Tensions in Migration and Mobility

5th Neuchâtel Graduate Conference of Migration and Mobility Studies

University of Neuchâtel, 7 – 8 July 2022

Call for Papers
Deadline for Submission is 31 March 2022
Aim and Scope
The Neuchâtel Graduate Conference (NGC) is an international graduate conference organized by the nccr – on the move, the Swiss National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) for migration and mobility studies. It provides a stimulating environment in which doctoral and postdoctoral researchers from different universities and research institutions can exchange ideas, establish networks, attend targeted training, and initiate collaborative research.

The 5th edition will take place from 7 to 8 July 2022 as a hybrid event, with the physical event at the University of Neuchâtel and the possibility to attend the conference also remotely via Webex. It will gather around 50 researchers in the fields of migration and mobility.

Call for Papers: Tensions in Migration and Mobility
The topic of this year will be “Tensions in Migration and Mobility”. Deeply embedded in broader global economic, social, political and technological transformations, patterns of human movement are affected by tensions operating in a myriad of ways and at multiple scales. The notions that international migration disrupts a world organized in mutually exclusive nation-states, or that transnational practices of migrants clash with political ideas about “integration” or citizenship, are well entrenched in both theoretical and normative debates. The governance of migration and mobility has also become a key site of contradictions between political discourses and “policies on paper,” or between policies on paper and their implementation, which are partly reflecting tensions in public attitudes over the attributions of rights and access to services for diverse categories of mobile people. Moreover, the field of Migration and Mobility studies itself is affected by tensions between different epistemologies, disciplines, methods, as scholars are increasingly re-arranging their core categories. With this in mind, we wish to encourage junior researchers to explore past, contemporary or future tensions regarding the regulation and the experience of human movement. We are inviting you to provide scientifically grounded analysis on how political, economic, technological, and social change may enter in tension with evolving practices of migration and mobility. We welcome papers addressing this overarching topic from all related disciplines in migration and mobility studies, such as demography, economics, geography, law, political science, sociology, and other relevant fields.

Conference Format and Working Groups
As we intend to make room for in-depth discussions and facilitate the finalization of articles for publication in international journals, participants will be invited to remain within the same working group over the two days of the conference. Six closed groups with a maximum of eight carefully selected participants will be discussing precisely defined topics. Researchers from the nccr – on the move and senior scholars from our International Advisory Board (IAB) will guide the discussions and provide expertise.

Falling under the same overarching theme of “Tensions in Migration and Mobility”, the groups will be divided into the following topics:

1) Policy and Governance Tensions in the Fields of Migration and Mobility
The increase of cross-border mobility has placed the subjects of migration and governance in the focus of public discourse and policymaking. Numerous actors ranging from government actors, bureaucrats, to local non-governmental organizations have played a role in shaping the policymaking process, either directly or indirectly. The goal of this working group is to examine policy versus application/implementation within migration regimes. This can include either: (i) governance tensions between administrative or political bodies and/or (ii) tensions between or within various migration policies (i.e. free movement, border security, discrimination toward “protected groups”, naturalization and integration, etc.). The main questions to be raised and discussed will be: Where are the main points of contention in migration policy? What are the main tensions within the policymaking process and implementation? What impact do “street-level bureaucrats” have with their “discretionary power” or how it is used? The organizers of this interdisciplinary panel invite contributions from different disciplines/fields (i.e. political science, sociology, psychology, public policy, etc.) to explore different aspects of “policy & governance tensions” in the fields of migration and mobility.

2) Understanding Citizenship under Tension
Rights and opportunities associated with passports are unevenly distributed among countries in the world. These global inequalities impact not only values but also the meaning and uses of citizenship, which sometimes
create tensions (for instance the membership of a specific nation-state). An example among others would be the particular public health situation that we face currently; it emphasizes the central role of citizenship to access some rights and opportunities. Indeed, at some point during the COVID-19 pandemic, some states decided to close their borders and to only admit citizens or permanent residents. While migration and mobility restrictions have existed for a very long time, this example underlines the link between citizenship and opportunities for migration and mobility. The various questions that will be addressed by the working group are the following: How has citizenship, as a concept or as a legal status, evolved over time and across countries? How do individuals cope with inequalities in citizenship values? How and when is citizenship related to migration and mobility? How do individuals cope with restrictions related to their residency status or the passport they hold? The organizers of this interdisciplinary working group invite quantitative and qualitative contributions from different disciplines (i.e. political science, sociology, demography, law, etc.) to reflect on these and related issues.

3) Tensions Developed in a Transnational Social World

In the early 1990s, the transnational lens was introduced as a new framework to study migration-related phenomena. Since then, this conceptual framework has found its usefulness and relevance in a wide variety of subjects, as it allows scholars to study social processes and phenomena transcending nation-state boundaries. In doing so, new political, institutional as well as societal tensions were disclosed. This working group creates space for the discussion of such tensions by asking among others the following questions: How do national institutions and governments cope with the transnationalization of the social world? Which challenges arise in the organization of political action and societal change that go beyond territorial and political boundaries of the nation-state? Which difficulties do transnationally mobile people encounter? How do people create and define their identity in a transnational social world? How do family members spread across different countries support each other? The organizers of this working group invite qualitative and quantitative scholars from the social sciences to reflect on these and related questions.

4) Between Access and Exclusion: Tensions in Attitudes and Preferences in the Attribution of Rights to Migrants

With many people (still) on the move, people’s attitudes on questions such as who should get what, when, and under which circumstances remain pertinent subjects of study. If anything, the current pandemic has highlighted tensions between attributing more rights to migrants or restricting their access. Who should be allowed to rely on the state for economic support? Under which circumstances should migrants be allowed to participate politically in their country of residence? What does it mean to be fully “integrated” or “part of us”? How does public opinion on such issues compare over time or across space? This working group aims to address these and related questions. We accept papers that investigate public opinion in the migration/mobility context, with a special focus on the attributions of rights and access to services to migrants. The objective is to improve our understanding of what mechanisms and motivations lie behind people’s preferences/attitudes/opinions in this context.

5) Tensions in Refugees’ and Migrants’ Integration

As recent studies show, migration policy is characterized not so much by its growing restrictiveness but rather by its increasing focus on migrants’ selection. This tendency is complemented with pragmatic integration policies highly focused on employment, designed to promote the factors leading to labor market access such as learning the host country’s language, or rapidly integrating vocational training. This policy orientation is clearly observed in the case of refugee integration, where the proliferation of temporary forms of protection has created increasing pressures to fulfill integration requirements such as getting a job and learning the host country language in order to escape the uncertainty associated with precarious legal statuses. Against this background, we aim at deepening the discussion on the interactions and tensions between migration policy, integration policy and economic policy on the one hand, and the lived experiences of migrants and refugees on the other hand. This could include the following questions: How do migration, integration and economic policies interact? How do economic actors shape migration and integration policies? How do these three policies shape migrants’ and refugees’ experiences of integration? To what extent the interaction between these various policies takes into considerations migrants’ and refugees’ aspirations and future plans? The organizers of this working group invite qualitative and quantitative scholars to share their work on these and related questions.

6) Rising Tensions in the Anthropocene: the Strained Relations between Mobility and Global Warming

While environmental factors have historically had a significant impact on human movement, the rapidly evolving consequences of human-induced climate change have raised major concerns and new tensions about the relationship between environment and mobility. On the one hand, the consequences of global warming are likely to affect population distribution and contribute to increasing levels of mobility as some regions of the world...
will become uninhabitable. On the other hand, the high mobility of persons and goods through the massive use of transportation systems remains one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Against this contrasted background, this panel investigates the complex relationship between mobility and global warming by asking, among others, the following questions: Where, when, and how does climate change alter existing human mobility patterns? How is global warming in turn shaped by the scope and the speed of our current mobilities? What type of policies are developed to address the challenges linked to the impacts of climate change on mobility and the other way around? Should the opportunities to move be enhanced or reduced in order to counteract the detrimental effects of global warming? The organizers of this panel welcome papers addressing these and other relevant questions from all related disciplines in migration and mobility studies, be it from theoretical, empirical, or normative perspectives.

Best Paper Award

The Neuchâtel Graduate Conference of Migration and Mobility Studies offers a prize of CHF 500 for the best paper to be submitted and presented at the conference.

Submission Procedure

The deadline for submission is 31 March 2022

Paper proposals should include the working group title you wish to propose, an abstract (max. 250 words), a list of up to five keywords, the name and affiliation of the presenter. Co-authored papers and papers at different stages of advancement are welcome.

Paper proposals must be submitted via this form by Thursday, 31 March 2022. Applicants will be informed by 20 April 2022. For any questions, please contact Robin Stünzi, Education and Careers Officer, by email at: robin.stunzi@unine.ch.

There is no participation fee. To encourage participation from all universities, the nccr – on the move will provide funding opportunities up to CHF 400. Funding for the Neuchâtel Graduate Conference of Migration and Mobility Studies is specifically designed for international graduate students traveling from far or without mobility funding. Please contact Robin Stünzi, the Scientific Officer, to check your eligibility and apply for funding.