

International Conference



“Facing Inequalities - Strategies for Change”

Organized by the Cluster
“In/Equalities in the Context of Social Transformation Processes” of
the Field of Excellence *Dimensions of Europe*

University of Graz, Austria

6-7 November 2025

Book of Abstracts

Welcome!

In an era marked by profound social, political, and economic transformations, inequalities—whether based on race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, or other dimensions—remain pervasive challenges globally. While the complex mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are constantly at play, we are also witnessing the development of alternative strategies and practices that challenge these inequalities.

The conference **“Facing Inequalities - Strategies for Change”** focuses on the intersections of multiple inequalities and questions how mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion are (re)produced, negotiated, and challenged through alternative imaginations and practices. It aims to foster a deeper understanding of these complexities and explore strategies to promote equality, inclusivity, and justice.

This interdisciplinary conference seeks to bring together diverse historical and contemporary perspectives from a range of academic disciplines, providing a platform for scholars, researchers, and practitioners to engage in insightful discussions on addressing exclusion, discrimination and socio-political inequalities.

Concept and Organisation:

Assoc.-Prof. Dr. Emma Lantschner

Dr. Derya Özkaya

Speakers of the Cluster “In/Equalities in the Context of Social Transformation Processes”
Centre for Southeast European Studies & Graz School of Interdisciplinary Transnational Studies

Day 1

Thursday, 6 November

Panel 1: (Un)Equal Translations: Unveiling Power Asymmetries of Language in Migration Societies

Chair & Discussant: Sonja Pöllabauer (University of Vienna)

In migration societies, interpreters and translators, regardless of their professional status, often assist migrants to navigate the mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion in the host country. They enable communication in healthcare, public services, educational institutions, or local administration. Human translators and interpreters, often assisted by more or less sophisticated communication technologies, facilitate understanding in everyday life situations and give a voice to those who would otherwise remain silent. Speaking in the name of the migrant, they give the promise to overcome barriers, wipe out boundaries, reduce inequalities, and enable empowerment and participation. Yet this commitment is at the same time ambivalent and alludes to a dark side inscribed to this benevolence. Translation and interpreting can also be considered a prism that reflects asymmetrical power dynamics of language in society and have the potential to reinforce inequality (Bahadır-Berzig 2024).

Sonja Pöllabauer holds a position as Professor for Interpreting Studies with a focus on Community Interpreting and serves as Vice-Director of Studies at the Centre of Translation Studies at the University of Vienna. Her research interests include interpreter-mediated communication in asylum settings, healthcare interpreting, interpreter education and interpreting ethics.

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“Eternal Gratitude:” (Non)Professional Interpreters as Instruments of (de/re)migrantisation in (post)migrant Societies

Şebnem Bahadır-Berzig (University of Graz)

This talk reflects upon how virtues attached to the act of interpreting such as altruism, helpfulness, engagement, or commitment can be critically positioned and revisited in a socio-political framework where exploitations, exclusions, and vulnerabilities persist. Drawing on the research-based and collaborative performance project Die gute Dolmetscherin von Graz (AG Kommundolmetschen/ITAT, University of Graz and Theater InterACT 2025/2026), she explores how certain types of interpreting work can contribute to perpetuating, reinforcing, or even creating new forms of inequality.

Şebnem Bahadır-Berzig is Professor of Translation Studies, Deputy Head of the Department of Translation Studies and Co-Speaker of the Core Research Area “Multilingualism, Migration and Cultural Transformation” at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Graz. Her main research interests include the pedagogy, politics and ethics of translation and interpreting, public service interpreting, health care interpreting, migration, transcultural and multilingual communication in spaces of crisis and disaster.

Social Inequalities and Machine Translation: A Participatory Research Perspective

Ines Buchegger & Azar Najafi Marboyeh (University of Graz)

This contribution sheds light on the potentially contradictory role of translation applications, such as Google Translate and DeepL, in the lives of migrant women, asking whether these tools empower users or perpetuate existing inequalities. To this end, they present insights from the participatory research project DiMiTra (Digitalisation, Migration, Translation) conducted with two groups of nine women, speaking Chinese, Ukrainian, Polish, Bulgarian, and Dari/Farsi. Engaging in participatory research implies a fundamental shift in the research relationship: individuals who are often positioned as passive objects of study instead take on the role of active co-researchers of their own lived realities (Freire 1970; Lewin 1946; Fals-Borda 1987). This approach emphasizes the co-production of knowledge, recognizing participants as experts of their everyday experiences and as contributors to both the process and the outcomes of research (Reason & Torbert, 2001; Bergold & Thomas, 2012). In our contribution, we deliberately move away from an emphasis on theorising and instead foreground practical examples that illustrate how migrant women engage with translation apps in their everyday lives. By presenting vignettes that trace the ambivalent role of translation apps, we aim to highlight how socio-technical infrastructures both constrain and enable, both exclude and empower. We argue that strategies for change must account for these contradictions, recognising the agency of users while critically interrogating the structural and technological conditions that shape their possibilities.

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Ines Buchegger is a doctoral researcher at the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz. In her research, she focuses on the role of machine translation in the communication practices of migrant women connecting posthumanist theory with a participatory research methodology.

Azar Najafi Marboyeh earned her PhD in Linguistics in Iran and is currently working as a trainer in various educational projects of the NGO LebensGroß. She contributed as co researcher to the participatory research project DiMiTra.

Translation and Vulnerability: An Interprofessional Dialogue

Mirjam Purkarthofer (Stadt Graz) & Raquel Pacheco Aguilar (University of Graz)

This paper deploys the concept of vulnerability as a mechanism for exploring the empirical realities of inequality in interpreted-mediated interactions in health and social care settings from the perspectives of various stakeholder groups such as interpreters, practitioners, service managers and service users. Drawing on the results of a collaborative student research project between the community health centre Gesundheitsdrehlscheibe of the City of Graz and the Department of Translation Studies (University Graz), they will explore ways of advancing an interprofessional dialogue on questions around language, participation, and (in)equality.

Mirjam Purkarthofer is a physiotherapist at the Gesundheitsdrehlscheibe, a community health centre of the municipality of Graz, and lecturer at Joanneum University of Applied Science in Graz. She also holds a master's degree in Translation and Interpreting Studies (German, English, Arabic).

Raquel Pacheco Aguilar is postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Translation Studies and Co-Speaker of the Cluster "Spatial Dimensions" of the Core Research Area "Multilingualism, Migration and Cultural Transformation" at the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Graz. Her main research areas include public service interpreting (particularly in local administration), multilingualism and crisis communication, translation and care work, digital translation policies, and the ethics of translation education.

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Translation as Care Work: Language, Intersectionality, and Inequality

Raquel Pacheco Aguilar and Ines Buchegger

This presentation analyzes how language intersects with gender, race, age and socio-economic status impacting on the ways in which inequality is constructed and maintained (Gonçalves and Schluter 2020). Particularly in the context of a datafication of communication, translation and interpreting work have the potential to become "invisible translational labor" (Giustini 2023), a labor that is often feminized, materially devalued, and can even be outsourced from the public sphere. In this sense, translating and interpreting can be understood as a form of doing care and be analyzed at the intersection between Gender and Translation Studies.

Panel 2: Educational In/Justice: Structures of Inclusion and Exclusion

Chair: Dušan Ristić (University of Graz)

Unequal Spaces and the Meritocratic Imagination: Educational Upward Mobility Among Russian Youth

Tamara Kusimova (CEU Vienna)

While education remains the most important facilitator of upward social mobility, educational institutions are also sites of reproduction of persistent social inequality and exclusion (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In this paper, I study the uncommon trajectories of students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds who gain access to an elite university. These are rare cases of upward social mobility through education when students end up in so-called inferential spaces (Mijs, 2018) – contrasting socio-economic contexts that allow them to reassess previous social experience and form their ideas about social inequality and its causes, as well as failures, successes, and what it takes to achieve it. Drawing on the existing research on inequalities in education, boundary work (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) and upward mobility (Khan, 2012; Silva, 2015), and based on 24 in-depth interviews with participants of a targeted affirmative action program in an elite Russian university, I explore how they navigate the unfamiliar social environment, encounter the invisible symbolic boundaries and express their views on (in-)equality in their own life. The main finding of the paper is that despite encountering inequality and exclusion, the popular cultural narrative of meritocracy – individual hard work always pays off – remains dominant and is internalized by informants as a tool of empowerment, where they gain agency through their resilience and hard work; for informants, education at an elite university is perceived as a step toward escape, resistance, and personal moral growth. While grounded in the Russian context, this finding speaks to a broader phenomenon, allowing us to put it into both global and comparative dimensions: the internalization of meritocratic values by structurally disadvantaged youth and the coexistence of high meritocratic beliefs with high social inequality (Mijs, 2016, 2021).

Tamara Kusimova is a sociologist and PhD candidate at the Central European University, working in the interdisciplinary field of culture and cognition. She is particularly interested in how culturally mediated perceptions shape opportunities for and barriers to upward social mobility. Her work has been published in the Journal of Cognition and Culture and Laboratorium.

Educational Environments and Language Practices as Mechanisms of Exclusion and Tools for Inclusion: Reframing Stereotypes in Learning Contexts

Chukwuemeke Buzome (Ignatius Ajuru University of Education)

The educational environment together with language use serves as both a determinant and instrument for student experiences and identity development as well as learning equity. The same learning environments can perpetuate social rank systems along with cultural biases against certain groups. The paper examines how educational institutions in Nigeria use language systems to support or resist systemic inequality patterns. The study draws from sociolinguistics and critical pedagogy combined with educational psychology to analyze how language intersects with school space as an exclusionary tool that functions simultaneously as an inclusionary mechanism. The research selected 350 survey participants who work either as teachers or administrators or curriculum officers at both urban and rural private and public schools. A stratified random sampling technique produced equal representation among participants, and all contributors needed at least two years of experience working in instructional or policy-based roles. A structured questionnaire served for data collection that grouped items by four sections including demographic background information and sections about language practices and perceptions of school environments and experiences of inclusion and exclusion. A total of 78% of participants completed the survey using a mixed-mode approach, which included both online and in-person methods. The research identifies two main elements: monolingual governmental education policies that exclude students, and approaches like translanguaging combined with culturally sensitive instruction that promote inclusion. The research provides functional findings about creating multilingual and socially fair educational settings which add to systemic discussions about equity and educational justice.

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Chukwuemeke Buzome is a PhD candidate at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, he has a diploma in nursery and primary education (1999), a B.A. (Ed.) (2000), and an M.Ed. (2007) in childhood education. Presently, he lectures in the Department of Educational Management and Foundations. Since January 2019, he has been teaching at Delta State University in Abraka, Nigeria. Trained as a childhood education expert, his study focuses on child psychology, child rights, gender concerns, children with special needs and learning challenges in early childhood education. He is a member of some professional associations: Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Early Childhood Association in Nigeria (ECAN), Canadian Association of African Studies (CAAS), etc.

Equality Through Acts of Linguistic Citizenship: Entanglements of Semiotic Resources, and Multilingual Repertoires

Simangele Mashazi (Stellenbosch University)

This paper discusses the discursive practices and lived experiences of multilingual black South African staff and students at Stellenbosch University (South Africa). It explores how they make use of their linguistic repertoires to position themselves in varying social spaces on and around campus, a space that was previously exclusively white. The study made use of language portraits (Busch 2012; Prasad 2016; Singer 2018) as well as the participatory photo interview method (Kolb 2008) that invites participants to be part of collecting data about their surroundings, by taking photos. This made room to look not only at spoken language but at how participants use and interpret other semiotic resources to assign meaning to their environment and their experiences of inclusion / exclusion within it. Looking at spaces and bodies as semiotic resources allows us to explore how participants read and understand the spaces they inhabit and how their behaviour (linguistic and otherwise) is affected by that reading. Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005: 203) argue that “spaces themselves have an influence on what people can do and can become in them.” Participants used their linguistic repertoires to navigate spaces, negotiate relationships, and express various aspects of their identities through acts of ‘linguistic citizenship’ (Stroud 2015; Bock and Stroud 2021). This language use reflects an acknowledgement of the ideological nature of language and how important a tool language is to navigate this. The paper further explores the vulnerable act of trying to accommodate, include and assimilate using multilingual repertoires as well as acts of resistance through the use or refusal to use other repertoires. This has implications for how we move towards a space that does not gloss over past and present injustices but simultaneously looks forward to new possibilities of belonging.

Simangele Mashazi is a Junior Lecturer and a PhD candidate in the Department of General Linguistics at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Her research is informed by arts-based methodologies. Her MA looked at the linguistic repertoires and lived experiences of multilingual staff and students at Stellenbosch University. Her PhD focusses on the functions of humour on South African social media as a resource in the performance of various identities through multilingual practices on and offline.

Panel 3: Polarization and Fragmentation of Croatian Society I

Chair: Ivana Spirovska (University of Graz)

(Status of) Gender Equality in Croatia Post Istanbul Convention Ratification: Detraditionalization Amid Legislative Improvements

Darija Željko Mrljak & Antonija Petričušić (University of Zagreb)

This presentation explores how the 2023 Baseline Evaluation Report by GREVIO—the Istanbul Convention's independent expert body—served as a crucial 'reality check' regarding gaps in Croatian legislation and practice in addressing gender-based violence. GREVIO's thorough analysis led to several legislative improvements, including the legal definition of gender-based violence and the introduction of the criminal offence of aggravated murder of a woman—commonly referred to as femicide—into the Criminal Code. However, the introduction of the femicide offence sparked fierce criticism, this time from within the judiciary itself. The Supreme Court of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Bar Association both argued that the provision discriminates against men. While it can be concluded that the issue of gender-based violence has gained legislative attention and broad public visibility, paradoxically, efforts to institutionalize gender studies at the University of Zagreb have stagnated. At the same time, signs of societal detraditionalization are increasingly visible. One vivid example is the emergence of the initiative Muževni budite ("Be Manly"), which since 2022 gathers men on the first Saturday of every month in the main squares of several Croatian cities—including the capital, Zagreb—to pray against abortion, for women's chastity and for men's leadership within the family. This presentation will further explore other examples of societal detraditionalization and examine the actors and initiatives that continue to promote gender equality in contemporary Croatia.

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Darija Željko Mrljak is an assistant at the Department of Criminal Procedural Law at the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law and doctoral student at the doctoral studies of the University of Zagreb Faculty of Law. She completed postgraduate studies in Human Rights at the Central European University in Budapest with special honours in 2019.

Antonija Petričušić is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia. She is a visiting professor and a member of the International Academic Council of the European Regional Master's Programme in Democracy and Human Rights in South East Europe. She received her Ph.D. from the Faculty of Law at the University of Graz, Austria. She received her M.A. in Sociology and Social Anthropology at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary and her M.A. in Human Rights and Democratization from the University of Sarajevo and the University of Bologna.

Migrants and parenting leaves: how inclusive are leave policies for different migrants' situations?

Mirna Varga & Ivana Dobrotić (University of Zagreb)

Despite Europe's long history of migration and its increasingly diverse migrant populations, many migrants and their families – particularly those from non-EU countries – remain excluded from social rights such as parenting leaves. The diversity of migrants' statuses and the varied eligibility criteria across Europe, including employment status, social insurance requirements, and residency or citizenship, complicate comparative assessments of migrants' access to parenting leave, highlighting critical knowledge and data gaps. This paper addresses these gaps by introducing a conceptual framework, grounded in leave policy scholarship and migration studies, to compare leave access for different migrant groups (e.g., refugees, economic migrants, asylum seekers). This framework is applied to six European countries – Croatia, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, and the United Kingdom – chosen for their contrasting approaches, with the first three adopting more universal systems and the latter three tying eligibility to employment. Building on this comparative analysis, the paper then turns to Croatia for a more in-depth examination, focusing specifically on how cleavages in access to parenting leave are constructed and reinforced among different migrant groups.

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Mirna Varga is an assistant and doctoral researcher at the Department of Social Policy, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. She leads seminar groups in European Social Policy, introducing students to key concepts, programs, and policies of the European Union in the field of social policy. Her research interests include migration and integration policies, gender equality policies, parental leave, and broader European social and anti-discrimination policies. She is a junior member of the International Network on Leave Policies & Research, an editorial collaborator for The Croatian Journal of Social Policy, and a management committee member of the COST Action CA21150 on parental leave and social sustainability.

Ivana Dobrotić is Professor of Comparative Social Policy at the University of Zagreb and an Associate Member of the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford. She was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellow at the University of Oxford, leading the InCARE project investigating parenting leaves and childcare policies' development in Southeastern Europe. Her research interest is in the field of comparative social policy, with a particular interest in care and paid work, gender, social and spatial inequalities. She is a Steering Committee member of the ECPR Standing Group on Gender and Politics, the ESPAnet (The Network for European Social Policy Analysis) board member, and co-editor of the Annual Review of Leave Policies & Related Research.

Trust as a Missing Link: Understanding Fragmentation in Croatian Society

Valentina Vučković (University of Zagreb) (Online)

The main goal of this paper is to explore the erosion of interpersonal and institutional trust as both a consequence and a driver of inequality and fragmentation in Croatia. Since the decrease in trust is recognised to reflect structural inequalities, uneven development, and widespread perceptions of institutional unfairness, the paper has two specific objectives. First, it aims to analyse the relationship between levels of trust and key socio-economic dimensions of inequalities (e.g., income, education, employment, territorial marginalisation). Second, it seeks to propose strategies for restoring trust as part of broader efforts to reduce fragmentation and promote inclusive governance. Methodologically, the paper will focus on secondary analysis of quantitative data that cover the measurement of trust (e.g., European Social Survey, Eurobarometer, Life in Transition). In doing so, it will analyse trust among different categories of individuals - the employed/unemployed, youth/old, residents of rural/urban regions, etc. We expect to find an unequal distribution of reasons and resources for trust, which acts as a key mechanism reinforcing exclusion and disempowerment. Finally, we will outline trust-oriented policy strategies. The paper adds a relational aspect to the discussion on reducing inequality and renewing democracy in post-transitional societies by defining trust as a social and institutional prerequisite for equality.

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Valentina Vučković, PhD is an Associate Professor at the Department of Economic Theory at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Economics and Business, Croatia. Her professional background includes working as a researcher at the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) Zagreb, at the Department for International Economic and Political Relations from 2008 to 2014. She has been involved in research on projects dealing with energy efficiency, tax system and labour market reforms, STEM, business environment, privatization, migration and innovation. She has experience in performing ex-ante and ex-post policy assessments using sophisticated statistical tools and econometric models.

Panel 4: Migration and Displacement

Chair: Bilgin Ayata (University of Graz)

Intersectionality in the Mind: How Migrants' Experiences with Multiple Inequalities Shape Their Perceptions

Margherita Cusmano (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity)

Economic inequality is rarely experienced in isolation. Instead, it intersects with legal, racial, and educational inequalities, shaping how individuals perceive and interpret socio-economic disparities. This paper explores how migrants in Germany understand economic inequality through the lens of their intersectional experiences. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 47 participants from diverse backgrounds, the study examines how legal stratification, ethnic discrimination, and the devaluation of cultural capital influence how migrants make sense of economic inequality. A key focus lies in how migrants' first-hand encounters with inequalities shape their interpretations of economic disparities. When reflecting on inequality, respondents frequently foreground their own struggles—whether facing restricted access to labor markets due to an insecure legal status, experiencing racialized barriers to housing, or having their professional qualifications unrecognized. These dimensions of inequality do not exist in isolation but rather intertwine, shaping both material conditions and subjective understandings. By adopting a sociological perspective focusing on the “inequality in the mind”—subjective, everyday understandings of inequality—the study contributes to research on inequalities in multiple ways. It highlights how migration biographies shape understandings of inequality, showing that migrants do not assess inequality solely based on income differences but through a broader matrix of exclusion and opportunity. Therefore, the study underscores the role of intersectionality in shaping subjective understandings of inequality. The study reveals that for migrants, different inequalities do not merely coexist in their experiences—they are also deeply entangled in their sense-making processes.

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Margherita Cusmano is a Doctoral Research Fellow in Sociology at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (Germany), currently working on a project on migrants' perceptions of economic inequality. Previously, she worked at the Center of Methods in Social Sciences (University of Göttingen, Germany), conducting biographical research with migrants facing illegalization and deportation. In addition to her research, she has also been active in NGOs offering free legal consultation for migrants, language support, and access to healthcare in Germany and Italy.

Reproductive Exclusion and Strategies for Change: An Intersectional Perspective on Pregnant Refugee Women

Luisa Perdomo Lopez & Okka Zimmermann & Milena Drehlich
(Technische Universität Braunschweig)

Pregnant refugee women face compounded discrimination shaped by intersecting structures of exclusion. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork - including participant observation and expert interviews in asylum and healthcare settings - this paper explores how asylum systems, health services, and public accommodations are shaped by normative assumptions about refugees as able-bodied, single men. These systems often neglect the reproductive, physical and emotional needs of pregnant women, especially those who experience multiple marginalization such as racialization, disability or insecure legal status. Using an intersectional lens, we show how legal, institutional and social practices intersect to produce reproductive exclusion. Rather than isolated failures, these experiences reflect systemic problems that neglect the gendered and embodied dimensions of forced migration. Our analysis, based on feminist and critical migration studies, highlights how bureaucratic indifference and exclusion reinforce hierarchies of deservingness and belonging. Building on the concept of reproductive justice developed by black feminist activists, we link reproductive rights to broader social justice, emphasizing structural change over individualized solutions. We also examine how affected women navigate these barriers through informal networks, resistance strategies, and advocacy, offering insights into everyday forms of agency within constrained environments. We propose policy responses: recognizing pregnancy as a factor in refugee status determination; ensuring access to culturally sensitive prenatal and postnatal care; providing financial and infrastructural support to expectant mothers; and enabling stable housing and family reunification. These steps need to be embedded in a policy framework that places care, equality and dignity at the centre. By centering lived experience and subjective knowledge, this paper contributes to broader discussions on how intersectional research can reveal hidden forms of inequality and support transformative strategies. We call for a shift from reactive policy to systemic change that promotes the autonomy, dignity and participation of marginalized communities.

November 6, Thursday
13:30-15:00

SZ 15.21
Universitätsstraße 15
Building A, 2nd Floor

Luisa Perdomo Lopez obtained her Master's degree from Technische Universität Braunschweig in 2023. Her academic and professional work centers on social inequality, forced migration and family sociology. She is currently employed as a consultant at TU Braunschweig, conducts research on pregnancy and forced migration and works on a freelance basis at a psychosocial center for refugees.

Okka Zimmermann is a Professor of Social Work at IU International University and a postdoc researcher at the Institute of Sociology at Technische Universität Braunschweig. Her research focuses on life courses, families, gender, and social inequality.

Milena Drehlich is a Master's student in "Organization, Governance, and Education" at Technische Universität Braunschweig. As part of her studies, she conducted a qualitative research project on the situation of pregnant refugee women in Germany and the challenges and potentials of adequate healthcare provision. She also works as a student assistant at TU Braunschweig.

Depoliticizing a Kurdish Refugee Camp as a Governance Tool for Exclusion

Filyra Vlastou Dimopoulou (Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne and National Technical University of Athens)

This presentation focuses on the period after the 2015 reception crisis in Greece and explores migrants' everyday practices and negotiations over the contested presence of the self - organised Lavrio refugee camp, inhabited by Kurdish migrants, in the city center of the coastal town of Lavrio in Greece. The Lavrio refugee camp is the first reception centre in Greece, established in 1947. From the early 1980s the then state camp was mostly inhabited by Kurdish asylum seekers passing through Greece, associated in their majority with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), becoming gradually a political front in exile for their struggle. The status of the camp changed to self-organised structure, at the peak of the so-called 2015 reception crisis and in view of the multiple changes it brought in the governance of migration at the national and European level. For the last years the camp was run with the support of the PKK network, as well as local, national, and transnational solidarity initiatives, up until 2024 that the camp was evacuated by state authorities. During this period, the camp's presence in a central location became highly disputed and contested both by local and state authorities. Building on ethnographic research and interviews with camp residents and locals, this presentation argues that camp residents, in response to the precarious presence of the camp and aware that the relationship between the city and the camp is unequal, they engage into everyday practices that aim to negotiate belonging and to secure and assert their place in the city. Doing so, my aim is not only to discuss migrants' agency in precarious conditions but also to contribute to a novel understanding of refugee camps not as isolated spatial formations but interwoven with their local surroundings.

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Filyra Vlastou-Dimopoulou is a PhD candidate in geography at Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne in France and at the National Technical University of Athens in Greece (Co-direction). Her research interests and publications focus on the politics and spatialities of migration, on living together dynamics between migrants and locals, refugee camps, and socio-spatial segregation. Filyra has worked as a researcher in national and international projects, for such institutions as at the Greek National Center of Social Research, Panteion University, the Aristotle University, the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency. She has also been a visiting researcher at the Population Research Centre, University of Groningen.

Panel 5: Education and In/equality: Language, Identity and Citizenship

Chair: Şebnem Bahadır-Berzig (University of Graz)

Excluded by monolingual schools: The potential of translation and interpreting for non-German speaking parents

Marie Tschurtschenthaler (University of Graz)

Migration societies are characterized by multilingualism. Nevertheless, educational institutions are generally organized monolingually. The Austrian school system adheres to a strong monolingual tradition (Gogolin 2021), which privileges German as the dominant language over others. In schools, German is the only “legitimate language” (Bourdieu 1990), as the language of instruction (LoI) but also for any form of communication. In the context of migration, language becomes an instrument of distinction, and both schools and society sort parents accordingly. Migration questions a line of difference that is one of the most fundamental social distinctions, a symbolic boundary separating the “inside” from the “outside.” Migration thus problematizes boundaries between “us” and “them,” simultaneously questioning and reinforcing this fundamental distinction of social order (Mecheril 2010:12-13; Lamont/Molnár 2002). In this order, parents are categorized as non-/migrant parents, parents whose first language is/is not German, parents with children with an extraordinary or regular status, and so on. This reality raises the question of which role schools play in reinforcing these differences, leading to the exclusion of certain parents and their children. How are these differences and categories constructed and perceived? How do they affect societal orders of belonging? In the context of Austrian schools and for parents whose first language is not German, might translation and interpreting foster participation and overcome some forms of exclusion? To address these questions, this contribution draws on natio-racial-cultural (multiple) belonging (Mecheril 2003), a concept of belonging used in the context of migration and education. It examines the case of these parents and their societal position, participation, and belonging along these lines of difference. It explores the school’s role and translation and interpreting’s potential to (de-)construct or balance these differences and exclusions. Empirical results from an ongoing study (document analysis, observations, and interviews) in Austrian compulsory schools regarding parent communication and participation support these theoretical arguments.

November 6, Thursday
13:30-15:00

Leopoldine Schmidt Room
Universitätsstraße 15
Building B, Ground Floor

Marie Tschurtschenthaler is a research assistant and third-year PhD candidate at the Department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. She holds an MA in Conference Interpreting and an MEd in Teacher Education from the University of Vienna. At the University of Graz, she collaborates in the "Spatial Dimensions" cluster within the Faculty of Humanities' core research area, "Multilingualism, Migration, and Cultural Transformation." She is also a member of the working group "Community Interpreting" and the Doctoral Program "Migration - Diversity - Global Societies." Her PhD research focuses on communication between Austrian compulsory schools and parents whose first language is not German, with an emphasis on the role of translation and interpreting in facilitating parental communication and participation. Her main research interests include community interpreting, multilingualism, translation policy, and the relationship between translation and migration.

Towards Equality: Structural Challenges in Integrating Refugee Teachers into German Schools

Kristina Kocyba & Olha Ihnatyeva (Technical University Dresden)

The employment of individuals with a (forced) migration background in the German education sector remains low nationwide (GEW, 2021). This is particularly evident in the limited recruitment of internationally trained teachers into schools. While educational policy discourse emphasizes the value of diversifying the teaching workforce—citing goals such as cultural openness, integration of refugee professionals, and addressing the teacher shortage—actual hiring rates remain limited in practice (Wojciechowicz et al., 2022, 2024). Our study seeks to reconstruct the hiring process of internationally trained teachers, with a specific focus on identifying structural barriers and proposing potential solutions. The research draws on semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian teachers who fled the war and are currently engaged in a qualification process for school employment in Saxony. The responsibility of researchers toward refugee participants plays a central role in our interview design (Krause et al., 2024; Kwiecińska & Łukianow, 2025). Preliminary findings from our pilot study highlight several interrelated challenges. Many participants face significant family and caregiving responsibilities that compete with the demands of the qualification process. Logistical difficulties are also common, as there is often a considerable distance between their homes, universities, and the schools where they are placed. Moreover, a lack of inter-institutional coordination—among universities and school authorities—results in fragmented communication and insufficient information, complicating participants' navigation through the system. At the time of the conference, we will have extended and validated these initial insights through further interviews. The results underscore the need for a university-based support program that ensures structured coordination across the involved institutions. Such a program should provide family-friendly and interculturally sensitive guidance that is responsive to the transnational biographies and life realities of refugee teachers. Addressing these structural issues is essential not only to support the professional integration of refugee educators, but also to realize the broader goal of increasing cultural diversity within the German teaching workforce.

Kristina Kocyba holds the Chair for School Pedagogy: School and Research at TU Dresden. Her teaching covers topics such as child protection, school development, and migration, while her research focuses on forced migration and schooling. Kristina is a founding member of the EMCE research network (Education and Migration in Central Europe). She is the project leader of the Erasmus+ project Act4Mig: A Course for Teachers on Forced Migration (2024-2027), in collaboration with partners in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine.

Olha Ihnatyeva is a faculty member at Cherkasy State University. Since 2022, she has been working as a DAAD-funded scholar at TU Dresden in the Department of Slavic Studies. Since 2024, she has also been working as a researcher at the Chair for School Pedagogy: School and Research. Her teaching focuses on interculturality in teacher training and teacher mental health. She conducts empirical research on the work and life experiences of Ukrainian teachers and supports the CUP program (Community University Program), which strengthens collaborations between universities and civil institutions.

From colorblindness to anti-racist: opportunities and shortcomings in Austrian university pedagogical settings

Heide Bruckner & Annette Sprung (University of Graz)

The official absence of racial categories is common practice in continental Europe, and perpetuates a 'colorblindness', or erasure and denial of the presence of non-white (Austrian) bodies and the everyday inequalities they face (Bonilla-Silva 2017; Williams 2025). University educators teaching about intersectionality and racism in the Austrian context face several challenges when combatting this colorblindness, particularly when teaching to/with a primarily white university student body (DiAngelo 2018; Bruckner 2023). Research in intersectional and anti-racist pedagogy points to the potential of experiential, reflective learning environments as effective avenues to teach both critical whiteness and anti-racist pedagogy (Bruckner and Bellante 2025). Drawing on a community-based learning experience on sustainable food and race, with students from the University of Graz and the Chiala African Verein in Graz, I discuss honest challenges and opportunities about putting an intersectional pedagogy into practice. From student reflections and my own notes as an educator, I take a critical reflexive approach to address what practices were most (in)effective in moving student learning from colorblindness to anti-racist understandings. Ultimately, I focus on concrete strategies and approaches that educators can use in their teaching—towards fostering student understandings of how race takes place in everyday environments.

Heide K. Bruckner is a postdoctoral lecturer and researcher of human geography at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research engages with everyday experiences of food and environmental (in)justice, in contexts as diverse as western Europe, the United States, Latin America and Oceania. Focusing on food systems, she brings multi-scalar analysis of how economic and social inequalities touch down, and are contested, through eating and food provisioning practices. With more than a decade of experience as an educator teaching about intersectional inequalities, she is committed to both research and action on effective pedagogical practice for diverse, inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Panel 6: Polarization and Fragmentation of Croatian Society II

Chair: Emma Lantschner (University of Graz)

Intersecting Margins: Gender, Violence, and Healthcare Access Among Minority Women in Croatia

Valentina Kozjak (University of Zagreb) & Tea Ritoša (University of Aalborg)

This study explores the position of women within various minority communities in Croatia, with a focus on gender roles, domestic violence, and access to healthcare. Drawing on qualitative data from focus group discussions, it investigates how ethnicity, geographic location, and cultural norms shape the lived experiences of minority women. A particular area of inquiry is the influence of cultural expectations on gender roles, especially regarding the division of caregiving and domestic responsibilities. The study also examines whether women feel social pressure to conform to traditional roles, and how such dynamics may affect their autonomy. In the context of domestic violence, minority women may face compounded barriers to seeking help, including language obstacles, institutional mistrust, and stigma within their communities. Furthermore, healthcare access emerges as a significant concern. While Croatia's universal health system provides formal coverage, minority women report persistent structural barriers, including long waiting times, geographic inaccessibility, and a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Gynecological care is often financially or physically out of reach, and mental health services are limited, with stigma posing an additional deterrent to utilization. The study highlights notable differences among minority groups. Roma women frequently point to systemic exclusion and socioeconomic marginalization as core challenges, while women from other ethnic minorities often emphasize bureaucratic and linguistic barriers. These distinctions underscore the necessity for tailored, group-specific interventions. Key findings suggest that: 1) Family structures can reinforce gender inequality and inhibit help-seeking in cases of violence. 2) Inadequate access to reproductive and mental health services heightens the vulnerability of minority women. 3) Structural and cultural barriers collectively deepen social exclusion. The study underscores the urgency of culturally responsive public services, including community-based outreach, gender-sensitive violence prevention, and inclusive healthcare infrastructure.

Valentina Kozjak is an assistant at the Department of Theory and Methods of Social Work at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. She graduated Magna cum laude in social work and later earned a Master's degree in the field. Before joining the faculty, she worked as a social worker in a Residential Home and a Social Welfare Center. In 2023, she completed a postgraduate program in Psychosocial Approaches in Social Work and is currently pursuing a PhD. Her research interests focus on individuals, families, communities and their mental health and interdependence. Additionally, she is undergoing training in systemic family psychotherapy and actively participates in professional organizations, projects and conferences within the field of social work.

Tea Ritoša is an assistant at the Department of Theory and Methods of Social Work, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. She completed her primary education in Višnjan and high school in Poreč. In 2017, she enrolled in the undergraduate social work program at the same faculty, graduating Cum Laude. She earned her Master's degree Magna Cum Laude in 2022 with a thesis on depression, stress, and risky behaviors among students during the Covid-19 pandemic. During her studies, she worked as a student assistant at the same department and later gained experience as a trainee social worker at the Centre for Social Welfare in Poreč. Tea has been accepted into a PhD program at Aalborg University, where she will begin as a research fellow in September 2025. She actively participates in scientific publishing, conferences, and training, and is engaged in various research and professional projects within the field of social work.

Financial Allocations for National Minorities in Croatia: Challenges and Perspectives

Barbara Mašić (University of Zagreb) Low Voter Turnout and State

The issue of low voter turnout, particularly among members of national minorities, raises important questions about the effectiveness of state financial allocations for minority rights. This paper explores the potential correlation between the funds allocated by the Republic of Croatia for programs and activities aimed at national minority councils and the level of political participation among members of national minority, as measured by turnout in minority elections. Political participation of minority members is often promoted as a key indicator of their integration and equality within society. Despite significant financial investments in education, cultural programs, and political mechanisms, data shows persistently low election turnout. The analysis highlights potential causes of this phenomenon, including a lack of trust in institutions, feelings of marginalization, or perceptions of insufficient transparency in the use of allocated funds. This paper poses the question: Do state financial expenditures increase political participation, or are additional strategies required to encourage more active involvement of minority groups. The findings of this research could contribute to the formulation of policies aimed at improving social cohesion and reducing polarization within Croatian society.

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Barbara Mašić is a doctoral student in Political Science at the University of Zagreb. She holds a Master's degree in Law (2011), a Master's degree in Political Science (2012), and a Bachelor's degree in Journalism (2010). Since 201 she works at the Ministry of Justice, Public Administration, and Digital Transformation, where her main responsibility is drafting legislative acts related to the implementation of European Union data regulations. Her research focuses on national minorities, electoral law, and political party systems.

Gender, ethnicity and statelessness: Stateless Roma Women in Croatia and North Macedonia

Ivana Spirovska (University of Graz)

Statelessness continues to impact Roma communities in both Croatia and North Macedonia. This research paper presents a comparative analysis of the legal frameworks and institutional and policy responses to statelessness in the aforementioned states, while centering on the lived experiences of stateless Roma women. Using an intersection of gender, ethnicity and legal status, it explores how the absence of legal status impacts women differently across national contexts, shaped by varying legal, social and policy environments and examines potential unique challenges faced by stateless Roma women. The research employs mixed-method design combining legal analysis with qualitative data from biographic interviews with stateless Roma women, alongside insights from experts and practitioners. By connecting legal framework with personal narratives, the research aims to highlight the gendered dimensions of statelessness within a specific national context. The research paper seeks to explore positive practices and remaining challenges in both countries, and contribute to broader regional debates.

Ivana Spirovska is a research associate in the Volkswagen Foundation-funded project "Transforming Anxieties of Ageing in Southeastern Europe." She is a member of the research team in Graz involved in the "Gender Dimension of the Croatian Minority Policy" (GEMINI) project. Her research focuses on human rights, statelessness, citizenship, national/ethnic minorities, aging and migration studies.

Panel 7: Social Movements, Resistance and Democracy

Chair: Derya Özkaya (University of Graz)

A New Paradigm for Intersectionality in Citizens' Assemblies

Anastasia Karatzia & Niall O'Connor (University of Essex)

Profound changes are taking place within the field of democratic participation, as innovative alternative forms of citizen deliberation and engagement emerge, and which pose significant questions for their relationship with traditional democratic mechanisms. There is a risk that democratic innovations such as citizens' assemblies reproduce or reinforce rather than challenge, existing inequalities and exclusions from democratic processes and institutions. The interdisciplinary EU-CIEMPLY (Creating an Inclusive European Citizens' Assembly) project aims to address this problem by developing inclusive strategies and models for EU citizens' assemblies that maximise intersectional equality, inclusion and deliberation. Intersectionality is used by the project as a lens through which to underscore the unique challenges, needs, experiences and knowledge of individuals belonging to multiple intersecting marginalised social groups, with an initial focus on race, gender, age and socioeconomic status. One of the challenges that the project seeks to overcome is that intersectionality continues to be viewed as an essentially 'theoretical' framework, the practical operationalisation of which remains largely unexplored within the context of citizens' assemblies. Democratic innovations are not insensitive to the need to increase the participation of social groups that have historically been marginalised from traditional democratic processes. Indeed, inclusion and equality are central tenets of the design and implementation of such democratic innovations. However, much of the existing literature and practice focuses on identifying the causes of the marginalisation of particular social groups, without considering cross-cutting factors of exclusion from an intersectional perspective. Our project explores how the experience of simultaneously belonging to multiple intersecting marginalised social groups affects participation in—and thereby the functioning of—citizens' assemblies as a means of democratic participation. It does so by focusing not on individual or identitarian characteristics, but rather through an analysis of power structures and relations of marginalisation and dominance. The overarching aim is to recommend a model for change which will empower marginalised groups within the context of democratic participation.

November 6, Thursday
15:30-17:00

SZ 15.21
Universitätsstraße 15
Building A, 2nd Floor

Anastasia Karatzia and Niall O'Connor are Associate Professors of Law at Essex Law School, University of Essex, United Kingdom. Anastasia and Niall lead a team of academics at the University of Essex working as part of the Horizon Europe-funded EU-CIEMBLY project (Creating an Inclusive European Citizens' Assembly), which aims to integrate intersectional equality considerations into the design and delivery of innovative forms of democratic deliberation namely citizens' assemblies, in order to improve the intersectional inclusiveness and quality of such instruments. Beyond the EU-CIEMBLY project, Anastasia specialises in various aspects of EU law, including citizens' participation through the European Citizens' Initiative, as well as European financial and banking law. Niall's research focuses on social aspects of European integration, particularly the balancing between fundamental economic and social rights within the EU legal order, including within the equality law field.

Reframing Circles of Solidarity in the Wake of Disappointment

Maša Mrovlje (University of Leeds)

The paper examines the disappointment of marginalized groups within resistance, such as women, whose concerns are often neglected within and subordinated to the overall goals of the movement. It shows how marginalized resisters' disappointment can mobilize new forms of solidarity that challenge both the systemic violence of the repressive regime and the oppressive attitudes within the resistance movement. To theorise how (women) resisters can reinvigorate bonds of solidarity broken by internal oppression, I draw on Sara Ahmed's notion of circulation of affect and Audre Lorde's understanding of vulnerability as a source of resistance. Ahmed's notion of circulation of affect helps me explore how the practice of breaking oppressive masculine resistance solidarities and forming new safe(er) feminist solidarities in the wake of disappointment is ultimately about intervening in and reframing circles of affect. But how could disappointment break oppressive circles and make new safe(er) circles? Drawing on Lorde, I suggest disappointment can shatter the marginalized resisters' ideals of the unity of resistance and reveal how such supposed ideals of unity are predicated upon a neglect, silencing or exclusion of some individuals' or groups' embodied vulnerabilities. The marginalized resisters' affirmation of vulnerability in the face of disappointment, in turn, can disclose new solidarities predicated upon mutual recognition and sharing of one another's embodied, context-specific vulnerabilities. I put this theoretical engagement in dialogue with a prominent example of feminist activism, where women resisters have experienced disappointment over oppressive gender attitudes within resistance and initiated new solidarities to challenge them: a radical feminist group Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment (Opantish) that organized against sexual violence emerging in the wake of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. I examine how the concrete practical mechanisms through which these feminist activists revived solidarity after disappointment managed to reframe circles of affect and rethink vulnerability as a source of resistance.

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Maša Mrovlje is an Associate Professor of Political Theory and Co-Director of the Centre for Contemporary Political Theory at the University of Leeds. Her research interests are located within contemporary political thought and international political theory. She has contributed to pressing issues of political judgement, memory politics, transitional justice, political violence and, most recently, resistance. She is author of *Rethinking Political Judgement: Arendt and Existentialism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019). Her articles appeared in leading international peer-reviewed journals, including *Political Theory*, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, *Millennium*, and *The Journal of Politics*. She currently works on two projects. The first explores the political potentials of disappointment within the modern revolutionary tradition. The second focuses on women's experience of resistance.

When and why do mobilizations against gender equality fail, and when do they succeed?

Zorica-Iva Sirocic (University of Graz)

Few areas of gender politics have received as much scholarly attention in recent years as its antithesis, or so-called “anti-gender” politics. A common denominator of existing studies of anti-gender politics is their focus on the successful campaigns that threaten to challenge, prevent and/or reverse rights and mechanisms put in place to promote gender and sexual equality. In contrast, this presentation asks why and when anti-gender movements fail. To this end, the presentation will present the results of a study that uses a temporal perspective to compare case studies of failed and successful campaigns, focusing on the political outcomes of same-sex marriage referendums. As these cases are all located in (Central and South) Eastern Europe, the study not only fills the gap in systematic evaluation of the outcomes of anti-gender movements, but also partially challenges the notion that this region is a particularly fertile ground for anti-feminist and anti-LGBTQ+ agendas, highlighting the factors of resilience.

Zorica Siročić is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Graz, specializing in gender politics, social movements, political sociology, and the sociology of gender in her research and teaching.

Rap as Gaeilge and Kneecap: Turning US Hip Hop into A Tool For Irish Identity and Resistance in The Post-Conflict North of Ireland

Monia O'Brien Castro (Tours University)

Hip-hop has evolved into a global movement since its inception in the 1970s in the African-American economically depressed South Bronx neighbourhood of New York. Initially rooted in African American and Latino experiences, hip-hop has transcended cultural and geographical boundaries, influencing music, dance, fashion, and social activism worldwide. Indeed, artists across continents have infused their local languages, looks, musical styles, and societal issues into the genre, thereby creating unique regional expressions. Beyond entertainment in fact, hip-hop fundamentally serves as a platform for marginalized voices, addressing social and political issues. The transformative power of this type of music, which articulates struggles and aspirations, resonates with youth globally, and fosters a sense of community and empowerment. Naturally, hip-hop has been adapted in the United Kingdom, and in this paper, I intend to delve into a form of hip-hop originating in Northern Ireland specifically. As a matter of fact, the backdrop offers an uncommon and compelling perspective distinct from that of English hip-hop for instance, primarily due to the deep intertwining with cultural identity, language preservation, and political expression. I will focus on Rap as Gaeilge, which translates to rapping in Irish, a subgenre of hip-hop music, where artists perform rap lyrics in the Irish language. In recent years, Belfast-based Republican trio Kneecap has significantly contributed to the resurgence and popularity of this niche genre in yet another sort of environment, which accounts for the fact that I will use this provocative and acclaimed band to illustrate my demonstration. The thrust of this study aims to provide an insight into how Rap as Gaeilge, in the singular socio-cultural and political landscape of post-conflict Northern Ireland, may serve as a medium for the reformation of Irish identity through the reclaiming of Irish language and culture, for political discourse and resistance, and ultimately, for social change and long-overdue peace, offering a perspective that is both regionally specific and globally resonant. How has Rap as Gaeilge adapted the aesthetics and ethos of US hip-hop and transformed it to reflect societal issues, historical contexts, and cultural narratives in Northern Ireland? How is rapping in Irish a strategic choice not only to revitalize the Irish language, but also to express national identity and resist? Since Rap as Gaeilge against such a backdrop involves the transgression of a long-standing oppressed status by Catholics belonging to the Republican community in the face of an opposed Protestant, Loyalist one, may the existing antagonism deepen any further as a result? Or instead, surprisingly, may this cause Protestants to recognize themselves in such pursuit of identity and protest, and play a prominent part in building sustainable reconciliation and peace in a region marked by entrenched divisions along religious, socio-economic, political, and cultural lines?

November 6, Thursday
15:30-17:00

SZ 15.21
Universitätsstraße 15
Building A, 2nd Floor

Monia O'Brien Castro is Senior Lecturer in British and Irish Studies at Tours University, FRANCE. Following a doctoral thesis on the decline and renewal of British inner cities, she has published extensively on phenomena specific to the UK's socio-economically deprived urban centers in the neoliberal era, including exclusion, riots and gangs. She has also co-edited *30 Years After: Issues and Representations of the Falklands War* (Ashgate, 2014), *Preserving the Sixties: Britain and the 'Decade of Protest'* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), *Americanis/zation* (Le Manuscrit, 2021), and *Transcender les frontières: Une exploration sociale, urbaine et politique*, Le Manuscrit-Savoirs, 2025 for instance). She also collaborated with the Etablissement Public du Parc et de la Grande Halle de la Villette as scientific advisor for the Kréyol Factory exhibition in 2009, and has published books dedicated to English language learning (Ixelles, 2012 and 2015).

Panel 8: Book Panel: "Entanglements, Narratives, and the Environment: Inter-American Perspectives"

Chair: Roberta Maierhofer (University of Graz)

In light of Amitav Ghosh's (2016) exploration of "a crisis of the imagination" in the face of climate change and environmental degradation, the combination of articles in this book seek to address the potential of literature, history, and politics in comprehending the profound dimensions and violence of these challenges and its related inequalities. The book shows, among others, that the Anthropocene, characterized by its complex and interconnected phenomena, demands fresh narratives and theoretical perspectives, particularly within the framework of Inter-American Studies, which can offer a new venue to discuss these pressing issues and to provide intersectional and inter-regional considerations and strategies. Thus, drawing on non-Western and conventional theoretical and methodological understandings, the book's Inter-American framework with its hemispheric perspectives opens up the possibilities to view climate change in all its complexities and relationalities. It is the aim of this book panel to show how through an interdisciplinary array of papers, strategies for facing inequalities in light of the climate crisis may be a fruitful way forward.

The panel consist of three talks, where the first one will be present a comprehensive overview of the ideas and approaches of the edited volume and will be held by two of the editors of the volume, **Roberta Maierhofer and Eva Bauer**. The second talk will be held by one of the authors, **Lena LeBlhumer**, on her chapter entitled "Living the Symbiosis with Nature: Race and the American Landscape as Depicted in Joseph Drew Lanham's *Life Writing the Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* (2016). The third talk will be present another chapter from the volume by the author **Nicole Haring** with the title "The Last Generation: Cherrie Moraga's Prose and Poetry, the Chthulucene, and Intersectional Environmentalism".

November 6, Thursday
15:30-17:00

Leopoldine Schmidt Room
Universitätsstraße 15
Building B, Ground Floor

Eva Katharina Bauer is PhD candidate and project coordinator for the Erasmus+ project "Eco-Stories" (www.ecostories.org), coordinated by the Center for Inter-American Studies, University of Graz. She is engaged in the intersection of language, culture, and environmental issues. Her ongoing research investigates the temporal aspects of environmental concerns in the field of ecolinguistics, intersectional environmentalism and environmental humanities.

Nicole Haring is (Senior) Scientist at the Center for Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research interests focus on feminist theory, contemporary US-American literature, Inter-American studies, aging and intergenerational studies, and critical pedagogies. Currently, her research focuses on social reproduction theory, eco-criticism and environmental humanities. She is the lead researcher in the Erasmus+ project "Eco-Storytelling."

Lena Elisabeth Leßlhuber is a doctoral student and university assistant at the Department of English and American Studies at the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg. She holds a master's degree in education (subjects: English / History, Social Studies and Political Education) and also completed the extra-curricular "Migration Studies". Her research interests are within Black studies, life writing, transatlantic and migration studies.

Roberta Maierhofer is Professor of American Studies and Director of the Center for Inter-American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research focuses on (Inter)American Literature and Culture, Gender and Age/Aging. In her publication *Salty Old Women: Gender, Age, and Identity in American Culture*, she developed a theoretical approach to gender and age/ing (anocriticism).

Panel 9: Inequalities in the Contemporary Workplace

Chair: Renate Ortlieb (University of Graz)

Intersecting Identities in the Heat of the Kitchen: An Ethnographic Study of Diversity, Microaggressions and Resilience in Commercial Kitchens (Online)

Carmenrita Bugeja (University of Malta)

The focus of this paper is the diversity and intersectionality in commercial kitchens, drawing on ethnographic research to explore the lived experiences of workers in these high-pressure environments. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and workplace diversity, the research investigates how race, nationality, gender, and religion intersect to shape labour hierarchies, social dynamics, and experiences of inclusion or exclusion. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, the study interrogates how workplace microaggressions and systemic inequities manifest in daily interactions, contributing to the marginalization of workers with intersecting minority identities (Nadal et al., 2014; Ghumman et al., 2013). The study situates commercial kitchens as critical sites where power dynamics and structural and systemic inequities are both reproduced and resisted. It explores how labour hierarchies are informed by nationality (Portes & Zhou, 1993), how gendered expectations perpetuate exclusionary practices (Lewis et al., 2013), and how religious practices are often dismissed or inadequately accommodated (Ghumman et al., 2013). These intersectional dynamics contribute to unique vulnerabilities, while simultaneously creating opportunities for acts of resilience, solidarity, and resistance among marginalised workers (Martin, Y.C. 2010). By centering the voices and experiences of kitchen workers, this ethnographic study contributes to a growing body of literature on workplace diversity and intersectionality, providing critical insights into how systemic inequities can be addressed to foster more inclusive and equitable work environments.

Carmenrita Bugeja is a PhD Candidate at the University of Malta. Graduating with a B. Communications (Honours) and a Master's in Communications from the University of Malta, she has lectured at the Institute of Tourism Studies since 2008, educating aspiring chefs. Her feminist research on intersectionality, ethnography, well-being, microaggressions, and diversity fuels profoundly transformative change in the catering industry and beyond.

From Anti-Discrimination to Universal Dignity at Work: Toward a Hybrid Regulatory Framework Against Workplace Harassment

Aleksandar Ristovski (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University)

Workplace harassment is a harmful phenomenon that violates the right to dignity at work and jeopardizes occupational safety and health by fostering abusive, hostile or unsafe working conditions. It disproportionately affects working women, undermining their equal opportunities in the labour market, often manifesting as gender-based or sexual harassment. Today, many countries have adopted some form of national regulation against workplace harassment, though protections are typically fragmented across multiple regulatory frameworks, including: equality and non-discrimination laws; labour relations statutes (encompassing occupational safety and health provisions) and tort and criminal law. Where some legal systems (e.g., U.S., UK) anchor workplace harassment protections strictly to discrimination (gender, race, religion), others (e.g., France, Sweden) encompass a broader concept of dignity protection that is not necessarily tied to discriminatory grounds, i.e. legally protected characteristics. Instead, it stems from the need to safeguard against personal animosity, abuse of power, and generally, the infliction of psychological harm regardless of motive. This paper analyzes the strengths and weaknesses—particularly regarding definitions, scope, enforcement mechanisms, and legal remedies for workplace harassment—of existing doctrinal concepts (the discrimination-based model and the motive-blind harassment model). Inspired by the core principles of ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work—which mandates an integrated, inclusive, and gender-responsive approach to eliminating workplace violence and harassment—the analysis seeks to develop a hybrid framework designed to establish a comprehensive and equitable system that protects workers from all forms of abuse while simultaneously addressing systemic discrimination. Such a framework will also be evaluated against Macedonian legislation, which adopts an ambiguous conceptual and legal stance toward workplace harassment regulation, while simultaneously accommodating three overlapping yet distinct phenomena: harassment, mobbing, and psychological harassment in the workplace.

November 6, Thursday
15:30-17:00

SR 15.48
Universitätsstraße 15
Building D, 4th Floor

Aleksandar Ristovski is full professor of labour law at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (Iustinianus Primus Faculty of Law - Skopje). He has published scholarly works in labour law through leading international imprints like Springer, C.H. Beck, Hart Publishing, and Wolters Kluwer. Professor Ristovski has participated in several international scientific projects and has on multiple occasions been engaged as external collaborator of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on labour law and industrial relations' related projects in Macedonia. In this capacity, he authored the GAP analysis assessing the alignment of North Macedonia's legislation with ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. Additionally, he has served as the lead national expert and member of the working group tasked with drafting North Macedonia's new Law on Protection against Workplace Harassment. He also is a national expert for North Macedonia in the European Labour Law Network (ELLN) and the CEElex network of national legal experts on labour and industrial relations in Central and Eastern Europe. Prof. Ristovski is one of the founders of the Association for Labour and Social Law of North Macedonia established in 2019 and currently serves as its vice president.

Structural Injustice and EU Labour Migration Law and Policy: Overcoming Migrant Labour Inequalities

Amy Weatherburn (KU Leuven)

Labour market shortages in the European Union (EU) necessitate an extra-EU workforce. In response, EU legal migration law and policy is instrumentalised to attract skills and talent, positioning the EU as a panacea for third-country national workers who want to invest in and increase their human and social capital. The reality that many migrant workers face, however, runs contrary to their expectations of the opportunities that the prospect of working in the EU offers. Despite the EU labour migration acquis' guarantee for the respect for equal treatment (admittedly subject to some conditions) and protection from exploitation, migrant workers are three times more likely to experience abuse and exploitation (ILO 2022). This paper will consider to what extent inequalities associated with labour mobility are systemic and therefore a structural injustice. Theories of structural injustice (Young 1990, Mantouvalou 2023, McKeown 2024), seek to attribute responsibility for the moral wrongdoings that occur through structures. This paper applies this theoretical stance to the EU as a supranational legal entity wherein the governance and regulation of an extra-EU labour force is prescribed at European level but requires national implementation. Notwithstanding the aim to promote the equality and integration of migration workers, the protective provisions of the EU labour migration legal framework are flawed as they are premised upon an inter-relational, transactional, individualistic model that does not acknowledge the structural background conditions that create the vulnerability and precarity of migrant workers. A structural injustice theoretical perspective is therefore of added value in the determination of strategies for change that need to adopt a forward-looking response - favoured by structural theories - that eliminates the structural risk factors entrenching existing inequalities with a view to enhancing the social reality of migrant workers.

Amy Weatherburn is FWO Senior Postdoctoral Fellow at the KU Leuven Institute for European Law and Doctor of Law (VUB & Tilburg, 2019). Her main research areas are human trafficking, (labour) migration and fundamental rights. Her postdoctoral research project AccessRem (grant agreement No. 1245925N), focuses on tackling labour exploitation beyond criminal law and providing access to remedy to migrant workers who have experienced violations of social and labour rights in the workplace. She has published her work in books, collective works and international journals and completed research stays at University College London (2024), European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI) (2023), and Tilburg University (2018).

Keynote Lecture

Racism, Bordering, and Contemporary Necropolitics

NIRA YUVAL-DAVIS

Professor Emeritus, Honorary Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) at the University of East London

The double crisis of governability and governmentality of neo-liberal globalisation has brought with it the rise of huge local and global social, economic and political inequalities as well as different kinds of identity politics, both on the Right and on the Left, as defensive strategies. In this presentation I shall discuss some of the manifestations of these strategies and their effects on contemporary politics of belonging. In particular, I shall focus on the role of everyday bordering in these strategies and the growing necropolitics – the dehumanization of ‘the Other’ and their entitlement to life – as one of their outcomes. The presentation will end with a brief discussion of the kind of the politics of care which will be necessary – although not sufficient – to face up to and change this necropolitical paradigm.

Nira Yuval-Davis is Professor Emeritus, Honorary Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB) at the University of East London. A diasporic Israeli socialist feminist, Nira has been active in different forums against racism and sexism in Israel and other settler colonial societies as well as in the UK and Europe. Among other activities she has been the President of the Research Committee 05 (on Racism, Nationalism, Indigeneity and Ethnic Relations) of the International Sociological Association, founder member of Women Against Fundamentalism, the international research network on Women in Militarized Conflict Zones and Social Scientists Against the Hostile Environment.

Nira Yuval-Davis has won the 2018 International Sociological Association Distinguished Award for Excellence in Research and Practice. The article she has written with G. Wemyss and K. Cassidy on ‘Everyday Bordering, Belonging and the Reorientation of British Immigration Legislation’, *Sociology*, 52(2), has won the 2019 Sage Sociology Award for Excellence and Innovation. Among her books *Woman-Nation-State* (1989), *Racialized Boundaries* (1992), *Unsettling Settler Societies* (1995), *Gender and Nation* (1997), *The Warning Signs of Fundamentalism* (2004), *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations* (2011), *Women Against Fundamentalism* (2014) and *Bordering* (2019). She is currently developing her recent article in *Sociology* on Antisemitism as Racism into a book. Her works have been translated into more than ten languages.

Day 2

Friday, 7 November

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Panel 10: Inequalities in Academia: Power, Privilege, and Precarity

Chair: Katharina Scherke (University of Graz)

Meritocracy in the Academic Field? On the (classed) Experiences of Becoming a Scientist in Poland

Justyna Kajta & Stefan Bieńkowski (SWPS University Warsaw)

Despite expectations of increased social mobility in Poland after 1989, class-based educational inequalities remain relatively stable (cf. Domanski et al. 2019; Sadura 2017). As many researchers note (Littler 2018, Sandel 2020), meritocracy is a myth rather than a principle of social life. Although higher education in Poland is dominated by public universities, this does not mean that studying does not carry costs that prevent or limit opportunities for underprivileged people to enter academia. In addition to issues related to economic capital, cultural and social capitals prove to be significant for the opportunities and experiences of studying and developing academic careers (cf. Bourdieu 2023). The paper will present findings from the analysis of biographical and narrative interviews with academics, collected in the framework of the project "RaM-CLASS. Class reproduction and mobility - biographical experiences in academic, artistic, and business fields". The interviewees represent different institutions and disciplines, but share having at least a doctoral degree and working at a university. They also function in the academic field, with its stakes and rules of the "game." Importantly, the interviewees represent one of two scenarios related to their social background: they come (a) from working class families, or (b) from homes where at least one parent was an academic. Thus, the analysis compares the experiences of becoming a scientist being a process of intergenerational upward mobility or class reproduction. The analysis is devoted to (a) whether and how class background is related to individual opportunities and experiences of entering the academic field (from high school to university work), and (b) how factors related to class location interact with other social categories (e.g. gender) and influence the situation of young academics. The analysis contributes to a broader discussion of meritocracy, equal chances and the meaning of class in contemporary academic field.

Justyna Kajta is a sociologist working at the SWPS University in Warsaw (Poland). Her main research interests concern social class and inequalities, youth, social movements, social and political changes in Central and Eastern Europe as well as qualitative research, e.g. biographical method and discourse analysis. She is the Principal Investigator in the project RaM-CLASS. Class reproduction and mobility - biographical experiences in academic, artistic, and business fields.

Stefan Bieńkowski is a sociologist and a PhD candidate at the University of Warsaw. His research focuses on the sociology of work, employment deregulation, and the meanings of work from both institutional and critical perspectives. He is particularly interested in the interrelation between structural changes in the labor market and workers' experiences. In addition to his academic work, he is engaged in artistic practice, exploring the intersections between art and social inquiry.

Cumulative Dis/advantage in Academia: Gender and Field Intersection in Longitudinal Perspective

Katerina Cidlinska & Marta Vohlidalova (Ambis University Prague)

The academic environment historically produced various inequalities. After a century of formal equal access of men and women to higher education, women are still significantly underrepresented in academic careers. If they enter academia, their careers are shorter, slower, and less progressive than men's (EC, 2021). Neoliberal policies, which increase competitiveness, penalize any career slowdowns or breaks due to childcare and raise the importance of work-related networks, seem to make access to higher echelons of academic careers for women even more complicated (see, e.g., Vohlídalová, Cidlinská, Králová, 2025; van den Brink & Benschop, 2014). The mantra of economic efficiency linked to neoliberal policies has also strengthened the field inequalities. Neoliberal policies brought the accent to the speed of scientific production, transferred the responsibility for funding public research on researchers and created extreme work instability (Macfarlane, 2021; Morley, 2016). SSH and STEM fields differ in paradigms, methodology, culture, organization of research production and working conditions (Becher and Trowler, 2001) and have unequal chances to profit under these circumstances. This fact shapes career opportunities and working conditions in the field. A large body of research has focused on gender inequalities in academia. However, it rarely reflects the intersection of gender and field inequalities (Cidlinská, 2019; Silander et al., 2022). Our paper focuses on the role of gender and field in career development. We ask how inequalities are constituted in terms of women's and men's careers in SSH and STEM fields and how men and women reflect on the conditions for their career growth. We built on the qualitative longitudinal study among Czech academics, which followed 30 academics for about 10 years via repeated qualitative interviews. We interpret our findings using the theoretical concepts of cumulative advantage (Merton, 1988) and linked lives (Krüger, Lévy, 2001).

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Kateřina Cidlinská is an Assistant professor in Sociology on Ambis University Prague and Charles University in Prague. Her research topics are working conditions in academia, academic careers, exits from academic career, gender inequalities in academia and professional identities. She continually publishes in international peer-reviewed journals and authored or co-authored several academic and popularization monographs.

Marta Vohlídalová is an Assistant professor in Sociology on Ambis University Prague and senior researcher in Gender and Sociology dept. Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. She focuses on gender equality on the labour market, work-life balance, women in decision-making, and gender and sexual harassment with special regard to the academic environment and higher education institutions. She has published her work in international peer-reviewed journals and authored or coauthored several monographs.

Facing Digital Violence in Academia

Nina Vischer & Kyra Schneider (OTH Regensburg - Digital Hate project)

Digitalization offers opportunities, but it also (re)produces social power structures based on factors such as gender, race, and age. The phenomenon of digital violence is indicative of this: Thus, women, young people, and those with visible migration backgrounds are more frequently targeted (Das NETTZ et al. 2024; Oksanen et al. 2022). Furthermore, women are more affected by forms of sexualized violence than men (Spagert et al. 2025). Besides socio-psychological and economic consequences for those affected, digital violence can also result in “silencing”, that is the withdrawing from the internet “[...] as an important democratic space for discourse” (Frey 2020, p.1). The research project “Digital Hate - Digital violence against female professors in contentious fields of knowledge” examines digital violence in the field of science as an important public arena of debate. The project focuses on female professors as victims of digital violence and puts it into perspective as a form of gender-based violence. The extent, forms, content and effects of gender-based digital violence against female professors in Germany working in the fields of gender, migration or climate research are investigated. Furthermore, the institutional strategies and support structures against digital hate in academia will be examined. For the conference, we would like to outline first results of our quantitative online questionnaire for professors and academic institutions in Germany describing their experiences with digital hate in academia. As this questionnaire is currently in the field, we would like to leave it open at this point which priorities we will set in this contribution as this depends on the results of the survey. Furthermore, we will discuss digital violence against female professors as gender-based violence that is also linked to other intersectional forms of discrimination. Overall - as we will argue - digital violence in academia threatens to (re)enforce already existing (social, epistemic) inequalities.

Nina Vischer is a research associate at OTH Regensburg in the Digital Hate project. She studied Physical activity and Health Science in Regensburg and Erlangen. Main areas of work/research: Gender, health equity.

Kyra Schneider is a research associate at OTH Regensburg in the Digital Hate project. She studied Social Sciences in Augsburg. Main areas of work/research: Gender, discourse analysis.

Panel 11: Marginalized Lives: Visibility, Representation, and Social Exclusion

Chair: Zorica-Iva Sirocic (University of Graz)

Spoons, Feathers and Maandazi: Creative Co-Research with Parents of Children with Additional Needs as a Strategy for Addressing Inequality

Carolyn Defrin (University of Graz) & Elena Marchevska (London South Bank University)

Parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) often face overwhelming systems of care—navigating bureaucratic referral processes, advocating for their children, and coordinating multiple appointments, frequently while relying on public transportation. These structural pressures can deepen social and emotional inequalities, leaving little space for the parents' own needs to be recognised or met. This project, developed in South London in collaboration with Whippersnappers, a community organisation delivering inclusive, creative provision for SEND families, aimed to address these layered inequalities. Supported by ELEVATE—a local borough's cultural equity initiative—our research brought together eight parents in a series of co-creative workshops designed to explore and express their experiences of accessing support and services. Through collage-making, storytelling, shared meals, massage, and sound baths, the workshops became spaces of both inquiry and care. Parents created physical and sensory maps of their journeys through the system, took part in walking interviews, and reflected on themes of accessibility, stigma, and wellbeing. These activities allowed for both critical reflection and emotional replenishment—centering the parents not just as advocates, but as individuals with their own stories, insights, and needs. This performative presentation shares our methodology and findings, with audio-visual excerpts and poetic reflections on how creative, participatory research can challenge systemic exclusion, foster community, and offer restorative spaces within the context of care.

Carolyn Defrin is an artist-researcher working across the visual and performing arts. She is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions fellow at the University of Graz examining the role of art in border practices in Greece and Spain. Her artistic and academic work focuses on migration, intergenerational memory and belonging.

Elena Marchevska is a practitioner-researcher interested in new historical discontinuities that have emerged in post-capitalist and post-socialist transition. She is researching and writing extensively on the issues of belonging, displacement, the border and intergenerational trauma. Her artistic work explores borders and stories that emerge from living in transition. She is a Professor in performance studies at London South Bank University, UK.

Neurodivergent fan communities: Creating representation and visibility through online community

Bo Blanksma (Utrecht University)

For an autistic audience, finding representation in popular media is not easy. Representation is rare, and when neurodivergence is represented, it is often stereotypical and inauthentic (Osteen 2007, 1-47). However, this representation is, in many cases, the only source of information about autism that people consume. Stereotypical representation of autism can have significant impact on audiences (Fraser 2018, 30). For allistic (= non-autistic) audiences, the harm comes in the form of gross misunderstanding of what "authentic autism" entails

(Becker 2022, 161). For autistic audiences, the harm can become more personal; the perpetuated negative image of autism can be internalized and negatively impact autistic people's self-esteem (Schwarz 2007, 258). One way for autistic people to escape harmful, stereotypical representation, is through looking for representation in characters that show relatable, neurodivergent traits, rather than an explicit diagnosis (Schwarz 2007, 268) and sharing these interpretations online with others. In this presentation, I will highlight one autistic fan community, that shared their autistic interpretations about the television show *What We Do in the Shadows* and through this, formed a community of care for other autistic people. The community that was constructed by the commenters is one that offers comfort, joy, support, and a place to share one's authentic self for autistic people. This is especially important for autistic people, who tend to struggle with connecting to other people more than allistics, and might not be able to find the abovementioned comfort, joy, and support offline. I will answer the following research question: How can fan communities made for and by minority communities offer an alternative perspective on diversity and inclusion?

Bo Blanksma has an MA in Film and Television cultures from Utrecht University and is currently a student of the RMA program Gender Studies at Utrecht University. She has experience with organizing and moderating events on queer and feminist film and the media industry and is currently an editor for interdisciplinary graduate journal *Junctions*. She is a part of two current research projects: "When queer cinema came to Germany," and "(In)fidelity in romantic relationships: the role of asexuality." Her main research interests include disability studies, queer film studies, postcolonial studies, and questions of representation.

**Psychiatric Statecraft and the Politics of Exclusion in Modern Germany,
1871-1969**

Laura Jung (University of Graz)

This paper examines how psychiatric knowledge was mobilized as a tool of state power in modern Germany to produce and legitimize systems of exclusion. Spanning the period from the unification of the German Empire to the Cold War, the study analyzes how trauma diagnoses and psychiatric classifications reinforced hierarchies of citizenship by pathologizing racialized, disabled, and ideologically marginalized individuals. These mechanisms of exclusion—framed as scientific and medical judgments—became central to the German state's approach to managing social difference and disciplining populations. The concept of psychiatric statecraft is introduced to capture the role of psychiatry in constructing the boundaries of the "normal" and the "fit" subject, thus shaping access to welfare, employment, and care. Drawing on thinkers such as Richard Ashley and Sylvia Wynter, the paper explores how psychiatric discourses reproduced colonial and racial logics, operating through institutions from the welfare office to the asylum. Through case studies involving industrial workers, WWI veterans, and Holocaust survivors, the paper traces the evolution of psychiatric exclusions across key regimes—imperial, fascist, and postwar democratic—highlighting how trauma diagnoses were weaponized to marginalize those deemed "constitutionally inferior." By situating psychiatry within broader strategies of governance, this research offers a critical historical perspective on how exclusionary medical paradigms have shaped access to public resources and care. It also reflects on their enduring legacy in contemporary German welfare and asylum policies, emphasizing the need for alternative, inclusive frameworks in mental health and social care.

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Laura Jung is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Graz. She earned a PhD in International Relations from the University of Sussex, and she holds an MA in Political Science (FU Berlin) and a BA in History and Sociology (Goldsmiths, University of London). Her research focuses on the interactions of science, technology and medicine with political orders. She is currently a member of the NOMIS-funded research project "Elastic Borders" at the University of Graz, where she is researching the use of advanced technologies in the European border regime. Her thesis research focused on the trauma diagnosis as a means of nation-building in Germany, and she has published on themes of sovereignty, biopolitics, psychiatric diagnosis, welfare, compensation claims, and eugenic politics. In 2024/25, Laura is also leading the "A.I.SYL" research project, which investigates the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies on Austrian asylum procedures. This research project is funded by Zukunftsfond Steiermark.

Panel 12: Ageing and Political Activism

Chair: Maša Mrovlje (University of Leeds)

This panel explores political activism as a life-course practice and a field of intergenerational engagement, challenging the dominant narratives that frame activism as the domain of youth. It highlights the critical contributions of older women in shaping movements for social, political, and ecological justice. By bringing ethnographic research into conversation with ageing activists' lived experiences, the panel examines how life experiences and intersecting identities inform their activism and their ability to build solidarity across generations. Guiding questions include: What motivates older adults to engage in collective action? How do their biographies, collective memories, and identities shape their engagement? What collective experiences, narratives, and strategies do older activists employ to confront intersecting forms of inequalities?

The Politics of Age in Activism: Negotiating Solidarity and Hierarchy Across Generations

Derya Özkaya (University of Graz)

This paper investigates the (im)possibilities of intergenerational solidarity within contemporary social and ecological justice movements in Southeast Europe. Building on ten months of exploratory ethnographic research, including participant observation and life-story interviews with older women activists in Austria, Turkey, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, it analyzes how political subjectivities are sustained, transformed, and negotiated in later life. While scholarship on ageing and political participation often portrays older adults as marginal or disengaged, preliminary findings reveal a far more complex terrain shaped by intersecting emotional, historical, and political dynamics.

Derya Özkaya is a postdoctoral researcher and senior lecturer at the Graz School of Interdisciplinary Transnational Studies, University of Graz. Her research examines the politics of affect and collective emotions, protest movements and political activism, politics of ageing, intersectional theories and methodologies, collective memory, political ethnography, and contemporary politics of Turkey. She is the co-speaker of the research cluster "*In/equalities in the Context of Social Transformation Processes*" and co-coordinator the working group "*Emotions and Affect in Society and Politics*" at the University of Graz. Derya holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Freie Universität Berlin and an M.A. in Cultural Studies from Sabancı University, Istanbul.

Activists' Experiences: Representatives of Omas gegen Rechts and Omas for Future, Austria

Omas gegen Rechts is a non-partisan, civil-society initiative founded in 2017 in Austria and Germany. The group brings together older women (and supporters) who oppose the rise of right-wing populism, racism, antisemitism, and all forms of exclusion. Driven by the conviction that "being old does not mean being silent," members lend their voice, presence, and experience to protest, awareness-raising and solidarity actions in order to defend democratic values and human dignity.

Omas for Future is a grassroots climate initiative in Germany, Austria, and beyond, composed primarily of people aged 50+ committed to securing a livable and sustainable future for younger generations. Active through local groups, the activists use accessible, low-threshold tools, including interactive quizzes, informative materials and community events, to motivate behavioural change and raise climate awareness. Rooted in "love for life" and intergenerational responsibility, the initiative advocates for everyday solutions and collective action, emphasizing solidarity across generations rather than guilt or fear.

Panel 13: Triggers of Inequalities in Transnational Kurdish Context

Chair & Discussant: Naif Bezwan (University of Vienna)

War, displacement, urbanisation, migration and climate crisis as well as the inequalities resulting from these factors play a central role in Kurdish contexts. Many factors are rooted in the regions of origin, while others are rooted in the host countries. In our panel, we will examine these factors from different contextual and disciplinary perspectives and their interaction in relation to the transnational way of life through which the places of origin and destination of mobilities are connected.

Invisible Across Borders: Statelessness and Inequality in the Kurdish Diaspora

Janroj Yilmaz Keles (Middlesex University London)

This presentation explores experiences of the Kurdish diaspora directly connected to their statelessness. The Kurds, one of the world's largest stateless population, are often rendered invisible in host countries by being registered under imposed national identities such as Turkish, Iranian, Syrian, or Iraqi. This erasure reinforces political, social, and economic marginalisation, deepening structural inequalities across generations.

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Bound by Injustice: How the Oppression of Women Deepens Inequality in Kurdistan

Shilan Fuad Hussain (Institute of Domestic Violence, Religion & Migration)

This contribution examines how Kurdish women's political, social, and economic marginalisation reinforces systemic inequality across Kurdistan. It argues that true progress in the region is impossible without women's full emancipation and empowerment

Having a Choice: Spaces of Reciprocity in Hierarchical Multilingual Settings

Agnes Grond (University of Graz)

This paper explores transnational Kurdish language ecologies characterized by reciprocal multilingualism, in which speakers maintain their complex repertoires instead of abandoning the smaller languages. In times of ever-increasing mobility and, as a result, increasingly linguistically diverse societies, such shared linguistic spaces play a central role in ensuring societal participation.

Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies: Scripturalism, Dogmatism and Hierarchy in the Religious Field of Kurdistan

Thomas Schmidinger (University of Kurdistan - Hewlêr)

This contribution examines the extent to which statehood and confessionalization lead to the marginalization and division of dissident spiritual traditions, using the example of non-scriptural religious traditions in Kurdistan.

Naif Bezwan is currently working as Senior Scientist and a head of research project on the Kurdish Self-Determination Conflict and Conflict Resolution at the University of Vienna's Department of Constitutional and Administrative Law. He also acts as Visiting Professor with the Faculty of Business and Law at the University of Middlesex London, and as Research Professor at the University of Kurdistan Hewler/Iraq. Previous to his current positions, Bezwan has worked, taught and carried out research in Germany, England, Turkey and Austria. His areas of interest include Turkish foreign and domestic politics, Kurdish studies, Middle East studies, comparative migration and diaspora studies, international law and political theory. His academic writing addresses Turkish domestic and foreign policy, modern Turkish history and the Kurdish self-determination conflict in the Middle East from a historical and comparative perspective. Bezwan has published papers in the above-mentioned areas in German, English, Kurdish and Turkish.

Janroj Yilmaz Keles is associate professor at the department of Law and Social Sciences at the Middlesex University London. His research interests lay in the fields of migration, globalisation, the labour market, stateless diaspora, transnational political activism, ethnicity, representation, media, nationalism and ethno-nationalist conflict. He has published several single-authored and co-authored articles in peer-reviewed high-quality journals, including Political Geography, Industrial Law Journal, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Antipode, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, The Sociological Review, Work, Employment and Society, Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, Societies, Middle East Journal of Culture & Communication, and Urban Studies.

Shilan Fuad Hussain is researcher and analyst dedicated to advancing gender equality and advocating for women's rights. She is a researcher at the Institute of Domestic Violence, Religion & Migration, an Associate Editor for Brill, and a Senior Consultant on gender-related societal issues. Previously, she was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow in Gender Studies and Cultural Analysis, a Visiting Fellow at the Washington Kurdish Institute (U.S.), and a Doctoral Fellow at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (Switzerland), where she published several papers and received specialised training. She holds a PhD in Cultural Analysis from the University of Urbino (Italy) and is an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Agnes Grond is senior lecturer at the department of Translation Studies at the University of Graz. Her research on Kurdish diaspora languages in Austria draws on the concepts of Critical Sociolinguistics. A particular emphasis is put on new methodologies and the development of pragmatic frameworks for a broader understanding of the relation between environmental input and language policies, language ideologies and multilingual language use. Recent book projects include "Voicing Plurality in an Open World" (edited volume, Wiesbaden: Reichert), "Mountains as Frontier Arenas. A collection of essays on early modern Kurdish history" and "Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Central Anatolia" (both Vienna: Praesens). Agnes Grond is also a co-editor of the Vienna Kurdish studies Yearbook.

Thomas Schmidinger is a political scientist and social and cultural anthropologist. He is associate professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr (UKH) in Erbil and lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna and in the MA for Social Work at the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria. He is a Research Associate at the Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha (South Africa) and a member of the Editorial Board of the Iraqi Journal for Political Science. He is co-founder and since the beginning Secretary General of the Austrian Society for the Promotion of Kurdology / European Centre for Kurdish Studies.

Panel 14: Intersectional Injustices and Struggles in Global Perspective

Chair: Heidrun Zettelbauer (University of Graz)

Negotiating Dissonant Citizenship: Islamic Feminisms and Religious Visibility in Europe

Anna Dolce (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia)

Across contemporary Europe, the visibility of Muslim women—especially through the Islamic veil—has become a highly contested site where broader struggles over gender, religion, and national belonging unfold. This paper investigates how different national frameworks of regulating religious visibility, focusing on France and Italy, reproduce selective mechanisms of citizenship under the rhetoric of secularism, social cohesion, and public safety. Building on the concept of *dissonant citizenship* as a critical and situated form of belonging, the analysis examines how Islamic feminisms renegotiate the frontiers of democratic inclusion through legal, political, theological, and artistic strategies, operating both nationally and transnationally. Mobilizations such as the Hijabeuses collective, the Circulaire Chatel, the case of Silvia Romano, the Council of Europe's hijab campaign, and the controversies over the abaya and the burkini reveal how the public presence of Muslim women becomes a legal, political, and symbolic battleground. Adopting an intersectional and decolonial perspective, the paper integrates national legal frameworks, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union, and the resistance practices of movements such as Lallab, the European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW), and Sisters in Islam. The epistemic pluralism promoted by Islamic feminisms challenges the hegemonic models of secular citizenship and proposes a transformative, pluralistic reconfiguration of democratic belonging. By articulating alternative imaginaries and proactive strategies for change, these movements contribute to reshaping the European public sphere toward greater justice and equality.

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Anna Dolce is a PhD candidate in the Humanities (M-STO/04) at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia. Her doctoral research, supervised by Alfonso Botti and Vincenzo Pacillo, is titled *The European Public Sphere and the Challenge of Islamic Feminisms in the Early 21st Century*, and is due to be defended in May 2025. In 2023, she conducted research at Sorbonne Université, and in 2022 at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE) and the Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités (GSRL). She holds a second-level MA in Public History (2020, with honors) and a Master's degree in Anthropology and Contemporary History (2019, with honors). She has been involved in public history projects with the Centro Documentazione Donna in Modena. She is a member of the Società Italiana per lo Studio della Storia Contemporanea (SISSCO) and of the Società Italiana delle Storiche (SIS).

Inclusive Digital Participation in Albania: Are Rural Women Left Behind?

Merita Meçe (Independent Researcher)

Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of Albania contributing to 18 percent of its gross domestic product. Women are the backbone of the sector accounting for 40.1 percent of the employed persons compared to 28.7 percent of male workers. Highly exposed to demographic transition, rural areas have limited human capital and resources which call for intergenerational transfer. Aging of the rural labor force has a direct impact on food security and sustainable agriculture food system. Recent studies conducted in Albania have indicated rural women's limited access to agricultural extension services and time-saving technologies. Several international institutions and organizations including FAO emphasize the importance of digitalization and innovation in agri-food system transformation and the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. But uneven process of digital transformation and rural-urban disparities in socio-economic development affects rural population, in general, and rural women, in particular. Moreover, digital transformation affects differently aged rural women and those from minority populations. The main purpose of this paper is to examine rural women's participation in digital transformation in Albania highlighting their challenges and inequalities. Based on primary and secondary data, it analyzes their situation to understand their vulnerability and inequalities in the process of the agri-food system transformation. Primary data are collected from 65 participants (60 rural women and 5 rural men aged 25 - 70 years) from 7 villages located in various parts of the country with different levels of their socio-economic development through focus group discussions, face-to-face in-depth individual interviews, and key informants' interviews. Secondary data are collected through various international, national, and regional studies as well as national statistics. Findings show limited participation of rural women in the digital transformation of agri-food system impacting their agricultural productivity. Various inequalities combined with intersectionality increase their vulnerability highlighting the need to co-design and implement bottom-up digital strategies to ensure their inclusive participation in agri-food system transformation in Albania.

Merita H. Meçe is an independent researcher, consultant and evaluator who is involved in various projects that focus on social change and the economic empowerment of rural women in Albania. She has contributed in various research papers and has published articles in several peer-reviewed journals.

Addressing Rural Women's Intersectional Inequality: A Policy Perspective on Sustainable Regional Development in North Macedonia and Serbia

Milka Dimitrovska ("Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University)

Rural women in the Western Balkans face multitude of challenges in the economic, social, educational, political and societal sphere, as well as regarding the access to justice, and adequate physical and social infrastructure. Social norms are rather unfavourable to women in the Balkans, which is significantly emphasized in rural areas. Women in North Macedonia and Serbia mark numerous commonalities in these terms, with the specific circumstances per regions. Even though these countries are rather well rated as far as the indices for gender equality and inequality are concerned, still, the center-periphery dichotomy significantly affects women's overall situation and opportunities, thus accentuating the difference of women's stance per regions and areas. As well, addressing substantial gender issues is highly sensitive to both international and national political and legal trends and societal narratives. Therefore, the purpose of this research would be to detect the key legal, political and social factors impacting the main lines of women's inequality in Macedonia and Serbia and to provide balanced regional development policy perspective on the possible improvement of women's stance in these countries. To this end, content analysis would be used to analyze current strategic and normative framework, as well as descriptive statistical analysis per region based on available official states' data, yet including other sources such as the suitable data from the ESS Round 10. As sustainable development, including policies for not only sustainability but for equality, is at the heart of balanced regional development, it is necessary to consistently assess and institutionally improve the well-being of women living in more challenging socio-economic circumstances.

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Milka Dimitrovska is an Assistant Professor at the Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research at the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje. She has graduated at the Faculty of Law at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, followed by an LLM obtained at the Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, on the TEMPUS course of European Integration. Dimitrovska became a PhD in International Law and Politics at the Faculty of Law at "St. Kliment Ohridski" University in Bitola where she has been a Research and Teaching Assistant for several years, teaching the courses: EU Legal and Political System, Political System, Constitutional Law and Local Government. She is currently focused on scientific research which extends to the fields of human rights, EU policies, democracy and good governance.

Feminism and Poor Racialized Young Women in a Rising Conservative Era in Argentina

Ana Cecilia Gaitan (Argentinean Technical and Scientific National Council)

On June 3, 2015, a pivotal social and political event took place in Argentina, which changed the nature of feminisms in the country and in the region: Ni Una Menos, NUM [Not One Woman Less]. First NUM demonstration brought the massification of a renewed feminist movement, while evocative of a social memory linked to subalternity. This massive popular mobilization did not just condemn the lack of government response to violence against women, but showed the feminist movement's capacity to set public agendas and opened up possibilities to increase political pressure for sexual and reproductive rights reforms, currently challenged by a Right-wing expansion. In these past ten years, young women have had a special place in the feminist mobilization. They joined the street demonstrations in a massive way, which made them visible as a political actor. Since then, most research has focused on the activism and political practices of young women living in the main cities of the country. Many of them from middle class. Little has been written yet regarding how social class, race and territories intervene in how they relate to feminism and shape the inter- and intrasubjective processes of politicization. Considering this research gap, I examine how young poor racialized women who are not necessarily activists, but who nevertheless get in touch with feminisms in their everyday lives, embrace the movement political ideas. I explore their understandings on critical issues for feminisms, such as autonomy, violence and state intervention. I believe studying their reactions to feminist proposals constitutes a vantage point from which to discuss broader processes linked to inequalities and different forms of oppression. It also allows us to elaborate a reflection on the debts that democracy owes to these subjects. Data is from an ethnographic fieldwork done from 2022 to 2025 in poor Buenos Aires neighborhoods.

Ana Cecilia Gaitan is a researcher at the Argentinean Technical and Scientific National Council. She earned my PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Buenos Aires, and had been teaching and researching at the National University of San Martin (UNSAM) for the past 12 years, where she coordinates the Program of Social Studies on Gender, Children and Youth. her long-standing interest has been to understand how young racialized women experience gender and sexuality and make decisions about their bodies and lives in contexts of social inequality. After receiving her PhD, she conducted postdoctoral research at the Colegio de la Frontera Norte with a grant from the Government of Mexico. During the academic year 2021-2022 She was a Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University. These two stays nurtured her knowledge about the discussions on violence and affects her research interest in feminist activism around violence and gender equality.

Contesting Political Imbalance and Gender Inequalities in Nigeria: The Impact of the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign

Egbule Philip Onyekachukwu & Ibezim Jennifer Ogochukwu (University of Delta)

There is a large body of work by Africa's feminists that has chronicled rural and urban women's struggles for national liberation, emancipation peace and gender equality since Nigeria's independence. This literature has shown struggles during the colonial period in which women played pivotal roles such as the Women's War by Aba women in Nigeria. One of such recent struggles that have built on the foundation of past struggles is "Bring Back Our Girls" (BBOG) movement in Nigeria. The Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) campaign has become a point of convergence for building a sustained coalition encompassing political leaders, celebrities, youth activists, students, human rights groups and other concerned Nigerians to press the government to provide an effective response to the Boko Haram outrage and working to bring back the abducted Chibok schoolgirls. This study analyzes the Bring Back Our Girls campaign as a powerful act of resistance against political marginalization and gender inequalities in Nigeria. By mobilizing national and global attention, the movement challenged state accountability failures and patriarchal norms. Additionally, this paper explores how the movement, initiated in response to the 2014 abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok, Northern Nigeria, challenged state neglect, patriarchal norms, and broader socio-political marginalization. Through a mixed-methods approach combining discourse analysis, interviews, and media review, the study highlights the role of women-led activism in redefining civic engagement and demanding accountability. It also interrogates the intersections of gender, security, and political power, emphasizing how the BBOG movement galvanized national and international attention to systemic inequalities. Ultimately, the paper argues that while the campaign exposed entrenched inequality, it also illuminated both the possibilities and limitations of social movements in transforming gendered political structures in Nigeria.

Egbule Philip Onyekachukwu holds a B.Sc. (Ed.) (2004), and M.Sc. (Ed.) (2011) in Social Studies. He lectures in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Delta, Nigeria. As a social scientist by training, his chief scholarly interests include globalization studies, African culture and politics, human rights, and gender issues. He is astute in research, which has resulted in the publication of 55 scholarly articles in peer-reviewed journals between 2013 and present. He has presented over 40 research findings at national and international conferences and workshops in his area of interest. He has received several awards, grants, and fellowships from various organizations, including the Emerging Scholar Award, the Fifteenth International Conference on Climate Change: Impacts, in recognition of excellent scholarship at the University of British Columbia, BC, Canada, April 21, 2023.

Panel 15: Ageing, Care, and Inequality in Later Life

Chair: Ulla Kriebner (University of Graz)

Gendered Inequality, Ageism, and Intergenerational Challenges in Albania's Demographic Transition

**Irida Agolli Nasufi (University of Tirana) &
Eglantina Gjermeni (Diplomat and Gender Equality Expert)**

Albania is experiencing a significant demographic upheaval characterized by accelerated aging, population decrease, and changing intergenerational relationships. The median age has increased from 35.3 to 42.5 years, while the percentage of those 65 and older has nearly doubled from 11.3% in 2011 to 19.7% in 2023, according to the 2023 Census. Increased life expectancy, substantial youth emigration, and consistently low fertility rates are the main causes of this demographic transition. For older women, who make up the majority of the aging population, these changes have made structural disparities worse in later life. Women over 65 are far more likely than males to live alone, have fewer pension benefits, and are more likely to experience poverty and social isolation. Concerns over loneliness, caregiving responsibilities, and a lack of support are raised by census statistics showing that 62.5% of people living alone are 60 years of age or older, with women making up the majority. Albanian institutions and society are still firmly rooted in ageism, which excludes senior citizens from involvement in community affairs, policymaking, and access to high-quality healthcare. Disparities in values between younger and older populations, economic precarity, and unequal access to opportunities are all contributing factors to the escalation of intergenerational tensions. Using census data, policy analysis, and field research, this study explores how age, gender, and social inequality intersect in a changing Albania. It makes the case for an approach to aging that is intergenerational, gender-sensitive, and rights-based. Promoting gender parity in pension reform and eldercare delivery, growing community-based, gender responsive care services, and encouraging intergenerational communication and shared responsibility are some of the main proposals. In Albania's changing demographic environment, promoting dignity and inclusion in older age, especially for women, is crucial to maintaining social fairness and long-term social cohesion.

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Irida Agolli is a full-time faculty member teaching in both the Bachelor and Master programs in Social Work. Her academic expertise lies in the fields of social policy institutions, program and policy evaluation, and social work with children. With over 20 years of professional experience, she is a national expert in policy and program development across both local and national levels. Her work spans a wide array of thematic areas, including social protection, gender equality and violence against women, youth health and participation, child protection, social care service planning, inclusive education, and workforce development. Irida has contributed to numerous national strategies, action plans, and reforms, and has collaborated with international organizations and public institutions. She holds strong theoretical and practical knowledge in participatory policy formulation, evidence-based policymaking, impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation, and project cycle management. Her academic and professional engagements reflect a deep commitment to advancing inclusive and effective social policies and services.

Eglantina Gjermeni is a prominent Albanian politician, diplomat, and expert in gender equality, with a distinguished career in public service and academia. Born in Krujë in 1968, she holds a master's degree from Grand Valley State University (USA) and a PhD in Social Work from the University of Tirana, where she also lectured for many years. She led the Gender Alliance for Development Center for over a decade, contributing significantly to advancing women's rights in Albania. Elected to the Albanian Parliament in 2009 and 2013, Gjermeni served as Minister of Urban Development from 2013 to 2017. She has published widely, including her 2014 paper on gender quotas in Albania. In 2017, she received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Grand Valley State University and chaired the parliamentary Subcommittee on Gender Equality and Prevention of Violence against Women. Since 2022, she has served as Albania's Permanent Representative to the OSCE and other international organizations in Vienna.

Diminishing Social Exclusion and Exclusion Trade-Offs: Insights from a Municipal Housing Complex in Austria

Dzenana Pupic & Klaus Wegleitner (University of Graz - CIRAC)

Precarious socio-economic living conditions, closely tied to housing issues and processes of ageing, pose major challenges for participation and social inclusion. Exacerbated by current care crises, they often lead to weakened support networks and barriers to services, mobility, and cultural engagement. Access to participation is unequally distributed, shaped by intersections of socio-economic status, age, and related social positions. In this paper, we argue that although we may individually and collectively act against social exclusion, this action may not always be fruitful. On the one hand, this agency is often constrained by structurally fragile conditions, which we describe as forms of structural carelessness. On the other hand, by proposing the concept of exclusion trade-offs, we capture how efforts to reduce exclusion in one domain may inadvertently reproduce or even intensify exclusion in others, due to interdependencies across social, spatial, and infrastructural dimensions. A thematic analysis of qualitative data collected in a municipal housing complex in Graz, Austria, examines how residents facing cumulative disadvantages mobilize against adverse living conditions. Using a multidimensional framework of social exclusion, we analyze the interrelations between action, structural barriers, and shifting exclusionary effects across domains. Our findings show that residents proactively secure livelihoods, provide neighbourly support, and engage in collective initiatives. However, systemic shortcomings—such as the absence of an elevator—illustrate how political neglect and infrastructural gaps personalize systemic failures and strain community solidarity. The absence of adequate responses to residents' needs reflects structural carelessness, shifting responsibility onto individuals and undermining collective resilience. The analysis highlights how exclusion trade-offs arise when targeted actions address immediate disadvantages but, under fragile systemic conditions, simultaneously open up new vulnerabilities elsewhere. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex, multidimensional nature of social exclusion and offer a potential starting point for rethinking related policy development.

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Dženana PupiĆ is a postdoctoral researcher at the *Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care* (CIRAC) at University of Graz. With a background in economics and social sciences, and research experience in violence measurement as well as identities and violence, her current research focuses on topics around aging, care, and social exclusion. Recently, she has explored questions of needs and potentials of aging citizens living in precarious circumstances with respect to their health literacy, social participation and caring arrangements. Her ongoing work focuses on end-of-life experiences in the workplace and examines how care regimes and employers can support employees navigating these issues. Dženana was a Junior Research Fellow at the Department of Public Economics at Graz University and taught courses on game theory, public economics, and identity and violence.

Klaus Wegleitner is an Associate Professor (Public Health & End-of-Life-Care) and Vice Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care (CIRAC), head of the working area "Public Care" at the Institute of Pastoral Theology at the University of Graz (Austria) and chairperson of "Careweb - Association for the promotion of societal care culture. Life, old age, dementia and dying" in Vienna. His research interests are addressing the need for developing and transforming health care systems and societal care networks in elderly and end-of-life care, interlinking palliative care and public health perspectives, care ethics, questions about social justice and the democratization of care. A major aspect of his research and consulting is to promote and develop Caring/Compassionate Communities.

Live-in Care on Trial: State, Solidarity and Human Rights in the Era of Care Marketisation

Maroš Matiaško (Charles University)

European societies have been facing a care crisis, and politically induced indifference concerning care has become a well-described phenomenon (Dowling 2021). This reflects deeper, systemic challenges in how care is valued, organised, and provided within 21st-century capitalist economies, shaped by competing pressures that undermine the conditions for social reproduction. Strikingly, this crisis unfolds within a rich normative landscape shaped by complex legal obligations, including international and intra-state human rights norms addressing various aspects of care. In our interdisciplinary paper, we analyse one particular legal case as a unique example of the importance of recognising solidarity and human rights in the context of live-in care in the European Union. Specifically, we examine the judgment of the German Federal Labour Court in the case of Ms Dobrina Alekseva, a Bulgarian migrant live-in care worker employed in Germany. In a groundbreaking 2021 ruling, the court ruled in favour of Alekseva, affirming the right to a minimum wage and regulated working time, thus challenging the exploitative norms underpinning the transnational marketisation of care. This case allows for an analytical reflection on the (welfare) state's role in regulating care relations. We highlight the state's responsibility as both a guarantor and enforcer of human rights-protecting not only the rights of care recipients, such as seniors ageing in place, but also the rights of care providers, many of whom are migrant women from Central and Eastern Europe. Drawing on an interdisciplinary perspective that combines legal analysis, social anthropology, and feminist care ethics, we explore how human rights claims are translated and contested in everyday struggles within the European care landscape. Finally, we argue that the case exposes the multiple and intersecting inequalities-legal, economic, and social—that structure live-in care regimes in the European Union today.

Maroš Matiaško is a human rights expert and post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague. His specialisation is in human rights, care, and the anthropology of human rights. He is a postdoc researcher at the CareOrg project supported by a Volkswagenstiftung grant. He led research in several projects concerning the right to care and rights of people with disabilities and senior citizens. He has served on various monitoring teams, overseeing human rights standards in social care and mental health institutions.

Silenced Voices at the End of Life: An Epistemic Injustice Perspective on Migration, Aging, and Gender

Anna-Christina Kainradl & Klaus Wegleiter (University of Graz - CIRAC)

In our paper we would like to critically examine the intersection of old age, migration, and gender in end-of-life care through the theoretical framework of epistemic injustice. Older migrants experiencing end-of-life care often face intersecting forms of vulnerability created by factors including age, migration experience, gender, and socioeconomic status. Their vulnerability is also influenced by a significant lack of participatory approaches that would center their voices and experiences. Drawing on Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, the analysis identifies two systematic forms of injustice experienced by older migrants in end-of-life care settings. First, testimonial injustice occurs when their expressions of needs, end-of-life preferences, expertise, and knowledge are devalued or dismissed due to prejudicial credibility deficits. Second, hermeneutical injustice manifests when older migrants miss out the possibilities to adequately articulate their knowledge and experience within end-of-life care arrangements dominated by reductionist biomedical frameworks. These epistemic inequities are evident in both clinical and communal settings and reproduced by research approaches which position older migrants as objects of research rather than knowledge bearers. The paper argues that overcoming these injustices requires a multi-layered approach that critically examines intersectional discrimination, institutional power dynamics, and societal knowledge practices. On a practical level, this will be demonstrated by critically analysing Death Literacy and its interpretations as a potential tool for systematically incorporating the knowledge and experiences of older migrants into end-of-life care arrangements. The papers critical perspective highlights how current approaches fail to systematically integrate older migrants' experiences and knowledge into care structures. Furthermore, it challenges the field to recognize how intersectional factors shape end-of-life experiences and to enact structural changes that value marginalized knowledge. By addressing these epistemic inequities, end-of-life care practices and cultures can move toward shaping more equitable and responsive end-of-life environments also for aging migrant populations.

Anna-Christina Kainradl is a (Senior) Scientist at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Aging and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research focuses on ethical questions in old age, migration, and care from an intersectional perspective. She also teaches Medical Ethics at the Medical University of Graz, Austria, and is involved in projects dealing with age, care, and migration. Her publications discuss age(ing) in the context of health, care, and climate change. In 2023, she co-edited *Aging Studies and Ecocriticism: Interdisciplinary Encounters* (Lexington). She is member of the Advisory Board of the European Network in Aging Studies (ENAS) and a member of the Age and Care Research Group Graz (ACRGG).

Panel 16: Urban Justice: Spatial Inequalities and Grassroots Struggles

Chair: Rivka Saltiel (University of Graz)

Struggles over the Right to the City: Grassroots Environmental Mobilizations Against Neoliberal Urban Megaprojects in Turkey

Hikmet Kuran (Cappadocia University)

This paper investigates the intersection of environmental justice and urban social movements in Turkey through the lens of grassroots resistance against neoliberal megaprojects promoted by the AKP government. Framed under the concept of the "right to the city," the study explores how marginalized communities, ecologists, and urban activists mobilize to contest ecologically destructive, socially exclusive, and spatially unjust transformations imposed through projects such as the Canal Istanbul, the Third Airport, and the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant. These mobilizations are conceptualized as acts of urban and ecological citizenship that challenge the authoritarian restructuring of urban space and the commodification of nature. They not only resist top-down impositions but also articulate alternative imaginaries for democratic planning, ecological sustainability, and spatial justice. The analysis highlights the symbolic and political significance of urban and natural commons, collective memory, and grassroots solidarity networks in sustaining resistance. By situating these movements within broader theoretical debates on uneven development, urban authoritarianism, and eco-populism, the paper argues that the Turkish case offers crucial insights into how urban and ecological inequalities are co-produced and how they are increasingly resisted. It emphasizes the importance of grassroots strategies in reimagining urban futures, not merely as reactive gestures but as proactive interventions against systemic injustices.

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Hikmet Kuran is an Assistant Professor of Urban and Environmental Studies at Cappadocia University, Turkey. His research focuses on neoliberal urbanization, environmental justice, the right to the city, and the political ecologies of mega infrastructure projects. He has published widely on the socio-spatial impacts of state-led urban transformation and has a particular interest in how grassroots movements contest authoritarian urbanism and ecological destruction. He teaches courses on urban geography, environmental politics, and critical urban theory. Currently, he is working on a postdoctoral research project exploring degrowth tourism and alternative imaginaries of urban futures. His academic work integrates critical theory, political ecology, and empirical case studies from Turkey and beyond.

Intersectional Injustices and Feminist Urban Activism: Reimagining Gendered Resistance in West African Cities (Online)

Oche Innocent Onuche (Bingham University)

This paper investigates how intersectional injustices are confronted through emergent forms of feminist urban activism in contemporary West African cities, with a focus on Lagos (Nigeria), Accra (Ghana), and Dakar (Senegal). Drawing on Black feminist thought and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000), the study critically examines how gender, class, age, and spatial marginality intertwine to shape the lived experiences of urban women and queer individuals. It further explores how grassroots feminist movements creatively reimagine resistance and reconfigure urban spaces as platforms of inclusion, dignity, and collective healing. Using a qualitative, interpretive approach, the study is grounded in secondary data sourced from national development plans, gender equality reports by international organisations (UN Women, Amnesty International, African Development Bank), and official demographic and urban planning documents. The analysis reveals that intersectional inequalities are not only structural but also spatially entrenched—manifesting in access to housing, safety, employment, and political participation. In response, feminist urban movements are reclaiming public spaces through digital activism, art-based protests, mutual aid networks, and policy advocacy. Findings indicate that these movements challenge normative constructions of womanhood, urban order, and governance, offering alternative imaginaries that centre care, solidarity, and justice. However, state responses remain ambivalent—oscillating between cooptation and repression—highlighting the precarity of activist labour in patriarchal and neoliberal urban regimes. The paper argues for a rethinking of urban policy frameworks to foreground intersectionality and feminist perspectives in addressing inequality. It recommends increased support for grassroots feminist organising, gender-responsive urban planning, and more inclusive participatory governance structures.

Oche Innocent Onuche is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, at Bingham University, Karu, Nigeria. He holds a B.Sc. in Sociology (2008), a M.Sc. in Urban Sociology (2015), and a Ph.D. in Development Sociology (2019) from Nasarawa State University, Keffi. With over six years of experience in Development and Urban Sociology, he has contributed extensively to national and international academic journals and book chapters. His research focuses on Development Sociology, Urban Sociology, Gender Studies, Public Policy, and Peace Studies. His ongoing projects include *Rethinking Development Policies and Programmes in Nigeria: Framing an Indigenous Model*; *The Politics of Foreign Aid and the Development Debate in Nigeria*; and *Understanding Urbanization: Theory, Policy, and Empirics*, among others.

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You Don't Have to Live Next to Me: Towards Demobilizing Individualistic Bias in Computational Approaches to Urban Segregation

Anastassia Vybornova (University of Copenhagen) & Trivik Verma (University of Bristol)

The global surge in social inequalities is one of the pressing issues of our times. The spatial expression of social inequalities at city scale gives rise to urban segregation, a common phenomenon across different local and cultural contexts. The increasing popularity of Big Data and computational models has inspired a growing number of computational social science studies that analyze, evaluate, and issue policy recommendations for urban segregation. Today's wealth in information and computational power could inform urban planning for equity. However, as we show here, segregation research is epistemologically interdependent with prevalent economic theories which overfocus on individual responsibility while neglecting systemic processes. This individualistic bias is also engrained in computational models of urban segregation. Through several contemporary examples of how Big Data – and the assumptions underlying its usage – influence (de)segregation patterns and policies, our essay tells a cautionary tale. We highlight how a lack of consideration for data ethics can lead to the creation of computational models that have a real-life, further marginalizing impact on disadvantaged groups. With this essay, our aim is to develop a better discernment of the pitfalls and potentials of computational approaches to urban segregation, thereby fostering a conscious focus on systemic thinking about urban inequalities. We suggest setting an agenda for research and collective action that is directed at demobilizing individualistic bias, informing our thinking about urban segregation, but also more broadly our efforts to create sustainable cities and communities.

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Anastassia Vybornova is a postdoctoral researcher in Urban Data Science at the Copenhagen Center for Social Data Science (SODAS) at the University of Copenhagen and at the NEtworks, Data, and Society (NERDS) research group at the IT University of Copenhagen. She has a background in Technical Physics and Environmental Science. Her current work focuses on sustainable mobility and the spatiality of social networks.

Trivik Verma is an Associate Professor at the Bristol Digital Futures Institute and the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. His research focusses on cities, inequalities, and justice. He studies various challenges of urbanization such as segregation, inequities in access and wellbeing, transport and energy poverty, and climate-related vulnerabilities.

Panel 17: Creative Struggles for Equality

Chair: Caroly Defrin (University of Graz)

Exhibitions as Pedagogical Spaces: Visual Language, Agency, and Knowledge Production in Kyrgyzstan's Contemporary Art

Aleksandra Filatova (Narxoz University)

This research explores how contemporary art exhibitions in Kyrgyzstan function as critical interventions into systems of exclusion, offering alternative spaces where marginalized communities reclaim agency and articulate counter-narratives. Focusing on projects such as *To Be Named* and *let the red whip break* by MoFA+ (Museum of Feminists and Queer Art), the study examines how feminist, queer, and minority artists use visual language as a strategy to challenge intersecting inequalities rooted in nationalism, patriarchy, and global cultural hierarchies. Rather than operating within conventional institutions, these exhibitions cultivate collective practices of knowledge-making, enabling underrepresented groups to negotiate identity and belonging. Through participatory and community-based methods, they offer pedagogical alternatives to top-down models of education and cultural production. Grounded in decolonial theory and arts-based research, and informed by thinkers such as Spivak, Bhabha, Rogoff, Mamedov, and Sorokina, this research highlights how artists in Kyrgyzstan strategically navigate and disrupt the tension between state-supported nationalism and the homogenizing forces of global agendas. These exhibitions propose embodied, localized strategies for inclusion and justice, contributing to broader imaginaries of social transformation. By reframing art spaces as pedagogical arenas, the project engages with the complex reproduction of inequality and positions creative practice as both a critical lens and a means of collective resistance.

Aleksandra Filatova is a practice-based researcher, art practitioner, and educator whose work centers on visual language as a method of knowledge production and social transformation. She is currently an Adjunct Assistant Professor at Narxoz University in Almaty, where she leads the Art and Creativity Club and experiments with pedagogical models that engage students and faculty in co-creating knowledge beyond institutional hierarchies. Her recent curatorial work includes *ToBeNamed Kyrgyzstan*, a collaborative exhibition developed within the Experimental Humanities Collaborative Network (Bard College and the Smithsonian Institute), which explored locality, globality, and strategies of inclusion through contemporary art. She also runs *#критикуюкакмогу* (Critic As I Can), a participatory project and series of masterclasses that supports underrepresented voices in writing about contemporary art from within the region.

Peripheral Solidarities: Artistic Interventions Against Class Inequality in Post-Yugoslav Societies

Biljana Puric (University of Graz)

In the aftermath of Yugoslavia's disintegration, the post-socialist transitions of its successor states have been marked by deepening class inequalities, privatisation of public property, and the erosion of labor rights. This paper examines contemporary artistic responses to these processes, focusing on how art operates as a critical site for representing dispossession and rearticulating workers' agency. Drawing on several case studies, including works by Dejan Marković, KURS collective, and Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić, I argue that they illuminate the lived realities of post-Yugoslav economic peripheries and offer imaginaries for justice rooted in the region's socialist past. Rather than merely documenting loss, these practices engage in the symbolic and political work of re-narrating labor struggles, contesting neoliberal practices of class disintegration, and invoking collective memory to resist historical erasure. In particular, KURS's work re-centers the figure of the worker within visual and spatial discourse, while Rädle and Jeremić introduce participatory methods to challenge aesthetic and socio-political exclusion. Theoretically, the paper draws on post-Marxist critiques (Fraser, Tomba), theories of cultural memory (Assmann), and perspectives on European peripheries (Pantić, Todorova). These frameworks help illuminate how artistic practices can not only bear witness to systemic inequalities but also act as interventions – tools to unsettle hegemonic narratives and prefigure alternative socio-political arrangements. By analyzing how art both reflects and reshapes the socio-economic terrain of the post-Yugoslav region, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how cultural strategies can challenge mechanisms of exclusion and foster new articulations of class solidarity, dignity, and inclusion within and beyond the region.

Biljana Purić is a doctoral researcher at the University of Graz. Her research focuses on contemporary art and politics and art practices emerging from the post-Yugoslav region. She has published articles as well as art and film reviews and criticism in ARTMargins, Issues in Ethnology & Anthropology, Third Text, Loophole Magazine, The Journal of Curatorial Studies, and Short Film Studies.

Digitalisation of Cultural Heritage: Discourses on Social Inequalities in Museum Practices

Dušan Ristić (University of Graz)

This paper explores the evolving discourses surrounding the digital transformation of museums. It presents the results of a fieldwork study conducted in Graz (Austria) and Novi Sad (Serbia) in 2024. Using a qualitative methodological framework – situational analysis and the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse – this study maps the discourses of cultural heritage digitalisation practices. The research sample consists of interviews with experts in the field, as well as data scraped from the websites of museums, providing a comprehensive view of the museum discursive practices. The study hypothesises that digitalisation of cultural heritage in museums involves both technology and discourses, allowing for recreation and recontextualization, as well as non-localized, interactive use of digitised heritage. The aim is to demonstrate that digitalisation of cultural heritage and digital transformation of museums are deeply embedded in broader discursive networks and social practices that shape and influence museums. The study demonstrates that discourses on the digitalisation of cultural heritage articulate social inequalities, particularly in terms of accessibility to digitised content, between generations and between genders. It also confirms that these discourses are intertwined with ongoing transformations and debates about power and reconfiguration of cultural spaces in a digital age. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how museums negotiate digital change, revealing challenges in fostering more inclusive and participatory digital environments in their practices.

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Dušan Ristić is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad in Serbia. Currently research fellow of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions at The Department of Digital Humanities, University of Graz (October 2023-2025). The fields of my research interests are sociological studies of knowledge, discourse, culture and space, as well as the social and cultural implications of digitalisation and datafication practices in knowledge and culture production.

The Politics of Age and Exclusion: Gerontocide and Social Abandonment in Chie Hayakawa's *Plan 75* (2022)

Ulla Kriebnernegg (University of Graz - CIRAC)

This paper explores how ageism, socio-political marginalization, and medically assisted dying converge in Chie Hayakawa's dystopian film *Plan 75* (2022). Set in a near-future Japan, the film envisions a state-organized euthanasia initiative in which individuals aged 75 and older are encouraged—through financial incentives—to voluntarily end their lives. Hayakawa constructs a speculative yet plausible future rooted in Japan's ongoing demographic challenges and its struggle to imagine a viable path forward amidst an aging population. The titular program, "Plan 75," targets all citizens above a certain age threshold, irrespective of health or ability, and presents death as a civic contribution. While it appears to offer participants agency, the program effectively reduces human life to an age-based statistic and reframes state neglect as personal empowerment. The film critiques the pervasive influence of neoliberal logic, portraying older adults as expendable, socially invisible, and economically burdensome. In doing so, it exposes how aging is increasingly managed through strategies of elimination – in this case, geronticide – rather than care, empathy, or systemic support. Drawing on cultural gerontology and critical film analysis, this paper interrogates how the film constructs narratives around aging, autonomy, and state control, revealing how mechanisms of exclusion are (re)produced through institutionalized responses to vulnerability. It explores how intersecting inequalities—particularly age, class, gender, and access to care—shape the lived experiences of aging populations, and how the privatization of dignity and death masks structural neglect and social abandonment. By situating *Plan 75* within broader debates on ageism, end-of-life ethics, and public health policy, this paper highlights the role of cultural representation in both reinforcing and contesting exclusionary practices. It further proposes cinema as a critical site for imagining alternative, compassionate frameworks for aging that resist reductionist and dehumanizing discourses. In doing so, the paper contributes to the conference's overarching goal of identifying and developing strategies for social change and inclusion in the face of pervasive inequalities.

Ulla Kriebnernegg is Full Professor of Cultural Aging and Care Studies and Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Age and Care (CIRAC) at the University of Graz, Austria, as well as Adjunct Professor at the Medical University of Graz. With a background in North American Studies, her research engages with critical Age Studies, Gender, and Health & Medical Humanities. She is the author of *Putting Age in its Place: Long-Term Residential Care in Contemporary Film and Fiction* (forthcoming, transcript) and co-editor of *Aging and Ecocriticism: Interdisciplinary Encounters* (Lexington, 2023). A founding member and former president of the European Network of Aging Studies (ENAS), she co-edits the Aging Studies book series. Kriebnernegg is Associate Editor at *The Gerontologist*, a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA), and serves on its Board of Directors. She has taught internationally and has received several teaching and research awards.

Panel 18: In/equalities in a Digital World

Chair: Nicole Haring (University of Graz)

Digital Divide 2.0: How 'Free' AI Tools Exacerbate - or Mitigate - Inequalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bojana Vukojević & Borislav Vukojević (University of Banja Luka)

The promise of generative AI is to democratise access to knowledge, yet that promise is conditional on users' digital competence. In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), this prerequisite is weak. Eurostat's Digital-Skills Indicator (DSI) shows that, in 2023, only 30% of the population possess at least basic digital skills (while EU-27: 57%) – the second lowest share in the Western Balkans. While 80.4% of citizens are using the internet daily, we can say that the problem is qualitative, not infrastructural. BiH records a 38.7 % rate of "computer illiteracy," reinforcing the skills gap. Analytically, the study first adopts DiMaggio and Hargittai's (2001) tripartite model of the digital divide—access, skills, and outcomes—thereby locating AI literacy squarely within the "second-level" and "third-level" divides. This framework is extended through Sen's and Kleine's capabilities approach, which conceptualises digital competence as an institutionally mediated freedom to broaden individuals' real-life choices. Eubanks (2018) and Noble (2019) provide a critical lens on datafied and algorithmic inequalities, warning that generative models may re-inscribe and intensify existing global asymmetries of power and knowledge. Methodology integrates two components: secondary analysis of Eurostat's DSI indicators disaggregated by socio-demographic variables and experimental workshops that aim to capture "learning velocity" through measuring the ratio of decreasing time for resolving tasks and increasing the quality of solutions. The expected outcome of the study is to show how BiH's second-level digital divide is morphing into a third-level divide and to propose targeted policy interventions such as micro-grants for AI trainings, a compulsory AI module in secondary schools, and local AI help-desks, offering an evidence-based roadmap for an inclusive digital transformation.

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Bojana Vukojević is a senior teaching assistant at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka, Department of Sociology. She earned her PhD there in 2024 with the dissertation "Cultural Participation of the Citizens of Republika Srpska: A Sociological Analysis of Cultural Needs, Habits and Tastes." Vukojević completed her BA in Sociology at the same faculty in 2012. She obtained an MA in Sociology from the University of Novi Sad in 2014 after defending the thesis "Interculturalism as a Response to the Static Nature of Multiculturalism." Her research focuses on cultural and religious sociology, media, and migration. She has presented at scientific conferences in Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia. She has contributed to numerous national and international projects, published peer-reviewed articles, authored one monograph, and co-authored two books.

Borislav Vukojević is a senior teaching assistant in the Journalism and Communication Studies programme at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka. In 2025 he earned a PhD at the same faculty with the dissertation "The Rise of Podcast Studies from a Communication Perspective: From Technology to the Reconceptualisation of New Media Forms." He obtained an MA in Communication Sciences there in 2015 and completed his BA in Journalism and Communication in 2013. Vukojević is the author of the book *Analysis of Responsibility in Journalism* (2016) and has published numerous scholarly and professional articles on communication studies, media literacy, political communication and new media. He has presented at scientific conferences in Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. His research interests include public opinion, new media, media literacy, media analysis and artificial intelligence.

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Leopoldine Schmidt Room
Universitätsstraße 15
Building B, Ground Floor

Situated Justice and Algorithmic Inequalities: A Socio-Technical Strategy for Inclusive Systems

Paola Panarese & Marta Grasso & Claudia Solinas (Sapienza University of Rome)

Despite profound sociocultural, economic, and technological transformations over the past thirty years, gender and ethnic inequalities persist, evolving into more subtle and less visible forms (van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal, 2019). As digital technologies have become central to everyday life, they have expanded access to information and opportunities, while reinforcing exclusion and revealing the ambivalent role of technology in both perpetuating and transforming inequalities (van Dijck, Poell, and De Waal, 2019; Zuboff, 2019; Noble, 2018). Despite growing recognition of bias and systemic distortions in algorithmic systems, much of the current debate remains technical, overlooking the social dynamics and structural entanglements between inequality and computational systems (Costanza-Chock, 2020). The PRIN PNRR IMAGES project – coordinated by Sapienza University of Rome in collaboration with the National Research Council (CNR) – explores how inclusivity and accessibility can inform design practices. Combining insights from a systematic scoping review (Page et al., 2021) and qualitative research, including interviews and focus groups with developers and users, the project critically addresses how algorithmic inequalities are reproduced, calling for alternative practices to confront these dynamics (Shrestha and Das, 2022). Findings highlight tensions, such as divergences between computational and social approaches to fairness, the persistence of the gender data gap, and the marginalization of intersectional perspectives. Based on an integrated analysis of literature and empirical data, this contribution proposes a socio-technical framework that addresses multiple forms of marginalization—including gender, ethnicity, class, disability, and age. This framework draws on participatory auditing, a situated conceptualization of fairness, and the slow technology paradigm (Wellner and Rothman, 2020) to promote more reflective and inclusive design practices. By critically engaging with the socio-technical reproduction of inequalities, this contribution offers actionable pathways for fostering greater inclusivity, equity, and justice within contemporary technological ecosystems.

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Digital Resistance or Market Co-optation? The Paradox of Body Positivity Activism in India

Kanki Hazarika & Akash Dewangan (University of Delhi)

The extravagant Ambani wedding in India in 2024, with its opulence and celebrity guests, overshadowed a disturbing trend: the body-shaming of young girls like Ziva (M. S Dhoni's daughter) and Aaradhya (daughter of Aishwarya Rai-Abhishek Bachchan). Trolls mocked their appearances, reflecting India's toxic beauty standards—slim, fair, and youthful—that even target children. This obsession, reinforced by capitalist market remains deeply ingrained in Indian psyche. Such an understanding of female beauty is prescribed by the societal norms that have been constructed and reinforced through various means. Promulgation of beauty standards by advertising and fashion industry, zero-figure phenomenon in the Bollywood reinforces this notion. Such reinforcement of the "ideal" body types is not only just a socio-cultural phenomenon, but it is also embedded in capitalist economy. The capitalist market fuels this obsession by aggressively organising beauty pageants, promoting weight loss products, fairness cream and other products. These industries thrive by perpetuating narrow beauty ideals, thereby making women insecure and turning that insecurity into revenue streams. Such a scenario compels us to interrogate resistance: how do counter-narratives emerge and resist the norms set by both society and capitalist market. To address this, this paper examines how social media facilitates alternate discourse on beauty norms in India. Recent years have witnessed emergence of counter- hegemonic body narratives on social media platforms. A growing movement of activists, and influencers are using platforms such as Instagram to push back against body-shaming—celebrating diverse bodies and redefining beauty on their own terms. Employing an intersectional lens, this qualitative study analyses four social media influencers - Sakshi Sindwani, Neha Parulkar, Tanvi Geetha Ravishankar and Nidhi Sunil and their agency in subverting conventional ideation, while also interrogating their paradoxical relationship with capitalist market. The paper argues that while their Instagram narratives challenge the dominant standards, they also co-opt the capitalist market mechanisms they seek to disrupt, leveraging social media platforms to redefine beauty while remaining embedded in the market-driven industry. This paper highlights the dual nature of digital resistance-its potential for emancipation as well as inherent limitations within a capitalist economy.

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