methods will be used to study Afghan minors/men—who arrived as unaccompanied minors—and their parents in Brussels and Mons. Telephonic interviews will be conducted with parents who are waiting (in home regions) to join their sons in Belgium. This study adds a novel perspective to the intergenerational experiences of mobility (in)justice via exploring both parental and children's embedded experiences of migration-infrastructure, reunification-processes and related uncertainties, at native and destination contexts. It aligns with the conference's fifth theme to critically reimagine borders and mobility (in)justice in relation to URM and their families, originating from conflict-affected regions of the South.

Alix Ernoux and Luc Leboeuf (University of Liège)

Multidisciplinary Age Assessment for Migrants in Belgium: A Paradigm Shift or 'Business as Usual'

Being recognized as minors is even more essential for migrant children since it preconditions access to their rights. Yet, as in asylum procedures, a 'culture of disbelief' prevails (Kagan 2003; Anderson, Hollaus, Lindsay, and Williamson 2014; Jubany 2017). Children's declarations do not suffice to establish their age. They are expected to produce official documents and/or undergo an age assessment conducted by the authorities (Jault-Seseke, 2022). The age determination process used to mainly rely on medical evaluations, such as tests measuring bone density. Such tests have been widely criticized by civil society organisations due to their inaccuracy, and condemned by the ECtHR (F.B. v. Belgium, 6 March 2025). The new EU asylum procedures regulation, which will be implemented on 12 June 2026, now requires a multidisciplinary age assessment that involves psycho-social workers (Reg. 2024/1348). This begs the question whether the new age assessment process will reshape protections for migrants' children, in ways that duly acknowledge their experiences and give them back a voice. This paper addresses that question through the analysis of the reform towards a multidisciplinary age assessment process in Belgium. It therefore combines the study of the relevant legislation, case-law, and administrative guidelines, with the analysis of qualitative data that were collected through participant observations (which were conducted during the stakeholder consultations organised by the asylum authority) and interviews with stakeholders (lawyers, guardian services, asylum authority, immigration office, NGOs, doctors, guardians and civil courts). Based on these data, the paper will evaluate if the reform weakens or reinforces the 'culture of disbelief': does it pave the way for evidentiary practices that duly acknowledge the words of migrant children? Or does it merely substitute multidisciplinary assessments for bone tests, while misusing the expertise of psychosocial workers?

Anja Van den Durpel (Ghent University)

Criminalisation of migration and the enhancement of free passing of exploitation

This contribution focuses on the nexus between criminalisation of migration and access to basic rights, specifically migrant victims of crime who are in an irregular residence situation

their access to victims rights and support in Belgium. In contemporary society, irregularised migrants and persons who support them are being criminalised through processes of restricting legal and policy infrastructures (Delvino, 2019; Van den Durpel, 2022). Secondly, narratives and discourses of 'illegals' who 'illegally' entered the EU and are unauthorised to stay on the nation's territory and who, consequently, should not be entitled to ('enjoy') rights significantly contribute to this criminalisation (Van den Durpel, 2024). Thirdly, the lived (and often self-fulfilling) experiences of irregularised victims of crime -already seriously hampered by shame, fear and lack of knowledge- foster criminalisation as the rare occasions in which they are willing to make their victimhood know and/or file a complaint with the police are often met with criminalisation and penalisation, instead of being addressed as a victim. This three key dimensions of the irregularity assemblage (Sigona & Van Liempt, 2025) are shown through the Visa Roc research and its predecessor Safe Reporting of Crime. The presentation offers a critical reflection on the contemporary societal and legal position of migrants in an irregular residence situation. It aims to stimulate debate on how migration scholars can respond to the undeservingness discourses and how academia can help shape a way forward towards social justice for irregularised migrants.

STREAM 6: Dialogue session: 'Affective Frontiers of Anthropological Fieldwork with Migrant Communities'

Room 3.3.

Chair: Elisa Robbe, Giacomo Orsini and Alexandra Sanchez

Sofia Cash (Ibero-American University)

Affectives frontiers of anthropological fieldwork with migrant communities

A collective reflection on the affective, ethical, and political frontiers of anthropological fieldwork with migrant communities. Departing from the premise that knowledge production is never neutral, the session could seek to foreground how emotions, vulnerability, care, and embodied presence shape research practices in contexts marked by violence, displacement, and forced mobility. My reflections about the topic are grounded in long-term ethnographic and volunteer fieldwork conducted in migrant shelters in Mexico City, where research, care practices, and everyday coexistence become deeply entangled. Rather than positioning myself as an external observer, this experience revealed the porous boundaries between researchers and interlocutors, academic responsibility and human involvement, observation and action. These "affective frontiers" challenge conventional methodological frameworks and call for a critical rethinking of positionality, accountability, and the politics of representation in migration research. Through narrative and autoethnographic reflections, I would like to explore how emotions operate as a site of knowledge production and ethical tension. We can address questions such as: How do emotions, exhaustion, empathy, and fear shape what we see, record, and write? What responsibilities emerge when research is conducted within spaces of care, such as shelters, camps, or community organizations? How can participatory, narrative, and artistic forms of knowledge production contribute to decolonizing migration studies without reproducing extractive logics?

Marwa Neji (Ghent University)

Decolonizing Migration Studies Facing the Rise of Nationalism in Europe: An Epistemological Conceptualization

The global social hierarchy is deeply influenced by the enduring legacies of colonialism and the dichotomy between former colonial powers and previously/colonized states. Migration studies Mobility studies, particularly in postcolonial contexts, remain critical fields of inquiry that reveal these power structures. This paper examines the implications of postcolonial and decolonial theories for research on women's mobility, foregrounding the politicization of movement as a colonial inheritance. The first section analyzes how colonial research practices are perpetuated in the categorization of "outsiders", aligning with the rise of nationalism in several European nations. The second section will then explore the positionality of women researchers within migration studies from a decolonial feminist perspective, particularly as a migrant women researcher myself, I am not to analysis of the developed "colonial relationship", but mainly, the analysis of how the global intersects with the local, in the experiences of individual agents (Gille & Riain 2002). After clarifying what I mean by "mobility bias," I propose arguments for an epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009), to counteract the colonial genealogy of global inequality, advocating for a decolonized approach to knowledge production in the field of migration studies.

Chirine Chalak (Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Solidarity towards migrants and antiracist practices in Morocco

Morocco has become over the past decades a place of settlement for people coming from subsaharan countries. Different types of actors ranging from international organisation to local individuals have started to help and defends foreigners who recently arrived in Morocco to fill a gap left by the insufficient state policies. However, as a result of the shrinking space of civil society and the increased criminalisation of solidarity, helping migrants has become a form of dissent and resistance. The general objective of the research is to understand the forms of solidarity actors imagine and implement at the local level to defend migrants and counter xenophobic discourses and discriminatory practices in Morocco. It aims to answer the research question what forms of informal solidarity and anti racist practices emerge within grassroots organisations supporting migrants? To answer this question, the research draws on ethnographic qualitative methods, focusing on one organisation led by migrants to help women on the move by offering them temporary shelter. It is academically relevant as it de-centres the focus of migration and solidarity studies from Western to Global South settings. Using an intersectional approach to understand the different types of oppression their are facing and a decolonial feminist approach to analyse their strategies, it aims at shifting the narrative and put an emphasis on migrants' imaginative agency.

STREAM 5&6: Symposium 'Mapping the debate on human rights and migration'
Room 2.3.

Chair: Thomas Spijkerboer

Thomas Spijkerboer, Salahadin Ali, Ahmed Elsayed, Alex Geraki Trimi and Ana Luz Manzano Orti
(Ghent University)

Public debates about migration in Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand, but also in various locations in the Global South/Third World/emerging countries, are increasingly xenophobic, racialised, securitised and exclusionary. At first sight, one would expect human rights and ethics to be a source of a different narrative about this, based on liberal values such as individual rights and the blessings of the free movement of capital, goods and persons. However, human rights institutions (courts, commissions, committees) as well as migration ethics discourse turn out to be well capable of absorbing, to a large extent, the exclusionary characteristics of this debate. Based on the work of authors such as Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, Bas Schotel and José Jorge Mendoza, we observe that the capacity of human rights and ethics to absorb and reproduce exclusion is not a conjunctural issue related to political developments over the past two decades, but is a structural element right from the start. By presenting our work in progress in the MIGJUST project, we hope to offer two contributions. First, we propose to rethink human rights and migration ethics by not assuming that they are necessarily benign for migrants (but potentially led astray by xenophobic etc. temptations) but that they may be fundamentally problematic (not part of the solution but part of the problem, so to speak). In doing so, we partly rely on poststructuralist/postcolonial and, decolonial approaches but partly also on materialist approaches (Samir Amin, Cedric Robinson, B.S. Chimni). Secondly, we propose to reflect on the (im)possibilities of decolonising academic work (Tuck & Yang 2012) on human rights, migration and ethics by focusing our research on materials from the Global South but also by questioning what is the most effective theoretical and methodological framework for doing so (for example the critique of Cusicanqui 2012 of decolonial theory)

STREAM 5: Socio-legal migration research at street level
Room 3.2.

Chair: Sophie Bols

Alina Petith (University of Urbino)

Law as a Site of Power: The Discursive Construction of Gender-Based Violence in Asylum Proceedings

Gender-based violence remains structurally underrepresented as a reason for asylum in German proceedings. This article examines constructions of gender-based violence and of the subjects being granted protection for their gender based claims for asylum by actors involved

in asylum negotiations. This article does not ask whether decisions are legally correct, but rather what logic they generate – from the perspective of judges and lawyers. The focus is two of the actors involved in the asylum procedure: What intentions, professional self-perceptions, and structural constraints guide judges and lawyers? What implicit norms about the “right” victim subject – the woman who has experienced violence – shape their actions? And how do these internal perspectives relate to the actual observable procedural practices? This article is embedded in a sociology of knowledge ethnography (according to Keller iA 2019) of the dispositif “asylum proceedings involving gender-specific persecution.” Methodologically, it is based on expert interviews with key participants in the process, evaluated using sociological discourse analysis. This opens up a level that discourse analysis and ethnography alone cannot reach: the subjective horizons of interpretation of the actors and their intertwining with structural conditions such as time pressure, high case numbers, and political pressure. The article understands the asylum procedure as a place of discursive and practical (re)production of power. It shows how institutional constraints and normative assumptions interact and contribute to the systematic invisibility of gender-based violence—and thus reproduce existing social power relations in law.

Emma Vescovi and Claire Lefort-Rieu (University of Liège)

Governing Deportation Through Law and Practice: Ethnographic Perspectives on Control and Non-Compliance in Belgium

This paper examines contemporary return practices in Belgium, focusing on administrative detention, forced returns, so-called voluntary return programmes, and the development of “alternatives to detention”. Drawing on the collective research project MigrantsInCourt (University of Liège – FNRS) and multi-sited ethnography, we analyse how return law and policy are enacted, negotiated, and sometimes resisted in everyday practices. Our research combines fieldwork within federal administrations (Lefort-Rieu), with migrants subject to return procedures and their lawyers (Vescovi), and with judges and prosecutors (Andreetta). This approach highlights how return policies are shaped not only by formal legal frameworks, but also by informal practices, institutional constraints, and power relations embedded in bordering processes. We examine how discourses of individual responsibility, cooperation, and voluntariness structure return governance around a persistent tension between the optimisation of state coercive power and legal frameworks formally aimed at protecting fundamental rights. Focusing on changes in detention centre governance and the increasing use of alternatives to detention, we show how arrangements presented as safeguards or humanitarian innovations often reconfigure or extend coercive control. Law thus plays an ambivalent role, simultaneously enabling intensified control over migrants’ mobility while providing resources through which this power is supervised and at times contested. Methodologically, this paper reflects on the ethical and epistemological challenges of conducting ethnographic research in highly contested and precarious institutional spaces. We argue that attending to the lived experiences of migrants, frontline bureaucrats, and legal actors opens up critical perspectives on return practices.

Ellen Desmet (Ghent University), Karel Arnaut (KU Leuven), Ilse Derluyn (Ghent University) and Katrijn Maryns (Ghent University)

This paper proposes the concept of “critical moments” as a methodological lense to analyse asylum procedures. Asylum procedures are challenging, partly due to the diverse socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds of all actors involved (such as applicants, officials, interpreters, and lawyers) and the interactions between them. The UNPACK project integrates insights from four disciplines – linguistics, anthropology, psychology and law – to examine the lived experiences of those involved. Through in-depth ethnographic research, focusing both on specific case studies and on the broader organizational context, UNPACK seeks to gain a better understanding of the asylum procedure in Belgium. To that end, the concept of ‘critical moments’ provides a bridge between actors’ and analysts’ categories, an analytical tool for managing large datasets and for conducting coherent team-based analysis, and a foundation for an empirically grounded conceptualization of fairness. The paper proceeds in two parts. The first section develops a working definition of ‘critical moments’. Provisionally, critical moments are understood as instances or events perceived as significant that exhibit one or more of the following characteristics: (i) they give rise to divergent interpretations among the actors involved; (ii) they generate divergent interpretations across disciplinary perspectives; (iii) they affect perceptions of fairness in asylum procedures; (iv) they are highly influential in asylum decision-making. The second part of the paper focuses on asylum interviews, proposing a categorization of critical moments in personal hearings as to their key features and potential consequences. This analysis draws on literature grounded in direct observations of asylum interviews (“first-hand”) as well as studies based on interviews or focus groups with asylum applicants, officials, and other participants present during the interview (“second-hand”).

Seb Rumsby (University of Birmingham)

Playing the system? The everyday politics of recent Vietnamese migrants navigating the UK's shifting migration policies

Vietnamese nationals have consistently ranked as among the most common nationalities of people crossing into the UK on small boats and applying for asylum. This stands in contrast with other small boat passengers who mostly hail from war-torn countries, begging the question of why Vietnamese people are so desperate to reach the UK – and are they ‘playing the system’? Based on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with recent Vietnamese migrants in the UK, this paper explores emic understandings of migration law and tactics of navigating the UK’s increasingly restrictive ‘hostile environment’ policies. Misunderstandings abound – both from the perspective of the Home Office grappling with Vietnamese migrants’ motivations, and from migrants themselves regarding their prospects of regularisation. In the state of legal uncertainty and rising anti-migrant sentiment, Vietnamese migrants are not passive victims but contest and redefine their deservingness to stay in terms of their (informal) labour contribution to host society. Meanwhile, the Home Office’s bureaucratic incompetence and shifting goalposts lead to wildly different paths to (ir)regularity for Vietnamese people in ostensibly similar situations, leading to the further mystification of migration policies and sense of powerlessness among migrants.

Theodora Rontzova (KU Leuven)

How Tight is the Lawyer's Suit? An ethnography of "lawyering" in the Greek Asylum Procedure

Asylum procedures are exigent to study, especially when considering the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of the multiple actors involved (applicants, administrators, interpreters, lawyers and judges), and the complex power dynamics among them. The discursive aspects of asylum have been studied in terms of linguistic diversity and multilingual interaction strategies both during litigation and legal consultation (Jacobs 2018-2022). Furthermore, emerging concepts such as vulnerability are currently studied (Leboeuf 2025 and 2022) mostly in terms of their conceptual genealogy, legal definition or performativity. What remains relatively understudied, is the position of lawyers throughout the procedure, despite their nodal role as intermediaries between (inter)national legal frameworks and the humans whose mobility and livelihood is affected. In my presentation, I intend to examine the role of lawyers during consultations with asylum applicants and during the adjudication process in Greece, and focus on i) the position of the lawyer on the crossroads between structure (the legal framework within they have to move) and their own agency, and ii) the process of translating and transplanting emerging legal concepts such as vulnerability, dignity, and agency in their "lawyering", their discourses and practices, written and oral, both during adjudication and consulting. As part of my master's thesis, my fieldwork consists of interviews of legal practitioners, focusing on the discursive and concrete linguistic choices they employ, and participant observations of consultation sessions. I focus on the case of Greece: on July of 2025, the Greek Parliament passed an amendment suspending the ability of individuals entering Greece from North Africa to submit asylum applications. This amendment as well as a broader set of measures to curb the increased migration flow send the message that refugees are no longer welcome, marking a strict turn in policy.

STREAM 6: Storytelling and Migrant Narratives

Room 3.3.

Chair: Alexandra Sanchez

Tina Reynaert (Ghent University)

Laughing Back: Performing Satire, Mimicry, and Resistance in the Zollhausboys' Songs

This presentation examines a selection of satirical songs by the Zollhausboys, a band composed of applicants for international protection and German musicians. Emerging in the context of post-2015 Germany, the project uses participatory music-making and cabaret-style songwriting to articulate migrant perspectives on integration while critically engaging with the rise of extreme-right populism. Drawing on multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA), the study combines close readings of song lyrics with analysis of musical structure, genre references, and key musical parameters. It identifies recurring satirical techniques such as hyperbole, irony, parody, and role reversal, and examines their discursive functions through the lenses of Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry and Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque. The analysis argues that satire operates here as a form of counter-discourse. Through exaggeration, situational irony and musical parody, the songs expose the absurdity of

xenophobic rhetoric, unsettle language-based hierarchies of belonging, and complicate celebratory narratives of German Willkommenskultur. Humor becomes both shield and scalpel: a means of navigating vulnerability while safely critiquing the contradictory realities of integration as lived experience. By foregrounding the Zollhausboys' songwriting practice, this study contributes to debates on participatory art and migration. It suggests that such projects can function not merely as temporary distractions within asylum governance, but as critical spaces in which applicants for international protection exercise discursive agency and actively intervene in contemporary debates on belonging in Germany.

Chun Hong Yan (University of Southampton) and Manni Man Lai Cheung (University of Cambridge)

Examining Migrants' Sensitive and Unheard Experiences in Contentious Times through Digital Story Completion

This study examines the potential of story completion as a decolonially attuned narrative method for researching migrants' sensitive and politically contentious experiences. Story completion is a qualitative approach in which participants are invited to extend a researcher-designed story stem, enabling the indirect articulation of perspectives that may be constrained by surveillance, stigma or power asymmetries. Despite its relevance for contexts shaped by colonial legacies, racialisation and exclusion, story completion remains largely underutilised within migration studies. Focusing on digital story completion, this study critically assesses how three methodological features, anonymity, non-personal storytelling, and participants' control over narrative content, can create conditions for epistemic safety and narrative agency. The discussion draws on illustrative research with prospective migrants from Hong Kong and Hong Kong migrants living in the UK, exploring their perspectives on the Hong Kong and British education systems. Through the stories produced, participants articulated critiques of national security education in Hong Kong, as well as experiences of othering and racism in the UK, accounts that are often silenced or difficult to access through conventional qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups. By centring storytelling as a mode of knowledge production, this study positions story completion as a method that unsettles extractive research practices and challenges dominant regimes of voice and representation in migration research. We argue that digital story completion offers a promising, ethically responsive and underexplored methodological tool for engaging migrants' situated knowledges, particularly in contexts where speaking directly may entail social, political or emotional risk.

Raffaello Khan O. Augustin (New York University Abu Dhabi)

Empire in Stone and Silence: Imperial Nostalgia and Diasporic Counter-Memory in Madrid's Philippine Monumental Landscape

Madrid acts as a "contact zone" where the ghosts of empire and the living bodies of the diaspora collide. This paper investigates the spatial and symbolic dissonance between two sites of memory linking Spain and the Philippines: the Monumento a los Héroes de Baler (a site of state-sanctioned imperial nostalgia) and the José Rizal Monument. While the latter is officially framed as a benevolent marker of "Philippine-Spanish friendship", this paper critiques that narrative as a diplomatic fiction that obscures the violence of the colonial encounter. Utilizing visual sociology and auto-ethnography, I argue that while the Spanish state attempts to

“sanitize” the trauma of 1898 through these monuments, the Filipino diaspora “activates” these spaces to perform a new kind of citizenship. By juxtaposing the myth of benevolent assimilation encoded in the Rizal monument against the epistemic silence of the Baler siege, this study recasts the Filipino diasporic subject as a “modern ilustrado”. Just as Rizal was a migrant negotiating the metropole, the contemporary diaspora reclaims these sites to unsettle the colonial logics embedded in the Spanish imperial capital.

Leen Al Massalma (University of Oxford)

Building the Nation, the Home and the Future: Agency at the Displacement-Revolution Nexus

As one of the largest displacement contexts in history, the Syrian case has been widely researched. Research has mainly focused on the politicisation, subjectification and instrumentalisation of displaced Syrians and, more recently, the agency of Syrians as aid providers with their displaced communities. Yet, scholarly focus rarely tackles the role of displaced Syrians as political agents within their host states and towards their homeland, disregarding their rich political background and revolutionary pasts and presents. The study of the impact of displacement on political imagination and engagement has emerged as a literature gap. This paper asks: how does displacement impact political engagement and imaginations of the nation, the home and the future in exile? This paper contributes to studies of displacements after revolution and political turmoil by expanding on the theoretical and empirical value of the displacement-revolution nexus, linking studies of displacement and nation-building with future studies, home studies and social movements studies. Drawing on digital ethnography of Instagram content in the transnational Syrian digital space and on photo- and object-elicited interviews with interlocutors from the Syrian diaspora in Belgium, the study examines their understandings and imaginations of Syrian identity and nationhood, the ‘future’ and the ‘home’. Findings reveal the changes and continuities of interpretations of power and initial revolution demands (freedom, dignity, justice) in the intimate and the personal; subsequent reshaping of homeland conflict or revolution and, ultimately leading to; (re)definitions of collectively desired futures and home(land)s. This research reframes displacement as a continuation of people’s struggles for dignity and freedom in their countries of origin, instead of a spatial and temporal rupture, thereby emphasising the (political) agency of displaced people in migration studies.

Ifraat Jahan (EMMIR)

Exploring Identity and Belonging: A Migrant Artist’s Life Story in German Theatre

Theatre is often described as a mirror of society, yet in Germany this mirror does not fully reflect the country’s diversity. Although 26% of the population has a migration background, this diversity is not reflected in Theatre. A 2021 study of 67 federally funded cultural organizations found that people with a migration background and disabled people remain the most underrepresented groups among employees (Zimmermann, 2021, cited in Canyürek, 2021). German publicly funded theatre is symbolically central and highly regulated, yet migrants remain largely absent from stable and decision making roles, even after stronger diversity discourses in the wake of the #MeToo movement. This gap between diversity talk and actual inclusion makes theatre a key site for examining how discrimination

operates systemically rather than merely through individual acts. Methodologically, this paper draws on ongoing life story research with a theatre artist with a migration background in Germany to rethink how systemic discrimination can be conceptualized and empirically examined. Using dialogical interviews, shadowing, art based methods and analysis of publicly available data, the study focuses on key turning points; first engagements, typecasting, failed auditions and encounters with diversity initiatives to trace how discrimination is experienced, named, silenced and reinterpreted over time. This narrative lens makes visible systemic mechanisms such as difficulties accessing acting schools; the concentration of racialized artists in short term, thematically 'migrant' or marginal projects; informal recruitment and networking practices that reproduce homogeneity; racialized embodiment that positions some bodies as perpetually foreign. Theoretically, the paper combines Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) concepts of hybridity and Third Space with the notion of entangled mobilities (Wyss & Dahinden, 2022) to address identity and belonging and links these frameworks to debates on systemic discrimination to analyse institutional mechanisms of exclusion. Rather than viewing discrimination as isolated incidents, it is conceptualized as an arrangement of norms and expectations that structure who can enter, remain in and influence the theatre field. In this sense, Third Space becomes a location in which systemic asymmetries are reproduced in repertoire, governance and secure employment. The contribution is twofold. Conceptually, it shows how postcolonial notions of Third Space and hybridity can refine the idea of systemic discrimination in cultural fields by highlighting how aesthetic and institutional norms intersect with coloniality and racialization. Empirically and methodologically, it does not claim generalizability but demonstrates how a single, deeply analyzed can reveal the nuanced, cumulative and often unintentional character of systemic discrimination in German theatre, in line with the conference's aim to move from political diagnosis to a logic of proof.