



## Public Lecture Series

**Thursday, 8 June 2023**

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**Geo-political rivalry and anti-immigrant sentiment. A conjoint experiment in 22 countries**

**Andreas Wimmer, Columbia University**

**Discussant: Anita Manatschal, University of Neuchâtel, nccr – on the move**

18:00 – 19:30 h

This talk will be held in person at the University of Neuchâtel, 1er Mars 26, room C46, on WEBEX ([link](#)), as well as live-streamed on the nccr – on the move YouTube channel ([link](#)).

## **Abstract**

This study introduces a new argument into the literature on anti-immigrant attitudes. We argue that preferences for immigrants from certain countries of origin mirror the international relations between origin and destination countries. Immigrants from rival countries will be shunned, whereas immigrants from allied or neutral countries will be preferred, especially by respondents who are more identified with the nation either because they belong to the national majority or because they believe in their country's superiority. To support the argument, we use a survey experiment fielded in 22 countries from around the world. The forced choice conjoint experiment asks respondents to choose between a series of pairs of applications for permanent residence status. We randomize immigrant attributes, including countries of origin. Drawing on the international relations literature, we identify rival and non-rival countries for each survey country, and choose one rival-non-rival pair with similar racial and cultural make-up as the majority of respondents, and one pair of dissimilar countries. This allows us to disentangle racial and cultural preferences from those related to geopolitical rivalry. The results consistently and strongly align with our expectations: discrimination against immigrants from rival countries is so pronounced that it results in a net preference for racially and culturally dissimilar immigrants. We happened to field the experiment during a period that covered a couple of days before and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, allowing us to exploit exogenous changes in the intensity of a specific rivalry. This encourages us to interpret the results in causal terms.

## **Short Biography**

Andreas Wimmer is Lieber Professor of Sociology and Political Philosophy at Columbia University in New York. His research brings a long term historical and globally comparative perspective to the questions of how states are built and nations formed, how racial and ethnic hierarchies form or dissolve in the process, and when this will result in conflict and war. Most recently, he is trying to understand how ideas and institutions travel across the world and with what consequences. Using new methods and data, he continues the old search for historical patterns that repeat across contexts and times. He has pursued this agenda through the fields of anthropology, sociology, and political science and using multiple methods, from qualitative to quantitative, from small to large N, from online experiments to offline ethnography.

## **Selected Publications**

- Wimmer, Andreas (2019). Why Nationalism Works: And Why It Isn't Going Away. *Foreign Aff.*, 98, 27.
- Wimmer, Andreas (2013). *Ethnic boundary making: Institutions, power, networks*. Oxford University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas (2012). *Waves of war: Nationalism, state formation, and ethnic exclusion in the modern world*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas (2008). The making and unmaking of ethnic boundaries: A multilevel process theory *American journal of sociology*, 113(4), 970-1022.
- Wimmer, Andreas & Glick Schiller, Nina (2002). Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global networks*, 2(4), 301-334