



Roundtable at the Swiss Conference of Migration and Mobility Studies

Wednesday, 8 July 2026

Decolonizing Migration Studies within Fortress Europe

Gunjan Sondhi, Open University, Newcastle

Faten Khazaei, Northumbria University Newcastle

Shpresa Jashari, Pädagogische Hochschule Zug

Moderator: Claudia Wilopo, University of Bern

11:30 – 13:00 CET

This roundtable will be held in person at the University of Neuchâtel, [Avenue du 1er-Mars 26](#), Room C46 (Aula). **Participation is restricted to registered participants of the Swiss Conference of Migration and Mobility Studies (SCMMS).**

Description

Against the backdrop of ongoing debates surrounding the role of universities in “Fortress Europe” and global imperialist projects, and on the political and ethical responsibilities of migration research, this roundtable seeks to open a space for collective reflection on the possibilities of decolonization, both in the epistemic and material realms, within Western academic contexts. How can we challenge colonial logics in academic practices – the choice of topics, theoretical framing, research design, fieldwork relationships, authorship and dissemination? Can researchers deconstruct extractivist practices to shift concrete resources and power? What role should researchers play in decolonial struggles around the world?

Once confined to the margins of the academic world, as a radical form of critique and political praxis, “decolonization” has occupied more space in the last years, to the point of becoming a recurring term across the academic and cultural spheres. In academia, demands to decolonize institutional practices, curricula, or research methods have proliferated. These calls have echoed in migration studies as well, particularly following the reflexive turn undertaken by this field of studies. Yet, scholars and activists have warned that decolonization risks becoming nothing but a metaphor (Tuck & Yang 2012), separated from concrete political, ethical and material commitments. As such, structures of power can remain untouched, and the people and the cosmologies the decolonizing slogan aimed to bring to the fore remain excluded.

This roundtable aims to explore these issues, discussing necessary practices and potential pitfalls around the topic of decolonizing migration and mobility studies, by bringing together scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives, whose work directly engages with or critically interrogates the efforts to decolonize research on migration and mobility.

Bios

Dr Gunjan Sondhi is a feminist geographer leading The Open University’s Centre for Global Challenges and Social Justice as its Director, and a Senior Lecturer in Geography at the Open University. Her research offers critical insights into gender and migration, with expertise in international students and highly skilled migrants across South and Southeast Asia, North America, the UK, and the EU. She has an extensive publication record, contributes actively to policy dialogues, and collaborates widely across global research networks.

Faten Khazaei is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, at Northumbria University, in Newcastle, UK. She is an interdisciplinary scholar by training, originally from Iran and works at the intersection of gender studies, critical race studies, and the sociology of migration, institutions, and violence. She ethnographically investigates the intersectional ways in which state institutions in the name of treating public problems, (re)produce an unequal social, ethno-racial, and gendered order. Rather than viewing nationality, migration, gender, class, ‘race’, and ethnicity as pre-existing and supposedly descriptive categories, she focuses on the processes through which public policies and practices create, normalise, and naturalise these categories. Faten sits on the editorial board of the Journal of Gender Based Violence, published by Bristol University Press and that of Gender Issues book series, directed by the Swiss Association of Gender Studies.

Shpresa Jashari is a social scientist, linguist, and author particularly interested in those spots, where the nation state grasps peoples' languages and their bodies as "other". At present, she conducts research at the University of Teacher Education in Zug, Switzerland, focusing on migrantisation and discrimination in school. Before that, she worked at the Universities of Bremen (Interdisciplinary Linguistics & Study of Social Space), Freiburg im Breisgau (Sociolinguistics of Gender, Migration & Humour), Zurich (Multilingualism & Social Inequalities) and Neuchâtel, where she completed her doctoral thesis on the topic of "LANGUAGE AS B/ORDER: Crossing European Borders and and Boundaries through Mandatory 'Pre-Integrative Language Testing'".

Although Shpresa has clearly pushed through into the lifeworld of the "highly skilled", in some respects she remains a "migrant", still.

This workshop is organized by

Maeva Perrin, University of Geneva, nccr – on the move

Sélim Clerc, University of Neuchâtel, nccr – on the move

Carol Pierre, University of Neuchâtel, nccr – on the move