



IMIS

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

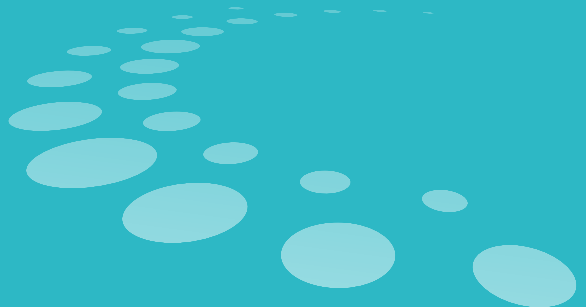
2025





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Prof. Dr. Helen Schwenken
Director of IMIS

PREFACE

Dear Readers,

We are delighted to share with you a glimpse into the work of the **Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS)** in 2025 by presenting some highlights — and thankfully, there were many in the past year. “Highlights” showcase particularly beautiful, vibrant, and communicative moments — yet, the highlights presented here only represent a small fraction of our activities. Much happens behind the scenes, from coordinating events to small gestures of welcoming new colleagues and other contributions that rarely make it into the spotlight. We warmly invite you to visit the IMIS website to explore the full breadth of our members’ work and the many research projects not individually mentioned in this report.

In many of our projects, a reflexive perspective on key theories and categories of migration research is pursued — most prominently in

the **Collaborative Research Centre “Production of Migration” (SFB 1604)** and the Junior Research Group “The Production of Knowledge on Migration”, both of which are featured in these “Highlights”. Furthermore, the sometimes close and affirmative connection between the societal problematization of migration and the research on it is examined. Thus, IMIS critically scrutinizes migration studies’ own knowledge production on migration.

At the time of the institute’s founding in the early 1990s, Germany faced a large influx of refugees and structurally high unemployment. In an increasingly hostile and racist climate, asylum seekers and migrants — along with other individuals targeted as *weak* or *undesirable* by racists and neo-Nazis — faced a wave of violent attacks, including deadly arson. Political responses included restrictions on the right to asylum and a European border architecture designed to screen and turn people away before they can even reach or cross external

borders. Migration research has repeatedly demonstrated that these measures did not achieve the intended results — yet, this research has rarely been heeded, leaving those who believe in *evidence-based* policy disillusioned. In light of wars, the alarming rise of right-wing populist parties, and the coldness and hostility migrants continue to encounter in everyday life and interactions with authorities, academia has a crucial role to play in society. This is currently an important topic at IMIS and within our **International Migration and Intercultural Relations (IMIB)** Master’s program.

Thanks to our new Science Communication team for producing this report, and, of course, to the IMIS board and all IMIS staff and members for the dedicated collective work over the past year.

Enjoy the glimpse into our activities!

FuturMig TAKES OFF

EXPLORING FUTURES OF MIGRATION

How do societies imagine futures of migration and how do these imaginaries shape political decisions, educational practices, and public debates? With the launch of **Futures of Migration (FuturMig)**, IMIS began coordinating a new Lower Saxony-wide research cluster dedicated to exactly these questions.

At its core, FuturMig focuses on visions, expectations, and strategies for shaping future migration societies. The research area examines how ideas about *future migration* emerge and circulate across politics, media, civil society, and academic knowledge production, and how they influence action in the present. A first step is a comprehensive scientific mapping of existing debates and research, which over time will be complemented by

the establishment of an international visiting professorship and the development of a larger joint research proposal.

A distinctive feature of FuturMig is its strong emphasis on education and pedagogical contexts. From early childhood education and schools to universities, civil society initiatives, museums, and memorial sites, the project explores how migration-related diversity is addressed and how it could be approached more reflexively as a demographic normality. One concrete outcome will be a cross-university certificate program designed to support (prospective) teachers, educators, and professionals in dealing with migration-related diversity in their everyday practice. In addition, FuturMig sets up a real-world laboratory



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on history and memory cultures, where participatory formats and interventions are tested in cooperation with societal actors. Here, visions about migration, belonging, and historical responsibility are not only analyzed, but actively co-produced.

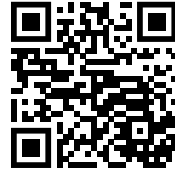
Running from 2025 to 2029, Futur-Mig brings together five partners: IMIS Osnabrück University, the Centre for Global Migration Stud-

ies (CeMig) at the University of Göttingen, the Centre for Educational Integration (ZBI) at the University of Hildesheim, the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media/ Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) in Braunschweig, and the Museum Friedland. Supported by the State of Lower Saxony and the Volkswagen Foundation within the program “Wissenschaftsräume” (English: “Spaces of Science”), the project strengthens cooper-

ation between universities and non-university research institutions in the field of migration research.

Closely linked to the Collaborative Research Centre “Production of Migration” (SFB 1604), FuturMig marks an important milestone in strengthening interdiscipli-

nary, forward-looking migration research in Lower Saxony and beyond.



www.futurmig.de

FUTURMIG



WHO ARE »WE«?

LESSONS FROM THE KultMIX PROJECT ON CHANGING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN A MIGRATION SOCIETY

What happens to cultural institutions when the societies around them are (re)shaped by migration? That was the driving question behind the IMIS-based research project **Kulturproduktion in der Migrationsgesellschaft (KultMIX)** (English: Cultural Production in the Migration Society). Running since 2018 and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the project explored how cultural institutions position themselves in relation to migration and growing social diversity — and how they are in turn changed by it.

Rather than observing from a distance, the project worked in close partnership with practitioners on the ground. Through

real-world laboratories, academic research was directly intertwined with the everyday realities of selected cultural institutions. The project covered four thematic areas — theater, museums, cultural policy and administration, and the independent cultural scene — across four cities: Osnabrück, Hamburg, Sindelfingen, and Dresden.

The project's findings are brought together in an edited volume published by transcript Verlag in 2024, freely available as open access. Edited by Jens Schneider, Jochen Oltmer, Andreas Pott, and Antonie Schmiz, the book sets the research in dialog with practitioners and policymakers, examining the

Jens Schneider, Jochen Oltmer,
Andreas Pott, Antonie Schmitz (Hg.)

KULTURPRODUKTION IN DER MIGRATIONS- GESELLSCHAFT

Herausforderungen für Kulturinstitutionen
und Kulturpolitik



[transcript] → Kultur- und Museumsmanagement

possibilities and challenges of navigating migration, diversity, and social change in the cultural sector.

On 6 May 2025, IMIS, SFB 1604, and the Theater Osnabrück co-hosted a public event to present the book and discuss its findings. Project coordinator Jens Schneider drew on demographic data from cities like Osnabrück to argue that the distinction between *migrant* and *German* is growing ever harder to sustain — and that cultural institutions

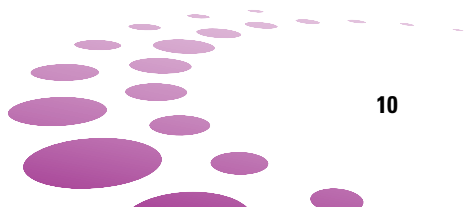
that fail to reckon with this risk losing a substantial part of their audience.

The event served as a reminder that engaging seriously with migration and diversity is not a one-time effort but a continuous challenge for cultural institutions and policymakers alike — one that demands a willingness to innovate, to question established structures, and to develop new formats that reach out to an audience that more genuinely reflects the society they serve.

Take a look inside



www.transcript-verlag.de



EuMIGS

WINTER WORKSHOP

DISCUSSING CARTOGRAPHIES OF MIGRATION & REFLEXIVITY IN RESEARCH

Migration shapes societies across Europe and remains a pressing social and political issue. In response, universities in many European countries have established dedicated master's programs in Migration Studies. To foster exchange among these programs, IMIS initiated the **European Master in Migration Studies (EuMIGS)** network in 2017.

The network brings together 13 migration research institutes from ten European countries and their respective master's programs, with the aim of strengthening academic mobility, cross-border learning, and sustained exchange among students and teaching staff.

At the heart of EuMIGS is a double degree program involving ten participating universities. It enables students to spend the second year of their studies at a partner institution in another European country and to graduate with degrees from both their home and host universities. All participating institutes are members of the IMISCOE Research Network, giving EuMIGS students access to IMISCOE's annual conferences and international training activities.

EuMIGS also offers shorter mobility schemes to students — from one semester-exchanges to joint workshops and courses. A key example is a series of three



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winter workshops funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership. The third and final workshop took place in Osnabrück from February 17 to 19, 2025, bringing together 16 EuMIGS double-degree students, 13 students from network MA programs, and 12 coordinators from seven European universities. The workshops were explicitly designed to bring together both double-degree students and students studying at one of the partner universities who do not have the possibility to go abroad for a whole year, e.g., because of care responsibilities.

The winter workshop in Osnabrück focused on critical cartography and reflexive approaches in migration research. A keynote lecture by Dr. Nora Küttel (Bremen University), with commentary by IMIS researcher Dr. Sophie Hinger, explored how maps can reproduce marginalization and power asymmetries, while also serving as tools for empowerment, visibility, and alternative

narratives. The lecture was complemented by a hands-on mapping workshop titled “Studying Migration on the Move”, led by Dr. Küttel, in which students developed visual representations of their research themes.

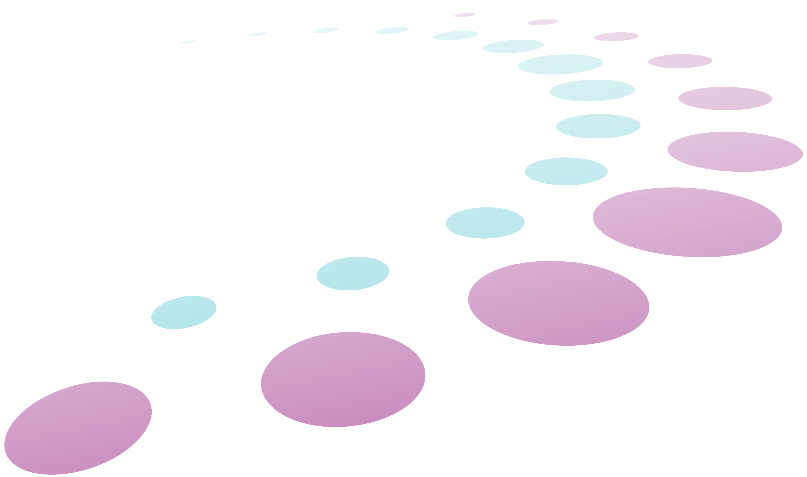
Participants also took part in a city tour led by Dr. Christoph Rass, Professor of Modern History and Historical Migration Research at Osnabrück University. The guided tour encouraged critical reflection on material cultures of memory and demonstrated how power structures and societal negotiations shape public representations of the past. Using examples such as museums, memorials, and monuments, Professor Rass illustrated how sites of memory produce both visibility and invisibility in translating historical experiences into the present.

The final day featured a hybrid panel discussion on reflexivity in migration studies, with thought-provoking contributions

from Professor Dr. Andreas Pott (Osnabrück University), Dr. Faten Khazaei (Northumbria University, Newcastle), Associate Professor Dr. Camille Schmoll (EHESS, Paris), Dr. Inken Bartels (Osnabrück University), and Dr. Jens Schneider (Osnabrück University). The panel sparked a lively and productive exchange with a broader audience of IMIS students and researchers.

opportunities to discuss their master's thesis projects and methodological approaches with experienced scholars, receiving detailed feedback and strengthening transnational academic networks. The workshop thus exemplified EuMIGS's core mission: Combining rigorous academic training with international collaboration and critical reflection on migration and related research.

Throughout the three-day workshop, students had multiple



FAREWELL TO OUR RESEARCH GROUP

»THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE ON MIGRATION«

In the summer of 2025, the Research Group **“The Production of Knowledge on Migration”** concluded five years of collaborative, interdisciplinary research. During this time, the group contributed to numerous conferences, workshops, and publications and engaged intensively with the categories, concepts, and data that shape representations of spatially mobile people and inform the practices that govern their mobilities. Their work advanced understanding of how migration is continuously produced and reproduced — both as an object of study and as an object of intervention — and contributed to the debate on reflexive migration research. The research group

also deepened insights into how mobilities shape societies (and vice versa), both in the past and in the present. We have asked the members of the research group about their personal highlight during the past five years.

Inken Bartels

“How can we intervene in knowledge politics on migration?”

Our research unfolded when migration knowledge was both highly demanded and fiercely contested. We witnessed a steady demand for policy relevant and applied studies on migration and the rise of reflexive scholarship. Yet, the political right’s alternative facts and fake news chal-

lenged this knowledge, prompting scholars to produce more *facts* and stronger *evidence* as counter narratives. Our research group resisted falling back on this kind of fact-based epistemic authority. Instead, we highlighted the epistemic struggles behind each claim — asking who produces knowledge, for what aims, and what truth making effects follow.”

Philipp Schäfer

“How can we produce knowledge in both careful and critical ways?”

In our research group, feminist contributions to Science and Technology Studies have helped us to develop answers to the challenges of researching knowledge practices simultaneously both carefully and critically. We have published our (joint) findings in several journals and edited volumes. But care practices also structured our ways of working together — while balancing family and paid work, coping with the material and emotional pressures of a funding-driven research landscape, or foste-



ring supportive interactions with colleagues inside and outside the institute.”

Laura Stielike

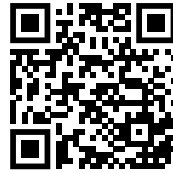
“How can we make our reflections accessible to a broader public?

To intervene in today’s heated migration debate from a knowledge perspective, we created the “Inventory of Migration Terms”. This online reference work discusses key terms such as *diversity*, *pull factor* or *guest worker*. These terms are not neutral. They are historically constructed, embody power relations and co-produce migration realities. The Inventory’s accessible format not only attracts scholars but also teachers, students and practitioners. I truly hope that it can contribute to more reflexivity when speaking about migration.”

Maurice Stierl

“How can a collective effort to produce scholarship look like?

Inventory of Migration Terms

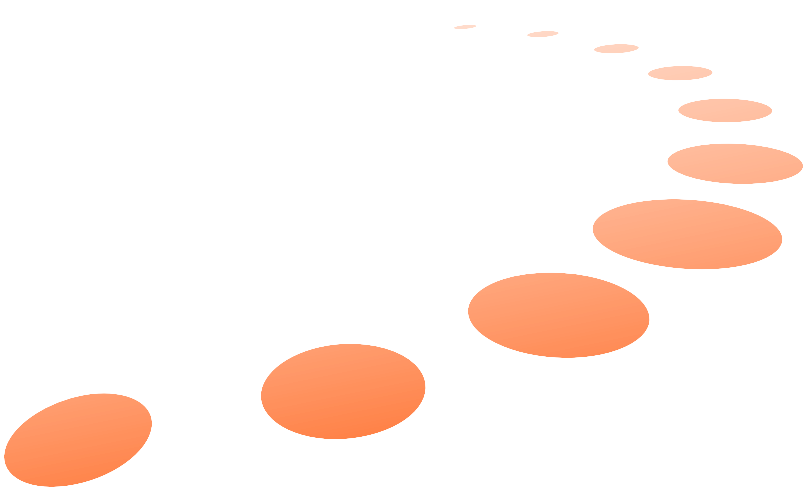


www.migrationsbegriffe.de

Within our research group, I fondly remember an extended brainstorming session at IMIS, in which we discussed the state of migration research in Germany and beyond. We had long observed what is often referred to as the *reflexive turn*, in Migration Studies, thus a growing examination of knowledge practices themselves and how they impact how we understand a contested phenomenon such as migration. Indeed, our research group working on “The Production of Knowledge on Migration” can itself be considered as part of this *turn*. Even so, we also had some reservations about this trajectory

and during our brainstorm, we started to formulate and systematize our critique. To see how this discussion turned into a concrete idea, then slowly took shape as a journal article, to eventually be published as “The Moral Eco-

nomies of Reflexive Migration Studies” in *Migration Studies*, is rewarding and, at least for me, demonstrates the benefits of collaborative work, even or especially in the often very individualized scientific industry.”





PROUDLY ANNOUNCING

FFVT PROJECT ENTERS SECOND FUNDING PHASE

The project **Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer (FFVT)** has secured funding for a second phase from Germany's Federal Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space (BMFTR). IMIS has been involved in the collaborative initiative since 2020 and previously contributed to its predecessor project, Forced Migration: Research and Transfer (FFT), which ran from 2016 to 2019. We spoke with Dr. Franck Düvell, who coordinates the project at IMIS, about its goals and achievements.

Franck, congratulations on the continuation of FFVT. What are the project's main objectives?

FFVT aims to sustainably strengthen interdisciplinary forced migration and refugee studies

in Germany. A core focus is promoting internationalization and diversity within academic research on forced migration and displacement, as well as fostering exchange, networking, and long-term collaboration. At the same time, the project is committed to making research findings accessible beyond academia, thereby contributing to informed and evidence-based societal and political debates on migration.

What has the project achieved so far?

Over the past funding phase, we have, in cooperation with other partners — the German Network for Forced Migration Studies, NWFF, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ —, contributed to

the organization of three international conferences with over 1,500 participants. We also organized around 30 workshops with approximately 1,000 researchers from a wide range of disciplines and over 46 countries. In addition, after the pandemic, FFVT hosted around 50 international scholars (FFVT fellows) at its partner institutions, introducing new expertise and underrepresented perspectives into the German research landscape.

Supporting early-career researchers has been another key pillar of our work. We established dedicated support structures for doctoral candidates and students enrolled in migration-related master's programs, including a biennial international summer school and an alumni network.

FFVT has also developed a range of formats to engage with public debates. One prominent example is *FFVT on Point*, an event series that provides a platform for discussing current, publicly relevant issues in forced migration and refugee



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research. These events foster dialog between researchers and stakeholders from politics, public administration, the media, and civil society. Moreover, researchers involved in FFVT have become well-established interlocutors for journalists and are regularly represented in media coverage.

One achievement I am particularly proud of is our annually published *Report Globale Flucht* (English:

REPORT GLOBALE

Herausgegeben von Jochen Oltmer, Marcel Berlinghoff, Franck Düvell, Benjamin Etzold, Christine Lang und Andreas Pott

FLUCHT 2025



Report on Global Forced Displacement). It has become an important reference for journalists, policymakers, and civil society actors working on forced displacement and refugee policy. Each volume addresses different aspects of global displacement and related policies through clearly written short contributions by leading experts, making complex research findings accessible to a broader audience.

Toward the end of the project, we initiated the establishment of a dedicated Standing Committee Forced Migration and Refugees within the IMISCOE network — the largest of its kind, with its 71 member institutes and 1,500 individual members. This created a sustainable structure for research networking in the field, and I am happy to chair this committee.

What is planned for the next years and what will be IMIS' major contributions in the second funding phase?

FFVT II is implemented by IMIS, the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), and the Center for Human Rights at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. The project will run until December 2029 (funding permitted). The above-mentioned objectives remain the same: networking, transfer, and the establishment of sustainable structures. Our specific responsibilities will include:

- the annual *Report Globale Flucht* and its accompanying transfer program (including a presentation at the Federal Press Conference and workshops)
- regular project and policy briefs
- an annual PhD/Postdoc colloquium
- planning of at least one international conference, ideally within the IMISCOE framework
- consolidating the IMISCOE Standing Committee
- preparing a major application for a research program on the theme of immobility/immobilization
- supporting individual projects
- hosting three international fellows annually



Flucht- und Flüchtlingsforschung: Vernetzung und Transfer
 Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer



www.ffvt.net

NETWORKING

IMIS AS PART OF THE DeZIM RESEARCH COMMUNITY

IMIS is part of the research community of **Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (DeZIM)** (English: German Center for Integration and Migration Research). The community aims to connect key actors in migration and integration research across Germany and currently brings together seven member institutions.

At IMIS, Dr. Marcel Berlinghoff is responsible for coordinating networking activities and exchange with the other member institutes of the DeZIM research community as well as with the DeZIM institute itself. We spoke with him about his role.

Marcel, what are your responsibilities as Research Coordinator and Liaison for DeZIM?

I serve as a central contact point for colleagues at both IMIS and within the DeZIM research community who are seeking cooperation partners or have questions regarding events or publications. In addition, I closely collaborate with colleagues from other institutes to organize joint formats such as FG Wednesday — a monthly professional online exchange for researchers working at institutes participating in the research community — , and the annual DeZIM Conference.

Why is IMIS' involvement in the DeZIM research community important?

The DeZIM research community brings together leading institutions in German migration research, creating a highly valuable

BIM

Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales
Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft



Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung



Mannheimer Zentrum
für europäische Sozialforschung

InZentiM

WZB



Wissenschaftszentrum
für Sozialforschung

IKG

Institut für Interdisziplinäre
Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung

DeZIM

Forschungs-
gemeinschaft

Gefördert vom:



Bundesministerium
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen
und Jugend

interdisciplinary network. This setting enables exchange beyond familiar academic environments and fosters new perspectives. The diversity of disciplines and research fields represented in the network significantly enriches our understanding of migration and integration-related topics. DeZIM also provides additional opportunities for visibility and attention in national media, politics, and practice through the networks established in recent years. This includes direct lines to federal ministries for the exchange of expertise.

How exactly is DeZIM fostering new research?

In the DeZIM community we provide opportunities for exchange of ideas at different levels and depth. For example, with the Co-Work-Program we fund short-term visits between researchers from the member institutes to develop and discuss ideas in different scientific settings. This can also be used to write joint appli-

cations or work on a co-authored article. The Workshop Series, on the other hand, opens spaces for broader discussions on specific research topics, methods, and even theoretical issues.

How does IMIS contribute to the work of the DeZIM research community?

IMIS is currently involved in several collaborative projects, including Transnational Perspectives on Migration and Integration (TRANSMIT), and Social Spaces of Migration (GeRäuMig). In addition, many other colleagues participate in the research community's formats or organize events in cooperation with the DeZIM Institute. For example, they contribute to the short publication format *DeZIMminute* which summarizes findings from ongoing research projects, and engage in the Mentoring Program for PhD students. This brings IMIS' reflexive perspective on migration research continuously into debates within the DeZIM community and beyond.



DeZIM Community

BIM Berliner Institut für empirische
Integrations- und Migrationsforschung

DeZIM | Institut



InZentIM
Interdisciplinary Centre for
Integration and Migration Research

IAB INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT
RESEARCH
The Research Institute of the Federal Employment Agency

IKG | Institut für interdisziplinäre
Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung

WZB 
Berlin Social Science Center



mzes mannheimer zentrum
für europäische sozialforschung

IMIS Institute for Migration Research
and Intercultural Studies

AT A GLANCE

SFB 1604 – "PRODUCTION OF MIGRATION"

Since April 2024, IMIS runs the Collaborative Research Centre "Production of Migration" (SFB 1604), a long-term research endeavor funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). SFB 1604 aims to transform the way we look at migration. It conducts theory-based, post-disciplinary and reflexive research on migration.

Drawing on concrete empirical cases, the SFB examines how individual, collective, and institutional actors across different contexts enact, negotiate, and ascribe meaning to migration. This *production of migration* is understood as a dynamic process of negotiation: in a contested arena marked by power asymmetries, migration is (de)thematized, (de)problematized, and connected to broader societal developments.

In this way, the production of migration not only generates, stabilizes, or transforms the physical movement of people, but also shapes social orders and systems of knowledge.

The long-term goal of SFB 1604 is the development of a reflexive theory of the societal production of migration.



www.producingmigration.org

Participating universities:

Osnabrück University, Kiel University, University of Münster, Goethe University Frankfurt, Europa-Universität Flensburg, TU Dortmund University, Freie Universität Berlin/Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam

Projects:

15 research projects, Integrated Research Training Group, Transfer Project

Members:

62 (in first funding phase 2024-2027)

Board:

Prof. Dr. Julia Becker,
Prof. Dr. Jochen Oltmer,
Prof. Dr. Andreas Pott (Chair),
Aurora A. Sauter,
Prof. Dr. Helen Schwenken (Co-Chair)

**Join our IMIS/SFB Lecture Series at
Osnabrück University or via livestream.**

Click here for more details:



www.uni-osnabrueck.de/sfb1604

**PRODUCTION
OF MIGRATION**





IN PORTRAIT

PEOPLE AT IMIS

IMIS brings together people across all roles and career stages — from student assistants and administrative staff to PhD candidates, postdocs, and professors. Here, four individuals share brief insights into their work and experiences at IMIS through three questions.

Prof. Dr. H. Neşe Özgen

Neşe what has been your academic journey, and what are your main research interests?

I have been a Professor of Sociology and Anthropology in Turkey since 2005, focusing on borders, forced migration, statelessness, and memory. After my displacement from Turkey, I joined the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies in 2023 as a Philipp Schwartz Initiative Fellow

of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and I continue my research at IMIS within the SAFE-DAAD Fellowship framework. These fellowships have allowed me to further develop a research trajectory I have pursued for over two decades across Turkey, Greece, Germany, and the United States.

What are you currently working on?

My project — The Camp as a Life-world: Memories of Statelessness in the Kurdish Refugee Experience — examines refugee camps as lived social worlds where memory, political subjectivity, and belonging are produced. Focusing on Kurdish refugees in Greece and Germany, it explores how statelessness is shared and transformed into counter-memories

shaping political agency, identity, and citizenship. Using multisited ethnography, interviews, observation, and archival research, the project bridges empirical work and conceptual debates.

My broader interests include border regimes, feminist migration analyses, memory in exile, and women's solidarity networks. I focus on refugee self-organization and political agency under criminalization and shrinking civic space.

Which perspectives do you bring to IMIS and what do you particularly enjoy about working here?

I bring a long-term, historically grounded, and comparative perspective on migration, shaped by sustained fieldwork and engagement across academic and political contexts. My work is interdisciplinary, combining sociology, anthropology, political geography, and memory studies, and closely linked to civil society, refugee organizations, and European policy debates. I see



© Neşe Özgen

research as collaborative and value spaces for collective reflection, such as workshops and transnational networks.

What I enjoy most at IMIS is its commitment to critical, interdisciplinary migration research and its collegial, intellectually generous environment, where theory, empirical work, ethics, and public engagement come together.



Prof. Dr. Lisa Janotta

Lisa, you have been Professor of Social Pedagogy with a focus on racism research at Osnabrück University since 2024. What motivated you to join IMIS in 2025?

I am happy to join IMIS as an interdisciplinary research and collaboration network. IMIS enables insights into a variety of research

perspectives and empirical work from many parts of the world.

What are the main focal points of your research?

While many IMIS researchers focus on economically, legally, and socially driven dynamics of border building and migration from a historical or contemporary perspective, I am interested in the less visible aspects of power relations in migration. This includes the emotional and affective meaning of social relations. Of course, I am also interested in the question of how we can take these insights into account for pedagogical research, theory, and practice.

What are you currently working on?

I am developing a social-psychoanalytical perspective based on group analysis, a theoretical framework you may know from Norbert Elias and S. H. Foulkes. Farhad Dalal, who follows this perspective, has developed a

theory that understands racism as a social and psychic process that involves all members of society emotionally, whether they are Black, Brown, White, Jewish, or identify as belonging to other groups. By following this theoretical approach, I want to contribute to the vivid discussion on racism and racism-critical approaches in pedagogy, approaching it from a perspective that aims to understand dynamics within groups. In addition to working on theoretical frameworks, this also supports professionalization in social work and pedagogical practice.

Sigrid Pusch

Sigrid, you headed the secretariat of IMIS's central professorship for Migration and Society for over 30 years. In 2025, we bid you farewell as you entered retirement. Which moments at IMIS have remained particularly memorable for you?

I look back with particular fondness on the many visiting



scholars from every corner of the globe who came to Osnabrück to do their research at IMIS. With some of them I also connected on a personal level — we went for walks, watched movies at the cinema, and explored other cities together. I would also like to mention the students of the Master's program in International Migration and Intercultural Relations (IMIB), which was founded by IMIS. These socially committed

young people will remain with me as a wonderful memory. Both the visiting scholars and the students really enriched my working life tremendously.

What do you particularly enjoy about retirement?

Being able to sleep in a little longer in the mornings is a real treat. I am also thoroughly enjoying bike rides and walks during the day, and heading to the gym in the morning when it is still quiet.

What advice would you like to give your successor in the secretariat?

Despite the heavy workload that comes with running a successful institute like ours, we colleagues in the IMIS secretariat always took the time to be good colleagues to one another. My successor will also encounter this culture of collegiality. My advice to her: be professional, but never lose sight of who you are. I was always Sigrid first and

foremost. Because the time we spend at work is, ultimately, time we spend living.

Dr. Lekh Nath Paudel

Lekh, you are a postdoctoral researcher in our Collaborative Research Centre “Production of Migration” (SFB 1604). There, you work in a project on gender-differentiating migration policies.

What exactly is the project about?

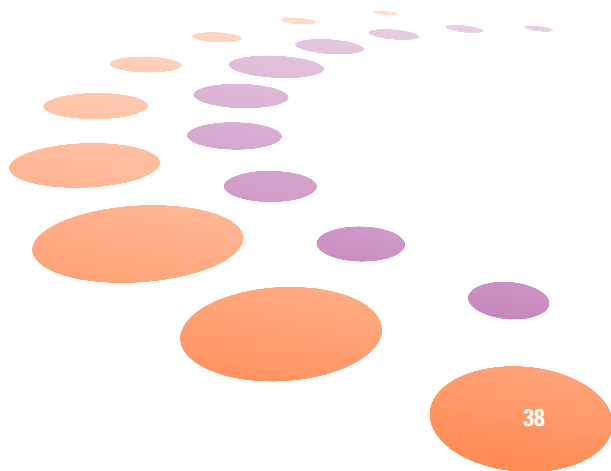
Our project investigates the production of gender-differentiating policies by looking at gender-specific emigration restrictions in Nepal and India, where women who intend to emigrate face restrictions depending on their age, marital status, level of education and profession. Our research answers the question of how gender-differentiating policies are imposed, contested and negotiated. We analyze their embeddedness as well as their constitutive role in shaping the migration infrastructures that produce gender-differentiated migration.

What is your own particular research focus within this project?

Within our research, I specifically focus on how these gender bans are legitimized, contested and renegotiated in the migration infrastructures, as well as their epistemic underpinnings and intersectional implications.

Your life is divided between Germany and Nepal. How do you manage to balance your academic career at IMIS with your family life in Nepal?

My research is autobiographical in the sense that my transnational life is also my research object and Nepal is my field. I am grateful to the IMIS directorate for providing me with the flexibility to be at both ends.



KEY FIGURES

2025



Members & Staff

82



PhDs

58



**Student
Assistants**

40



**International
Guests 25/26**

40



**IMIB Master
Students 25/26**

133



Publications

Uncountable



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HIGHLIGHT FROM OUR IMIB MASTER'S PROGRAM

FOUNDING OF A MIGRATION POLICY
THINK TANK



IMIS coordinates the interdisciplinary master's program **International Migration and Intercultural Relations (IMIB)** at Osnabrück University. The program brings together ten different disciplines, including sociology, law, religious studies, and economics, offering students a broad and integrated perspective on migration-related issues. Students have the opportunity to earn a double

degree through the transnational exchange program European Master in Migration Studies (EuMIGS). Each year, the IMIB master admits 30 new students.

Beyond their academic training, many IMIB students are actively engaged in civil society organizations or even develop their own initiatives for social and political engagement.

One such initiative is the **Think-Tank Migrationspolitik e.V.** (English: Migration Policy Think Tank).

It originated as a student-led initiative motivated by the desire to engage with migration issues beyond the confines of formal academic studies. Its founding impulse arose from the shared observation that public debates on migration were becoming increasingly detached from empirical research and scientific evidence — a development which, in the

eyes of the founding students, threatens democracy. The initiative quickly grew in scope and organizational structure, ultimately leading the group to formalize as a registered association (eingetragener Verein) in 2025.

When the ThinkTank Migrationspolitik speaks of migration policy, it adopts a broad understanding of politics that includes language, media, institutions, and everyday practices — spaces where power shapes belonging, participation, inclusion, and exclusion, and

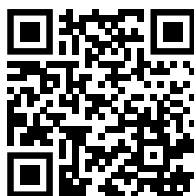


where narratives about migration are produced, amplified, or silenced.

Accordingly, the ThinkTank Migrationspolitik engages in a wide range of activities aimed at shaping public discourse and contributing to migration policy debates. These include in-depth discussions and analyses of current developments in migration policy, networking of actors from academia, civil society, media, administration, and politics, and the organization of events and projects such as panel discussions and workshops. In addition, the ThinkTank conducts public outreach and advocacy through statements and targeted social media communication, while offering critical, evidence-based perspectives on migration-related media coverage.

The association currently has 13 members (as of January 2026) and is open to anyone committed to advocating for a human rights-based approach to migration policy and to strengthening constructive debate. Its work benefits from the broad interdisciplinary backgrounds of its members.

Looking ahead, the ThinkTank aims to grow as an organization, expand its reach, and contribute to a future in which debates on migration are conducted in a constructive, evidence-based, and humane manner rather than being shaped by polarizing narratives.



www.tt-migrationspolitik.org

AWARD-WINNING

JOURNAL ARTICLE BY HISTORIAN CHRISTOPH RASS AND HIS U.S. COLLEAGUE JULIE M. WEISE

In 2025, IMIS and SFB 1604 member Prof. Dr. Christoph Rass and Prof. Dr. Julie M. Weise (University of Oregon) received an award for the best social science journal article from the Mexico Section of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA).

The award honors their article “Migrating Concepts: The Transatlantic Origins of the Bracero Program, 1919-42”, published in *The American Historical Review*, Volume 129, Issue 1, March 2024.

The jury highlighted the article’s innovative contribution to historical migration research and its reconceptualization of one of the most influential labor migration programs of the 20th century. The Bracero Program (1942-1964), a bilateral agreement between the United States and Mexico, regulated temporary labor migration and resulted in more than four million contracts that allowed Mexican men to work in the United States. Previous scholarship has largely interpreted the program through



the lens of the U.S. hegemony and bilateral power relations.

Rass and Weise propose a different perspective: Their article traces the conceptual origins of the Bracero Program to two decades of intense transatlantic knowledge exchange that preceded its formal establishment. During the interwar period, Mexican politicians, intellectuals, diplomats, and labor activists actively participated in international debates on migration policy. They closely followed European developments, particularly in Italy, and engaged with emerging models of bilateral labor agreements and their institutionalization through international organizations such as the International Labor Organization (ILO).

While U.S. policymakers largely ignored international expert recommendations and European precedents, Mexican actors systematically observed, translated, and adapted these ideas to their own political context. When



the United States entered World War II and labor demand surged, Mexican negotiators were therefore well prepared. Drawing on transatlantic expertise, they played a decisive role in shaping the Bracero Program's design and regulatory framework.

By reconstructing these processes of translation, adaptation, and political instrumentalization, the article challenges nationally

bounded narratives and highlights Latin American agency in the making of global migration regimes. Rass and Weise argue for a migration history that moves beyond comparison and instead foregrounds entanglements and knowledge circulation across regions.

The award-winning article is part of a broader collaborative research agenda. Rass and

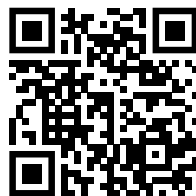
Weise currently work within the transatlantic and interdisciplinary group Translations of Migration, which explores how meanings of migration are culturally translated across time, space, and social contexts. First results were already published in *History and Theory*. In addition, both authors are preparing a monograph on the globalization of the guest worker concept in the 20th century.

Journal Article



www.academic.oup.com

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GOING GLOBAL

RESEARCH EXCHANGE AND TEACHING ABROAD

Migration is a global phenomenon; spatial movements of people connect the world. Migration means crossing borders. Science, too, is global. Knowledge knows no borders — it circulates globally through exchange, networking, productive irritation, and shifts in perspective.

For this reason, migration research does not stop at Germany's borders. To analyze and understand international migration — its causes, forms, and consequences — it must extend beyond them. Researchers at IMIS and in our DFG-funded Collaborative Research Centre "Production of Migration" (SFB 1604) therefore regularly conduct fieldwork in other countries and regions of the world. They also

travel internationally to present their projects and findings at conferences, teach at partner universities, and engage in intensive exchange and collaboration with colleagues worldwide.

Our students in the IMIB and EuMIGS master's programs are equally mobile. Many spend one or two semesters at a university abroad or conduct research overseas for their master's theses. Here, we present a small selection of our international activities in 2025.



India

Homaira Rahnom spent time in Kerala and Delhi to learn about labour migration and gender in India. She spoke, amongst others, with nurses, former domestic workers, recruitment agencies, trade unions, and religious networks. Key insights from the conversations included the accessibility to the official migration

infrastructure for some groups and the exclusion from that infrastructure for others. Furthermore, India's migration strategy became clearer during these conversations, revealing a shift from labor migration to positioning the country as a hub for talent and skilled migration.



©Aurora A. Sauter



©Aurora A. Sauter

USA

In May and June 2025, **Aurora A. Sauter** traveled to the Gulf of Maine to conduct fieldwork for the SFB project *The Production of Climate Flight as an Occasion for Theorization* and for her related dissertation on climate change and migration in the Global North. She traveled along the coast and spoke with NGOs, concerned residents, and stakeholders from sectors such as fisheries, construction, and industry. The rapidly warming Gulf is putting increasing pressure on many livelihoods and local economies.

At the same time, Maine is marked by pronounced social inequalities, which are being intensified by the in-migration of wealthier residents attracted by the state's natural environment and quality of life — often in contrast to states such as Texas. This dynamic is fueling

gentrification and widening existing inequalities. Aurora's visit concluded in New York City, where she participated in the MR2025 conference *Mobility, Adaptation, and Wellbeing in a Changing Climate* at Columbia University.

Outreach

Read Aurora's article on migration and climate change, drawing on case studies from the United States and the Netherlands, published within the framework of IMIS' cooperation with Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) (in German only).



www.bpb.de

Canada

In 2025, **Professor Dr. Andreas Pott**, chair of the Collaborative Research Centre “Production of Migration”, spent three months as a Scholar of Excellence at the Global Migration Institute (formerly Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration) at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), Canada. While at GMI, he worked intensively on the functions of space as a central medium for the societal production of migration, prepared

the new GMI-IMIS Exchange Fellowship Program, and convened, together with renowned migration sociologist Professor Dr. Anna Triandafyllidou, the well-attended Workshop on Becoming a Migration Researcher.



Since 2019, our master's program in International Migration and Intercultural Relations (IMIB) has maintained an exchange partnership with Toronto Metropolitan University's Immigration and Settlement Studies (ISS) program. Each year, three IMIB students have the opportunity to spend one semester studying in Canada. In 2025, these students were **Ben Balsmeier**, **Antonia Gier**, and **Antonia Plenkens**.

“*During our exchange semester at TMU, we gained important insights into Canada's immigration history, policies, and experiences, which also inspired our further academic journey.*”
Antonia Gier



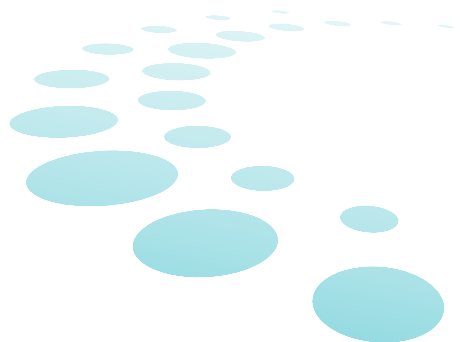


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France

Our team for Paris: From July 1-4, 2025, about **twenty of our scholars and students** took part in the 22nd IMISCOE Annual Conference in Paris, on Decentering Migration Studies. They led panels, presented and discussed their research in workshops, and engaged in

intensive exchange with other academics from the more than 70 research institutes that are part of the IMISCOE international migration research network.





Moldova

One SFB project examines the production of mobility options in the context of migration and border management between the EU and the two Eastern European countries Ukraine and Moldova.

In 2025, researchers **Professor Dr. Ulrich Schneckener**, **Isabel Hoffmann**, and **Katharina Kleynmans**

traveled to Moldova to conduct interviews with representatives from the government, the EU, political foundations, and civil society on the infrastructures that regulate mobility and how these are shaped by regional conflict dynamics.

(In the picture: State Secretary Valeriu Mija, to the left of the researchers.)

FROM CAMPUS TO COMMUNITY

DIALOG WITH LOCAL PRACTITIONERS

IMIS does not only maintain international networks, but is also embedded in its local context. Since its founding, it has sought active exchange with the city's administration and civil society organizations in and around Osnabrück. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this work. In 2025, IMIS set out to rebuild these connections, with regular meetings with local practitioners now planned on an ongoing basis.

The first of these was a networking event held in November on the theme of Forced Migration & the City. Local actors active in this area were invited to attend. Around 40 people from more than 20 different organizations took part, joining IMIS researchers

in discussion about current developments, challenges, and approaches to the accommodation, care, support, and social inclusion of refugees in Osnabrück.

The event was tied to the international project **SOLI*CITY: Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective** — a global partnership that brings together academics and partner organizations to co-develop and share evidence-based knowledge related to the policies and practices of accommodating vulnerable and precarious migrants and refugees in major urban centers in Africa, Europe, North America, and Latin America. IMIS serves as a

regional hub within this network, which is committed to fostering active dialog between academia and civil society.

The networking meeting at Osnabrück University featured presentations on four IMIS projects addressing forced migration and the negotiation of migration in urban spaces. One example is the collaborative project **Gesellschaftliche Räume der Migration (GeRäuMig)** (English: Social Spaces of Migration), led at IMIS by Dr. Mert Pekşen. It examines how migration-related conflicts are articulated spatially and how local people deal with them.

Dr. Iryna Lapshyna presented findings from her research on the **Ukrainian diaspora in Germany**, which included interviews conducted in Osnabrück. She demonstrated how Ukrainian refugees are organizing to help new arrivals from Ukraine. The diaspora is also actively supporting people still in Ukraine and engaging in advocacy to keep

the war in Ukraine on the political agenda and prevent support from drying up.

The event closed on an informal note, with participants engaging in animated conversation about potential areas of cooperation — including around citizen science and the co-production of knowledge on migration.



SELECTED OUTREACH EVENTS

2025

6 May

- Film Screening and Panel Discussion: The Power of the Visa
- Discussion of Project Results: Cultural Production in the Migration Society (KultMIX)

10 February

Reviewing Election Platforms: Discussion of Migration Policy Demands from the Perspective of Academia and Practice



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11 October

Panel Discussion:
40 Years of Immigration in
Germany in (Independent) Film

19 November

Networking Meeting:
Forced Migration & the City

23 June

There Is Another Way! Shaping Migration Together:
Dialog Between Academia, Municipal Administration
and Civil Society



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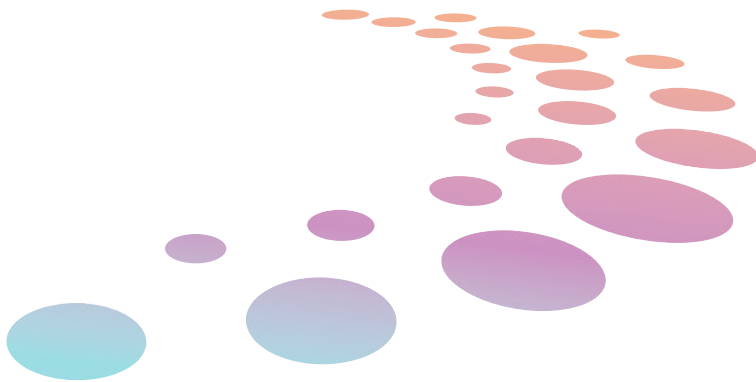
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