



Public Lecture Series

Thursday, 21 November 2024

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Reframing Migration Narratives through Music: A Qualitative Approach

Mary Boatemaa Setrana, University of Ghana

18:00 – 19:30 h

This talk will be held in person at the University of Neuchâtel, Rue Abram-Louis Breguet 2, room 2.310, and on WEBEX ([link](#)).

Abstract

How do songs represent migration narratives of human movement in the African context? From the late 1980s to the present day, various forms of local songs composed by African musicians have constructed migration from their own and others' experiences - dominant migration narratives do not adequately capture or reflect the African experience of migration because of the lens through which they are viewed. I argue that current narratives of migration, which are dominant from a Eurocentric perspective, perceive Africans as rather passive agents when it comes to issues of migration. Not only is this perception unfounded, but it also fails to represent the rich diversity of migration on the continent. Using Ghana as a case study, I analyse songs from the late 1980s and early 1990s to the present. Due to the political instability that followed Ghana's independence, several Ghanaians were forced to seek safety elsewhere, including in Europe. Although they could not share their negative experiences with relatives back home, they preferred to sing about them to spread the word. These songs have continued to this day but have taken on new narratives that reflect contemporary migration restrictions and EU externalisation policies.

Short Biography

Prof. Mary Boatemaa Setrana is the Director of the Centre for Migration Studies, at the University of Ghana. She holds a Ph.D. in Migration Studies from the University of Ghana and Radboud University, in the Netherlands. She is a member of various migration management technical and advisory groups including the African Union Commission (AUC) on migration governance, and the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) Centre of Excellence on Migration & Mobility). She has led several policy dialogues and stakeholder consultative meetings including the African Union's Pan African Forum on Migration (PAFOM) and the SADC secretariat's Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA). She was a co-consultant for the drafting of national migration policies in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe; and she is currently the lead consultant for the drafting of the National Migration Policy for Botswana. She is currently the Program Affairs and Innovative Officer for the International Association of Forced Migration Conference Committee (IASFM). Dr. Setrana is a member of the consortium working on large projects including the GCRF South-South Migration, Inequality, and Development Hub, funded by UKRI.