

Workshop

(Counter)Narratives on Migration in Times of Crisis

11 June 2025

08:45 – 17:45

University of Neuchâtel

The workshop will be held at the University of Neuchâtel, Rue Abram-Louis Breguet 2, Room 2.310. Please register by 1 June by way of this [link](#).

This interdisciplinary workshop is organized by two nccr – on the move projects:

[Narratives of Crisis and Their Influence in Shaping Discourses and Policies of Migration and Mobility](#) and [Evolving \(Im\)Mobility Regimes: Migrant Workers' Entitlement and Precarization in Times of Crisis](#).

Workshop Description

The “narrative turn” has become a significant focus in the social sciences and beyond, prompting deeper analysis of how migration and crises are scrutinized across different disciplines. Studies underpin that these narratives differ on who constructs them. For example, situations recognized as a “migration crisis” by media or politicians, are not always regarded as such by migrants and/or researchers. Critical issues raised by migrants are not always perceived in the same way by authorities. Moreover, some types of crises are more likely to be framed in the media and political rhetoric than reflected in official documents or individual accounts.

These different discourses on migration in times of crisis highlight different forms of (counter)narratives. Researchers also contribute to these (counter)narratives depending on their disciplinary backgrounds, research methods, and the questions they pursue.

This in-person workshop aims to explore and to foster exchanges of these diverse perspectives by seeking their commonalities and divergences. With a focus on how various crises shape (counter)narratives on migration, we bring together scholars from different scientific fields to enable an interdisciplinary dialogue on the subject.

The workshop proposes three panels examining different types of crises: (1) socio-political and economic crises, (2) asylum and border crises, (3) health crises. We aim to investigate how these crises overlap and shape migration narratives, and how counternarratives emerge in response to dominant discourses.

By fostering interdisciplinary discussion, the workshop strengthens a nuanced understanding of migration (counter)narratives in times of crisis and contributes to the development of new frameworks for analysing these complex phenomena.

Location

The workshop will be held at the University of Neuchâtel, [Rue Abram-Louis Breguet 2](#), Room 2.310.

Registration

Please register by 1 June by way of this [link](#). More information available from Maja Lysienia: maja.lysienia@hevs.ch.

Wednesday, 11 June 2025

08:45 – 09:15

Welcome Coffee

09:15 – 09:30

Introduction

09:30 – 10:00

Understanding Migration Narratives: What They Are, Why They Matter, and Who Believes Them (in-person presentation tbc)

James Dennison (European University Institute and Harvard Kennedy School)

Panel I

10:00 – 11:30

Chair: Anna Marino

Socio-political and economic crises

Renarrating Crisis: London 1974

Carol Pierre (University of Neuchâtel)

Young Migrants, Austerity and Housing: How Austerity Alters Lives and Futures Across Europe

Sarah Marie Hall (University of Manchester)

Migrant Workers' Precarity in Times of Crisis and its Link to Changes in Migration and Social Policies Since the Mid-2000s

Olga Ganjour (University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland)

11:30 – 13:00

Lunch break

13:00 – 13:30

Experience of Australian Response to Migration Crisis

Abdelaziz Muhamat (Global Detention Project)

Panel II

13:30 – 15:00

Chair: Maja Lysienia

Asylum and Border Crises

Narrating Crises of Europe's Southernmost Borderscapes: The Case of Melilla and Lampedusa

Anna Marino (University of Neuchâtel)

"Migrant Instrumentalisation" Narrative: Law and Politics of Refugee Exclusion at the EU Border with Belarus and Russia (in-person presentation tbc)

Aleksandra Ancite-Jepifánova (King's College London and CEU Democracy Institute)

Highlighting Tensions between Everyday Narratives and Legal Narratives in Framing Asylum Seekers' Cases

Flora Di Donato (University Federico II)

15:00 – 15:30

Coffee break

15:30 – 16:00

Experience of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Switzerland

Hilmi Gashi (UNIA)

Panel III

16:00 – 17:30

Chair: Liliana Azevedo

Health Crises

A Continuing Crisis: Migrant Precarity in Post-COVID Tiruppur, India (online)

Nidhi Subramanyam (University of Toronto)

Crisis Narratives and Frontline Work in Switzerland During the COVID-19 Pandemic (and Beyond)

Andrea Friedli (University of Applied Sciences HES-SO Valais-Wallis and University of Teacher Education Fribourg)

Rulla Sutter (Bern University of Applied Sciences and University of Neuchâtel)

(Counter)Narratives of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Experienced Precarities of Labor Migrants in the Hospitality and Catering Industry (online)

Livia Tomás (ZHAW School of Social Work)

17:30 – 17:45

Migration Crisis with Adjectives: Towards a New Conceptualization & Assessment of Institutional Responses to Migration Crises across World Regions (partly online)

Ana Margheritis (Universidad Torcuato Di Tella)

Anna Marino (University of Neuchâtel)

Speakers

Aleksandra Ancite-Jepifánova is an interdisciplinary scholar working at the intersection of migration and refugee law, conflict, and human rights. She holds a PhD in law from Queen Mary University of London and is currently a Research Associate at King's College London. She is also a Research Affiliate with the Refugee Law Initiative, University of London, and Central European University's Democracy Institute. Aleksandra's work combines doctrinal and empirical research methods by particularly focusing on family reunification and access to international protection. She has published extensively in these areas, including a monograph *The Concept of Marriages of Convenience in EU Free Movement Law: EU and UK Perspectives* (Brill, 2024). Her ongoing project focuses on the situation at the EU's external border with Belarus and Russia and the concept of migrant instrumentalisation. On behalf of CEU Rule of Law Clinic, she has also prepared third party interventions before the European Court of Human Rights in cases involving protection seekers who have attempted to enter the EU from Belarus.

James Dennison is a part-time Professor at the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) of the European University Institute in Florence and the 2025/26 Pierre Keller Professor at the Harvard Kennedy School. He directs the Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration (OPAM) at the MPC. His research interests include political attitudes, behaviour, and communication, migration, and quantitative methods.

Flora Di Donato is Full Professor of Philosophy of Law (IUS 20) and chair of the Clinical Legal Training course at the Law Department of the University Federico II. She is the scientific coordinator of the [Clinica Legale Federico II](#), which comprises the Statelessness Legal Clinics (SLC) (Strengthening Legal Education and Practice on Statelessness) funded by UNHCR and the clinical legal help desk to support asylum seekers and refugees. In 2007, she got her PhD in philosophy of law at the University of Naples in cooperation

(co-tutela) with the University of Neuchâtel (CH). For her PhD thesis “La costruzione giudiziaria del fatto. Il ruolo della narrazione nel processo” she was awarded a prestigious distinction from the ISA (International Sociological Association): the RCSL-ISA Adam Podgórecki Prize 2010 “for her outstanding achievements as an emerging scholar in socio-legal research”. Between 2011 and 2017, she was research fellow at the Center for Migration Law at the University of Neuchâtel (CH) where she developed the [project](#) Immigrant’s trajectories of integration, between indeterminate (legislative) criteria and uncertain lifecourses: Analysis of legal cases, funded by the Swiss National Foundation. She was co-author of clinical teaching projects at the Law Faculty of the University of Neuchâtel and at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland in Geneva. Between 2002 and 2018, she was visiting scholar and lecturer at the University of Montreal, University of Malta, Cuny Graduate Center of New York, New York University Law School (NY), American Graduate Center of New York, New York University Law School (NY), American University College (WDC), New York School of Law (NY) and Institut Swiss de Droit Comparé (Lausanne).

Andrea Friedli (PhD in Social Anthropology) is a research associate at the University of Applied Sciences HES-SO Valais-Wallis and at the University of Teacher Education Fribourg. Her research interests include (ethno-religious) identity politics, anthropology of the state, migration and mobility, educational anthropology, among others. Currently she works in the project “Frontline Work in Humanitarian Disasters” in scopes of the NRP-80 Covid-19 and society”, as well as in a SNF-project on knowledge production in mosque visits by school classes.

Olga Ganjour obtained her PhD in Sociology from the University of Geneva in 2016. She is currently a scientific collaborator at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland in Geneva and at the Institute of Sociological Research at the University of Geneva. Her research within nccr – on the move focuses on the quantitative comparative analysis of precarity among different categories of migrants in European countries, using cross-sectional data from the EU Labor Force Survey and the EU Income and Living Conditions Survey.

Hilmi Gashi is head of the interest groups division at the trade union Unia. He is President of the Migration Commission of the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions and a member of the Federal Commission on Migration (FCM) and the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR). He was born in Prizren Kosova. In Switzerland, he initially worked in construction and then studied economics and social sciences in Fribourg in 1992. He later obtained an MAS in NPO Management and a Certificate in Management of Volunteers and on Negotiation at the FES Academy for Management and Politics. He is a member of the Muri-Gümligen municipal parliament for the Green Party and is its president this year. He is also a Board Member of Solidarités sans frontières and Aktion Vierviertel. During his studies, he was involved with Radio Bern, RaBe. At the Swiss Red Cross, Hilmi first worked as an expert for Kosova and later headed a project for an information platform on migration and health www.miges.ch, which later became www.migesplus.ch. This was followed by projects at HEKS/OSAR, as a project consultant, co-designer and lecturer for micro-enterprises at HEKS PERSPEKTIVE. Since 2005, he has worked for the Unia trade union in various positions. In 2002, he ventured into partial self-employment as a film author, project manager in the fields of communication and migration and as a radio journalist. He has worked for the Unia trade union in various positions since 2005.

Sarah Marie Hall is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Manchester. With her research she develops conceptual and empirical understandings of how socio-economic changes are shaped by relationships, lived experience and social difference. Since 2021 she has been leading a large UKRI project on Austerity and Altered Life-Courses, exploring how austerity across Europe shapes young people’s lives and futures. This project brings together her long-standing interests in everyday life and the economy; social reproduction, care and ethics; and feminist methods and praxis.

Ana Margheritis (PhD, Political Science, University of Toronto) is Research Professor at the National Council of Scientific and Technological Research of Argentina and Universidad Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires.

She formerly worked at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; University of Florida at Gainesville and Tulane University in the USA; King's College, University College London and University of Southampton in the UK, and UTDT, FLACSO and UBA in Argentina. She was visiting researcher at Science Po, France; Università Degli Studi di Milano, Italy; Instituto Juan March and Universidad de Salamanca, Spain; Columbia University & UC San Diego, USA; Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil; ITAM, Mexico, and FLACSO Ecuador. She has been consultant for GLOBALCIT at EUI, Florence; RCGDS, Universität Bremen; MiTSopro, University of Liège, as well as various national research councils and international organizations. Ana is the author of four sole authored books, including *Migration Governance across Regions: State-Diaspora Relations in the Latin America-Southern Europe Corridor*, and co-author and editor of three other volumes, the most recent entitled *Shaping Migration between Europe and Latin America*.

Anna Marino is a doctoral researcher at the Swiss National Center of Competence in Research – The Migration-Mobility Nexus (nccr – on the move), and at the University of Neuchâtel. Anna holds an interdisciplinary MA in European Studies from Maastricht University and has experience as junior lecturer at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of Maastricht University. She holds a Certificate of training in European Migration and Asylum Law issued by the Odysseus Academic Network for Legal Studies on Immigration and Asylum in Europe. Anna's PhD thesis investigates narratives and counter-narratives of migration in two southern European border societies and is situated within the broader nccr – on the move project "Narratives of Crisis and Their Influence in Shaping Discourses and Policies of Migration and Mobility".

Abdelaziz Muhamat is an award-winning human rights defender globally recognized for advocating refugee rights. His activism began during six years of detention on Manus Island, where he became a leading voice against the mistreatment of asylum seekers. His work has earned him prestigious accolades, including the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, the Australian Human Rights Commission Media Award, the Walkley Awards, and recognition from the New York Radio Festivals. Through storytelling, public speaking, and media, he amplifies marginalized voices and challenges harmful migration policies. Currently, Abdelaziz is the Refugee Advocacy Coordinator at the Global Detention Project in Geneva. He also serves as an interim president of the Martin Ennals Foundation and co-president of the Martin Ennals Association, supporting human rights defenders worldwide.

Carol Pierre is a historian and Doctoral Research Assistant in the Swiss Forum for Migration Studies and nccr – on the move, at the University of Neuchâtel. She is working within the framework of NCCR project: Narratives of crisis and their influence on attitudes, behaviour, and policies of migration and mobility. Carol's focus is on migration, multiculturalism, social movements, and community building in the latter half of 20th century Britain. Her thesis 'Contesting Crisis: Narratives of Resistance in London, 1974' offers a critical reappraisal this year by deconstructing the prevailing historiographical narrative that characterises it primarily as a period of acute crisis. Utilising the framework of people's history her work highlights the experiences of (migrant) communities and their resistance to systemic oppression (immigration policies, racist policing laws, discrimination in housing and employment).

Nidhi Subramanyam is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Toronto in Canada. Her research examines urban governance, planning for water security, and migrant inclusion in rapidly urbanizing regions. Utilizing interdisciplinary frameworks and ethnographic methods, she examines how planning reflects and reinforces the status quo in shaping the transition to 'improved' conditions and how different social groups interact with planning processes to contest entrenched inequalities and create just, equitable, and sustainable futures. Nidhi earned her Ph.D. and Master of Regional Planning from Cornell University, following a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Mumbai.

Rulla Sutter (PhD candidate in Social Work) is a research associate at the Bern University of Applied Sciences and at the University of Neuchâtel. Her research focuses on social inequality, NGO-state relations, digitalisation in social services, and poverty governance. She is currently working on her doctoral project within the NRP-80 program "Covid-19 and Society", titled "The Three Roles of Social Welfare NGOs in Poverty Reduction: A Mixed Methods Case Study of Caritas Switzerland", which examines how NGOs

complement, challenge, and inform public welfare systems in times of crisis.

Livia Tomás is a Postdoctoral Researcher at ZHAW School of Social Work. As part of the nccr – on the move project 'Evolving (Im)Mobility Regimes', she studies the living and working conditions of migrants in the Swiss hospitality industry and examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced these conditions. In doing so, she also analyses the migration trajectories and diverse mobility patterns developed by the interviewed labour migrants – both of which she previously explored in her PhD research conducted with older adults on the move.