CFP: (Public) Space in Migration Research

Event organised by Crime & Society Research Group (CRiS -VUB) in collaboration with Brussels Interdisciplinary Research centre on Migration and Minorities (BIRMM – VUB) and Brussels Centre for Urban Studies (BCUS – VUB)

VUB Etterbeek Campus, 1PM-5:30PM, June 3rd 2024

Organisers: Mattias De Backer and Floris Liekens (Crime & Society Research Group – VUB) and Lena Imeraj (Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research – VUB)

Migration and mobility are pre-eminently spatial phenomena, as they consist by definition of a movement through physical space and the confrontation of this movement with borders and spatial demarcations. Without these spatial elements, many migration-related phenomena, concepts, classifications, and identities lose their meaning. This event seeks to explore the role of (public) space in migration research by bringing together scholars from different disciplines for an afternoon of discussion, reflection, and engagement.

We situate the event in the broader context of the 'spatial turn' in the social sciences, which involves a (renewed) attention to the role of place, space, and spatiality in social phenomena
and processes, the importance of which has been foregrounded by urban theorists such as Lefebvre (1991), Massey (2005), and Santos (2021). They argued that space is not merely an inert or neutral backdrop for human and non-human activities and practices, but rather, it actively shapes and constitutes these activities and practices. In essence, social life does not just happen in space; it is inherently intertwined with and defined by space itself.

In the field of migration studies, scholars engage with spaces via various sites of study, including arrival cities (Saunders, 2011) or neighbourhoods (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020), public spaces (Bhatti et al., 2009), everyday geopolitics (Benwell, 2016), semi-public spaces such as asylum- and reception centres (Griffiths, 2014), and soft arrival infrastructures (Boost & Oosterlynck, 2019) such as coffee bars or hair salons (De Backer et al., 2023). Others explore the tension between migration controls and individual or collective modes of reappropriation of (public) space, delving into topics such as the role of space in citizenship struggles (Maestri & Hughes, 2017) and negotiations of visibility (De Backer, 2022).

For the first part of the event, we invite papers reflecting on the importance of (public) spaces in the study of migration-related topics, with different disciplinary perspectives ranging from communications studies, criminology, (human) geography, history, law, linguistics, queer studies, urban studies, philosophy, political sciences, sociology and psychology. We invite submissions about, but not limited to:

- Belonging and place-attachment
- Place-identity and place-making
- Power, subjectivity, and space
- Spatial scale and scale(d) relations
- Territory and territoriality
- Spatial tactics/strategies
- Order and conflict in public space
- Everyday bordering practices
- Emotional and affective geographies of (in)security
- Mobilisation, resistance and space
- Slow violence of the everyday
- Mobility and immobility

In the second part of the event, everyone is invited to participate in the workshop organised by Annelys de Vet (ARIA and Sint Lucas School of Arts Antwerp) and Floris Liekens (VUB). Participants are requested to prepare a creative assignment for the workshop, the details of which will be provided later.
Applicants should submit a 250-word abstract, including a preliminary title, to Floris Liekens (floris.liekens@vub.be), Mattias De Backer (mattias.de.backer@vub.ac.be) and Lena Imeraj (lena.imeraj@vub.be) no later than 8 May 2024. Successful applicants will be notified soon afterwards.

We’re looking forward to meeting you at the event!

Best regards,

Floris, Mattias and Lena

References:


