



Public Lecture Series

Thursday 2 October 2025

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Knowledge Production and the Use of Academic Research by Migration Policy Actors

Leila Hadj Abdou

18:00 – 19:30 CET

This talk will be held at the University of Neuchâtel, Av. du 1er-Mars 26, Room B32 and on WEBEX ([link](#)).

Abstract

In migration research there is an ongoing, growing debate about the limited impact of academic research on migration policy making, accompanied by a plea for more scientifically informed, evidence-based migration policy. These debates, however, rarely empirically engage with the question of how policy actors inform themselves and make judgements about international migration. In light of this gap, the presentation discusses processes of knowledge production in migration governance, by focusing on the sources policy actors rely on to form their insights about immigration. The presentation underlines that the migration policy field is an arena in which policy actors have to cope with political pressure, uncertainty, and ambiguity. Judgements about international migration inevitably rely on past experiences, new information in turn is filtered by relationships of trust regarding the sources, as well as by pre-set organizational goals and logics. Based on these empirical insights, the presentation eventually concludes that claims for more academic evidence-based policymaking are based upon a simplified understanding of what policymaking and the formation of knowledge claims about immigration are about, as well as the role of migration research.

Bio

Leila Hadj Abdou is the Deputy Head of the Migration Research and Law Department at the IOM Country Office for Austria. Previously, she was a Part-time Assistant Professor at the European University Institute (Migration Policy Center), where her responsibilities included Executive Education on migration. She has also held academic positions at the University of Sheffield, Johns Hopkins University, University College Dublin, and the University of Vienna. Before joining IOM, Leila Hadj Abdou worked in the Integration and Diversity Department of the City of Vienna, where she was responsible for the Integration and Diversity Monitor. She also has professional NGO experience in the field of asylum.

Leila Hadj Abdou is giving this lecture in a private capacity based on her academic research in the field of migration governance, and not as a representative of any organization she is professionally related to.