Concluding Conference of the PhD Program “Boundary Formations in Migration Societies”

**Interdisciplinary and International Conference**

**Border Matters: The Formation of Boundaries in Migration Societies and the Responsibility of Scholarship**

**Venue:** Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany

**Dates:** February 26-28, 2020

**Keynotes:** Nicolas De Genova (Houston), Alana Lentin (Sydney)

Ever since the so-called ‘summer of migration’ of 2015, a central characteristic of migration has become particularly visible in a range of different political and societal spheres and discourses: i.e., practices of crossing boundaries and practices of its prevention are mutually constitutive dimensions of socio-political transformation. In other words, migration destabilizes orders of difference and belonging and mobilizes forces of their re-stabilization at the very same time. In a range of different contexts in migration societies – e.g., at the borders of Europe, in parliamentary debates, in train stations and supermarkets as well as in classrooms at schools and universities – we witness increasingly hostile attempts at demarcating the self from the other, which give ample proof of the strong impact of national, ethnic and/or cultural boundaries beyond the borders of the nation state. At the same time, the urge of redrawing exactly these lines of demarcation in order to safeguard what is considered to be ‘one’s own identity’ finds expression in the resurgence of right-wing and populist parties and movements in different regions of the world. In analogy to these societal dynamics, one can also observe a re-nationalization of territorial borders – a development which, according to Étienne Balibar’s, goes hand in hand with the demarcation of citizenship and thus also sets the limits of democratic participation.

In view of this mutually constitutive relationship between the formation of boundaries and the constitution of orders of difference and belonging in migration societies, the conference pursues two goals: First, it explores the processes of producing national, ethno-cultural, and/or cultural boundaries in different historical and regional contexts. It examines the discourses and practices of ‘doing border’ (e.g. in governmental or non-governmental organizations in the context of the European border regime) and their effects (e.g. in the constitution of the ‘migrant’ or the ‘refugee’ subject). In so doing, the conference aims at illustrating that and how boundaries as well as orders of difference and belonging are (re)produced and (re)negotiated in a range of different societal constellations. Second, following the self-reflexive stance of critical migration studies, the conference also sets out to discuss in how far scholarship in this field contributes to the formation and transformation of boundaries in migration societies. i.e., how do (which) perspectives in migration studies reproduce specific notions and orders of difference and belonging – e.g. through a specific theoretical approach, terminology or methodology? What is the role and responsibility of migration researchers with regard to the current political situation? Can they still refrain from political intervention considering the growing nationalistic and racist tendencies? Are they not asked to work against these tendencies through their scholarship?

Against the backdrop of these observations and considerations, the conference is to be understood both as a site of presenting and discussing scholarly work on practices and discourses of (trans)forming boundaries in migration societies and as a site of reflecting on
one’s own position and responsibility as researcher. In order to establish a dialogue between these two concerns, it invites speakers from different disciplinary backgrounds to present theoretical and methodological consideration as well as case studies from their respective fields of inquiry.

Conference Panels

Panel 1 - Racism – (Ir)Relevant in a German Context?! Contributions by Critical Race Theories & De/Postcolonial Theories for (Critical) Scholarship

Panel 2 - Migration and Border Governance in the EUropean Border Regime during and after 2015

Panel 3 - (Re-)production of Belonging in the Context of Projects of ‘Integration’

Panel 4 - Contested Spaces of Arrival – Negotiating Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Migration Societies from a Historical Perspective

Panel 5 - Academic Knowledge Production and Responsibility

Panel descriptions

Panel 1
Racism – (Ir)Relevant in a German Context?! Contributions by Critical Race Theories & De/Postcolonial Theories for (Critical) Scholarship

Critical race theory and de/postcolonial perspectives are essential for an understanding of the constitution of national-ethnic-cultural boundaries both in the past and the present. They bring with them great potential to analyze contemporary conditions in view of historical developments and with regard to their global dimension. In dialogue with these perspectives, this panel seeks to discuss the role of racism and colonialism on various levels in the context of (postcolonial/post-National Socialist) Germany, thereby contributing to a more thorough understanding of the formation and transformation of borders in Europe. Among others, the following questions will be adressed: How does the creation of national-ethnic-cultural boundaries and the constitution of "Us" and the Others relate to racism and colonialism? How can material and symbolic privileges and deprivations concerning subjectivation be understood from a critical race perspective? What responsibility do researchers have regarding research ethics, reflectivity of their own position and considering power relations (coloniality of power)? And what responsibility do they have with regard to the reproduction, legitimation or struggle of racist differentiation?

Isabel Dean (Göttingen), María Consuelo Flores Rojas (Osnabrück), Khorshid Khodabakhshreshad (Göttingen), Shadi Kooroshy (Oldenburg), Tobias Linnemann (Oldenburg), Iris Rajanayagam (Berlin)

Comment by: Nikita Dhawan (Giessen)
Panel 2

Migration and Border Governance in the EUropean Border Regime during and after 2015

The so-called ‘summer of migration’ 2015 is widely regarded as a turning point for the EUropean border regime. The large number of border crossings towards and through EUrope at that time has brought to the surface a profound crisis of migration governance and border security of the EU and its member states. The policies and practices of re-stabilizing the border regime after the “long summer” are characterized by severe policy restrictivations and at the same time continue differential in- and exclusions. The panel sets out to examine the discourses and practices of governing migration and borders during and after the “summer of migration”, thus picking up on a central topic of our individual and collective research in the PhD program “Boundary formations in migration societies”. It invites contributions that analyze different dimensions and spaces of migration and border governance. Accordingly, presentations may focus on, e.g., the EU’s externalization politics with regard to neighboring states, conflicts within the EU and its member states concerning the Common European Asylum System, discursive struggles articulated in representations ranging from images, visual artefacts or texts to the local materializations of the EUropean border regime through infrastructures (e.g. at what is commonly referred to as ‘hotspots’ of migration at external borders). Putting different disciplinary perspectives in dialogue, we want to shed light on interruptions, transformations as well as continuities of the policies of differential inclusion and exclusion since 2015.

Karl Heyer (Osnabrück), Laura Holderied (Oldenburg), Judith Kopp (Kassel), David Niebauer (Göttingen), Silvan Pollozek (München/Munich), Simon Sperling (Osnabrück)

Comment by: Bernd Kasparek (Uni Göttingen)

Panel 3

(Re-)production of Belonging in the Context of Projects of ‘Integration’

As a reaction to the long summer of migration in 2015, represented as crisis-laden, there has been an increase in projects aiming at the so-called integration of refugees in Germany. In different spheres of society, such as Fine Arts, Education and Sports new programs have evolved, addressing and thus producing new target groups. This panel deals with the meaning-making processes of the discourse about ‘integration’, processes of subjectivation and their effects. The focus is on the ways the distinction between "we" and "others" take shape in the mode of ‘integration’ and thus expressing demands for nationally coded social containment, and exclusion at the same time. It sets out to discuss how, by means of attribution of the inability or unwillingness to integrate, imaginations of upgraded, elevated self-images are constructed in different empirical contexts, and explores to what extent integration functions as economic capital. Here, ‘integration’ becomes a key element that expresses the social commitment and responsibility of companies. In order to meet funding guidelines, a demand for programs designed specifically for certain target groups is produced. At the same time, degrees of integration must be made ‘measurable’ because of the obligation to regularly evaluate success and failure of these programs. For this panel, then, the following questions are of interest: Which different argumentations and logics, e.g. economic, normative, are made used of in the integration discourse? How does the talk about ‘integration’ shape different ideas of belongings, creating dichotomic schemes of ‘us’ and ‘them’? How do practices of disciplinary
power form subjects which are viewed as either not able or not willing to integrate into what is imagined as German society? In what way, on the other hand, is the notion of ‘integration’ contested and how are the discursive positions which are offered contradicted and refused?

Micól Feuchter (Oldenburg), Maria Consuelo Flores Rojas (Osnabrück), Alisha M.B. Heinemann (Bremen), Laila Lucia Lucas (Oldenburg), Azadeh Sharifi (München)

Comment by: NN

Panel 4
Contested Spaces of Arrival – Negotiating Mechanisms of Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Migration Societies from a Historical Perspective

In view of strengthening of racist discourses and practices and the far-reaching helplessness of progressive forces as to how to oppose these developments, it is worth taking a look at history: The investigation of past struggles can help to identify reoccurring structural patterns inherent in these developments or, vice versa, to make a case for their historic singularity. This panel aims to scrutinize the contested spaces of arrival from a historical perspective, focusing on structures and mechanisms of border drawing processes and strategies of resistance. It intends to map out migrants’ claims for participation in their host societies and the possibilities and limitations of fulfilling these claim, and thus takes into closer consideration mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the contested spaces of arrival from a local-historical perspective. Since the non-European migrants’ role in the struggle for participation is central to the panel, the contributions are supposed to either emphasize the perspectives and practices of the migrants or focus on the negotiation processes between migrant and institutional actors and ideally be theoretically embedded in micro- or cultural historical approaches. Possible questions the contributions may engage with include: How were border drawing processes constituted at the local level and to what extent did they differ from border drawing processes at the national and supranational levels? What consequences did the processes of drawing borders have for the everyday life of migrants? In what ways did migrants resist exclusion, what alliances they form, and how successful were their struggles? How important were local socio-economic support structures for the successful implication of resistance against mechanism of exclusion? What role did class, gender, and educational background play in the ability to form strong alliances and networks? What conclusions can be drawn from past struggles for today's conflicts?

Maria Alexopoulou (Mannheim), Kennetta Hammond Perry (Leicester), Svenja von Jan (Göttingen)

Comment by: Bettina Severin-Barboutie (Giessen)

Panel 5
Academic Knowledge Production and Responsibility (panel discussion)

Transnational migrations of people, their bodies, stories and desires, is one of the main issues of political concern and interest. Accordingly, academic knowledge on transnational migration, produced at universities as central institutions in the production of knowledge, always entails a particularly political dimension, since it contributes to strengthening or weakening, affirming or criticizing societal structures and processes. How, then, can scholarly responsibility be conceived in this context? How do we legitimize the mere search for “pure knowledge” in face of global inequalities of an unprecedented scope and scale and at a time, when human
suffering (be it due to ecological damage, civil wars and poverty) has reached an unparalleled level in the history of mankind? Yet, what if the university would exclusively dedicate itself to these urgent issues in order to contribute to a change toward a better world? Would it lose its status as a place that “must not interdict any question, any putting into question” (Derrida)? What options, then, are left for researchers and to take social responsibility? Or would it be better to leave the university for good? The panel discussion sets out to address these and other questions, putting into dialogue voices from various disciplinary backgrounds.

Yasemin Karakaşoğlu (Bremen), Wilhelm Krull (VolkswagenStiftung), Paul Mecheril (Bielefeld), Hatice Pınar Şenoğuz (Göttingen)

**Registration**

Please register via E-Mail migg@uol.de

Deadline for registration is **February 20, 2020.**

The participation is free of charge.

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PhD Program “Boundary Formations in Migration Societies”

at the Universities of Oldenburg, Osnabrück and Göttingen, Germany

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