

## **Title of workshop**

Using images in migration research: a mutual exchange between scholars and artists

## **Organizers**

Marco Martiniello, CEDEM, Liège

Wiebke Sievers, ISR, Vienna

Ricard Zapata-Barrero, GRITIM, Barcelona

## **Background**

We live in a world of images and sounds. We are all confronted directly in our daily life with lots of images and sounds produced, mediated and distributed through various channels such as internet, radio, television, cinema, newspapers, exhibitions, DVD, etc. Such images also have a major impact on the construction and representation of migration. It seems obvious that all the images dealing with migration have to be related with the attitudes of the general public towards migration and migrants. Remember the clusters of Albanians on a boat on their way to Italy on the front page of *Time Magazine* in 1991? It really struck the opinion and created a fear of invasion not only in Italy, but also elsewhere in Europe and in the world. More recently, images of the exodus provoked by the changes of regimes in the Arab world have fuelled similar fears. At the same time, the picture of a Syrian child dead on a Greek beach attracted compassion all over the planet.

There is a huge literature coming from many different disciplines, including communication and media studies, cultural studies and film studies, where images of migration are discussed from various perspectives. Communication and media studies explain and analyse the process of production, diffusion and reception of images and sounds and how they can affect our social behaviour and our attitudes in the field of migration, amongst many others. For example, Rodney Benson argues that the public debates on immigration have become increasingly focused on the dramatic, emotional dimensions as well as on issues related to security and public-order, both in France and in the United States. This does not only hold true for the media, but also for other social and political channels. Since most citizens rely in particular on the media to be informed, the terms of media debates certainly shape citizens' views on migration. At the same time, the images used in this process are often more multifaceted than implied in the context where they are used, as Stuart Hall has highlighted in his studies on the construction and de-construction of meaning in photos of Black immigrants in Britain. He showed not only how images were used to construct these immigrants as a problem, but also how a careful reading of these images reveals narratives not implied in these constructions, such as the immigrants' hopes and dreams (Hall 1984). Such counter-narratives are also intentionally created in documentaries and films dealing with migration. For instance, Andrea Segre's documentaries focusing on migration from Africa to Europe, such as *Mare chiuso/Closed Sea*, move beyond the well-known image of the overfilled boats floating in the Mediterranean Sea to tell the individual stories of the people taking these boats (Ardizoni 2013). In addition, films, such as Aki Kaurismäki's *Le Havre*, create Utopian visions of workers and policemen understanding the plight of refugees (Ceuterick 2014).

These manifold insights into how images are used to construct realities will serve as a starting point for a workshop that aims to bring together migration researchers from different disciplines in a fruitful exchange on research methods, results and dissemination focusing on images of migration in these processes. This exchange will involve three issues:

1) How can social sciences and cultural studies learn from each other concerning the use of images (photographs, films, videos, drawings) in the process of producing academic knowledge about migration, integration and ethnic relations?

2) How can social sciences and cultural studies learn from each other concerning the use of images in the dissemination of research results in order to increase their public impact?

3) How can both fields collaborate with artists to create new images of migration?

The workshop will include academic papers on images of migration (with a particular focus on refugee movements), an interdisciplinary exchange on communicating research results and a dialogue between academics and artists (filmmakers and photographers) focusing on how research and the arts can inspire each other in creating new images of migration.

## **Programme**

### ***Session 1: Academic papers on images of migration and communicating research results***

Chair: Wiebke Sievers, ISR, Vienna

Marco Martiniello, CEDEM, Liège: Towards a visual sociology of migration

Sabrina Axster, Rutgers University, New Jersey: How do we talk about refugees? Unpacking how visual images in comics help to reinforce popular myths about refugees

Leila Hadj Abdou and Karin Liebhart, University of Vienna: A tweeted refugee crisis: Visual framing of refugees on social media accounts

Martina Kamm, Dana Pedemonte, Anna Weber, Bülent Kaya, Face Migration, Zurich: Storytelling in the film “No child’s play. Consequences of war, flight and persecution on the second generation of refugees in Switzerland” (2016)

### ***Session 2: Dialogue between academics and artists***

Chair: Marco Martiniello, CEDEM, Liège

Artists participating in the discussion:

Giulio Piscitelli, photographer, Naples

Mohamed Mouaz, filmmaker, Vienna