Joint CESSMIR – MIGloba – BIRMM Research Day

18 October 2024, 09:00-16:00
De Krook, Ghent

WORDS THAT MATTER: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON CATEGORISATION FROM MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY RESEARCH

PROGRAMME

09:00 – 09:30 Welcome coffee	

09:30 – 10:00
Welcome by the organising partners BIRMM, CESSMIR & MIGloba

10:00 – 10:45
Keynote by Robin Vandevoordt (UGent) & Sorana Toma (UGent): **"The politics of categorisation: human movement, arrival and diversity"**

As an interdisciplinary field, migration studies has long been geared towards the needs of states, intergovernmental actors and NGOs. As a result, academic research has tended to reproduce the categories, norms and ideas that are implicit within the policies of these actors. In recent decades, however, many scholars have called for a more reflexive approach to the words we use to describe different forms of human movement (Bakewell 2008; Casas-Cortes et al 2015; Chimni 2009; Crawley & Skleparis 2018; Dahinden 2016; Dahinden et al 2021; Zetter 2007;), processes of arrival (Favell 2022; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore 2018; Rytter 2019; Schinkel 2018) and (super-)diversity (Blommaert & Rampton 2018; Vertovec 2019). These calls have urged migration scholars to examine the effects seemingly 'natural' categories may have on what kind of research is conducted, how this may (not) reproduce policy assumptions, and how this may (not) serve to justify those policies. In this keynote, we will delve into recent debates on a number of keywords, and explore how these debates are reshaping migration studies as an interdisciplinary field.

10:45 – 11:15
Break

11:15 – 12:00
Keynote by Mieke Vandenbroucke (UAntwerpen): "**O tempora, o mores. On discursive categorisation in marriage migration governance in Belgian socio-legal history**"

Starting from the observation that institutional categories are both situated in time/place and discursive constructions, I will discuss in this talk how the notion of a marriage of convenience developed over time from an accepted practice in society to an institutional category in public policy, and criminalised as part of a restrictive turn in EU migration policy. By drawing on extensive linguistic ethnographic work, I then show how this migration category is put into practice by street-level bureaucrats.

12:00 – 12:45
Keynote by Omar Cham (VUB): "**Beyond Borders: How Migration Narratives Shape Future Journeys**"

Across many countries in the Global North, narratives relating to migration and migrants are becoming more polarised and divisive (Güell & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2024). These polarising migration narratives not only impact individual attitudes towards migrants but also policy responses, as evidenced by the greater push and adoption of more restrictive migration policies, deprivation of individuals' right to seek protection, violent removals of irregularised migrants, and the implementation of migration deterrence campaigns in the Global North.
Despite the widespread understanding of migration narratives and their effects on migration policies and individual attitudes, especially in Europe, the question of how migration narratives are formed, nurtured, or influence migration decisions and policy responses in the Global South remains underexplored. Join Omar for an insightful keynote to explore how stories and perceptions on migration in the Gambia shape the migration decisions of potential migrants and the government's policy responses in the Gambia and possibly beyond.

12:45 – 14:00
Lunch

14:00 – 16:00
Parallel workshops

Workshop 1 by Sorana Toma (CESSMIR – UGent), Rachel Waerniers (UNIA) and Matthieu Ferry (INED): "**Measuring origins: the promises (and pitfalls) of self-identification**"

In this workshop, we critically reflect on academic and policy categories used to measure national and ethno-religious origins within an increasingly diverse population. We build on cutting-edge empirical research and discuss practical avenues for improving equality data collection and analysis, bringing both practitioners and academics to the table.

Workshop 2 by Mieke Vandenbroucke (UAntwerpen), Katrijn Maryns (UGent), Marie Jacobs (UGent) and Sara Bergen (UAntwerpen): **"Linguistic ethnography of migrant categories and institutional categorisation practices"**

In this workshop, we will delve into what linguistic ethnography, and specifically, a linguistic ethnographic approach to migrant categories and institutional practices entails. We will discuss its epistemological orientation, different kinds of data collection, data analysis and triangulation, as well as how linguistic ethnographic knowledge can be operationalised to achieve social and/or institutional change.

The workshop will combine a more theoretical introduction to the field with collective (interdisciplinary) discussions and analyses of qualitative data examples and discourse extracts on migrant categories and their discursive construction in institutional categorisation practices.

Workshop 3 by Valériane Mistiaen (VUB) and Martina Temmerman (VUB): **"Discourse Analysis"**

Language and discourse are fundamental objects for understanding human societies but as reality is not transparent, language is not neutral! This workshop will therefore approach the main principles of Discourse Analysis with the aim for the participants to acquire a discursive sensitivity to help them to deconstruct naive conceptions of language. After a theoretical part on Discourse Analysis, participants will be introduced to lexicometric analysis and an overview of the possibilities offered by the software TXM (and/or Hyperbase) will be presented. Participants are encouraged to come with a corpus of texts if they want to work on their research topics.