ETMU 2026 Conference Booklet

Towards Good Relations in Mobile Futures: The Role of Trust for Migration and Belonging



5–6 November 2026
Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland

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Programme

Wednesday 4.11.2026

Time	Programme	Location
15:00–18:00	ETMU Doctoral Seminar 2026	Migration Institute of Finland, Hämeenkatu 13. Pre-registration required.

Thursday 5.11.2026

Time	Programme	Location
09:00–10:00	Registration	Arken Lobby
10:00–10:15	**Welcome words** Magdalena Kmak (Mobile Futures); Melinda Russial and Michelle Francett-Hermes (ETMU).	Armfelt (A102)
10:15–11:30	**Keynote 1** "Why would I come to a place that hates me for what I am" Black and Muslim Women Decolonising Trust in New Global Times. Emeritus Professor Heidi Safia Mirza; chair: Magdalena Kmak.	Armfelt (A102)
11:30–13:00	Lunch (at one's own expense)	
13:00–14:30	Parallel sessions 1	Refer to the session timetable
14:30–15:00	Coffee break: Meet the ETMU board	Arken Lobby
15:00–16:30	Parallel sessions 2	Refer to the session timetable
16:40–17:30	**Reception and book launch** Welcome by Sinikka Valtonen, City of Turku. Launch of Trust Dilemmas – Perspectives on Trust, Migration and Integration, edited by Magdalena Kmak, Eveliina Lyytinen and Liselott Sundbäck.	Arken Lobby
19:00	Conference dinner	Panimoravintola Koulu, Eerikinkatu 18. Advance registration required.

Friday 6.11.2026

Time	Programme	Location
08:30–09:00	ETMU Fall General Assembly	Armfelt (A102)
09:15–10:45	Parallel sessions 3	Refer to the session timetable
10:45–11:15	Coffee break	Arken Lobby
11:15–12:30	**Keynote 2** Diversity and Social Sustainability in Ageing Welfare States: Negotiations of Deservingness and Trust. Entrepreneur and Professor of Practice Shadia Rask; chair: Seija Jalagin.	Armfelt (A102)
12:30–13:45	Lunch (at one's own expense)	
13:45–14:15	ETMU Award presented by Mélodine Sommier	Armfelt (A102)
14:15–15:30	**Panel discussion** Trust, migration and integration in Finland. Panelists: Patricia Hynes, Outi Kähäri, Areen Nassar, Liisi Rwambiwa; moderator: Liselott Sundbäck.	Armfelt (A102)
15:30–15:45	Next conference announcement and final words	Armfelt (A102)

Keynote Speakers

Heidi Safia Mirza

Heidi Safia Mirza is Emeritus Professor of Equality Studies in Education at UCL Institute of Education. She is internationally known for pioneering intersectional research on race, gender and identity in education and for championing equality and rights for Black, Asian and Muslim women and young people through educational reform. A daughter of the Windrush generation from Trinidad, she has been honoured as one of the first and rare "Phenomenal Black Women Professors" in Britain. Her books include Race, Gender and Educational Desire, Black British Feminism and Young Female and Black. She co-edited Dismantling Race in Higher Education: Racism, Whiteness and Decolonising the Academy, and recently led the Institute for Fiscal Studies' Deaton Review of race and ethnic inequalities.

She is author of several best-selling books including Race, Gender and Educational Desire, Black British Feminism and Young Female and Black, which was voted in the top 40 most influential educational studies in Britain. A leading voice in the global Black feminist movement, she continues to inspire a new generation of scholars and activists.

Keynote 1: "Why would I come to a place that hates me for what I am" Black and Muslim Women Decolonising Trust in New Global Times

"Why would I come to a place that hates me for what I am?" captures the lived reality of many Black and Muslim women navigating the intersectionality of racism, migration, mobility, and belonging in new global times. Their encounters with states, borders, and everyday institutional publics are shaped by racialised suspicion, Islamophobic surveillance, and gendered moral regulation. In such contexts, trust is not a neutral expectation but a colonial demand in which institutions insist on being trusted while offering little structural trustworthiness in return.

Mistrust emerges from the opacity of migration systems, 'safeguarding' regimes, and counter-terrorism policies that cast Black and Muslim women and girls as either risky or deficient. Distrust, however, is their rational, historically grounded response to the violence of imperialism, the legacies of enslavement, genocide and Islamophobia. Yet, as my research shows, Black and Muslim women 'still rise' to form and cultivate alternative infrastructures of trust and citizenship among themselves.

Through their decolonial feminist world-making – grounded in diasporic solidarities and communities of hope, love, and care – they imagine familial futures beyond the hate, hostility and violence that defines and fuels our racialised world order.

Shadia Rask

Shadia Rask is an entrepreneur and Professor of Practice at Hanken School of Economics. Her core expertise is social sustainability, particularly diversity, equity and inclusion and immigration. She holds a PhD in public health, and her research has focused on inequities in the context of immigration. Before entrepreneurship, she worked in research and development for 13 years at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). She is a board member of UN Women Finland and Startup Refugees, and a columnist for YLE. She has received the ETMU Award and the State Award for Public Information for constructive, research-based contributions to public discussion on racism and inequality.

"It's not just about waiting a few more years. It's the prolonged uncertainty and nightmares. … When you are making decisions about citizenship and residency requirements, it's not just some written rule. It's about the best years of someone's life." These experiences reveal how the boundaries of belonging and solidarity are continuously imagined, contested, and renegotiated. But what is sustainable, and for whom?

Shadia is a board member of UN Women Finland and Startup Refugees. She is also a columnist for the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE. She is a nationally acclaimed speaker and has been awarded the ETMU Award and the State Award for Public Information.

Keynote 2: Diversity and Social Sustainability in Ageing Welfare States: Negotiations of Deservingness and Trust

Ageing societies such as Finland seek to attract foreign workers to offset the shrinking working-age population and strengthen the economic sustainability of the welfare state. At the same time, receiving countries struggle with uneven integration outcomes, growing opposition to immigration and increasing cultural diversity. A central paradox emerges: immigration is needed, but immigrants are not wanted.

This keynote draws together research findings and lived experiences to explore how deservingness and trust are negotiated. Through interviews with women from immigrant backgrounds, it illustrates the tensions and pressure generated by xenophobia and increasingly restrictive immigration policies. These experiences reveal how the boundaries of belonging and solidarity are continuously imagined, contested, and renegotiated. But what is sustainable, and for whom?

Panel Discussion and Panelists

Trust, migration and integration in Finland

Drawing on the newly published edited volume Trust Dilemmas – Perspectives on Trust, Migration and Integration, edited by Magdalena Kmak, Eveliina Lyytinen and Liselott Sundbäck, this panel explores the role of trust in migration and integration. The discussion addresses whether trust is necessary for inclusion and two-way integration, what alternative strategies emerge when trust is not possible or safe, and how society can foster trusting relationships while acknowledging the risks and vulnerabilities involved

Panelists

Patricia Hynes: Professor of Social Justice in the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, Sheffield Hallam University. She conducts applied research on forced migration in all its forms, particularly refugees, asylum seekers and people affected by human trafficking. A key theme in her published work is trust and/or mistrust in humanitarian contexts.

Outi Kähäri: Senior researcher in the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Eastern Finland. She holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of Turku and the title of docent in minority history at the University of Oulu. Her research has explored trust-related phenomena in everyday and institutional encounters in migration and integration, as well as the minority history of Ingrian Finns and memories among displaced families in Baltic and Nordic states. She currently works on intergenerational non-belonging, minority identities and mental health in Swedish-Finnish families.

Areen Nassar: Postdoctoral researcher at the Kokkola Consortium Chydenius, University of Jyväskylä. He holds a PhD in Social Sciences specialising in Social Work. His research focuses on capabilities, well-being and research ethics in forced-migration contexts, especially trust in research encounters and relationships between researchers and participants. His work also engages with victims of human trafficking, particularly young people who run away from institutional care.

Liisi Rwambiwa: Expert in institutional trust and social cohesion, with over 15 years of experience in social and health services and the third sector. She is Head of the Social Cohesion Unit at the Finnish Refugee Council, focusing on strengthening trust between communities and institutions. She has worked on trust-building, preventing polarisation and improving public-service accessibility for multilingual communities, and previously served as Executive Director of Hyvä Koti ry. Her current research examines fear of authorities and institutional trust among immigrant and multilingual families with children.

Moderator: Liselott Sundbäck: Postdoctoral researcher in social policy at Åbo Akademi University. Her research focuses on the welfare state and migration, especially institutional encounters and trust. Her current topics include migrant mothers and trust, linguistic vulnerabilities in child welfare, and bureaucratic tensions surrounding the choice of Swedish as a language of integration.

Sessions

Parallel Session 1

1.1 All quiet on the Eastern border? Bordering practices at the EU Eastern border

Session conveners	Magdalena Kmak magdalena.kmak@abo.fi, Witold Klaus witold.klaus@gmail.com
Time	13:00-14:30 and 15:00-16:30, Thursday, 5.11.2026, Parallel sessions 1 and 2
Place	Fiesta (B205), Arken

Session Description

This session focuses on the migratory paths, international protection and rule of law, migration control and bordering practices, as well as the interwoven responses to discourses, politics, perceptions, and imaginations of migration on the Eastern border, from different perspectives: history, law, the processes of bordering, and people.

In recent years, the eastern part of the European Union and its borders have attracted much more international attention than before. The year 2021 could be marked as a pivotal point in this regard, when the so-called Eastern Border Route became fully operational, and people on the move appeared in large numbers at the Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian borders, seeking to cross irregularly. This led to the militarisation of the area, affecting later also Estonia and Finland, and the introduction of physical barriers along the border. Yet, the developments at the border remain understudied and undertheorized.

The aim of this session is to respond to the renewed focus on the Eastern border and to understand and conceptualise the recent developments at that border that have so far gathered limited academic attention beyond the legal analysis of pushbacks. The session will focus on historical developments, bordering practices, and various forms of resistance, thereby revealing the processes of border enforcement on the EU's eastern flank. In particular, the session will critically analyse how the securitisation of external European Eastern borders has developed over the years, how changes to law and practice have been justified, and which actors have been involved in that process and how the access to protection and the rule of law has been affected in result.

This session critically examines the processes that led to the fortification of the Eastern border over the years. Special attention is paid to events after 2021, when those processes have accelerated. The focus includes:

- The progressive *securitisation* of the EU Eastern border as a result of the institutionalisation and Europeanization of migration and refugee policies in the EU. The session will show, in particular, the recent shift from understanding migration as a concern for social cohesion, internal security, and public order to characterising it as instrumentalised and constituting an external hybrid threat and, in consequence, an existential threat to the EU and its border states.
- The rapidly progressing *militarisation* of the border through the deployment of military forces, armed personnel, and militarised infrastructure to regulate migration flows, effectively merging border security and defence objectives. The session focuses on both material measures—such as fences, barriers, and

checkpoints—and operational strategies, including surveillance and military patrolling, characterised by the development of physical infrastructure.

- *Criminalisation* not only of migration and people on the move themselves, but also of solidarity and activism, as a result of militarisation and politicisation of migration.
- Different forms of *resistance* to these developments of securitisation, militarisation, and criminalisation, including legal, political, humanitarian (solidarity), and individual forms of resistance and coping.

The session will include selected chapters from the forthcoming edited collection, but will also be partially open for individual submissions. The session will be organised in English.

Accepted papers

Parallel Session 1 | 13:00-14:30 | 5.11.26

1. Law, Infrastructure, and the Materialities of Border Control: Reproducing the Logics of Externalisation at the EU's Eastern Borders: Kristina Wejstål (University of Gothenburg)

While border studies have convincingly demonstrated that contemporary bordering practices often extend beyond the Westphalian line of demarcation, recent geopolitical developments at the EU's eastern borders have been accompanied by a renewed investment in territorial borders and their physical infrastructures. This paper asks how recent material and legal reinforcements of border control, often framed as responses to the alleged instrumentalisation of migration by Russia and Belarus, reshape the significance of the territorial border under the EU border regime.

Drawing on legal geography and an understanding of law as always spatially grounded and materially present (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015), the paper conceptualises these developments as processes of re-territorialisation (Paasi, 2011) within an otherwise highly externalised EU border regime. Empirically, it analyses examples of reinforced territorial border control: the construction of walls and fences; the closure of border crossing points; the reinforcement of border zones; and laws on entry refusal established through the legal fiction of non-entry under the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum and in recent Finnish and Polish asylum legislation.

Combining legal doctrinal analysis, spatial theory, maps, and photographic documentation from the Eastern borders of Finland and Poland, the paper argues that these legal and physical infrastructures do not merely reinforce territorial borders. Rather, they contribute to a thickening of the border and establish a spatial distance – a physical and legal disconnection – between people seeking protection and the spaces in which fundamental rights would ordinarily become operative. Individuals arriving via the Eastern Border Route may therefore be physically present at the territorial border of an EU Member State, or even within its territory, while simultaneously remaining disconnected from the scope of fundamental rights protection. In this sense, re-territorialisation reproduces the logics of externalisation that have long characterised the EU border regime, and contributes to new forms of violence and exclusion.

2. Buffer Zones: Migration prevention in CEE countries and Finland from the Cold War to Europeanisation: Matti Välimäki (Åbo Akademi University)

This paper historicises Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Finnish regimes of preventing unauthorised and asylum migration from the Cold War to post-1990s Europeanisation. It situates the practices of the Soviet Union's western neighbours – CEE socialist states (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania) and Finland – within broader transformations of migration control, showing how Soviet buffer zones became the EU's eastern buffers in the 1990s.

Using Finnish archival materials and research on CEE/Finnish border regimes (1950s–1990s), the paper identifies the logics by which these buffers blocked unwanted crossings and transitioned from serving Soviet to EU priorities. Buffer zones embodied a layered non-entry regime combining border, visa and asylum policies, restrictive exit controls and cooperative enforcement, emerging at the intersection of Soviet security imperatives, satellite subordination/navigations and Finnish–Soviet bilateralism. Findings show shifts in European legal harmonisation, the rise of human-rights conditionality and changing target groups, alongside enduring continuities in pre-screening, cooperative enforcement and interagency coordination. Together, these dynamics reveal persistent adaptation to the stronger party's migration-prevention objectives (the USSR, later the EU), transforming the East–West border regime while sustaining its emphasis on curbing unauthorised and humanitarian crossings, shifting from exit prevention (Soviet era) to entry prevention (EU era).

3. Law and Crises Clashing at Borders: Restricting Access to Asylum at the Eastern Border of the European Union: Mehrnoosh Farzamfar (University of Turku) and Grażyna Baranowska

This chapter examines how crises affect access to asylum within the European Union (EU), focusing on the eastern borders, where the hostile activities of Belarus and Russia in the form of the so-called 'instrumentalisation of immigration' have intensified border controls. It shows that, despite Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights guaranteeing the right to seek asylum, the EU's Asylum *Acquis* — specifically, the Dublin Regulation, the Reception Conditions Directive, and the Asylum Procedures Directive — has largely failed to translate normative guarantees into reliable, uniform access in crises. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Belarus 2021–2022 border crisis, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have more than ever exposed the persistent systemic gaps in EU law on asylum. The EU's eastern Member States, which share land borders with Russia and Belarus, namely Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, have taken a securitised, border-centric response (such as pushbacks, rapid processing, and restricted remedies) that can undermine fundamental rights protections, including *non-refoulement* and access to legal aid. The chapter argues that these conditions render the right to seek asylum more intangible in practice, despite its formal enshrinement in EU law.

The chapter contends that reforms to EU asylum law must harmonise reception standards, guarantee timely, asylum-focused processing at first contact points, and reform the Dublin framework to alleviate frontline pressures without compromising rights. Stronger EU-wide safeguards — such as independent monitoring, accessible remedies, and crisis-resilient procedures — are essential. Revisions should align the EU *Acquis* with the 1951 Refugee Convention, reinforce safeguards against displacement and *refoulement*, and restore solidarity and fair responsibility-sharing among states. The analysis concludes that only a rights-centred, cohesive reform agenda can effectively translate the promises of fundamental rights into practical protection guarantees for asylum seekers, even in times of emergency.

Keywords: European Union (EU), Eastern borders of the EU, right to seek asylum in the EU, limitation or derogation of the right to seek asylum, instrumentalisation of migration

Parallel Session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Performance of Sovereignty or Management of Mobility? The Polish-German Border in Motion in the Shadow of the EU's Eastern Border "Crisis": Monika Szulecka (Institute of Law Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

The reintroduction of internal border controls within the Schengen area has transitioned from an exceptional safeguard to a "new normal", fundamentally altering the landscape of European mobility. This paper analyses the recent re-bordering of the Polish-German frontier, interpreting it through the lenses of populism and the historical arc of EU enlargement. Following Poland's 2007 entry into the Schengen Area, the Polish-German border transitioned from the EU's external frontier to an internal symbol of integration. However, the border never truly disappeared; instead, it was internalised through broad interpretations of Article 23 of the Schengen Borders Code. This "control in motion" – characterised by internal and mobile checks – turned the entire territory into a border zone long before the formal reinstatement of fixed checks.

The paper explores how the 2021 humanitarian crisis at the EU's Eastern border with Belarus served as the primary catalyst for the formal closure of the Polish-German border by Germany in 2023 and Poland in 2025. While official justifications cite migratory pressure, statistical evidence reveals that irregular crossings remain marginal compared to political rhetoric. This demonstrates that populist performance – rather than objective pressure – drives these closures. Populist actors exploit "emotional gold", specifically the politics of fear and anti-German sentiments, to frame migration as an existential threat to the "pure people" and national sovereignty. The emergence of civil border patrols or militias further illustrates the internalisation of historical traumas and the populist mobilisation of fear against a perceived "abdication" of the state and subordination to an untrustworthy neighbouring country or the EU. First, this fear concerned the EU's Eastern border, but more recently it "moved" to the border between Poland and Germany. The paper is based on empirical studies regarding migration and border control in Poland conducted between 2015 and 2019, supplemented by qualitative analysis of the Polish political discourse in the post-2021 context.

2. Instrumentalised migration as an emergency in Finnish law: Tuukka Brunila (University of Turku)

This paper explores how instrumentalised migration has become part of Finnish emergency law. Most notably, the Emergency Powers Act was amended in 2022 to provide powers necessary for dealing with cases of mass migration. I will analyse Finnish security documents and *travaux préparatoires* of relevant acts to understand this development. The paper begins by looking at the origin of instrumentalised migration as a security concept. As I will argue, a relevant shift takes place in late 2010s, when Finnish security documents begin to understand the causes mass migration as being politically motivated. Before this, mass migration was seen as being caused by external reasons, such as natural disasters or political turmoil. However, especially after the Belarus – Schengen border crisis, Finnish security officials begin to predict that aggressor states could redirect or even cause migration flows to exert political pressure on Finland. This shift is visible in what are seen as the main challenges in cases of mass migration. Before instrumentalised migration became a prominent security concept, the main issue seems to have been insufficient registration capacities. In contrast, with instrumentalised migration the issue becomes how to limit entry and, even, close down the border. As I will point out, this shift in understanding mass migration as a security issue is reflected by legislation. The *travaux préparatoires* of the Emergency Powers Act already consider mass migration as a potential emergency in 2008. However, at that point it was determined that no extraordinary powers were needed. In contrast, in 2022, the government proposal establishes that emergency powers to stop mass migration are necessary. My paper seeks to document this legislative development and understand, in general, how the securitisation of a phenomenon (re-)directs Finnish emergency law.

***3. Militarigration*—the "innovative" approach targeting people on the move at the Eastern European borders: Witold Klaus and Magdalena Kmak (Institute of Law Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences)**

The Eastern border of the European Union has emerged as a critical site of both migration management and regional security. Following a series of geopolitical crises—including the Belarusian instrumentalisation of migration in 2021 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022—EU member states bordering Russia and Belarus have implemented a range of measures to assert control over migration flows while reinforcing national and regional collective security. All of the above led to the rapidly progressing intertwining of migration management and militarisation at the EU's Eastern border, which we call "militarigration". The term refers to the deployment of military forces, armed personnel, and militarised infrastructure to regulate migration flows, effectively merging border security and defence objectives. It encompasses both material measures—such as fences, barriers, and checkpoints—and operational strategies, including surveillance, Frontex deployments, and military patrolling. The concept highlights how the militarisation of border controls transforms migration governance into a security-oriented, state-centric practice, in which the management of human mobility is inseparable from responding to existential threats to the nation. We argue that militarigration is the next step in the long-time observed securitisation of both migration and people on the move. The paper aims to present the concept of militarigration and how it differs from securitisation. The example will be the EU Eastern Border with a special focus on Poland.

There is a rapidly progressing intertwining of migration management and militarisation at the EU's Eastern border, which we call "militarigration". Given current developments, especially in Poland, we aim to present this concept and outline how it differs from securitisation.

1.2 Connecting Migration Researchers Across SRC Programmes

Session convener	Ville-Pekka Sorsa, programme director, SKILLS ville-pekka.sorsa@helsinki.fi
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Aura ARK-G107, Arken

Session description

The SRC Migration Researchers Meetup brings together researchers working on migration-related issues in ongoing Strategic Research Council (SRC)-funded projects (launched in 2021 or later). The aim is to strengthen connections across programmes, facilitate collaboration, and support the societal impact of SRC-funded research.The meetup will take place as a session within the ETMU 2026 Conference in Turku. Participation in this session is reserved for researchers affiliated with SRC-funded projects.

While conference participation is encouraged, it is also possible to attend the meetup without registering for the full conference. Researchers interested in participating are invited to indicate their preliminary interest via the form linked below. Further information, including the session format and practical arrangements, will be shared directly with registered participants.

1.3 In Her Shoes: A Guided Exploration of Trust in Everyday Encounters of Migrant Mothers A Moment to Step in, Reflect, and Understand

Session conveners	Lily Chan, lily@pathsintersect.com, Bouchra Amchou, amchoubouchra@yahoo.fr
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Smedjan (M227), Arken

Session Description

Between languages, expectations, and systems, where does trust begin or quietly break?

We explore how trust and mistrust are felt and formed in the everyday lives of migrant mothers navigating Finnish society. Rather than approaching trust as something abstract, we stay close to real moments: small interactions, misunderstandings, and the subtle shifts that build connection or create distance.

As participants in the Mobile Futures co-research project with Liselott Sundbäck, we center the voices and experiences of migrant mothers engaging with healthcare, safety systems, and community life.

The session begins with a short introduction from two migrant mothers who participated as co-researchers and also co-wrote a policy paper and an article, currently in peer review, about their work and experience. Through personal reflections and shared research, they offer a window into the emotional and practical realities of navigating unfamiliar systems as migrant mothers.

The core of the workshop is a guided, low-pressure scenario-based exercise.

Participants will work in pairs or small groups and be gently invited to step into different perspectives. The intention is not to perform, but to create space to pause, notice, and reflect.

After the exercise, we reflect together:

- What did you notice in your body?
- Did you feel trust? When or why not? What made trust easier or harder?
- What assumptions did you notice yourself making, spoken or unspoken?
- What made you feel seen, heard, or understood? What would have helped you feel more so?

Participants will explore an encounter where communication is unclear and language is a barrier.

This workshop invites participants into a guided, low-pressure experience to explore trust through lived situations of migrant mothers. No acting or performance is required, only openness to reflection and perspective-taking.

1.4 Language as a Proxy in Inclusion and Exclusion: Rethinking Language Learning and Motivation

Session Conveners	Sari Pöyhönen sari.h.poyhonen@jyu.fi (chair) Linda Bäckman linda.backman@migrationinstitute.fi Hilde Hjertager hilde.b.lund@uib.no
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Simone Weil (M134), Arken

Session description

Language has long played a central part in drawing borders: European nation-states were built around the idea of 'one language, one nation', centring the dominance of standard languages in opposition to other varieties. Language is likewise given a crucial position in recent policies of immigration and integration through for example the emphasis on language as 'key to society' in integration training, language requirements for many positions in the labour market, as well as access and belonging to the state through citizenship. In the case of Finland, the government has recently introduced language requirements also for permanent residency, and language skills of internationally recruited nurses have been widely debated in politics and the media.

Language thus acts as a gatekeeper for in/exclusion in society, and speaking an official, national language is portrayed as a sign of loyalty towards the state and a proof of 'integration' and trustworthiness. In this, language practices become a site in which assumptions about belonging, competence and cultural alignment are imposed. This is also relevant in institutional encounters, where assessment, documentation and language requirements may shape access, participation and belonging.

Research in language studies has, however, for several decades shown how language ideologies are always about more than language. In many state policies, language is used as a proxy for race, ethnicity, religion or other categories that cannot legally act as basis for differentiation. In this, certain populations and speakers are surveilled and marked more than others, maintaining colonial power asymmetries. 'Language barriers' thereby also reflect embedded power hierarchies and structures to in/exclude.

Monolingual language ideologies are deeply embedded in conceptions of identity and belonging, as well as in how the host society interprets its existing linguistic diversity in relation to the linguistic integration of newcomers. At the same time, research shows that an individual's language use reflects their linguistic citizenship: their agency, participation, and opportunities to exercise control over their linguistic resources and to construct new identities and communities.

This panel aims to bring together scholars working at the intersection of language and migration studies to explore different ways in which language acts as a means for social inclusion/exclusion, through topics concerning for example:

- Language learning and teaching
- Language requirements and testing
- Language in institutional encounters
- Language ideologies
- Linguistic citizenship and activism

Accepted Papers

1. Why am I learning Finnish? Highly educated adult immigrants' Finnish language learning as identity negotiations: Paulina Chavez Rodriguez (University of Turku)

This research explores immigrant language learning as identity negotiations in the context of integration training. Identity is defined as a socially constituted understanding of the self in relation to others which is constructed and negotiated across time and space (Norton, 2013). Language plays an essential and contradictory role in identity negotiation, particularly for immigrants, because it serves simultaneously as community gatekeeper and source of power and capital. More specifically, this research investigates how highly educated adult immigrants in Finland negotiate their context situated identities, their identities as capital and their identities as belonging through learning the Finnish language. The data consists of longitudinal interviews with seven highly educated adult immigrants learning Finnish as part of their integration path between the years 2022 and 2023. Using narrative methodologies as research tools and as spaces for identity negotiation, this research aims to answer: how do highly educated adult immigrants negotiate their identities in context situated language learning and practice? how do they negotiate the value of their identities as capital in relation to language learning? how do they negotiate participating and membership in target language communities? Published and preliminary results demonstrate that participants negotiate conflicting privileged and subjective identities at different stages of their learning. Context situated negotiations are more prevalent in narratives about the beginning of learning, while identities as capital and as belonging to communities of practice are negotiated across longer timeframes and even through imagined futures. These findings highlight the lifelong commitment participants make when learning the Finnish language and how these processes lead them to self-empowerment, critique of subjectifying integration processes, but also to the perpetuation of marginalising discourses related to immigrants as others.

2. Linguistic repertoires, Icelandic and belonging: migrants' discussions and language ideologies: Sofiya Zahova (Vigdís International Centre, University of Iceland)

This paper examines how long-term migrants in Iceland encounter, reproduce and question language ideologies that position Icelandic language knowledge as a measure of integration, participation and belonging. It draws on research conducted as part of the NordPlus project Multilingualism and Inclusion: Language Learning and Migrants in the Nordic Region, which works with on Bulgarian, Italian, Romanian and Serbian-speaking communities that remain underrepresented in research on migration and language learning in Iceland.

The discussed study approaches language learning as a social practice and draws on perspectives on linguistic repertoires, multilingualism as a resource, linguistic citizenship and language ideologies. It asks how participants understand the place of Icelandic in their own trajectories and how their accounts relate to public discourses in Iceland that associate knowledge of Icelandic with participation and integration. Particular attention is paid to the ways participants themselves invoke ideas of individual effort, relationships and responsibility for language learning, use and development of Icelandic.

The material was generated through community-based ethnographic research and citizen science methods. Adult participants took part in moderated group discussions organised through community visits to the Living Language Lab, the interactive exhibition of the Vigdís International Centre for Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding. The exhibition functioned as a discussion-elicitation environment, prompting participants to reflect on their linguistic

biographies, language learning, multilingual practices, and language endangerment. Discussions were conducted in participants' first languages and moderated in collaboration with community members.

The presentation and discussion of preliminary findings is centred on migrant engagement with language ideologies not simply in terms of acceptance or resistance, but as a process of reproducing, negotiating and questioning ideas about language, participation and belonging.

3. Speaking "Finn": Language, Community-Building, and Belonging in Northern Ontario Finnish Diaspora: Karis Shearer (The University of British Columbia; Visiting Research Fellow, Migration Institute of Finland)

This autoethnographic paper draws on my experience as a fourth-generation Finnish-Canadian participating in online Finnish languages classes offered by the Sudbury Finn School (SFS) seeking to reclaim my heritage language. I approach Finnish, or "Finn" as it is often called in Northern Ontario, not simply as a linguistic skill to be acquired, but as a site through which questions of identity, ancestry, and belonging are negotiated. What does it mean to reclaim a language when linguistic transmission has been interrupted across generations? And can language learning itself constitute a form of diasporic belonging?

The Sudbury Finn School was established in 1971 with the aim of ensuring that "the Finnish tongue would live on in the Sudbury area," alongside cultural institutions developed by Finnish immigrants following the First and Second World Wars. As vice-chair Norma Rautiainen explains, immigrant communities established halls, churches, businesses, bakeries, and spaces for sport and recreation, but "a small group of people decided we should have something to preserve the Finnish language as well." More than fifty years later, the school offers adult classes through zoom, bringing together learners whose relationships to Finnish are often several generations removed from migration. This history makes the school a productive site for examining how diasporic language is preserved, adapted, and reclaimed.

Drawing on Stuart Hall's understanding of identity as continually produced and Homi Bhabha's work on cultural hybridity, I consider belonging as relational rather than inherited. I bring these perspectives into conversation with Suresh Canagarajah's scholarship on heritage-language practices in diaspora and consider the SFS's publicly available mandate and relationship to Finnish state funding, asking how institutions participate in defining linguistic and cultural membership and how learning a heritage language may create new forms of diasporic belonging.

4. Everything will not be fine: Towards distrusting the "language as key to society" discourse: Johanna Ennser-Kananen (University of Jyväskylä)

This presentation is inspired by a "Daniel", an East African-origin student in a Finnish Adult Basic Education (ABE) center, who told me in an interview: "I'll study more Finnish, then everything will be fine". Triggered by this statement and the larger school-wide/societal discourse of overextended hopes into Finnish proficiency that it echoes, I discuss the (perceived/imposed) responsibility of students to learn and of teachers to teach, first and foremost, Finnish language.

For this discussion, I draw on data from a 5-year ethnographic study (2020-2025, Research Council of Finland), which examined epistemic and linguistic resources, ideologies, and negotiations in an adult basic education (ABE) center. The school served adult learners with forced migration background, most of whom resettled to Finland from West Asian and African countries. We, a team of 2-5 researchers, worked with 55 students and 12 teachers and gathered data from about 120 hours of participant observations, 10 unstructured and 35 semi-structured interviews, 88 hours of classroom recordings, and 12 hours of teacher workshops. Drawing on decolonial work (e.g., Cusicanqui, 2012; Dotson,

2014; Mitova, 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, 2021), we analyzed and theorized our data in several different ways, mostly leaning on thematic, moment, and discourse analysis.

For examining and problematizing (or developing distrust towards) the "(Finnish) language as key to (Finnish) society" discourse, I share data from classroom recordings and interviews that document students' desire for Finnish language skills, an exaggerated hope in dominant language proficiency, and the Finnish learning agenda seeping into many areas of schooling, including break times and subjects other than Finnish. I also consider systemic color- and pain-evasiveness (Author & Co-Author, 2026; Author, 2024) and a narrow understanding of language teaching as the backdrop for my argument. Finally, I discuss the opportunities and pitfalls of multilingual and language aware pedagogies, particularly the mantra proclaiming that "every teacher is a language teacher" and their problematic origin in or appropriation by neonationalist/assimilationist ideologies. I explain why multilingual and language aware approaches do not suffice if the goal is educational, epistemic, and social justice and end with a vision for epistemically and linguistically (more) just education.

1.5 Language as a Proxy in Inclusion and Exclusion: Language in Bordering Practices

Session Convener	Linda Bäckman linda.backman@migrationinstitute.fi (chair) Sari Pöyhönen sari.h.poyhonen@jyu.fi Hilde Hjertager hilde.b.lund@uib.no
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Nikander (D110), Arken

Session Description

Language has long played a central part in drawing borders: European nation-states were built around the idea of 'one language, one nation', centring the dominance of standard languages in opposition to other varieties. Language is likewise given a crucial position in recent policies of immigration and integration through for example the emphasis on language as 'key to society' in integration training, language requirements for many positions in the labour market, as well as access and belonging to the state through citizenship. In the case of Finland, the government has recently introduced language requirements also for permanent residency, and language skills of internationally recruited nurses have been widely debated in politics and the media.

Language thus acts as a gatekeeper for in/exclusion in society, and speaking an official, national language is portrayed as a sign of loyalty towards the state and a proof of 'integration' and trustworthiness. In this, language practices become a site in which assumptions about belonging, competence and cultural alignment are imposed. This is also relevant in institutional encounters, where assessment, documentation and language requirements may shape access, participation and belonging.

Research in language studies has, however, for several decades shown how language ideologies are always about more than language. In many state policies, language is used as a proxy for race, ethnicity, religion or other categories that cannot legally act as basis for differentiation. In this, certain populations and speakers are surveilled

and marked more than others, maintaining colonial power asymmetries. 'Language barriers' thereby also reflect embedded power hierarchies and structures to in/exclude.

Monolingual language ideologies are deeply embedded in conceptions of identity and belonging, as well as in how the host society interprets its existing linguistic diversity in relation to the linguistic integration of newcomers. At the same time, research shows that an individual's language use reflects their linguistic citizenship: their agency, participation, and opportunities to exercise control over their linguistic resources and to construct new identities and communities.

This panel aims to bring together scholars working at the intersection of language and migration studies to explore different ways in which language acts as a means for social inclusion/exclusion, through topics concerning for example:

- Language learning and teaching
- Language requirements and testing
- Language in institutional encounters
- Language ideologies
- Linguistic citizenship and activism

Accepted Papers

1. Migrants, language proficiency requirements, and social justice: Preparing for a high-stakes language test in Finland: Lotta Leinamo (University of Jyväskylä)

As language proficiency requirements for migrants are tightening across Europe and high-stakes language testing is becoming more common (Bocker & Strik, 2011; Rocca et al., 2020), research on their impact on individuals and societies is becoming increasingly relevant. These policies are often justified with their assumed positive effects on migrant integration and inclusion, although empirical evidence supporting them remains limited and some research even suggests that they may be detrimental to migrants' well-being and language learning (Carlsen et al., 2026).

Finland has also seen a tightening of language proficiency requirements and a rise in the number of migrants who take a test to obtain a certificate of their proficiency in one of the national languages (Hirvelä, 2024). In my doctoral dissertation, I explore how adult migrants in Finland perceive the requirements and navigate the process of preparing for and taking a high-stakes language test. Drawing on questionnaire data and critical ethnography with two groups preparing for a high-stakes language test, one in Finnish and one in Swedish, I look into how test-takers negotiate themes of validity, fairness, and justice, express solidarity, and build resistance.

In my presentation, I focus on my first article that explores the ways in which the process of preparing for the test makes visible and reproduces issues of social justice (Carlsen & Rocca, 2022) related to language proficiency requirements and high stakes testing. The findings highlight the complex and individualized nature of the process and its consequences, implying that taking and passing the test does not automatically lead to greater belonging, participation, or inclusion. Furthermore, the study suggests that high-stakes tests used for the purposes of language proficiency requirements may risk reproducing existing inequalities, highlighting the need for a deeper consideration of migrant perspectives in policymaking.

2. Raciolinguistic borders: Deportable subjects, language requirements and the neoliberal education system in Sweden: Sofi Jansson-Keshavarz (CMIR, Stockholm School of Economics)

This article examines how language requirements became mechanisms of racialization and exclusion in Swedish migration governance through the Upper Secondary School Act (2018 2025). The Act offered around 8,000 youths – primarily Afghanistani boys – facing deportation a conditional route to permanent residency via upper-secondary education and employment. Although the law did not formally require language proficiency, its implementation shows how Sweden's neoliberal education system made language a de facto criterion for residency. Framed within broader European trends of using language as border control, the article links contemporary citizenship regimes to colonial practices of racialized language hierarchies. Drawing on 21 interviews with teachers, study counsellors, principals, social workers, NGO staff, and legal advisers, it demonstrates how "raciolinguistic borders" were locally enacted, with youths' prospects varying significantly across municipalities.

Keywords: local borders, migration control, racialization, racial borders, refugee youth

3. Border Struggles in Language and Citizenship Testing in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland: Nina Carlsson (Migration Institute of Finland & Stockholm School of Economics)

Borders increasingly extend beyond territorial boundaries into everyday institutions and governance practices. Among less contested forms of bordering are high-stakes language and civic knowledge tests that regulate access to citizenship, residence, education, and employment. Drawing on the concept of *border struggles* (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013), this article examines how test takers respond to, negotiate, and strategize around citizenship-related high-stakes tests, making visible the labor behind these broadly uncontested testing practices.

The article compares Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, three Nordic countries with different citizenship-testing regimes and policy-change trajectories. Denmark has both language and civic knowledge tests for naturalization; Finland requires a language test and is developing a civic knowledge test; and Sweden has only recently introduced civic knowledge and language requirements. Together, these cases enable comparison across established, emerging, and changing testing regimes. The article draws on interviews with 74 people with experience in test preparation, test taking, or test implementation in the three countries, complemented by participant observation, policy analysis, and media analysis.

The article discusses six border struggle strategies used by test takers: adapting to underlying ideologies; strategic instrumentalization; mobility around test locations; switching between tests; 'cheating'; and silence. By bringing citizenship testing into conversation with the literature on border struggles, the article shifts attention from the restrictive effects of high-stakes tests to the agency of those subjected to them, and what that agency itself reveals about tests as governance tools.

1.6 Negotiating Trust: Immigrants' Relationships with News and Media

Session conveners	Lotta Kokkonen lotta.o.kokkonen@jyu.fi & Ilkhom Khalimzoda ilkhom.i.khalimzoda@jyu.fi
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Saussure (M128), Arken

Session Description

Media shape how we understand events locally and globally, construct social realities, imagine futures, and influence public opinion. They have also transformed the dynamics of migration. As Madianou and Miller (2012) propose in their theory of Polymedia, information and communication technologies (ICTs) in general have contributed to the transformation of the entire migration experience. Whereas once it took weeks or months – or years! – for messages to reach the previous home(s) of those who migrate, now it is possible to tap into an endless newsfeed from almost anywhere in the world and keep in contact with networks that are geographically dispersed. The choices between the different media sources, languages and social realities can lead to various arguable repercussions such as limited social engagement (ibid.), and/or the possibility to live a life both 'here' and 'there' in a kind of 'bifocal' orientation (Vertovec, 2004).

Research also consistently shows that media shape public attitudes toward immigrants. For instance, exposure to successful immigrant role models can influence perceptions and attitudes toward immigration (Unan, 2025). In Scandinavia, among other places, immigration-critical alternative media that mimic mainstream news formats have become a growing concern. These outlets employ journalistic conventions to advance a shared ideological message: that increased immigration has made Scandinavian societies unsafe and that political elites and the justice system are responsible for this so-called crisis (Nygaard, 2019). More broadly, heightened media attention to immigration polarizes attitudes by activating preexisting prejudices, rather than through persuasive effects of biased news consumption (Schneider, Strawczynski & Valette, 2025).

But what about the attitudes, experiences and expectations of the immigrants? Siitonen et al. (2026) have illustrated that since moving to Finland some immigrant families participating to their study reported to have experienced a push towards a certain type of media, often because it is considered as 'reliable' by the authorities within the environment. These recommendations were said to be coming for example from organisers and/or teachers at the integration training, for example. Yet, being able to critically assess the reliability of for example the news in Finnish was not always possible due to limitations in the Finnish language competence. Thus, many of the participants would rely on their friends and social circles for reliable news. This kind of 'curating' of the relevant content was discussed in those families especially where both parents had another L1 than Finnish. (Siitonen et al., 2026).

This session examines the fragmented nature of media use among transnational individuals, families, and communities. We aim to explore which media sources are considered trustworthy and why, as well as the kinds of realities media both reflect and construct for those who have relocated geographically. The democratic authority of news media rests on a basic premise of delegated trust: citizens rely on media to provide relevant and accurate information. In a context of declining trust, growing polarization, and an expanding media landscape, this session also considers how immigrants relate to the media when that trust is strained or breaks down.

Accepted Papers

1. Contradictions and tensions in immigrant families' negotiations on their media use in Finland: Lotta Kokkonen (University of Jyväskylä) & Ilkhom Khalimzoda (University of Jyväskylä)

In this presentation we will introduce our study investigating media practices within immigrant families in Finland, focusing on households with teenage children where at least one parent relocated to Finland in adulthood. In contemporary societies, media functions as a key facilitator of connectivity, identity, and belonging, and for immigrant families it plays a dual role in sustaining transnational ties while supporting integration into local contexts. Drawing on 19 focus group interviews, the research explores how multilingual and global media landscapes shape everyday family life, highlighting both opportunities for cohesion and sources of tension. Our analysis reveals that participating families seem to negotiate on balancing heritage preservation, safety concerns, and local expectations. Family members also negotiate meanings and practices of autonomy and engaging with transnational media trends. The study contributes to understanding how immigrant families navigate bifocality—the simultaneous engagement with local and distant realities—and how these negotiations take place in everyday interactions in these families.

2. Migrants on TikTok: Economy of Trust and Affective Politics: Nadezhda Vasileva (Tampere University)

This paper examines how migrants become media sources themselves and share their knowledge of immigration and life in Finland through content creation on TikTok. TikTok is a short-video platform that relies heavily on individualized algorithmic content moderation, creating unique viewing experiences based on the users' watching behaviors, interactions, and preferences. For mobile subjects, who move to Finland mainly to work and study – TikTok is a tool to learn about and relate to their new surroundings, local people, Finnishness, and on the other hand, to make their presence in Finland visible to others. Drawing on ethnographic data – semi-structured interviews with content creators, aged 18-35, who moved to Finland mostly within the last 5 years, observations on TikTok and multimodal analysis of selected videos, this paper reflects on how migrants get engaged in the economy of trust on TikTok. Negotiation and construction of trust on TikTok are considered to be at least two-directional – 1) towards developing a trustworthy online persona or so-called authenticity of content creators (trust in the content creator), 2) towards mitigating possible harm arising from the digital visibility (vulnerability) of content creators through control over their content and self-disclosure (distrust of the audience, algorithms). Relying on digital migration studies (Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2025), informed by decolonial perspective, the paper focuses on the ways migrants negotiate their belonging to Finland and navigate the affective regimes, manufactured and reinforced by TikTok. This paper draws on the ongoing research project "TikTok (Anti) Democracies: Self-making, Skepticism, and Political Expression among Young People", supported by Kone Foundation.

3. From Journalism to Integration: How Migrant Media Contributes to Integration Through Everyday News – The Case of HaberFin: Tarkan Tekten (HaberFin)

Integration is often discussed in terms of employment, language learning, education and participation in society. However, migrants also need continuous access to reliable information about the society in which they live. This paper examines how migrant media can contribute to integration through its everyday journalistic activities, using HaberFin, a Turkish-language online newspaper in Finland, as a case study. HaberFin's primary purpose is journalism: reporting news and current affairs from Finland, Turkey and the wider world. Since its establishment, the newspaper has produced more than 4,000 Turkish-language news reports, analyses and commentaries about Finland, covering politics, migration, legislation, citizenship, residence permits, education, healthcare, the economy, security and social issues. Integration is not its primary mission. Nevertheless, its everyday reporting creates an important connection between Turkish-speaking migrants and Finnish society. The paper asks how providing regular news in migrants' own language can contribute to their understanding of Finnish institutions, public debates and social life, and consequently support their integration. The study uses HaberFin as a qualitative case study and analyses its journalistic output and the subjects it covers. Particular attention is given to reporting that explains changes in legislation, public policies, elections, public services and other issues directly affecting migrants' everyday lives. The paper argues that journalism itself can have an integrative function. By informing migrants about what is happening in the society around them, migrant media can reduce information gaps, increase understanding of institutions and enable migrants to follow and participate in public discussion. In this sense, integration is not necessarily a separate activity added to journalism; it can be a natural outcome of being informed and connected to the society in which one lives. The HaberFin case demonstrates how migrant media can simultaneously fulfil its primary role as journalism and contribute to information access. institutional understanding, trust, participation and belonging.

Keywords: Migrant media, journalism, integration, Finland, trust, belonging, information access, HaberFin

1.7 Research as co-creation – Songing workshop

Session conveners	Iida Kauhanen, University of Oulu Iida.Kauhanen@oulu.fi Michelle Francett-Hermes, University of Oulu Melinda Russial, University of Oulu
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Armfelt, Arken

Session Description

It is typical that different feminist methodologies recognize that research can be messy, creative, unpredictable and unstable (e.g. Cairns 2013). In this workshop, we are interested in exploring what this can mean and what happens when we break through common barriers of academic performance to focus more on what can be created when we open ourselves to each other by giving space for listening and sharing (Gibbs 2010; Schultz 2018) – how to affect and how to be affected (Brown & Tucker 2010).

Drawing on Indigenous, Black feminist and decolonial literature, this workshop invites you to explore the meaning of co-creation in academia. We invite you to come to this workshop with your ponderings and previous theoretical understandings which we will weave into a format that aims to expand our minds towards creative and collective ways of knowing. The discussion will take form as a song workshop, utilizing a method called songing (lauluttaminen), created by Soiva Siili's children's music band. With the songing -method, we will write song lyrics and compose a song together. No musical skills are required for you to be able to participate fully in this workshop. You may bring a small instrument with you, if you wish, but this is not required. The song created during this workshop will be performed during the conference dinner. You may participate in the performance if you wish, but it is not mandatory. No paper presentations need to be submitted, in this workshop we will co-create a presentation.

You will be able to participate in this workshop in any language you wish, however, the instructions will be given in English/Finnish/Swedish depending on the participants' desire.

1.8 Trust and belonging in everyday relationships between people with different backgrounds

Session conveners	Ella Heimonen ella.heimonen@uef.fi Eerika Finell eerika.finell@uef.fi
Time	13:00-14:30 and 15:00-16:30, Thursday, 5.11.2026, Parallel sessions 1 and 2
Place	Kramer (M220), Arken

Session Description

Positive encounters in everyday life can be important in answering one's need for belonging, as these encounters can facilitate building sustaining and rewarding social relationships. As societies become more diverse, the importance of forming such relationships with individuals who do not share one's background (e.g. spoken language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) increases. However, individuals may avoid such encounters due to many reasons, including feelings of fear or anxiety. Positive encounters between people with different backgrounds in everyday life could increase trust as well as strengthen individuals' sense of belonging in their everyday communities. Such encounters may also lead to developing more enduring relationships with people from different backgrounds, which can have a large impact on individual's health and well-being and society at large.

This session explores trust and belonging in mundane relationships between people with different backgrounds. This includes questions about how trust and belonging shape these relationships as well as how individuals experience trust and belonging in their everyday relationships. Such relationships may include close relationships (e.g., friends, family, intimate partners), neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances, as well as more distal relationships, such as those formed in the third sector (e.g., NGOs, associations), in institutional contexts (e.g., schools or kindergarten) or on digital platforms.

Relevant questions may include, for example: what material, social or psychological elements hinder trust and belonging in relationships between people with different backgrounds? Which elements, in turn, can support them? How do individuals experience their everyday relationships of such nature; how are trust and belonging connected to these experiences? How do individuals deal with and make sense of mis- or distrust in their everyday relationships?

How do close and rewarding relationships between people with different backgrounds develop? Whether and how may feelings of dis- or mistrust prevent one from forming such relationships? How do relationships between people with different backgrounds in everyday life, positive or negative, shape individuals' sense of belonging and trust in society?

We invite presentations that explore these or related themes in everyday relationships between people with different backgrounds from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and methodological approaches.

Accepted Papers

Parallel Session 1 | 13:00-14:30 | 5.11.26

1. Emerging "we-ness" in developing friendships between Finnish and foreign-background mothers: Ella Heimonen (University of Eastern Finland), Eerika Finell (University of Eastern Finland), Clifford Stevenson (Nottingham Trent University; Tohoku University), Paula Paajanen (University of Eastern Finland), Kevin Durrheim (University of Johannesburg)

It is well known that identifying with a superordinate category can facilitate friendship between people with different backgrounds by highlighting their similarities. However, rewarding friendships may require a subjective sense of belonging to the common category. In this qualitative study, we investigate how an emerging friendship identity, "we-ness", unfolds over time in accounts of Finnish and immigrant-background befriending dyads where both members are mothers. We understand we-ness to consist of (a) a sense of trust and closeness with the partner, (b) perceived similarity and (c) the assumption that one's partner shares a similar identification with the relationship as oneself. The data consists of individual interviews with 12 intergroup mother dyads conducted individually three times over a six month period after first meeting each other (N = 72 interviews). Based on narrative analysis with a longitudinal dyadic approach, we constructed four longitudinal dyadic composite narratives: 1) becoming life-long friends; 2) gradually developing a bond as mothers; 3) uniting motherhood, divisive group differences; and 4) differing perspectives on the importance of motherhood. In the first two narratives, the we-ness was shared within the dyad and complementary with motherhood, demonstrating deep feelings of closeness and trust toward the partner and perceptions of a shared worldview (Type 1), or a fairly close bond and some doubts regarding the friendship's future (Type 2). In the latter two narratives the we-ness was not shared within the dyad, reflecting tensions or incompatibility between we-ness and differing backgrounds of the participants (Type 3) or motherhood (Type 4). The results show that sharing a common category is not always enough to facilitate shared we-ness in friendships between people with differing backgrounds.

Keywords: befriending, friendship, we-ness, longitudinal dyadic analysis, narrative

2. Non-communication of racism in international students' career counseling: Emma Nortio & Miira Niska (University of Helsinki)

International students are often discussed as ideal immigrants who are expected to contribute to Finnish society as highly educated experts after graduation. At the same time, they face difficulties in finding employment that matches their expertise. As previous research has shown the presence of racism in the Finnish labor market, international students' employment difficulties can be assumed to partly result from discrimination.

Career counseling is often presented as a way to improve international students' knowledge of the labor market and their position within it. In this study, we examine the interactional dynamics of career counseling sessions involving international students. More specifically, we focus on how racism in the Finnish labor market is (not) communicated in these institutional encounters. The data consist of 16 video- or audio-recorded career counseling sessions, which are analyzed from the perspectives of applied conversation analysis and discursive psychology.

The perspective of non-communication enables the analysis of the non-occurrence of communication events that could have occurred in a given situation. We argue that, as international students are at risk of experiencing racist discrimination, this is a relevant topic in career counseling. However, it is not explicitly brought up in the data. In this paper, we examine situations in which this topic could have been raised and discuss the dynamics and consequences of its non-communication.

3. "She Really Listens": Trust and Relational Agency among Migrant Background Youth in Child Welfare Out-of-Home Care: Johanna Wikgren-Roelofs (Åbo Akademi University)

Drawing on Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) (Jordan, 2017), this study explores how young service users with migrant backgrounds experience relationship-building with child welfare professionals in out-of-home care (OHC) in Finland. While previous research on young people with migrant backgrounds in child welfare has highlighted participation, language barriers, and institutional inequalities, less attention has been paid to the relational processes through which trust, connection, and relational safety are established, negotiated, and sometimes withdrawn.

The study is based on photo-elicited semi-structured interviews with nine service users aged 15-17 living in three OHC institutions across Finland. Data were analysed using thematic analysis informed by RCT. Although the same dataset has previously been used to examine language barriers and hermeneutical injustice, the present analysis focuses on young people's relational experiences with child welfare professionals.

The quote, "She really listens instead of just giving rehearsed replies," captures an emerging pattern in the empirical data. Initial analysis suggests that trust may be generated less through professional authority or expertise than through experiences of authentic responsiveness and genuine engagement. Preliminary results indicate that young people actively assess professionals and selectively invest in relationships they perceive as trustworthy, sometimes waiting for "the right person" before seeking support. Initial findings also suggest that withdrawal from professionals may be understood not simply as disengagement or resistance, but as a protective response to experiences of mistrust, surveillance, or relational disappointment.

The study contributes to child welfare and migration research by conceptualising young people as active relational agents and by examining how trust is negotiated in child welfare institutional care. Preliminary findings suggest that migration and language diversity may shape the conditions under which trust, connection, and withdrawal are negotiated, while the relational processes themselves may extend beyond this particular group. The study further demonstrates the value of RCT for understanding relationship-building in child welfare settings.

4. Intercultural Competence in Police Responses to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: A Conceptual Analysis Through the Nordic Context: Katja Köykkä (PhD researcher, University of Eastern Finland), Camila Iglesias (Assistant Prof. Lusofona University, Portugal)

This article examines the competencies required of authorities and police officers when encountering victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), with a particular focus on intercultural competence. More specifically, it asks how intercultural competence can be conceptualised as a core professional competency in authorities' and police officers' encounters with SGBV victims, and what dimensions of such competence are required to ensure victim-sensitive and equitable responses. The analysis draws on the Nordic policing context. Adopting a reflexive analytical perspective, the study is positioned as a conceptual contribution. In conceptual research, arguments are not grounded in primary empirical data in the conventional sense; rather, they emerge from the systematic integration and synthesis of existing concepts and theoretical frameworks.

SGBV is a complex and often underreported phenomenon, particularly affecting people from multicultural backgrounds, who may face barriers to accessing support and justice. Public authorities, especially the police, play a key role in protecting victims and ensuring equal access to justice. Failure to report violence can jeopardize victims' safety and recovery, and experiences of not being believed by police have been linked to adverse health outcomes.

In the Nordic policing context, public trust and institutional legitimacy are closely tied to the quality of police-citizen interactions. Responding effectively to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) requires more than legal and procedural knowledge; it also demands professional competencies such as intercultural competence, cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, and empathetic communication. Research shows that survivors' trust in the police is strongly influenced by whether they are heard, believed, informed, and treated with dignity throughout the reporting and investigative process. In contrast, victim-blaming, dismissive treatment, and inadequate communication may contribute to revictimisation and reduced engagement with justice processes. Furthermore, studies highlight the importance of police officers' trauma-related knowledge and their ability to provide supportive responses to survivors. Despite growing recognition of these competencies, Nordic research remains limited in examining how this expertise is developed, enacted, and supported within policing practice, particularly in relation to SGBV, indicating an important gap in the literature.

5. Punctual communities – experienced "comunidad" among Latin American Women in Helsinki: Mervi Leppäkorpi (University of Eastern Finland), Eurídice Hernández Gomes (University of Helsinki)

In research on migration, the importance of networks and communities is embedded in the understanding of how migrants attach to their chosen place of residence. We focus on the concept of the community (la comunidad) and the importance of it in research on migrants and migrant communities. We ask what characterizes the experienced (lack of) "comunidad" among Latin American women living in Helsinki. Our goal is to highlight how migration research focusing on "ethnic" or "national" communities may obscure communal experiences that are loose and project-bound but still provide some sort of care to these migrant women.

The data draw on two ongoing research projects: one focusing on Spanish speaking women and their experiences of the Finnish welfare state, another examining the role of urban social infrastructure in the identity construction processes of cross-cultural children with Latin American backgrounds. We analyze the different needs women face, from navigating bureaucratic systems and finding employment to raising children in the diaspora.

A common element across this trajectory is the fragility of la comunidad, which is sometimes experienced as absent. While struggling to find a sense of belonging in Finland, everyday life is often organized around the family, particularly spouses and children and around what we conceptualize as “punctual communities”. Built around shared projects or common interests rather than national affiliations, these punctual communities are temporally and spatially limited. Nonetheless, they provide moments of belonging and loose social ties that eventually allow reciprocity and care — la comunidad— to emerge among those who produce and sustain these projects.

Parallel Session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Filing, Shaping, Polishing: Embodied Skill and Self-Worth among Vietnamese Migrant Nail Technicians in Helsinki: Ngoc Thu Nguyen (Diversity in Society and Life (DIVSOL), CEREN (The Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism))

Drawing on sensory ethnographic research in a Vietnamese-owned nail salon catering to middle-class customers in Helsinki, the paper traces the journeys through which manicurists acquire and develop their skills, from apprentice to expert. It explores the different “battles” that migrant workers (most women) must cope with, negotiate, or resist not only within the nail salon itself, such as in the encounters with clients involving time pressure, work demands, proximity and intimate interactions, but also in their relationship with other manicurists, salon owners, and especially in negotiating their own sense of self, dignity, belonging, and embodied experiences in the workplace. Feminist phenomenology is a theoretical approach that examines lived experiences in the relation to gender, and social structures. It understands the body not as a neutral biological entity, but as a socially and politically constituted site where cultures, norms, social discourses, and power relations are experienced, embodied, internalized, and negotiated through everyday life (Ahmed, 2014; Butler, 1990, 2022; Young, 1980). For migrant women, these processes intersect with gender, race, and class, as occupational skills and qualifications may not be recognised as equivalent professional capital in the host society (Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001). These barriers are more particular in the beauty service industry, where the body is exploited and emotion labour is commercialised and controlled in encounters with customers (Hochschild, 2012; Kang, 2020; Vu, 2022). Building on these perspectives, the paper draws attention to the question: In those exploited working conditions, how do embodied skills become a foundation for workers’ sense of self-worth? By engaging with feminist epistemology, it focuses on embodied skills involved in producing women’s sense of self-worth in nail salons from the over 300 hours observing in a nail salon in downtown Helsinki.

2. “Nature and City So Closely Tied Together”: Place Attachment, Belonging, and Environmental Citizenship of Young Migrants in Tampere: Dr. Turkan Firinci Orman (Migration Institute of Finland)

This paper examines how transnational migration trajectories shape young adults’ (18–22 years) experiences of belonging, inclusion/exclusion, and spatial attachment in Tampere, Finland. It asks: How do everyday spatial practices and encounters across difference influence young migrants’ sense of place attachment and their emerging understandings of environmental citizenship and sustainability? The study draws on triangulated geo-social data, including digital mapping activities, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a “Letter to My Future Self” exercise. The study includes 13–15 participants with diverse transnational mobility backgrounds living and studying in Tampere. Preliminary findings suggest three key insights. First, environmental inclusion is strongly supported by urban infrastructures and access to nature, which together foster intuitive engagement with sustainable everyday practices and strengthen place attachment. These practices, particularly walking, cycling, recycling, and engagement with urban green spaces provide situated entry points for performing environmental citizenship as embodied and everyday practice. Second, social inclusion is more uneven in the current material, yet not uniformly constrained. While environmental sustainability is readily enacted through spatial practices, social and cultural belonging is experienced

in more differentiated ways, shaped by varying experiences of inclusion and exclusion and by uneven opportunities for embedded participation. However, data also indicate future-oriented expectations of social belonging in Tampere. Third, belonging is multi-sited. Transnational ties mean that attachment to Tampere coexists with sustained emotional and social connections elsewhere, producing asynchronous forms of place attachment and social belonging. The paper contributes to the conference theme of trust and belonging by showing that environmental inclusion, social inclusion, and belonging do not necessarily develop at the same pace. It highlights how urban nature and sustainable infrastructures foster place attachment, while social belonging is shaped by both inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics alongside transnational attachments.

Keywords: transnational youth migration; urban belonging; place attachment; everyday spatial practices; environmental citizenship; social sustainability

3. Social Connectedness in Changing Urban Neighbourhoods: Tuuli Anna Renvik (PhD, Chief Specialist, City of Helsinki, Urban Research and Statistics), Pekka Mustonen & Sirkku Järvelä

International migration is driving the growth of many European cities, making local populations increasingly diverse. However, intergroup contact and a shared sense of belonging do not necessarily increase in parallel: encounters between different groups of residents may be avoided, interactions may be perceived as unpleasant, and boundaries between groups may remain impermeable. The persistent challenge of residential segregation has prompted policymakers to consider ways of strengthening social connectedness at the neighbourhood level. To support these efforts, a deeper understanding of the characteristics and correlates of social connectedness in urban contexts is needed. The potential benefits are substantial, as recent research suggests that not only individuals' own sense of belonging to a community, but also the average level of identification among community members, can serve as a "social cure" for a range of psychosocial challenges. We conceptualise social connectedness as a subjective sense of belonging and a psychological bond between individuals and groups. It is assessed through five neighbourhood-related dimensions: sense of belonging, neighbour relationships, attitudes towards diversity, perceptions of intergroup relations, and perceived safety. Using Helsinki as a case example, we draw on recent survey datasets collected in neighbourhoods with varying socio-economic profiles and levels of ethno-cultural diversity. Our objectives are to (1) examine the associations between neighbourhood socio-economic characteristics and social connectedness, and (2) analyse the roles of socio-economic (dis)advantage and neighbourhood social connectedness in shaping residents' self-reported well-being. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for cities seeking to harness the potential of social connectedness in increasingly diverse urban neighbourhoods.

1.9 Trust in durable solutions: centring the voices of individuals and communities navigating refugeehood

Session convener	Camilla Marucco Al-Mimar, Migration Institute of Finland, camilla.marucco@migrationinstitute.fi Project "Endings: Refuge, Time, and Space"
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Jöns Budde (M218), Arken

Session Description

Building on critical research regarding durable solutions (e.g. Brun & Fábos 2017; Chimni 2004; Maple & Hovil 2025; Saunders 2018), this workshop investigates the role of trust, broadly understood, in relation with possible solutions to refugeehood and forced displacement.

We focus on both the more conventional and the more alternative forms of durable solutions that individuals, communities and institutions may pursue to end forced mobilities and migration. Our goal is to centre the voices of the people who navigate(d) refugeehood in the first person (Bradley et al 2019; Fee 2025), thus integrating existing, predominantly top-down approaches with bottom-up strategies and grassroots knowledge (Maple & Hovil 2025). We welcome researchers', artists', activists', NGO and institutional workers' inquiries into questions of e.g. trust, mistrust, distrust, belonging, hope, refusal, rule of law, accountability and protection in relation with ending forced mobilities and migration. In addition, we appreciate if workshop participants can reflect on the spatio-temporalities of trust and on the possible interconnections between the local and the global in yearned and enacted durable solutions.

Some of the questions that the workshop addresses include, for example:

- Which disciplinary, theoretical and methodological approaches have been used and can be used to investigate questions of trust broadly understood in relation with ending forced migration and mobilities?
- How do individuals and communities striving for durable solutions navigate trust, mistrust, distrust, belonging, hope, refusal, rule of law, accountability and protection?
- How do institutional policies aimed at ending forced migration and mobilities shape trust, mistrust, distrust, belonging, hope, rule of law, accountability and protection?
- What do relations of trust, mistrust and distrust look like in durable solutions at the local, national, transnational and global scales?
- What spatial and temporal dimensions of trust, mistrust and distrust can be observed in durable solutions?
- What (un)sustainable relations are desired, challenged and (re)created by individuals, grassroot communities and by institutions in their efforts to end forced migration and mobilities?

The primary language for this workshop is English.

Possible contributions in other languages can be considered, if the proponent can provide some form of translation into English, too. This workshop is part of the art and research project "Endings: Refuge, Time, and Space" (implemented at the Migration Institute of Finland, 2023-2026, funded by the Kone Foundation): the project has been investigating, through art and research, the question whether refugeehood may ever end and, if yes, when, where, how and for whom it ends.

Accepted Papers

1. Trusting Rohingya-Led CSOs: Durable Solutions by and for the Community: Angelica Conti (Doctoral Researcher – Institute for Human Rights, Åbo Akademi University)

For populations such as the Rohingya, for whom displacement has become intergenerational, trust emerges as a multifaceted and contradictory phenomenon, connected to hopes as well as discouragement. This paper draws on qualitative research examining the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in advancing the right to education for stateless children. Although the project was not initially designed to investigate trust, interviews with representatives of six CSOs working with the Rohingya community across five countries highlighted it as a central aspect affecting the relationships between communities, grassroots organisations, and external actors.

Many interviewees reported that the Rohingya community tends to place considerable trust in external actors, who provide substantial though short-term support. At the same time, some acknowledged that externally designed temporary projects, tied to limited cash flows, risk disempowering the community and limiting sustainable capacity-building. Therefore, trust becomes both a resource that enables access to aid and a mechanism that may reproduce dependency.

The findings highlight the need for deeper dialogue with Rohingya-led CSOs because, even though some of their representatives are already invited to institutional events, panels, or consultations, this is not enough for meaningful participation. The paper argues that, for solutions to be both durable and effective, trust must flow in both directions: from communities towards institutions and from institutions towards grassroots initiatives. In particular, Rohingya-led CSOs need to be recognised as actors capable of identifying priorities, designing interventions, and exercising long-term ownership over initiatives affecting their communities, including in the field of education.

2. Lived and yearned endings to refugeehood: Camilla Marucco Al-Mimar (research fellow, Migration Institute of Finland, project "Endings: Refuge, Time, and Space" Kone Foundation 2023-2026)

Protracted displacement is a grim reality for millions of people worldwide. Durable solutions and complementary pathways have been envisaged to end displacement and refugeehood – besides the strategies enacted by refugees themselves. However, both durable solutions and complementary pathways present several challenges, such as their dependence of states' political will to implement truly durable solutions for refugees. Through a case study carried out in Finland, this contribution asks: does refugeehood as lived experience ever end? This study combines the literatures on durable solutions and complementary pathways, on the refugee label, and on legalities, socialities, materialities, and emotions in refugeehood, asylum, and migration. By centring the voices of people living in Finland who (have) navigate(d) refugeehood, it shows how legalities are fundamental in "starting to end" refugeehood: for some research participants, refugeehood as lived experience ended gradually when they left the camp for a home of their own, started studying or obtained a degree, became employed, and learned the local language(s). However, racism in everyday encounters keeps many in a refugeehood-like state, reproducing borders and preventing them from "arriving existentially" in Finland (Drangsland & Karlsen 2026). These participants yearn (hooks 1990) for endings rooted in fairer immigration policies and welcoming socialities for themselves and their loved ones: in this way, they can more fully live, belong, and feel safe in Finland.

1.10 Trust in Everyday Encounters

Session convener	Eveliina Lyytinen, Migration Institute of Finland, eveliina.lyytinen@migrationinstitute.fi
Time	13:00-14:30 and 15:00-16:30, Thursday, 5.11.2026, Parallel sessions 1 and 2
Place	Westermarck (C101), Arken

Parallel Session 1 | 13:00-14:30 | 5.11.26

Accepted papers

1. Trust Does Not Begin at the Border: Migrant Life Histories and Integration in Finland: Prince Duah Agyei (Tampere Peace Research Institute)

Trust is widely recognised as important for migrants' experiences of integration, shaping relationships with institutions, communities, and wider society. Yet research often examines trust primarily through migrants' post-arrival encounters in receiving countries. Trust however, does not begin at the border. Migrants arrive with prior experiences of institutions and authority, recognition and exclusion, solidarity and dependence, security and uncertainty. How these accumulated experiences matter for subsequent social and institutional relationships remains insufficiently understood.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with first-generation West African migrants in Finland conducted as part of the Forms of Resistance and Practices of Hope project, the paper explores how trust is narrated across migration trajectories. Rather than treating trust as a stable individual disposition or solely as a product of experiences in the receiving society, the analysis approaches trust as relational, biographical, and continually negotiated. It examines how participants connect past and present encounters with people and institutions, and how earlier experiences inform, complicate, or reshape experiences of belonging and integration in Finland.

The paper does not assume that trust or distrust is simply carried from one context to another. Migration may reinforce existing orientations, disrupt them, or create conditions in which trust is reconsidered and reconstructed through new relationships and institutional encounters. By tracing these processes across participants' narratives, the paper examines how trust is negotiated across places, relationships, and different stages of migration.

Conceptually, the paper develops a biographical approach to trust in migration. It argues that understanding trust and integration requires moving beyond arrival-centred perspectives to examine the longer trajectories through which expectations of people, institutions, and social relations are formed, challenged, and transformed.

2. From Margins to Belonging: Negotiating Trust and Gendered Pathways of Migrant Inclusion in the Nordics: Dr. Surabhi Singh (Bennett University)

Migration has increasingly challenged societies to rethink the relationship between mobility, inclusion, and social cohesion. While trust is recognised as essential for building sustainable relationships between migrants, communities, and institutions, how trust is experienced and negotiated through gendered migration pathways remains

comparatively underexplored. This paper examines how gender shapes migrants' encounters with institutions, civil society actors, and local communities, influencing their opportunities for inclusion and processes of belonging in Nordic societies. Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of trust, belonging, and intersectionality, the paper argues that migrant inclusion is not a linear process of adaptation but a dynamic and relational process shaped by social positions, institutional interactions, and everyday encounters. It explores how gendered experiences influence migrants' access to resources, recognition, participation, and feelings of safety and belonging. By connecting trust and gender perspectives within migration research, the study highlights how structural inequalities and social hierarchies shape migrants' ability to develop meaningful relationships with their surrounding societies. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative comparative approach based on existing scholarly literature, policy frameworks, and empirical studies on migration and inclusion in the Nordic context. It examines the role of civil society organisations and social networks as spaces where trust can be cultivated, solidarity can emerge, and migrant participation can be strengthened. The paper contributes to contemporary debates on migration and belonging by demonstrating that trust is not merely an outcome of integration policies but a relational process continuously negotiated between migrants, communities, and institutions. It highlights how trust, gender, and inclusion intersect in shaping sustainable forms of belonging in diverse Nordic societies.

Keywords: Trust; Gender and Migration; Migrant Belonging; Nordic Societies

3. Recognition in Finnish wartime evacuees' and contemporary refugees' experiences of dis/emplacement: Saara Intonen (University of Oulu)

This paper draws on my ongoing research on experiences of forced displacement and emplacement of the Lapland War (1944-1945) evacuees and contemporary refugees in Finland. It contributes to bridging the gap between history and refugee studies that have traditionally been separate fields, affording only scant attention to forced migrants' mnemonic agency. The source material consists of Lapland War evacuees' written narratives, together with thematic interviews and writing competition texts by people who have come to Finland as forced migrants between the 1990s and the 2020s.

Methodologically, I draw from oral history research and qualitative content analysis, applying social philosopher Axel Honneth's (1995) recognition theory. According to Honneth, mutual recognition – as love in primary relations, rights in legal relations and solidarity in community of value – is an essential precondition for personal integrity and social justice, but vulnerable to three corresponding forms of disrespect: abuse, exclusion and denigration.

Similarly to trust, recognition is relational, dynamic and context-dependent, as well as closely linked to senses of safety, equity and belonging. Forced displacement disrupts established relations of recognition, necessitating their renegotiation in new contexts. Distinguishing between vertical (institutional) and horizontal (interpersonal) recognition, this paper focuses on the latter by exploring forced migrants' meaningful relationships. How do these relations affect experiences and processes of forced displacement and emplacement, and vice versa? How do experiences of Finnish wartime evacuees and contemporary refugees compare with each other? Based on my analysis, significant others with whom experiences, memories and narratives are shared, span a wide range of social associations from families and friendships to immediate and imagined communities. These relations and their transformation are central to dis-/emplacement, albeit in complex ways. Furthermore, vertical recognition is inseparable from the horizontal sphere, playing a crucial role in shaping forced migrants' everyday lives, other relations of recognition and sense of belonging.

4. Materializing Trust: Assemblages of Belonging and Uncertainty in a Finnish Reception Center: Riikka Era (Tampere University)

Trust is often analyzed as a purely human, psychological, or institutional phenomenon. Drawing on a chapter from my monograph *"Koti keskuksella"* (Home at the Center), I offer a methodological and theoretical intervention rooted in feminist new materialisms and assemblage thinking. I argue that trust, mistrust, and the sense of belonging are fundamentally socio-material practices, continuously co-constituted by human bodies, institutional spaces, and everyday objects within asylum reception centers.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork with refugee families living in cramped institutional quarters in Finland, I try to think how the material environment facilitates the negotiations of trust. I demonstrate how children and families actively use space and furniture, such as sofas, large armchairs, and low coffee tables, to regulate bodily distance, seek protection, and autonomously initiate contact with peers and, for example, researchers. Here, trust is not merely spoken; it is embodied and mediated through material configurations that allow for the shifting dynamics of proximity and withdrawal.

In this presentation I aim to formulate a conceptualization of trust as an elusive, relational, and dynamic assemblage. I argue that this would help to recognize how non-human entities and spatial-temporal structures actively shape marginalized groups' capacities for agency, safety, and a fractured sense of belonging.

Parallel Session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Trust through Care: Arab Migrant Mothers' Encounters with the Finnish Welfare State: Sandra Nasser El-Dine (FIME)

Drawing on ethnographic research, I examine how Arab migrant mothers develop relationships with the Finnish welfare state through everyday experiences of care. I approach trust as a relational process that emerges through encounters with schools, healthcare and other services. I show how experiences of safety, fair treatment and institutional care contribute to feelings of belonging and reciprocal commitment towards Finnish society.

Especially participants with a refugee background expressed gratitude towards Finland for providing safety after experiences of war and displacement. They described Finland as a society where the state protects rather than threatens those living within it. Experiences such as giving birth in Finnish hospitals, raising children in safe neighbourhoods, and seeing schools provide both safety and meaningful learning fostered not only trust in public institutions but also a sense of belonging.

Many mothers viewed participation in paid work as a reciprocal moral commitment – a way of giving back to a society that had cared for them. Participants valued Finland's commitment to gender equality, children's rights and religious freedom, describing it as a society where they could practise their faith and values openly. Several associated the Finnish ideal of suvaitsevaisuus with the Islamic concept of tasāmuḥ (respectful coexistence), emphasising shared ethical commitments rather than cultural difference. Likewise, many identified honesty, modesty and trustworthiness as moral virtues they associated both with Finnish people and with Islam.

Trust, however, remained contingent rather than unconditional. Experiences of inadequate healthcare sometimes led women to disengage from public health services. Experiences of discrimination and suspicion – such as assumptions that migrants are unwilling to learn Finnish or contribute to society – generated pressure to succeed simultaneously

as workers, mothers and "good migrants." The presentation argues that trust is not simply confidence in institutions but a reciprocal moral relationship produced – and sometimes undermined – through everyday experiences of care.

2. Seeing Trust Ethnographically: Everyday Social Relations among African Families in Rabat: Ossama Mouncif (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco)

Migration research has generated rich accounts of trust in relation to borders, institutions, humanitarian governance, and processes of belonging. Less attention has been paid to how trust becomes socially visible through the ordinary relationships that organise everyday urban life among migrant families. This paper argues that ethnography offers a distinctive lens through which trust can be understood not as an individual disposition or a condition for integration, but as a relational accomplishment emerging through everyday social practices.

Focusing on African families living in Rabat, Morocco, the paper examines how trust is continuously made, tested, and renegotiated through routine interactions with neighbours, schools, public administrations, civil society organisations, and other actors shaping everyday life. Rather than asking whether migrants trust institutions or communities, the analysis follows the everyday work through which families establish, maintain, suspend, and repair social relationships while navigating life in a context of South–South migration.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork based on participant observation, informal conversations, and sustained engagement with everyday practices, the paper argues that trust is better understood as an achievement of everyday social relations than as an individual disposition or an institutional resource. By treating trust as an ethnographic object rather than an explanatory variable, the paper shows how ethnography makes visible the gradual accomplishment of trust and belonging through the everyday work of sustaining social relations, thereby highlighting the analytical value of South–South migration for contemporary anthropological debates on trust, migration, and belonging.

3. Trust, Mistrust, and Well-being: Lived Experiences of Forced Migrant Women Navigating Child and Family Services in Finland: Laleh Golamrej Eliasi (Department of Social Research, University of Turku)

Trust lies at the heart of forced migrant women's ability to access support and build belonging in Finland. Social workers occupy a paradoxical position in this dynamic: if they pay attention to a client's cultural background, they risk "othering" the family; yet if they adopt a colour-blind approach in the name of equal treatment, they fail to see the individual and her specific circumstances. This double bind shapes the conditions under which trust can or cannot form between forced migrant families and the welfare system.

This paper draws on a qualitative studies examining how Afghan women in Finland discuss their ideal child-family services. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with forced migrant Afghan women (n=13) in Finland.

Thematic analysis revealed that institutional mistrust, rooted in fear of child custody loss, cultural misunderstandings, and inadequate information, functions as a significant barrier to help-seeking. A recurring theme was the profound power imbalance participants experienced with social workers: professionals who hold authority over both their home and their children, leaving families feeling exposed and without recourse. This power imbalance led participants to hide struggles, avoid authorities, and self-censor parenting choices. Mistrust was further compounded by interpreter-related privacy concerns and the absence of culturally responsive professionals.

At the same time, trust, when it emerged, became a powerful protective factor. Supportive social worker relationships, community networks, and religious practices provided emotional anchoring. Language learning and employment

functioned not only as coping strategies but as pathways to agency and institutional trust.

The paper argues that institutional mistrust is structurally produced, by legal precarity and low-quality communication with social workers, and that rebuilding it requires trauma-informed, gender-sensitive approaches that navigate the tension between cultural awareness and individual recognition.

1.11 Unpacking Trust and Categorization

Session Conveners	Outi Kähäri outi.kahari@oulu.fi & Elina Turjanmaa elina.turjanmaa@uef.fi
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Voltaire (M127), Arken

Accepted Papers

1. Trust and the Use of Anti Racist Approaches in Child Welfare: Eveliina Heino (University of Helsinki)

This study examines how trust shapes professionals' use of an anti-racist approach in child welfare and what factors promote or challenge this work. The research is based on eleven thematic interviews conducted in 2025 with members of a multidisciplinary team that worked exclusively with children and families of migrant background. The interviewees included social and family instructors, nurses, and a coordinating social worker.

Across the interviews, trust emerged as the central condition enabling anti-racist practice. Professionals described how trust between practitioners and families created the relational safety necessary for discussing experiences of rasism. This openness allowed practitioners to identify and adress racialised dynamics.

Trust within the multidisciplinary team also played a crucial role. Trust supported a shared commitment to anti-racist practice rather than leaving it to individual motivation. Trust between professionals "spilled over" to the client work also.

Overall, the findings show that trust is foundational for anti-racist practice in child welfare. Trust enables honest dialogue, supports reflective collaboration, and strengthens professionals' capacity to recognise and respond to racialised inequities. Anti-racist work is thus inseparable from the structural and relational conditions that allow trust to develop.

2. "White crows" and "genuine refugees": whiteness in negotiating a sense of belonging among Ukrainian refugees in Finland: Maryna Smahina (University of Helsinki)

The discourse of Ukrainians receiving a warmer welcome than other refugees in Europe, and in particular in Finland, has been prevalent in the aftermath of Russia's war in Ukraine (Merikoski 2022; Frank 2025). The 2022 invasion provoked an unprecedented influx of forced migrants within Europe in terms of its scale and rapid temporal

dimensions. The initial/continuous warm reception at scale is often attributed to a combination of demographics, cultural closeness, and eventually whiteness. But does it affect the sense of belonging among these refugees, and if so — how?

Multiple studies have been held on other forced migrants groups in Finland throughout the years, demonstrating that they face structural barriers and are racialized against the "white majority" (e.g., Ali 2024; Merikoski 2022). The aspect of Ukrainians' visible whiteness and the uniqueness of their positioning as European refugees fleeing active war, hasn't been yet in focus of any published studies. This study addresses this gap.

The initial qualitative analysis of 25 semi-structured interviews shows that whiteness played a significant role in participants' meaning-making around adaptation and belonging. It emerged particularly through perceptions of cultural closeness to Finns or distance from other migrant groups, experiences of othering, and assessments of their progress toward belonging. I argue that while being positioned as "white" in Finnish society may facilitate initial adaptation and shape public perceptions, this privilege remains superficial. Ultimately, Ukrainian refugees face many of the same barriers to belonging as other refugee groups, while their whiteness can be experienced as "off-white" or second-tier.

3. Hierarchies of Trust? Media Representations of Dual Citizenship in Finland: Tuire Liimatainen (University of Helsinki)

Dual citizenship has become increasingly accepted globally, but at the same it is closely entangled with topical political and public debates about immigration, citizenship, and national belonging. Citizenship is commonly associated with obligations and loyalty towards the state, while dual citizenship implies multiple obligations and potentially competing loyalties, challenging conventional understandings of citizenship and belonging. In Finland, dual citizens, particularly Finnish-Russian dual citizens, have become subject to increasingly securitized debates and mistrust following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent transformation of Finland's security environment.

At the same time, not all dual citizens are equally visible in these debates. Nordic dual citizens, for example, continue to have relatively easy access to Finnish citizenship and have largely remained outside securitized discussions. This relative invisibility is analytically significant as it points to underlying hierarchies of trust and belonging, revealing which combinations of citizenship are perceived as legitimate and unproblematic, and which are constructed as problematic.

In this paper, I present a preliminary analysis of media debates concerning dual citizens in the Finnish mainstream media in this millennium. I examine comparatively how different configurations of dual citizenship, such as Nordic–Nordic, Nordic–EU, and Nordic–non-Nordic/non-EU citizens, are represented in media discourse, looking particularly at how questions of trust and loyalty figure in these representations. By shifting attention from securitized groups to those dual citizens who remain largely invisible and unproblematic in public discourse, the paper highlights how media representations participate in producing hierarchies of belonging among formally equal citizens.

4. Trustworthiness Is Prior to Trust: Modelling Cross-Group Expectations in Immigrant Integration: Cuizhu Wang (Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin)

Finland is widely characterised as a high-trust society. Yet immigrant integration raises a theoretically and practically important question: to what extent does such trust extend across group boundaries, and what makes cross-group trust possible? Existing Finnish research finds favourable mutual attitudes between immigrants and Finns alongside reciprocal underestimation of the other group's attitudes (Nshom, 2022), suggesting that reported attitudes may

conceal important structures of social expectations. This paper argues that cross-group trust should be analysed through expectations of cross-group trustworthiness: whether others are expected to behave trustworthily, whether such conduct is socially expected, and whether these beliefs are aligned.

The framework is grounded in Bicchieri's expectation-based account of social norms (2006, 2017). Bicchieri, Xiao, and Muldoon (2011) provide experimental evidence for an important asymmetry: trustworthy reciprocity can be norm-governed even where trusting itself is not. Composto et al. (2025) further conceptualise trust as informed by expectations concerning others' actual and acceptable conduct. Together, these insights motivate shifting the explanatory focus from trust itself to the conditions under which others are expected to behave trustworthily. I develop this shift into the claim that trustworthiness is analytically prior to trust: in situations of voluntary vulnerable reliance, the expectation that another will respond trustworthily is part of the belief structure that makes trusting intelligible.

The paper develops a framework for identifying this expectation structure. Following Wang (2026), it distinguishes first- and higher-order descriptive and normative beliefs and examines both within-individual consistency and alignment within relevant reference networks. Extending Ross and Wang's (2025) distinction between pluralistic ignorance and preference falsification, the framework compares belief consistency with reference-network alignment to distinguish inaccurate or inconsistent beliefs from strategically divergent preference expression across networks.

The framework thus aims to distinguish genuinely low expectations of out-group trustworthiness from misperceived, internally inconsistent, or cross-network belief configurations, offering a more diagnostic basis for future integration research and policy than aggregate trust measures alone

Parallel Session 2

2.1 Antiracist and Anticolonial Solidarities

Session conveners	Ali Ali, Åbo Akademi & University of Helsinki, ali.ali@helsinki.fi, Ameera Masoud-Jaakonaho, University of Helsinki, ameera.masoud-jaakonaho@helsinki.fi
Time	15:00-16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 2
Place	Saussure (M128), Arken

Session Description

This panel examines mundane relations and embodied/actual experiences of activism and community-building in academic and political knowledge making, as well as struggles over the meanings of antiracism and anticolonialism.

In the panel, we ask: How do community engagements and material relations across the boundaries of race, class, gender and generations figure and matter in the political and academic sphere of antiracism and anticolonialism?

We aim to strengthen the theoretical and empiricalunderstanding of antiracist, feminist and queer mobilizations and solidarities across social divisions. Our research engages with people's first-hand lived experiences, narratives of (anti)racism and (anti)colonialism, and relations in activism and community life. This entails how people mobilizing across racial, classed, gendered and national boundaries give new meanings and create knowledge and imaginaries that not only problematize state-administrative and racist approaches to race and nationality, but inform how the past (colonial, racial, patriarchal) figures in the present and how to envision this past and its aftermath in the present, towards more reparative forms of social relations.

The panel builds on themes elaborated in the research project Becomings: Temporalities, Solidarities and Social Class in Antiracism (RCoF, 2025-2028). It aims to bring theoretical and empirical insights from the politics of temporality and becoming, to generate and circulate knowledge on the creation of new political openings, community-building and antiracist struggles. The panel further seeks to challenge neoliberal and state-centered models of academic production.

The session will bring together four papers that explore antiracist and anticolonial solidarities and mobilizations. The first paper of the panel builds on theorizations of racial time to reflect on solidarity, rest, and community care as generative and reparative antiracist practices. The second paper examines how "pasts in the present" reshape activists' understandings of antiracism and solidarity in relation to broader regional and social formations, opening possibilities for common struggles across temporalities and localities. The third paper takes relations of love and romance as scenes where politics of race, nationality and gender unfold intensely, and solidarities arise and fall through: in body and immediacy. The fourth paper explores the student solidarity with Palestine that unfolded after October 7, 2023, analysing forms of repression that students encounter within and beyond academia. The session will be conducted primarily in English and will focus on the project's themes outlined in this proposal, while also welcoming participants with an interest in these topics.

Accepted papers

1. Geopolitics in (the shadow of) Love and Pleasure: Race and Coloniality in Intimate Encounters (or the absence of which): Ali Ali (University of Helsinki)

Relations of love and romance are scenes where politics of race, nationality and gender unfold intensely: in body and immediacy. While romantic love and partnership might be thought of as a shelter from overwhelming geopolitics, they might end up the site where these geopolitics and history of colonialism and patriarchy are articulated and embodied in most sharpness and embodiedness, exacting the urgency to be addressed. Referring to my fieldwork at a queer support group for exiles in Finland and interviews with members in that group [people who came to Finland to seek asylum and love], I will foreground people's lived experience in (or relation to) dating, romance, love, as embodiment of politics in Finland, *and* as acts of tackling these politics. Meanwhile participants (racialized exiles) seek sanctuary from the austere and alienating geopolitics and state laws and bureaucracies in romantic/intimate endeavors and adventures, romance/love becomes the reality show of politics and the site to articulate the person's understanding of politics and histories of race, as well as their acts of inhabiting, addressing and redressing these politics.

2. Collective Care and Rest as Antiracist Solidarities: Ameera Masoud-Jaakonaho (CEREN, University of Helsinki)

There remains limited research that examines rest as an analytical framework for understanding antiracism in the Finnish context. In antiracist work, rest is frequently treated as secondary to urgency, productivity, and the constant demand to respond to racism. However, the politics of rest have long been central to Black feminist thought, where rest is understood not simply as personal self-care, but as a collective and political practice of resisting racial capitalism, white supremacy, and the expectation of endless labour.

This paper brings together the concepts of racial time and rest to examine how antiracist solidarities in Finland is shaped, and how rest becomes both necessary and contested within struggles for racial justice among racialized communities and activists. At the same time, the aim is to highlight antiracist practices of solidarity, rest and community care as reparative and generative. Reparative in their capacity to heal the temporal wounds of racial capitalism, and generative in their creation of new rhythms, solidarities, and futures that resist narratives of racism. The presentation draws on empirical material collected in Finland in 2025-2026.

3. Against Exceptionalism. Trust, Innocence, and Racial Capitalism in Icelandic Anthropology: Armando Garcia (Independent researcher)

How is trust configured when a single paradigm dominates a national discipline's account of racism? I answer through two heterodox forebears of critical social theory. Veblen supplies the premise that modern institutions inherit predatory habits beneath emulation and conspicuous display; Schopenhauer supplies the alternative, compassion as co-suffering, a ground of solidarity requiring no claim to national distinction. This path not taken matters now, when exceptionalism is decreasingly tenable. For over a decade, Icelandic anthropology has organised its account of racism around an innocence paradigm (Loftsdóttir 2013, 2019), treating racism as a problem of national self-image. The result, I argue, is a science of white self-image in which critique becomes honorific display, performed vicariously for the nation, whose reputational yield is branding. The paradigm fails at three levels. Ontologically, it reads racial order at the level of appearances alone, explicating neither Keskinen's racial Nordicisation (2022) nor the accumulation

dimensions theorised as racial capitalism (Robinson). Epistemologically, it institutionalises white ignorance (Mills) as pecuniary trained incapacity (Veblen), a non-knowing produced by the training that certifies such critique as expertise and recuperated by nation branding. Phenomenologically, exceptionalism survives as predatory habit: critique operates as a non-performative (Ahmed 2012), while archive selection, the nation's speech about itself, conserves habits of thought "never in full accord with the requirements of the present" (Veblen 1899). I triangulate a close reading of the paradigm's most accomplished application, a ten-year audit of the University of Iceland's anthropology MA (2016–2024), and archival evidence from sexual-racial governance to entanglements with National Socialist thought. Racial capitalism affords a more integral analysis: depth-realist in ontology, institutional and archival in its empirics, able to name what the paradigm cannot, from data-centre buildout to Arctic geopolitics and racialised labour disposability. Pluralising the discipline's analytics is trust-building work, a precondition for antiracist and anticolonial solidarity.

Keywords: Nordic exceptionalism; colonial innocence; anthropology; Iceland; Arctic geopolitics; racial capitalism

4. Reconfiguring the Past: Antiracist Temporalities and Solidarities in Finland: Suvi Keskinen and Emma Grillo Kajava (University of Helsinki)

In this presentation, we explore time as a contested terrain of antiracist interventions in Finland, examining how the past is actively engaged with and used as a reference and resource for contemporary antiracist struggles. The past is approached as an avenue through which antiracist activists reconfigure temporal conditions and connect present conditions with historical legacies of racial violence and antiracist resistance. Examining such temporal dimensions of political imagination and practice is central to grappling with how memories and histories of "the past" may influence activist understandings of antiracism and solidarity in relation to broader global formations of racial capitalism. In so doing, we foreground political imagination of lived histories as a source for mapping responsibilities and reciprocities in the present and unsettling state-centered liberal frameworks of antiracism.

Rooted in Marxist, decolonial and Black theorising on time, this presentation challenges the epistemic devaluation of the past and its demarcation from the present in orthodox Western imaginaries on time. Instead, it foregrounds activist narratives that break with linear, progressivist notions of time, emphasizing how the past persists and demands political engagement in the now. The presentation draws on empirical material collected in Finland in 2025-2026, consisting of interviews, texts and visual materials.

2.2 All quiet on the Eastern border? Bordering practices at the EU Eastern border

Session conveners	Magdalena Kmak magdalena.kmak@abo.fi, Witold Klaus witold.klaus@gmail.com
Time	13:00-14:30 and 15:00-16:30, Thursday, 5.11.2026, Parallel sessions 1 and 2
Place	Fiesta (B205), Arken

Session Description

This session focuses on the migratory paths, international protection and rule of law, migration control and bordering practices, as well as the interwoven responses to discourses, politics, perceptions, and imaginations of migration on the Eastern border, from different perspectives: history, law, the processes of bordering, and people.

In recent years, the eastern part of the European Union and its borders have attracted much more international attention than before. The year 2021 could be marked as a pivotal point in this regard, when the so-called Eastern Border Route became fully operational, and people on the move appeared in large numbers at the Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian borders, seeking to cross irregularly. This led to the militarisation of the area, affecting later also Estonia and Finland, and the introduction of physical barriers along the border. Yet, the developments at the border remain understudied and undertheorized.

The aim of this session is to respond to the renewed focus on the Eastern border and to understand and conceptualise the recent developments at that border that have so far gathered limited academic attention beyond the legal analysis of pushbacks. The session will focus on historical developments, bordering practices, and various forms of resistance, thereby revealing the processes of border enforcement on the EU's eastern flank. In particular, the session will critically analyse how the securitisation of external European Eastern borders has developed over the years, how changes to law and practice have been justified, and which actors have been involved in that process and how the access to protection and the rule of law has been affected in result.

This session critically examines the processes that led to the fortification of the Eastern border over the years. Special attention is paid to events after 2021, when those processes have accelerated. The focus includes:

- The progressive *securitisation* of the EU Eastern border as a result of the institutionalisation and Europeanization of migration and refugee policies in the EU. The session will show, in particular, the recent shift from understanding migration as a concern for social cohesion, internal security, and public order to characterising it as instrumentalised and constituting an external hybrid threat and, in consequence, an existential threat to the EU and its border states.
- The rapidly progressing *militarisation* of the border through the deployment of military forces, armed personnel, and militarised infrastructure to regulate migration flows, effectively merging border security and defence objectives. The session focuses on both material measures—such as fences, barriers, and checkpoints—and operational strategies, including surveillance and military patrolling, characterised by the development of physical infrastructure.
- *Criminalisation* not only of migration and people on the move themselves, but also of solidarity and activism, as a result of militarisation and politicisation of migration.
- Different forms of *resistance* to these developments of securitisation, militarisation, and criminalisation, including legal, political, humanitarian (solidarity), and individual forms of resistance and coping.

The session will include selected chapters from the forthcoming edited collection, but will also be partially open for individual submissions. The session will be organised in English.

Accepted papers

Parallel Session 1 | 13:00-14:30 | 5.11.26

1. Law, Infrastructure, and the Materialities of Border Control: Reproducing the Logics of Externalisation at the EU's Eastern Borders: Kristina Wejstål (University of Gothenburg)

While border studies have convincingly demonstrated that contemporary bordering practices often extend beyond the Westphalian line of demarcation, recent geopolitical developments at the EU's eastern borders have been accompanied by a renewed investment in territorial borders and their physical infrastructures. This paper asks how recent material and legal reinforcements of border control, often framed as responses to the alleged instrumentalisation of migration by Russia and Belarus, reshape the significance of the territorial border under the EU border regime.

Drawing on legal geography and an understanding of law as always spatially grounded and materially present (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015), the paper conceptualises these developments as processes of re-territorialisation (Paasi, 2011) within an otherwise highly externalised EU border regime. Empirically, it analyses examples of reinforced territorial border control: the construction of walls and fences; the closure of border crossing points; the reinforcement of border zones; and laws on entry refusal established through the legal fiction of non-entry under the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum and in recent Finnish and Polish asylum legislation.

Combining legal doctrinal analysis, spatial theory, maps, and photographic documentation from the Eastern borders of Finland and Poland, the paper argues that these legal and physical infrastructures do not merely reinforce territorial borders. Rather, they contribute to a thickening of the border and establish a spatial distance – a physical and legal disconnection – between people seeking protection and the spaces in which fundamental rights would ordinarily become operative. Individuals arriving via the Eastern Border Route may therefore be physically present at the territorial border of an EU Member State, or even within its territory, while simultaneously remaining disconnected from the scope of fundamental rights protection. In this sense, re-territorialisation reproduces the logics of externalisation that have long characterised the EU border regime, and contributes to new forms of violence and exclusion.

2. Buffer Zones: Migration prevention in CEE countries and Finland from the Cold War to Europeanisation: Matti Välimäki (Åbo Akademi University)

This paper historicises Central and Eastern European (CEE) and Finnish regimes of preventing unauthorised and asylum migration from the Cold War to post-1990s Europeanisation. It situates the practices of the Soviet Union's western neighbours – CEE socialist states (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania) and Finland – within broader transformations of migration control, showing how Soviet buffer zones became the EU's eastern buffers in the 1990s. Using Finnish archival materials and research on CEE/Finnish border regimes (1950s–1990s), the paper identifies the logics by which these buffers blocked unwanted crossings and transitioned from serving Soviet to EU priorities. Buffer zones embodied a layered non-entry regime combining border, visa and asylum policies, restrictive exit controls and cooperative enforcement, emerging at the intersection of Soviet security imperatives, satellite subordination/navigations and Finnish–Soviet bilateralism. Findings show shifts in European legal harmonisation, the

rise of human-rights conditionality and changing target groups, alongside enduring continuities in pre-screening, cooperative enforcement and interagency coordination. Together, these dynamics reveal persistent adaptation to the stronger party's migration-prevention objectives (the USSR, later the EU), transforming the East–West border regime while sustaining its emphasis on curbing unauthorised and humanitarian crossings, shifting from exit prevention (Soviet era) to entry prevention (EU era).

3. Law and Crises Clashing at Borders: Restricting Access to Asylum at the Eastern Border of the European Union: Mehrnoosh Farzamfar (University of Turku) and Grażyna Baranowska

This chapter examines how crises affect access to asylum within the European Union (EU), focusing on the eastern borders, where the hostile activities of Belarus and Russia in the form of the so-called 'instrumentalisation of immigration' have intensified border controls. It shows that, despite Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights guaranteeing the right to seek asylum, the EU's Asylum *Acquis* — specifically, the Dublin Regulation, the Reception Conditions Directive, and the Asylum Procedures Directive — has largely failed to translate normative guarantees into reliable, uniform access in crises. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Belarus 2021–2022 border crisis, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have more than ever exposed the persistent systemic gaps in EU law on asylum. The EU's eastern Member States, which share land borders with Russia and Belarus, namely Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, have taken a securitised, border-centric response (such as pushbacks, rapid processing, and restricted remedies) that can undermine fundamental rights protections, including *non-refoulement* and access to legal aid. The chapter argues that these conditions render the right to seek asylum more intangible in practice, despite its formal enshrinement in EU law.

The chapter contends that reforms to EU asylum law must harmonise reception standards, guarantee timely, asylum-focused processing at first contact points, and reform the Dublin framework to alleviate frontline pressures without compromising rights. Stronger EU-wide safeguards — such as independent monitoring, accessible remedies, and crisis-resilient procedures — are essential. Revisions should align the EU *Acquis* with the 1951 Refugee Convention, reinforce safeguards against displacement and *refoulement*, and restore solidarity and fair responsibility-sharing among states. The analysis concludes that only a rights-centred, cohesive reform agenda can effectively translate the promises of fundamental rights into practical protection guarantees for asylum seekers, even in times of emergency.

Keywords: European Union (EU), Eastern borders of the EU, right to seek asylum in the EU, limitation or derogation of the right to seek asylum, instrumentalisation of migration

Parallel Session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Performance of Sovereignty or Management of Mobility? The Polish-German Border in Motion in the Shadow of the EU's Eastern Border "Crisis": Monika Szulecka (Institute of Law Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences)

The reintroduction of internal border controls within the Schengen area has transitioned from an exceptional safeguard to a "new normal", fundamentally altering the landscape of European mobility. This paper analyses the recent re-bordering of the Polish-German frontier, interpreting it through the lenses of populism and the historical arc of EU enlargement. Following Poland's 2007 entry into the Schengen Area, the Polish-German border transitioned from the EU's external frontier to an internal symbol of integration. However, the border never truly disappeared; instead, it was internalised through broad interpretations of Article 23 of the Schengen Borders Code. This "control in motion" –

characterised by internal and mobile checks – turned the entire territory into a border zone long before the formal reinstatement of fixed checks.

The paper explores how the 2021 humanitarian crisis at the EU's Eastern border with Belarus served as the primary catalyst for the formal closure of the Polish-German border by Germany in 2023 and Poland in 2025. While official justifications cite migratory pressure, statistical evidence reveals that irregular crossings remain marginal compared to political rhetoric. This demonstrates that populist performance – rather than objective pressure – drives these closures. Populist actors exploit "emotional gold", specifically the politics of fear and anti-German sentiments, to frame migration as an existential threat to the "pure people" and national sovereignty. The emergence of civil border patrols or militias further illustrates the internalisation of historical traumas and the populist mobilisation of fear against a perceived "abdication" of the state and subordination to an untrustworthy neighbouring country or the EU. First, this fear concerned the EU's Eastern border, but more recently it "moved" to the border between Poland and Germany. The paper is based on empirical studies regarding migration and border control in Poland conducted between 2015 and 2019, supplemented by qualitative analysis of the Polish political discourse in the post-2021 context.

2. Instrumentalised migration as an emergency in Finnish law: Tuukka Brunila (University of Turku)

This paper explores how instrumentalised migration has become part of Finnish emergency law. Most notably, the Emergency Powers Act was amended in 2022 to provide powers necessary for dealing with cases of mass migration. I will analyse Finnish security documents and *travaux préparatoires* of relevant acts to understand this development. The paper begins by looking at the origin of instrumentalised migration as a security concept. As I will argue, a relevant shift takes place in late 2010s, when Finnish security documents begin to understand the causes mass migration as being politically motivated. Before this, mass migration was seen as being caused by external reasons, such as natural disasters or political turmoil. However, especially after the Belarus – Schengen border crisis, Finnish security officials begin to predict that aggressor states could redirect or even cause migration flows to exert political pressure on Finland. This shift is visible in what are seen as the main challenges in cases of mass migration. Before instrumentalised migration became a prominent security concept, the main issue seems to have been insufficient registration capacities. In contrast, with instrumentalised migration the issue becomes how to limit entry and, even, close down the border. As I will point out, this shift in understanding mass migration as a security issue is reflected by legislation. The *travaux préparatoires* of the Emergency Powers Act already consider mass migration as a potential emergency in 2008. However, at that point it was determined that no extraordinary powers were needed. In contrast, in 2022, the government proposal establishes that emergency powers to stop mass migration are necessary. My paper seeks to document this legislative development and understand, in general, how the securitisation of a phenomenon (re-)directs Finnish emergency law.

***3. Militarigration*—the "innovative" approach targeting people on the move at the Eastern European borders: Witold Klaus and Magdalena Kmak (Institute of Law Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences)**

The Eastern border of the European Union has emerged as a critical site of both migration management and regional security. Following a series of geopolitical crises—including the Belarusian instrumentalisation of migration in 2021 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022—EU member states bordering Russia and Belarus have implemented a range of measures to assert control over migration flows while reinforcing national and regional collective security. All of the above led to the rapidly progressing intertwining of migration management and militarisation at the EU's Eastern border, which we call "militarigration". The term refers to the deployment of military forces, armed personnel, and militarised infrastructure to regulate migration flows, effectively merging border security and defence objectives. It encompasses both material measures—such as fences, barriers, and checkpoints—and operational strategies,

including surveillance, Frontex deployments, and military patrolling. The concept highlights how the militarisation of border controls transforms migration governance into a security-oriented, state-centric practice, in which the management of human mobility is inseparable from responding to existential threats to the nation. We argue that militarigration is the next step in the long-time observed securitisation of both migration and people on the move. The paper aims to present the concept of militarigration and how it differs from securitisation. The example will be the EU Eastern Border with a special focus on Poland.

There is a rapidly progressing intertwining of migration management and militarisation at the EU's Eastern border, which we call "militarigration". Given current developments, especially in Poland, we aim to present this concept and outline how it differs from securitisation.

2.3 Beyond Integration: How community spaces build migrants' sense of belonging

Session Conveners	Nelson Otieno, asiranelee@gmail.com Irene Nyeko Agudu, ireneagudu1@gmail.com
Time	15:00 – 16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel Session 2
Place	Aura (G107), Arken

Session Description

What if belonging isn't integrated but designed, practiced, and negotiated in everyday community spaces? This interactive workshop is inspired by my current and ongoing research titled: The Role of Multicultural Centres in Immigrant Learning, Social Inclusion, and Sense of Belonging: A Qualitative Case Study of Villa Victor, Oulu. The workshop explores community centres as important spaces where trust, learning, and belonging are actively produced.

Moving beyond abstract policy discussions of "integration," the session will focus on pragmatic and relational dynamics that unfold in local environments referred to in this workshop as community spaces. These low-threshold community spaces such as libraries, cultural centres, learning hubs and informal gathering places matter to migrants. Additionally, migrants first encounter systems, build relationships and negotiate their place in society in these spaces. Many people develop a sense of belonging through their engagements with others. However, these spaces can be a double-edged sword for enabling and hindering belonging indirectly.

Workshop structure

This workshop session is a highly participatory experience from start to finish, with the research presentations supporting not only dialogue, but also co-creation among participants. It is structured in three phases: (a) Opening remarks and key insights (b) Exploratory activities for mapping trust and belonging and identifying barriers and blind spots (c) Co-designing for belonging. The opening activities will invite participants to reflect on trust, comfort, boundaries, and cultural perceptions of trust and proximity Research presentations will highlight tensions such as inclusion versus exclusion, formal structures versus informal interactions, and the role of everyday encounters within and without community spaces in shaping belonging.The workshop invites paper submissions for up to two additional

presenters on related topics. The workshop will conclude with a co-designed and collaborative activity to develop principles and interventions that could strengthen trust and inclusion in community spaces, with special attention to institutional and micro-institutional practices and affirmations of trust building through relationships

Language and facilitation

The workshop will be facilitated in English. However, participants will be encouraged to engage in multiple languages during group discussions where possible. Multilingual participation will be welcomed as a resource for inclusive dialogue.

Accepted Papers

1. NGOs as Trust Brokers in Immigrant Families' Encounters with Finnish Education System in Northern Finland: Irene Nyeko Agudu (University of Oulu, Faculty of Education and Psychology)

Finland's education policy is designed around the principle of equity, with free access to basic education for all learners, including immigrant learners. Despite this, studies have shown that immigrant learners continue to face multiple barriers that shape their everyday learning experiences in inequitable ways. These barriers reveal a gap between the promise of educational equity and the everyday relational conditions required for immigrant learners and families to participate fully in education in Northern Finland. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operate within this gap by acting as trust brokers, positioning themselves as connective links between families, schools, municipalities, and the wider Finnish system.

The data and findings presented in this paper are based on my master's thesis, which used a qualitative interpretivist research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven NGO practitioners from five organisations and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

The paper draws on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to position NGOs within the mesosystem, demonstrating how they actively construct connections between home and school, as well as with the wider environments influencing a child's development. From this perspective, linkages between microsystems and mesosystems are not automatically created; rather, intermediary actors such as NGOs actively build and sustain these linkages.

The findings demonstrate that the trust that NGO practitioners cultivated with families through consistent, personal and non-official relationships created pathways for recognition, participation, and ultimately, belonging. NGOs created structured community spaces where immigrant learners and their families could form connections such as friends' groups, parents' groups, community cafés, and women's living rooms. NGOs deliberately designed these community spaces to reduce the isolation and loneliness that participants consistently described as a barrier to learning and participation in Finnish society. This suggests that the contribution of NGOs to educational equity extends beyond service delivery to the cultivation of belonging itself.

2. Public libraries attending to immigrant and refugee users in Finland and other European countries: Kristina Eriksson-Backa (Information studies, Åbo Akademi University)

Public libraries are community spaces which aim to be safe and welcoming for people of different backgrounds and offer materials and programmes to meet the needs of their patrons (Dalmer et al., 2022, p.4). They are highly trusted institutions that also play an important role in creating social capital and social trust among immigrants and refugees through library programmes (Vårheim, 2014). The international project 'Public Library Services for Immigrants and Refugees' (PubLIB, 2026), which includes all five Nordic countries, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary and Croatia, aims to map public libraries' services, activities and partnerships aimed at immigrant and refugee communities. Quantitative data were collected via online surveys in 2025, from the persons in public libraries in all ten countries, who had the main responsibility for services to the immigrant and refugee populations. The total number of responses was 846, of which 91 were obtained from libraries in Finland.

Questions were, among others, about provided services and programmes, collaborations to develop services, and the perceived roles of librarians while working with immigrants and refugees. Preliminary results show that in Finland, the most common services were providing materials to borrow and computers with internet connection to use. Most libraries paid attention to the increased need for literature and materials in other languages and acquired especially children's literature. The perceived roles were, however, mainly those of traditional librarians and managers of information, whereas giving other types of support was uncommon. Research has shown that feelings of belonging can only occur with access to services (Dalmer et al., 2022, p.19). Social interaction and belonging were supported by cultural events that were commonly organised, and by providing facilities for events. Many libraries did, however, miss out on other opportunities, as a vast majority did, for example, not organise any language cafés that would facilitate learning and belonging, and support integration.

3. Trust Before Access: What Low Threshold Still Misses: Anna Lenkewitz-Salminen (Area-coordinator, Neighbourhood Mothers, Naapuriäidit, Nicehearts ry, Helsinki)

Finland's own definition of integration names it as a two-way process, requiring both the migrant's own activity and the receptiveness of the receiving society. In practice, only one side of that process has ever been developed. Drawing on Nicehearts ry's Neighbourhood Mothers programme, I show what happens when the receptiveness that was never built has to come from somewhere else: women who have already lived through isolation, unfamiliar systems,and institutional mistrust build that missing trust themselves, with women living through it now, extending it outward toward institutions that have never had to extend anything back.

This asymmetry runs deeper than access. Migrants are routinely expected to just go along with institutional decisions, rarely being told why something is being done or decided, what standard they are being measured against, or where the information they share actually ends up. Through weekly cafés and ongoing one-on-one support, neighbourhood mothers turn those encounters with authority into something a person can understand and prepare for.

Trust of this kind is not built through a single service encounter. It grows through repeated, informal contact with someone who has already crossed the same gap, who explains not only what is being asked, but why, and who remains a consistent, known presence over time rather than a rotating institutional role. And from there, trust grows into something more: Participant surveys and neighbourhood mothers' own reports on their activities and one-on-one helping cases show how initial trust develops further into a genuine feeling of belonging, first to a certain neighbourhood mother, then to a Neighbourhood Mothers' group, and ultimately to society. That sense of belonging shows up concretely: in a clearer understanding of how Finland and its systems actually work, in a known person to turn to when something goes wrong, and, increasingly, in a known service as well, in a shift for many women from being helped to helping others themselves, and, often, in the instinct to bring someone new into that same belonging.

Neither trust nor belonging comes from access alone. Finland's low threshold principle lowers the formal barrier to walking through a door, but it says nothing about whether a person trusts, or feels they belong to, what is waiting for

them once they do. A low threshold is meaningless if a person does not trust and does not feel they belong to whatever awaits them on the other side of it.

Trust and belonging follow the same pattern as integration itself. Each is treated as something the migrant alone is expected to supply, never something the receiving society has to earn or help build. That gap points to a question nobody currently asks: was that space ever designed with someone who does not yet trust the system in mind?

Drawing on ten years of practice and structured programme feedback, this paper argues that rethinking low threshold is not something institutions can simply design and then extend to migrants. It is something they would have to develop together with the people who arrive, learning from what already works in spaces like Neighbourhood Mothers' activities rather than adding accessibility on top of a system that was never, to begin with, built with migrants in the room. The paper closes by exploring what it would take to build trust, and the belonging that follows from it, before a person ever reaches a service door, not only once they arrive at one

2.4 Inclusion, Empathy and Trust – Towards Sustainable Active Citizenship

Session conveners	Finnish Refugee Council / Social Cohesion Unit / Järjestöhautomo Contact: Liisi Rwambiwa liisi.rwambiwa@pakolaisapu.fi
Time	15:00-16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 2
Place	Voltaire (M127), Arken

Session Description

Trust is a fundamental precondition for the functioning of civil society: trust in one's own opportunities to influence, trust in other actors, shared values, and societal structures. At the same time, civil society increasingly operates under cross-pressures, where it is expected to act both as a critical challenger of power and as a builder of trust.

This workshop explores what trust in civil society and trust by civil society mean in the present moment and in the future, particularly from the perspective of civic engagement and inclusion. The workshop provides a space for joint reflection, experience-sharing, and conceptual clarification.

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- deepen understanding of the significance of trust in civil society
- support civil society actors' ability to articulate and strengthen shared values
- identify ways in which civil society can simultaneously act as a critical and trust-building force
- strengthen the role of inclusion, empathy, and dialogue in sustainable active citizenship

Themes and Key Questions

The workshop will address, among others, the following questions:

1. Trust in civic engagement: what does trust mean in the context of civic engagement? What do we need to be able to trust in order for engagement to feel meaningful and possible?
2. Trust in shared values and goals: how are shared values built and articulated in a pluralistic society? How can civil society act as a promoter of values, or as a mediator of value-based tensions?
3. Critique and trust-building: how does civil society balance its critical role with its task of building trust? What kinds of practical tensions and opportunities are associated with this dual role?
4. Knowledge production on trust: what kind of data should civil society organisations collect, produce, or monitor from the perspective of trust (and trust research)?

Methods

The workshop is interactive and based on facilitated discussion, small-group work, and collective reflection. Participants' own experiences and organisational practices form a central component of the workshop.

Target group

Representatives of civil society organisations (primary target group), as well as researchers and actors from civil society, the public sector, and academia.

Evaluation and Reporting

The workshop will involve representatives of civil society organisations. If possible, it would be important for us to collect participant information and feedback from the workshop. This would enable the workshop to be implemented as part of the broader activities of the Järjestöhautomo. Representatives of other sectors may also participate; however, reporting will focus on participants from civil society organisations.

2.5 Language and Belonging

Session Convener	Anna Björnö anna.bjorno@laurea.fi
Time	15:00-16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 2
Place	Armfelt, Arken

Accepted Papers

1. Fluent enough? Language Ideals and the Negotiation of Belonging in Finland: Annika Valtonen & Prince Agyei (Tampere University)

Language is widely understood as a key to integration in Finland, where public and policy discussions frequently emphasise migrants' responsibility to acquire Finnish language skills as a pathway to employment and societal participation. In this context, Finnish language proficiency becomes a powerful marker through which belonging is evaluated.

In this presentation, we examine how migrants living in Finland narrate experiences of Finnish language use and learning. The analysis draws on 24 individual interviews and 9 focus group interviews with participants from diverse migration backgrounds. Using narrative positioning analysis, we explore how participants orient to, reproduce, negotiate, and resist dominant language ideals in their accounts of everyday life, work, education, and encounters with services.

Our findings show that participants repeatedly orient to a dominant language ideal that constructs fluent, native-level Finnish as a key marker of successful integration, employability, and belonging. This ideal is oriented to as taken-for-granted cultural knowledge in the interview interaction. Participants frequently explain and justify their level of Finnish proficiency, suggesting that falling short of the language ideal is treated as something that requires explanation. At the same time, participants contest the ideal in different ways. Some highlight structural barriers and limited opportunities to learn and use Finnish, challenging individualised understandings of language learning. Others criticise the assumption that Finnish fluency should be a prerequisite for employment, social acceptance, access to services, or societal recognition.

The results suggest that prevailing language ideals establish expectations that are difficult, and sometimes impossible, to meet under existing social conditions. The findings call for more inclusive integration training policies and practices that recognise language learning as a shared social process and address the institutional and interactional conditions shaping opportunities for participation and belonging.

2. Empowering and Inclusive Language Learning in Early Childhood Education: Alina Leminen, Berenice Rivera-Macias, Anna Björnö (The VOIKO Project: Empowering and Inclusive Language Learning addresses the need for effective and culturally responsive approaches to supporting Finnish language development among multilingual children in early childhood education.)

Increasing linguistic diversity in Finnish early childhood education has created new demands for pedagogical practices that support children's Finnish language development and collaboration with multilingual families. Previous research in Finland has shown considerable variation in how multilingualism is understood and addressed by early childhood education professionals and how language-aware practices are implemented in everyday educational environments (Honko & Mustonen, 2020; Aerila et al., 2024; Repo et al., 2024). Research has also highlighted the importance of collaboration between families and educational professionals in supporting children's multilingual development (Bergroth & Palviainen, 2016). Based on this understanding, VOIKO focuses on two interconnected areas: (1) strengthening early childhood education professionals' competence in supporting multilingual children's Finnish language learning and (2) developing culturally responsive practices for engaging and supporting multilingual families.

VOIKO is a multi-year development and intervention project conducted in collaboration with early childhood education centres. It follows an iterative, practice-based process in which the needs of professionals, children and families are identified through engagement with participating ECEC settings. These findings inform the development and piloting of pedagogical and family-engagement practices, which are further refined and evaluated through their implementation in everyday ECEC environments.

The project includes three main areas of development. Moksu (Monikielisyys suomen oppimisen tukena), an adaptation of the research-based ProBiMuc intervention to the Finnish early childhood education context, is developed and piloted to support multilingual children's Finnish language learning. In addition, music-based activities are integrated into pedagogical practice, and culturally responsive practices for collaboration with multilingual families are developed and tested.

The presentation introduces the VOIKO project design and emerging needs identified among its target groups and discusses how these inform the approaches being developed and piloted. Particular attention is given to how language-support and family-engagement approaches can be translated into practical tools for early childhood education professionals.

As the project progresses, the developed approaches will be brought together into a scalable toolkit comprising pedagogical methods, training materials and implementation guidelines. Through these outputs, VOIKO aims to strengthen professional competence, support multilingual families' participation and inclusion, and enhance opportunities for children's Finnish language development. The project also explores the applicability of selected approaches to primary-level S2 education and preparatory instruction.

3. The role of empathy and trust in local language learning of adult migrants: Sanna Riuttanen (Doctoral researcher, University of Jyväskylä)

Language learning is a social activity, and oral practice in real-life situations is key to developing spoken language skills. In this presentation, which is based on my dissertation study, I examine how adult basic education students navigate learning the Finnish language in Finland. Specifically, I wish to draw attention to one of the key findings of my dissertation: How differently the students were able to mobilise their acquired linguistic capital (i.e. use Finnish to communicate) in and outside of school, and how this finding could be linked to the notions of empathy and trust. The theoretical underpinnings of the presentation are Bourdieu's forms of capital and Norton's theory of language learning investment.

Adult basic education is intended for adults with interrupted formal education backgrounds or limited formal literacy skills. Over 85% of students are migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. My dissertation study, a critical linguistic ethnography, was located in a school in rural Finland. The school community was diverse in terms of languages, cultures, ages, abilities etc. Students used Finnish as their lingua franca to communicate on the school premises, but when it came to using Finnish in the larger community, they faced multiple issues.

In this presentation, I investigate the matter of mobilising linguistic capital in communicative situations with different people in connection to the notions of empathy and trust. I argue that diversity in a school community can foster empathy among its participants. I also argue that trust needs to be negotiated in communicative situations, where several different power hierarchies can be at play simultaneously.

4. Agency and Dignified Older Age in a Distrustful Society: Susanna Lehtovaara (Jade yhteisö ry)

Contemporary societies are increasingly shaped by global and local developments that generate insecurity, uncertainty, and concerns about the future. In this context, distrust and social polarization have become significant features of the societal climate. For minority populations, these developments may be particularly acute due to their position within society. Older adults with migrant backgrounds, especially those originating from outside the European Union, often remain marginalized and largely invisible in public discourse, service systems, media representations, and population-level ageing research in Finland. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to the experiences of loneliness and social exclusion among foreign-language-speaking older adults.

This presentation draws on findings from an NGO-based research initiative examining loneliness, exclusion, and the possibilities for fostering community, trust, and agency among older migrants in Finland. The study was conducted in Jade Community Association (Jade yhteisö ry), a multilingual organization that promotes inclusion, participation, agency, and well-being among older foreign-language speakers in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The association organizes age-friendly peer group activities in nine languages, with a particular focus on language groups and older people from outside the EU.

Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions with participants from five language groups (N = 50). The findings highlight experiences of otherness, exclusion, and marginalization, which contribute to feelings of loneliness and social isolation. At the same time, the discussions brought up the importance of community-based participation in strengthening feelings of safety, belonging, and trust in both other people and society more broadly. Opportunities to engage in meaningful activities and social interaction in one's own language emerged as particularly important for maintaining social connections and promoting agency in later life. The results demonstrate that low-threshold, community-based practices can play a crucial role in supporting the everyday well-being and social participation of older migrants.

We argue that a minority-language perspective is essential for developing a more comprehensive and equitable understanding of ageing in Finland. Research and public discussions on ageing must better recognize the diversity of older populations and create opportunities for older adults from different backgrounds to express their experiences in their own terms. By amplifying the voices of foreign-language-speaking older adults, this study contributes to ongoing debates on inclusive ageing and seeks to inform future research, service development, and policymaking aimed at building a more equal, multilingual, and diverse society.

5. When Language Becomes a Gatekeeper to Trust, Belonging, and Inclusion: Zahra Hosseini (Researcher, University of Helsinki) & Aaro Tupasela (University of Helsinki, Trust-M project)

Language is institutionally regarded as a crucial factor in facilitating integration; for immigrants, it simultaneously functions as a gatekeeper through which access to information, perceived trustworthiness, a sense of belonging, and inclusion are evaluated. Drawing on thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with long-term Finnish residents, this study elucidates how linguistic exclusion operates not as a singular event, but as a cumulative process. Some participants who were unable to navigate Finnish-language digital portals were not merely technically disadvantaged; they were also symbolically positioned as outsiders within systems designed for native speakers. Repeated experiences, being assumed illiterate for not speaking Finnish, receiving systematically inferior information through English-language portals, and relying on informal interpreters for critical institutional decisions, gradually eroded both institutional trust and their sense of being legitimate participants in Finnish society. Crucially, trust was most consistently rebuilt through relational encounters: a culturally responsive officer, a Finnish friend who bridged informational gaps, or a digital interaction that communicated recognition rather than suspicion. These findings present a significant policy challenge. The proliferation of parallel or multilingual portals entails substantial resource expenditures, poses risks of data fragmentation, and may inadvertently perpetuate segregation rather than promote inclusion. This paper advocates a single, inclusive digital gateway: a transparent interface that actively supports language learning, fosters digital literacy across cultural backgrounds, and accommodates diverse communicative needs within one equitable system. Such an approach mitigates digital discrimination, strengthens trust through equal access, and frames language not as a barrier to be circumvented but as a competence to be developed through meaningful institutional participation.

2.6 Language as a Proxy in Inclusion and Exclusion: A focus on children

Session Conveners	Sari Pöyhönen sari.h.poyhonen@jyu.fi (chair) & Hilde Hjertager hilde.b.lund@uib.no (chair) Linda Bäckman linda.backman@migrationinstitute.fi
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Simone Weil (M134), Arken

Session Description

Language has long played a central part in drawing borders: European nation-states were built around the idea of ‘one language, one nation’, centring the dominance of standard languages in opposition to other varieties. Language is likewise given a crucial position in recent policies of immigration and integration through for example the emphasis on language as ‘key to society’ in integration training, language requirements for many positions in the labour market, as well as access and belonging to the state through citizenship. In the case of Finland, the government has recently introduced language requirements also for permanent residency, and language skills of internationally recruited nurses have been widely debated in politics and the media.

Language thus acts as a gatekeeper for in/exclusion in society, and speaking an official, national language is portrayed as a sign of loyalty towards the state and a proof of ‘integration’ and trustworthiness. In this, language practices become a site in which assumptions about belonging, competence and cultural alignment are imposed. This is also relevant in institutional encounters, where assessment, documentation and language requirements may shape access, participation and belonging.

Research in language studies has, however, for several decades shown how language ideologies are always about more than language. In many state policies, language is used as a proxy for race, ethnicity, religion or other categories that cannot legally act as basis for differentiation. In this, certain populations and speakers are surveilled and marked more than others, maintaining colonial power asymmetries. 'Language barriers' thereby also reflect embedded power hierarchies and structures to in/exclude.

Monolingual language ideologies are deeply embedded in conceptions of identity and belonging, as well as in how the host society interprets its existing linguistic diversity in relation to the linguistic integration of newcomers. At the same time, research shows that an individual's language use reflects their linguistic citizenship: their agency, participation, and opportunities to exercise control over their linguistic resources and to construct new identities and communities.

This panel aims to bring together scholars working at the intersection of language and migration studies to explore different ways in which language acts as a means for social inclusion/exclusion, through topics concerning for example:

- Language learning and teaching
- Language requirements and testing
- Language in institutional encounters
- Language ideologies
- Linguistic citizenship and activism

Accepted Papers

1. Language, Spaces and Belonging: Cross-cultural Children's Experiences of Inclusion and Exclusion across Helsinki: Eurídice Hernández Gomes (Department of Cultures, University of Helsinki)

Scholarship on Finland's bilingual framework has often described it as a form of parallel monolingualism, where Finnish- and Swedish-language institutions operate as largely separate cultural spaces. While this spatial separation has been regarded as essential for safeguarding minority languages, it also reflects broader language ideologies that assume languages and communities exist as distinct and bounded entities. However, as children in Finland increasingly grow up navigating multiple linguistic landscapes in which Finnish and Swedish coexist alongside a wide range of heritage languages, it is worth reconsidering whether this model adequately captures their everyday linguistic realities.

Drawing on one year of multi-sited ethnography and 21 drawing-elicitation interviews with cross cultural children and young people of Latin American backgrounds living in the Helsinki Metropolitan Region, this presentation examines how they move across multiple linguistic environments and the meanings they attach to these experiences. The findings show that participants mobilise fluid linguistic and cultural repertoires closely intertwined with emotions, relationships, and everyday practices of belonging. At the same time, these repertoires are experienced differently across the city. While some institutional settings continue to privilege monolingual language practices, superdiverse container spaces—multilingual settings where different languages coexist and are enacted in everyday life—create opportunities for translanguaging and transknowledging that challenge rigid linguistic boundaries. As a result, the same linguistic practices may be welcomed in some settings while questioned or othered in others.

By foregrounding children's own experiences, the paper argues that language does not function as a universal mechanism of inclusion or exclusion. Instead, the contrasting experiences of the same children across different urban settings demonstrates that processes of in/exclusion emerge through the interaction between children's linguistic repertoires and the language ideologies embedded in particular urban spaces. In doing so, the paper shows that the relationship between language and belonging is spatially situated.

2. Access to language through access to participation: Multilingual children in Norwegian ECEC: Maria-Rosa R. Doublet (Research fellow and PhD student in Norwegian at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences) and Hilde Hjertager Lund (University of Bergen, The faculty of Pscyhology, Departement of Education)

Language is often treated as a condition for, and an important part of, participation in educational institutions (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). In this paper, we want to reverse the question and ask how participation itself enables or hinders opportunities for language use, language acquisition, and belonging among multilingual children in Norwegian Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

The study draws on a qualitative case study of a single culturally and linguistically diverse ECEC institution selected as a "good practice" case. The empirical material comprises participant observation in two departments, staff interviews, and six group conversations with 14 children aged four to five. The analysis focuses on two patterns in the data: 56rganized participation and linguistic belonging. We analyse how 56rganized participation functioned as supportive scaffolding to enable language use (Wood et.al., 1976) and draw on usage-based approaches to language acquisition through input, exposure, and meaningful social interaction (Bybee, 2010; Tomasello, 2003). We use Yuval-Davis's (2011) politics of belonging to analyse how these participation structures simultaneously shape the boundaries and conditions of linguistic belonging.

The findings show that participation was partly 56rganized to reduce the dependence on Norwegian verbal skills. Visual dayboards, activity boards, and picture supports helped children understand routines and negotiate access to daily activities through play. Children use language to define their relationship with home, ECEC, family, and peers. Home languages were visible and valued in ECEC, but Norwegian was most linked to full participation.

We argue that language can act as a gatekeeper to inclusion, but the relationship is recursive rather than one-dimensional: limited access to participation can also constrain opportunities to develop the language competence ECEC institutions expect. Inclusion and belonging therefore depend not only on children's linguistic competence but also on how institutions construct communicative participation.

3. Relational Ethics in Research on Sami Languages and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs: Nitharsana Rayappu (Department of Education, University of Bergen) and Kari Hagatun (University of Helsinki)

When doing research on languages in communities with a long history of exploitation and discrimination, scholars bear an ethical responsibility to address unequal power relations. Following centuries of Norwegianization and forced assimilation within the educational system, Sámi languages are categorized as severely endangered (UNESCO, 2010). Language revitalization, understood as an ongoing process to strengthen Sámi culture and identity, is thus an increasingly important topic within Sámi education (The Truth and Reconciliation Commision, 2023). However, there is limited research on Sámi-speaking children's language development, and the role language plays in inclusive special needs education.

This paper will draw on a mixed method study; Váibmogiella / Language of the Heart. The study consists of an ongoing quantitative longitudinal project aiming to explore how to support Sámi-speaking children in their social and academic development in Norway, and a qualitative ethnographic project further investigating inclusion of Sámi pupils with special needs, foregrounding the perspectives of Sámi children and their parents.

As research on the Sámi communities has historically reinforced discriminatory practices, it is important to establish trust between researchers and communities. This is especially important when issues connected to language are focused, as language is deeply intwined with feelings of inclusion and/or exclusion. While indigenous research has mainly focused of small-scale qualitative research, there has been limited attention on how large-scale quantitative projects can be conducted while maintaining core values in indigenous ethical frameworks.

This paper argues more focus within minority and migration research on (1) the interplay between minority language and inclusion of children with special needs, and (2) the need for centering local relational practices and minority languages in the research process.

4. Inclusion by choice, exclusion by practice? Migrant pupils' access to Swedish-medium schools in Finland: Sari Pöyhönen & Tuuni Tyni (University of Jyväskylä, Centre for Applied Language Studies, Finland)

Immigration plays a growing role in Finland's demographic development. Under Finland's bilingual language policy, migrants have a statutory right to choose either Finnish or Swedish as their integration language (Act on the Promotion of Integration 681/2023). In practice, however, educational pathways from early childhood to adult education are overwhelmingly organised in Finnish, including in some Swedish-majority municipalities (Bäckman & Haapamäki 2024; Pöyhönen & Simpson 2021; Sundbäck 2017).

In 2023, 84% of pupils in Swedish-medium comprehensive schools had Swedish registered as their first language, 11% Finnish, and 5% another language. Most pupils with migrant backgrounds attending Swedish-medium schools are concentrated in the Helsinki metropolitan area and Ostrobothnia.

There are two legally equal education paths in Finland in both national languages, Swedish and Finnish. Despite this formal equality, disparities in resources between Swedish- and Finnish-medium education have been identified. As a result, the challenges and development needs of Swedish-medium education have been the subject of growing concern. From the perspective of linguistic justice, limited access to Swedish-language integration pathways restricts opportunities for migrant children and young people to participate in Swedish-speaking communities. At the same time, Swedish-medium schools have fewer opportunities than Finnish-medium schools to engage with linguistic and cultural diversity.

This presentation draws on a three-year multidisciplinary project (2025–2028) examining educational pathways for integration through Swedish in Finland. Focusing on municipal policies and practices, we analyse how opportunities to access Swedish-medium comprehensive education are shaped locally. The study is based on interviews with municipal officials, school principals, decision-makers, and integration experts, complemented by policy and document analysis. As data collection is ongoing, the presentation reports initial findings and discusses their implications for linguistic justice, educational equity, and social inclusion.

2.7 Language as a Proxy in Inclusion and Exclusion: Language and access to services

Session Conveners	Linda Bäckman linda.backman@migrationinstitute.fi (chair) Sari Pöyhönen sari.h.poyhonen@jyu.fi Hilde Hjertager hilde.b.lund@uib.no
Time	13:00-14:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 1
Place	Nikander (D110), Arken

Session Description

Language has long played a central part in drawing borders: European nation-states were built around the idea of 'one language, one nation', centring the dominance of standard languages in opposition to other varieties. Language is likewise given a crucial position in recent policies of immigration and integration through for example the emphasis on language as 'key to society' in integration training, language requirements for many positions in the labour market, as well as access and belonging to the state through citizenship. In the case of Finland, the government has recently introduced language requirements also for permanent residency, and language skills of internationally recruited nurses have been widely debated in politics and the media.

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Research in language studies has, however, for several decades shown how language ideologies are always about more than language. In many state policies, language is used as a proxy for race, ethnicity, religion or other categories that cannot legally act as basis for differentiation. In this, certain populations and speakers are surveilled and marked more than others, maintaining colonial power asymmetries. 'Language barriers' thereby also reflect embedded power hierarchies and structures to in/exclude.

Monolingual language ideologies are deeply embedded in conceptions of identity and belonging, as well as in how the host society interprets its existing linguistic diversity in relation to the linguistic integration of newcomers. At the same time, research shows that an individual's language use reflects their linguistic citizenship: their agency, participation, and opportunities to exercise control over their linguistic resources and to construct new identities and communities.

This panel aims to bring together scholars working at the intersection of language and migration studies to explore different ways in which language acts as a means for social inclusion/exclusion, through topics concerning for example:

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- Language requirements and testing
- Language in institutional encounters
- Language ideologies
- Linguistic citizenship and activism

Accepted Papers

1. Language Barriers and Healthcare Access among Nepali Migrants in Finland:Shrwan Kumar Khanal (Doctoral Researcher, Doctoral Programme in Social Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland)

Finland's welfare state promises equal access to healthcare, but that promise depends on being able to communicate in local languages. For minority migrant groups, this requirement can quietly sort who receives full access to care and whose needs are heard. This paper examines how language barriers function as a gatekeeping mechanism in healthcare encounters among Nepali migrants, a growing but understudied community in Finland.

The study draws on 27 semi-structured interviews with working-age Nepali migrants. The study was conducted between February and August 2023 and analysed thematically. Findings highlight that limited Finnish proficiency made it difficult for participants to understand medical instructions, follow referral pathways, and communicate symptoms accurately. This further contributed to medication errors. Participants who spoke English or little Finnish often felt they received less attentive care, which some read as a form of discrimination linked to how they sounded rather than what they needed. Professional interpreter services, although legally guaranteed, were frequently unreliable, while privacy concerns discouraged the use of community interpreters within this small, tightly connected community. As a result, many participants turned to employers, family, and co-ethnic networks for guidance, sometimes receiving misleading information about their healthcare rights.

These findings suggest that language operates as more than a communication barrier. It works as a proxy for migrant status and belonging, reproducing exclusion in a system that presents itself as universal. The paper argues that healthcare institutions expect fluency in Finnish or Swedish, the two local languages. Among migrants who have not yet learned these languages, a group growing alongside rising international migration, this expectation decides who is treated as a full member of the healthcare system and who is left to navigate it through informal, uneven support.

2. Accessibility of Multilingual Online Information on Maternity and Child Health Clinic *(Neuvola)* Services in Finland: A Legal and Linguistic Analysis: Jaana Palander (Tampere University) and Mónica Sánchez Torres (University of Turku)

The Finnish maternity and child health clinic system (*neuvola*) is considered a cornerstone of primary healthcare. However, increasing linguistic diversity challenges equal access to services. This study examines the multilingual accessibility of online information on *neuvola* services from legal and linguistic perspectives. The data comprise *neuvola*-related webpages maintained by all 21 wellbeing service counties, Helsinki and Åland. The legal analysis focuses on linguistic rights, access to information, and accessibility of *neuvola*-services, and the linguistic analysis applies the 4-A/AAAQ framework to evaluate the availability and accessibility of multilingual information.

The results reveal great regional variation. Bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) wellbeing service counties provide more comprehensive and functionally accessible multilingual information, whereas monolingual regions often offer only partial translations. Common problems include untranslated subpages, links redirecting users to Finnish-language content, and fragmented multilingual service pathways. Although legal minimum requirements are met, practical linguistic accessibility, particularly in foreign languages, remains uneven. The findings reveal challenges in equality in access that that vary geographically and directly impact the sociodemographic distribution of social justice.

Equal access requires not only information availability but also the ability to find, understand, and use information regardless of linguistic background. Linguistic accessibility is therefore not merely a technical issue; it is also a matter of participation and inclusion. The inability to access information in a language that is understandable limit people's ability to exercise their rights and participate in decisions concerning their health, which may in turn reduce the use of health services. It may also weaken trust in public *neuvola* services and encourage people to seek alternative service providers.

3. Minority Languages, Institutional Trust, and Linguistic Gatekeeping in the Church of Sweden: Anoo Niskanen (Åbo Akademi University)

This paper examines how the national minority languages Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani Chib and Sami, as well as Swedish Sign Language, function as sites of inclusion and exclusion within the Church of Sweden. Building on research on language ideologies, minoritisation and institutional belonging, the study explores how linguistic hierarchies, historical assimilation and policy–practice gaps shape minority language users' experiences of participation and trust in religious institutional settings.

A central analytical focus is how monolingual language ideologies influence perceptions of linguistic proximity and distance. These ideologies contribute to the idea that some languages feel closer to Swedish and therefore more appropriate within church structures, while others are perceived as linguistically or culturally foreign. Swedish Sign Language is often associated with long institutional continuity and with user groups perceived as native to Sweden, which reinforces its visibility and acceptance. Romani Chib, despite its long history in Sweden, is frequently associated with migration and mobility, which affects how the language is positioned and understood within the Church of Sweden. These ideological patterns reflect broader societal tendencies in which language becomes a proxy for race, ethnicity or cultural alignment, shaping who is recognised as belonging and who is perceived as peripheral.

The paper analyses how minority language users navigate these ideologies and how trust is built, eroded or negotiated in encounters with a majority language institution. It also investigates how employees interpret language policies and how institutional decisions, such as reductions in Finnish language activities, influence minority language users' perceptions of reliability, accountability and linguistic equity.

Methodologically, the project combines an anonymous survey, interviews with church employees and discursive analysis of policy documents. Together, these approaches illuminate how minority language users negotiate their linguistic positioning within the Church of Sweden.

4. Tensions and paradoxes in amended integration legislation: Partial dissolving of Swedish integration paths in Finland?: Elina Sagne-Ollikainen and Elina Pirjatanniemi (Åbo Akademi)

The structure of integration services in Swedish is facing changes due to recent legislative amendments of the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (HE 74/2026 vp)**.** The government proposal on the Integration Act was commented by civil society actors, integration service providers, universities, municipalities, ombudsmen and authorities during January and February 2026. By analysing the comments on the legislative proposal from these actors and by combining the view of key actors for integration in Swedish, such as Bildningsalliansen and a main provider of integration services in Swedish language in the Metropolitan area, Luckan, this research focuses on paradoxes in the legislative changes with a focus on linguistic rights, equality and non-discrimination.

This research report is funded by the Swedish Culture Foundation and is part of a three year-long research project (2026–2028) on national legislation and policy documents related to linguistic rights. The goal is to identify gaps and needs concerning access to linguistic and cultural diversity. Work package 1 is led by the Institute for Human Rights at Åbo Akademi University, and it scrutinizes relevant legislation that regulates the status of the migrant, concerning their opportunities to integrate.

The reform of the Integration Act has a labour market focus on integration, leaving some groups of immigrants outside of the focus of integration, such as children, victims of human-trafficking, refugees and elderly immigrants. Simultaneous cuts of the funding of organizations in the third sector, risk to exacerbate the consequences of persons in vulnerable situations.

2.8 Migrant kinship networks – Legal and policy frameworks in shaping family life and belonging in a host country

Session Conveners	Mirkka Danielsbacka mirkka.danielsbacka@utu.fi & Johanna Lahtela johanna.lahtela@vaestoliitto.fi (MigScene consortium)
Time	15:00-16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 2 and 9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel Session 3
Place	Smedjan (M227), Arken

Session description

One of the most effective ways of integration and belonging is to strengthen immigrant ties to the host country through family connections. Family is the most important social institution and a key provider of (emotional) support. Immigrants often lack the support of extended family members in the host country as they typically immigrate either alone or with only their core family. What are the the likely trajectories of employment, productivity and family formation across different immigrant groups and generations and how these are shaped by family relations, are questions that have not been answered yet.

What is the role of legal and policy frameworks in shaping family life, including family reunification policies, residence status, and access to social services? These structures can both enable and constrain the possibilities for maintaining family unity and fostering a sense of belonging. We welcome submissions on topics such as migrant family relations, quantitative migration studies, transnational families, and family reunification policies.

The Population projections for migration scenarios, human capital development, and sustainable integration (MigScene) consortium explores how human capital, and productivity may evolve in Finland under various educational, migration, and integration scenarios. MigScene is funded by the Strategic Research Council (STN), established within the Research Council of Finland. MigScene is part of the Skills, Labour Supply and Migration in Future Finland (SKILLS) program.

Language of the session: English

Accepted Papers

Parallel Session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Population projections for migration scenarios, human capital development, and sustainable integration (MigScene): Johanna Lahtela, Väestöliitto & Mirkka Danielsbacka (University of Turku)

The most important economic asset of a population is its human capital: the skills, educational level, and wellbeing of residents. Educational expansion and international immigration can increase human capital and mitigate the negative consequences of population ageing. Attracting skilled migrants is key for increasing productivity, while integration in a way that promotes social cohesion also involves new demands to the educational system, social services, and society at large. This challenge is shared by all high-income countries but is especially astute in Finland, with its stalling productivity and educational levels, ultra-low fertility, a modest recent history of immigration, and stark concentration of immigrants to the capital region.

MigScene answers to these challenges and opportunities by exploring how human capital and productivity may evolve in Finland under various educational, migration, and integration scenarios. We present a set of multidimensional population projections up to the year 2070, study integration processes, employ methodological innovations, and enhance capacity to use projection tools. Specifically, we address the following questions: What are the likely future scenarios of human capital development in Finland, given different types of migration and educational policies, and how do they compare to other high-income countries? How do different scenarios affect labour force productivity, public expenditure, and the Finnish pension system? How can Finland compete internationally and successfully integrate skilled immigrants and their descendants in different regions? How can services and education ensure all children and youth enter adulthood with optimal capabilities?

In this presentation, we introduce the MigScene consortium which brings together expertise in data science, economics, and the social sciences. MigScene uses international microsimulation tools, register data, and advanced statistical methods. MigScene will create scenarios and policy recommendations for immigration policies, and for immigrants' skill development and sustainable integration.

2. Narrowing the gap? The role of integration policies in reducing immigrant-native disparities across integration domains: Minna Tuominen (MigScene/INVEST Research Center and Flagship, University of Turku)

Ageing population and declining fertility rates have increased the importance of immigration for sustaining Europe's labour force, tax base, and welfare systems. At the same time, political pressures to restrict immigration and limit integration measures have intensified across many European countries. While a substantial body of research has examined the relationship between integration policies and immigrant integration outcomes, existing studies have tended to focus primarily on economic and labour market indicators, providing a relatively narrow understanding of integration.

This study adopts Ager and Strang's framework of integration and examines the extent to which national integration policies are associated with differences between immigrants and natives across selected core domains of integration. Particular attention is given to the framework's "soft" dimensions, namely social connections, including family and friendship ties, and facilitating factors such as language use, safety, and stability. By focusing on these domains, the study seeks to capture aspects that are more closely related to the sense of belonging and social inclusion.

The study's main contribution is to shift the focus from immigrants alone to immigrant-native disparities. Thus, it investigates whether more inclusive policy framework can narrow the gap between immigrants and natives across key integration domains. Where data permit, distinctions will be made between migrants with EU and non-EU citizenship to assess whether policy effects vary across migrant groups.

The analysis combines individual-level data from the European Social Survey with country-level indicators from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) and other contextual sources. Multilevel regression models will be used to examine variation across country contexts. Based on previous research, the relationship between integration policies and integration outcomes is not expected to be linear. Nevertheless, the study hypothesises that more inclusive integration policies are associated with smaller immigrant-native disparities across the selected integration domains, particularly among non-EU migrants.

3. The significance of family life and belonging in the transfer of prisoners – A Nordic perspective: Saila Heinikoski (Finnish Institute of International Affairs), Kirsikka Ruonala (University of Turku) and Tatu Hyttinen (University of Turku)

This paper examines the role of family life and belonging in decisions concerning the transfer of prisoners in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. Drawing on legislation and court decisions, it analyses the extent to which family ties, social integration, and attachment to the sentencing state influence decisions to transfer foreign prisoners to another country. Interestingly, while the EU Framework Decision on the transfer of prisoners provides that family reasons need to be considered when making transfer decisions, the Nordic agreement on the transfer of prisoners makes no mention to family life.

The study considers both the legal frameworks governing prisoner transfers and their interpretation in practice. Most of the cases examined concern transfers within the European Union, where legal and administrative procedures are

generally more straightforward. Particular attention is paid to how courts assess family relationships, reintegration prospects, and connections to the sentencing state and the prisoner's country of nationality.

The analysis shows that, although family life and attachment are formally taken into account, courts rarely find that a prisoner is more closely connected to the sentencing state than to their country of citizenship, and prisoners are generally presumed to have stronger social and familial ties to their state of nationality. As a result, transfer decisions are only exceptionally overturned.

The paper also demonstrates that courts frequently assume that employment and reintegration prospects are better in the prisoner's country of nationality. It argues that nationality remains the primary indicator of belonging in transfer decisions, whereas family life and social integration have a more limited influence in practice. Consequently, courts tend to favour transfer if the person has in any case a deportation order and an entry ban to the sentencing state. The paper provides new knowledge on the significance of family ties and belonging concerning the transfer of prisoners.

Parallel Session 3 | 9:15-10:45 | 6.11.26

1. Do they catch up? African immigrants' earnings and employment trajectories in Finland: Chisom Okoli (University of Turku (Doctoral program in Inequalities, Intervention and New Welfare State – INVEST, Sociology)

This research focuses on African immigrants in Finland, comparing their economic integration outcomes and using administrative register data to track these outcomes over time. The study seeks to address an existing gap in immigrant welfare research in Finland by analyzing, longitudinally, the labour market outcomes of African immigrants in comparison to other major immigrant groups in Finland. The study will address this gap by asking: *How do African immigrants differ in their economic integration trajectories (earnings and months employed)* compared with *other immigrant groups?* This research uses the segmented labour market theory to aid its empirical analysis of the research problem. The segmented labor market theory posits that Western economies are bifurcated into a well-paying primary sector and a low-paying secondary sector; it provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing whether African and non-Western immigrants, who are often pushed into the secondary sector, have the same earnings and employment growth trajectories as other immigrant groups in Finland.

The study will use data from Finnish administrative registers to identify people born in Africa who are aged 18-64 and legally reside in Finland. For comparison, the study will also include six other immigrant groups with the same baseline characteristics. This study will use curvilinear growth curve models as part of its analytical strategy. Growth curve models estimate trajectories of earnings and employment over time since arrival in Finland from 2000 to 2023.

This research hypothesizes that African immigrants and those from non-European and non-Western countries will have slower earnings and employment growth trajectories than Western and European immigrants, with the former's labour outcomes failing to converge with the latter. Preliminary results show that immigrants from Africa and the Middle East have lower earnings and employment growth over time than other groups in Finland.

2. The prevalence, characteristics, and geographic distribution of core-kinless older adults in Finland: Mirkka Danielsbacka (University of Turku) & Alyona Artamonova (Population Research Institute)

Core-kinless older adults, i.e., those lacking a partner and children, represent a potentially vulnerable group. However, the whole population-level research devoted to this group remains scarce. This study estimates the prevalence,

sociodemographic characteristics, and geographic distribution of core-kinless adults in Finland, with attention to variation across ethnolinguistic groups of Finnish, Swedish, and other language speakers (often immigrants). We used register data covering the entire population aged 65 and over in 2024 (N = 1,328,732) and descriptive analyses. Core-kinlessness was defined as the absence of both a registered co-residing partner and any living children registered in Finland. In total, 11.6% of older adults in Finland were core-kinless. Prevalence was 11.3% among Finnish-speaking, 10.3% among Swedish-speaking, and 30.5% among other language-speaking individuals. Migration background in general, being male among Finnish-speaking as well as being female, being older and having lower education among other language-speaking individuals are the characteristics of this group. The positive associations between municipal core-kinlessness and i) demographic dependency ratio, ii) the mortality rate among older adults and iii) the rate of home care clients confirm that municipalities where these older adults are concentrated also face greater demographic and service pressures. This study provides the first register based national estimates of core-kinlessness in Finland, demonstrating that survey data underestimate this group. The findings o er evidence for targeted care planning at the individual and municipality levels.

3. Kinship networks of immigrants in Finland: Samuli Helle (INVEST Research Flagship Centre, University of Turku, Turku, Finland) & Mirkka Danielsbacka (Population Research Institute, Väestöliitto, Helsinki, Finland)

Family is the most important social institution, and kin members are key providers of all kinds of support. Immigrants often lack the everyday support of kin in the host country, as they typically immigrate either alone or with only their immediate family. In addition to the crucial importance of family and kin for individual well-being, family connections may also facilitate integration. By supporting family connections, immigrants' ties to and sense of belonging in the host country may be strengthened. The extent and composition of kinship networks of immigrants residing in Finland are not known. In this study, we describe the kin networks of first-generation immigrants using Finnish full-population register data. We aim to describe, as accurately as possible, the kin networks of immigrants in Finland across time (e.g., 2000, 2010, 2020, 2024), stratified by ego's age groups (e.g., 5, 15, 35, 65, 85), country of birth, and region within Finland. One known limitation of the register data is that we cannot identify siblings or other horizontal kin if they do not share an older generation (e.g., a mother or father) that is observed in the data. Consequently, kinship networks of immigrants constructed using register data will inevitably remain incomplete. This limitation needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results.

2.9 Trust and belonging in everyday relationships between people with different backgrounds

Session conveners	Ella Heimonen ella.heimonen@uef.fi Eerika Finell eerika.finell@uef.fi
Time	13:00-14:30 and 15:00-16:30, Thursday, 5.11.2026, Parallel sessions 1 and 2
Place	Kramer (M220), Arken

Session Description

Positive encounters in everyday life can be important in answering one's need for belonging, as these encounters can facilitate building sustaining and rewarding social relationships. As societies become more diverse, the importance of forming such relationships with individuals who do not share one's background (e.g. spoken language, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) increases. However, individuals may avoid such encounters due to many reasons, including feelings of fear or anxiety. Positive encounters between people with different backgrounds in everyday life could increase trust as well as strengthen individuals' sense of belonging in their everyday communities. Such encounters may also lead to developing more enduring relationships with people from different backgrounds, which can have a large impact on individual's health and well-being and society at large.

This session explores trust and belonging in mundane relationships between people with different backgrounds. This includes questions about how trust and belonging shape these relationships as well as how individuals experience trust and belonging in their everyday relationships. Such relationships may include close relationships (e.g., friends, family, intimate partners), neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances, as well as more distal relationships, such as those formed in the third sector (e.g., NGOs, associations), in institutional contexts (e.g., schools or kindergarten) or on digital platforms.

Relevant questions may include, for example: what material, social or psychological elements hinder trust and belonging in relationships between people with different backgrounds? Which elements, in turn, can support them? How do individuals experience their everyday relationships of such nature; how are trust and belonging connected to these experiences? How do individuals deal with and make sense of mis- or distrust in their everyday relationships? How do close and rewarding relationships between people with different backgrounds develop? Whether and how may feelings of dis- or mistrust prevent one from forming such relationships? How do relationships between people with different backgrounds in everyday life, positive or negative, shape individuals' sense of belonging and trust in society?

We invite presentations that explore these or related themes in everyday relationships between people with different backgrounds from diverse perspectives, disciplines, and methodological approaches.

Accepted Papers:

Parallel Session 1 | 13:00-14:30 | 5.11.26

1. Emerging "we-ness" in developing friendships between Finnish and foreign-background mothers: Ella Heimonen (University of Eastern Finland), Eerika Finell (University of Eastern Finland), Clifford Stevenson (Nottingham Trent University; Tohoku University), Paula Paajanen (University of Eastern Finland), Kevin Durrheim (University of Johannesburg)

It is well known that identifying with a superordinate category can facilitate friendship between people with different backgrounds by highlighting their similarities. However, rewarding friendships may require a subjective sense of belonging to the common category. In this qualitative study, we investigate how an emerging friendship identity, "we-ness", unfolds over time in accounts of Finnish and immigrant-background befriending dyads where both members are mothers. We understand we-ness to consist of (a) a sense of trust and closeness with the partner, (b) perceived similarity and (c) the assumption that one's partner shares a similar identification with the relationship as oneself. The data consists of individual interviews with 12 intergroup mother dyads conducted individually three times over a six month period after first meeting each other (N = 72 interviews). Based on narrative analysis with a longitudinal dyadic approach, we constructed four longitudinal dyadic composite narratives: 1) becoming life-long friends; 2) gradually developing a bond as mothers; 3) uniting motherhood, divisive group differences; and 4) differing perspectives on the importance of motherhood. In the first two narratives, the we-ness was shared within the dyad and complementary with motherhood, demonstrating deep feelings of closeness and trust toward the partner and perceptions of a shared worldview (Type 1), or a fairly close bond and some doubts regarding the friendship's future (Type 2). In the latter two narratives the we-ness was not shared within the dyad, reflecting tensions or incompatibility between we-ness and differing backgrounds of the participants (Type 3) or motherhood (Type 4). The results show that sharing a common category is not always enough to facilitate shared we-ness in friendships between people with differing backgrounds.

Keywords: befriending, friendship, we-ness, longitudinal dyadic analysis, narrative

2. Non-communication of racism in international students' career counseling: Emma Nortio & Miira Niska (University of Helsinki)

International students are often discussed as ideal immigrants who are expected to contribute to Finnish society as highly educated experts after graduation. At the same time, they face difficulties in finding employment that matches their expertise. As previous research has shown the presence of racism in the Finnish labor market, international students' employment difficulties can be assumed to partly result from discrimination.

Career counseling is often presented as a way to improve international students' knowledge of the labor market and their position within it. In this study, we examine the interactional dynamics of career counseling sessions involving international students. More specifically, we focus on how racism in the Finnish labor market is (not) communicated in these institutional encounters. The data consist of 16 video- or audio-recorded career counseling sessions, which are analyzed from the perspectives of applied conversation analysis and discursive psychology.

The perspective of non-communication enables the analysis of the non-occurrence of communication events that could have occurred in a given situation. We argue that, as international students are at risk of experiencing racist discrimination, this is a relevant topic in career counseling. However, it is not explicitly brought up in the data. In this

paper, we examine situations in which this topic could have been raised and discuss the dynamics and consequences of its non-communication.

3. "She Really Listens": Trust and Relational Agency among Migrant Background Youth in Child Welfare Out-of-Home Care: Johanna Wikgren-Roelofs (Åbo Akademi University)

Drawing on Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) (Jordan, 2017), this study explores how young service users with migrant backgrounds experience relationship-building with child welfare professionals in out-of-home care (OHC) in Finland. While previous research on young people with migrant backgrounds in child welfare has highlighted participation, language barriers, and institutional inequalities, less attention has been paid to the relational processes through which trust, connection, and relational safety are established, negotiated, and sometimes withdrawn.

The study is based on photo-elicited semi-structured interviews with nine service users aged 15-17 living in three OHC institutions across Finland. Data were analysed using thematic analysis informed by RCT. Although the same dataset has previously been used to examine language barriers and hermeneutical injustice, the present analysis focuses on young people's relational experiences with child welfare professionals.

The quote, "She really listens instead of just giving rehearsed replies," captures an emerging pattern in the empirical data. Initial analysis suggests that trust may be generated less through professional authority or expertise than through experiences of authentic responsiveness and genuine engagement. Preliminary results indicate that young people actively assess professionals and selectively invest in relationships they perceive as trustworthy, sometimes waiting for "the right person" before seeking support. Initial findings also suggest that withdrawal from professionals may be understood not simply as disengagement or resistance, but as a protective response to experiences of mistrust, surveillance, or relational disappointment.

The study contributes to child welfare and migration research by conceptualising young people as active relational agents and by examining how trust is negotiated in child welfare institutional care. Preliminary findings suggest that migration and language diversity may shape the conditions under which trust, connection, and withdrawal are negotiated, while the relational processes themselves may extend beyond this particular group. The study further demonstrates the value of RCT for understanding relationship-building in child welfare settings.

4. Intercultural Competence in Police Responses to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: A Conceptual Analysis Through the Nordic Context: Katja Köykkä (PhD researcher, University of Eastern Finland), Camila Iglesias (Assistant Prof. Lusofona University, Portugal)

This article examines the competencies required of authorities and police officers when encountering victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), with a particular focus on intercultural competence. More specifically, it asks how intercultural competence can be conceptualised as a core professional competency in authorities' and police officers' encounters with SGBV victims, and what dimensions of such competence are required to ensure victim-sensitive and equitable responses. The analysis draws on the Nordic policing context. Adopting a reflexive analytical perspective, the study is positioned as a conceptual contribution. In conceptual research, arguments are not grounded in primary empirical data in the conventional sense; rather, they emerge from the systematic integration and synthesis of existing concepts and theoretical frameworks.

SGBV is a complex and often underreported phenomenon, particularly affecting people from multicultural backgrounds, who may face barriers to accessing support and justice. Public authorities, especially the police, play a

key role in protecting victims and ensuring equal access to justice. Failure to report violence can jeopardize victims' safety and recovery, and experiences of not being believed by police have been linked to adverse health outcomes.

In the Nordic policing context, public trust and institutional legitimacy are closely tied to the quality of police-citizen interactions. Responding effectively to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) requires more than legal and procedural knowledge; it also demands professional competencies such as intercultural competence, cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, and empathetic communication. Research shows that survivors' trust in the police is strongly influenced by whether they are heard, believed, informed, and treated with dignity throughout the reporting and investigative process. In contrast, victim-blaming, dismissive treatment, and inadequate communication may contribute to revictimisation and reduced engagement with justice processes. Furthermore, studies highlight the importance of police officers' trauma-related knowledge and their ability to provide supportive responses to survivors. Despite growing recognition of these competencies, Nordic research remains limited in examining how this expertise is developed, enacted, and supported within policing practice, particularly in relation to SGBV, indicating an important gap in the literature.

5. Punctual communities – experienced "comunidad" among Latin American Women in Helsinki: Mervi Leppäkorpi (University of Eastern Finland), Eurídice Hernández Gomes (University of Helsinki)

In research on migration, the importance of networks and communities is embedded in the understanding of how migrants attach to their chosen place of residence. We focus on the concept of the community (la comunidad) and the importance of it in research on migrants and migrant communities. We ask what characterizes the experienced (lack of) "comunidad" among Latin American women living in Helsinki. Our goal is to highlight how migration research focusing on "ethnic" or "national" communities may obscure communal experiences that are loose and project-bound but still provide some sort of care to these migrant women.

The data draw on two ongoing research projects: one focusing on Spanish speaking women and their experiences of the Finnish welfare state, another examining the role of urban social infrastructure in the identity construction processes of cross-cultural children with Latin American backgrounds. We analyze the different needs women face, from navigating bureaucratic systems and finding employment to raising children in the diaspora.

A common element across this trajectory is the fragility of la comunidad, which is sometimes experienced as absent. While struggling to find a sense of belonging in Finland, everyday life is often organized around the family, particularly spouses and children and around what we conceptualize as "punctual communities". Built around shared projects or common interests rather than national affiliations, these punctual communities are temporally and spatially limited. Nonetheless, they provide moments of belonging and loose social ties that eventually allow reciprocity and care — la comunidad— to emerge among those who produce and sustain these projects.

Accepted papers

Parallel Session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Filing, Shaping, Polishing: Embodied Skill and Self-Worth among Vietnamese Migrant Nail Technicians in Helsinki: Ngoc Thu Nguyen (Diversity in Society and Life (DIVSOL), CEREN (The Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism))

Drawing on sensory ethnographic research in a Vietnamese-owned nail salon catering to middle-class customers in Helsinki, the paper traces the journeys through which manicurists acquire and develop their skills, from apprentice to expert. It explores the different "battles" that migrant workers (most women) must cope with, negotiate, or resist not only within the nail salon itself, such as in the encounters with clients involving time pressure, work demands, proximity and intimate interactions, but also in their relationship with other manicurists, salon owners, and especially in negotiating their own sense of self, dignity, belonging, and embodied experiences in the workplace. Feminist phenomenology is a theoretical approach that examines lived experiences in the relation to gender, and social structures. It understands the body not as a neutral biological entity, but as a socially and politically constituted site where cultures, norms, social discourses, and power relations are experienced, embodied, internalized, and negotiated through everyday life (Ahmed, 2014; Butler, 1990, 2022; Young, 1980). For migrant women, these processes intersect with gender, race, and class, as occupational skills and qualifications may not be recognised as equivalent professional capital in the host society (Anderson, 2000; Parreñas, 2001). These barriers are more particular in the beauty service industry, where the body is exploited and emotion labour is commercialised and controlled in encounters with customers (Hochschild, 2012; Kang, 2020; Vu, 2022). Building on these perspectives, the paper draws attention to the question: In those exploited working conditions, how do embodied skills become a foundation for workers' sense of self-worth? By engaging with feminist epistemology, it focuses on embodied skills involved in producing women's sense of self-worth in nail salons from the over 300 hours observing in a nail salon in downtown Helsinki.

2. "Nature and City So Closely Tied Together": Place Attachment, Belonging, and Environmental Citizenship of Young Migrants in Tampere: Dr. Turkan Firinci Orman (Migration Institute of Finland)

This paper examines how transnational migration trajectories shape young adults' (18–22 years) experiences of belonging, inclusion/exclusion, and spatial attachment in Tampere, Finland. It asks: How do everyday spatial practices and encounters across difference influence young migrants' sense of place attachment and their emerging understandings of environmental citizenship and sustainability? The study draws on triangulated geo-social data, including digital mapping activities, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a "Letter to My Future Self" exercise. The study includes 13–15 participants with diverse transnational mobility backgrounds living and studying in Tampere. Preliminary findings suggest three key insights. First, environmental inclusion is strongly supported by urban infrastructures and access to nature, which together foster intuitive engagement with sustainable everyday practices and strengthen place attachment. These practices, particularly walking, cycling, recycling, and engagement with urban green spaces provide situated entry points for performing environmental citizenship as embodied and everyday practice. Second, social inclusion is more uneven in the current material, yet not uniformly constrained. While environmental sustainability is readily enacted through spatial practices, social and cultural belonging is experienced in more differentiated ways, shaped by varying experiences of inclusion and exclusion and by uneven opportunities for embedded participation. However, data also indicate future-oriented expectations of social belonging in Tampere. Third, belonging is multi-sited. Transnational ties mean that attachment to Tampere coexists with sustained emotional and social connections elsewhere, producing asynchronous forms of place attachment and social belonging. The paper contributes to the conference theme of trust and belonging by showing that environmental inclusion, social inclusion,

and belonging do not necessarily develop at the same pace. It highlights how urban nature and sustainable infrastructures foster place attachment, while social belonging is shaped by both inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics alongside transnational attachments.

Keywords: transnational youth migration; urban belonging; place attachment; everyday spatial practices; environmental citizenship; social sustainability

3. Social Connectedness in Changing Urban Neighbourhoods: Tuuli Anna Renvik (PhD, Chief Specialist, City of Helsinki, Urban Research and Statistics), Pekka Mustonen & Sirkku Järvelä

International migration is driving the growth of many European cities, making local populations increasingly diverse. However, intergroup contact and a shared sense of belonging do not necessarily increase in parallel: encounters between different groups of residents may be avoided, interactions may be perceived as unpleasant, and boundaries between groups may remain impermeable. The persistent challenge of residential segregation has prompted policymakers to consider ways of strengthening social connectedness at the neighbourhood level. To support these efforts, a deeper understanding of the characteristics and correlates of social connectedness in urban contexts is needed. The potential benefits are substantial, as recent research suggests that not only individuals' own sense of belonging to a community, but also the average level of identification among community members, can serve as a "social cure" for a range of psychosocial challenges. We conceptualise social connectedness as a subjective sense of belonging and a psychological bond between individuals and groups. It is assessed through five neighbourhood-related dimensions: sense of belonging, neighbour relationships, attitudes towards diversity, perceptions of intergroup relations, and perceived safety. Using Helsinki as a case example, we draw on recent survey datasets collected in neighbourhoods with varying socio-economic profiles and levels of ethno-cultural diversity. Our objectives are to (1) examine the associations between neighbourhood socio-economic characteristics and social connectedness, and (2) analyse the roles of socio-economic (dis)advantage and neighbourhood social connectedness in shaping residents' self-reported well-being. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings for cities seeking to harness the potential of social connectedness in increasingly diverse urban neighbourhoods.

2.10 Trust, Belonging, and Migration in Nordic Peripheral Border Regions

Session convener	Mamata Raj mamata.raj@helsinki.fi
Time	15:00-16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 2
Place	Jöns Budde (M218), Arken

Session Description

This session explores the role of trust in shaping migration experiences and processes of belonging among immigrant women living in small towns and rural cross-border regions across the Nordic context. While migration research has predominantly focused on urban settings, less attention has been paid to peripheral border areas where mobility, demographic change, and limited resources significantly shape everyday life and opportunities.

The session invites contributions from a range of cross-border contexts, including the Finland–Sweden border, the Finland–Norway border, and connections between Finland and Estonia. These regions provide valuable insights into how borders are lived and experienced in everyday practices such as employment, access to services, community participation, and cross-border mobility. By broadening the geographical scope, the session seeks to encourage comparative perspectives and interdisciplinary dialogue.

In rural and peripheral border regions, trust becomes a crucial resource for navigating daily life. It influences access to employment, social networks, and institutional support systems. At the same time, trust is not fixed; it is continuously built, negotiated, and sometimes challenged through experiences of recognition, exclusion, and inequality. Immigrant women's experiences are particularly important in this context, as they often engage with multiple social roles and institutional structures while contributing to local economies and communities.

The session approaches trust as a dynamic and relational process shaped by gender, mobility, and local socio-economic conditions. It examines how trust operates across multiple levels, including interpersonal relations, community networks, institutional encounters, and cross-border interactions. In doing so, it highlights the complexities of belonging and integration in non-urban contexts.

Accepted Papers

1. From Threat to Distrust: Antagonistic Narratives and the Politics of Belonging: Gwenaëlle Bauvois (University of Helsinki)

Trust is a central condition of social cohesion, yet it can become deeply contested when societies are confronted with perceived threats. This paper examines how antagonistic threat narratives shape trust, mistrust and boundaries of belonging, asking how particular groups come to be constructed as sources of societal insecurity and how such constructions affect relations between citizens, institutions and imagined communities.

The paper draws on the KOMKRIS project (Governance and Resilience under Antagonistic Threats in the Nordic-Baltic Region), which examines how governance systems and civil society actors anticipate, interpret and respond to antagonistic threats, and how these responses may reinforce or undermine societal trust and regional resilience. I focus in particular on the communicative dimension of antagonism: how political and societal actors construct threats through narratives that distinguish between a supposedly trustworthy "us" and groups represented as threatening, disloyal or incompatible with the social order.

Methodologically, the paper draws on qualitative analysis of political and public discourse in the Nordic-Baltic context, examining how threat narratives mobilise categories of belonging and how these narratives circulate across different actors and arenas. Rather than treating distrust simply as an outcome of polarisation, I approach it as a potentially productive political resource: distrust can be actively cultivated, directed towards particular groups or institutions, and used to legitimise exclusionary understandings of membership and belonging.

I argue that antagonistic threat narratives can transform questions of migration and social difference into questions of security, trustworthiness and loyalty. In doing so, they do not merely express existing divisions but actively participate in producing the boundaries of the political community. At the same time, responses to perceived threats may themselves reproduce antagonistic distinctions, creating a difficult tension between security governance and the preservation of societal trust.

The paper therefore contributes to discussions of trust and belonging by conceptualising societal resilience not simply as the capacity to withstand threats, but also as the capacity to resist processes of antagonisation that undermine the social relations on which resilience depends.

Keywords: trust; distrust; antagonistic threats; belonging; migration; societal resilience; Nordic-Baltic region

2. Earning a Place: Trust, Recognition and Conditional Belonging among Asian Migrant Women in a Northern Border Region: Mamata Raj (Helsinki University)

Finland's ageing, migration-dependent border regions urgently need migrant workers, yet do not always recognise them. This paper examines how Asian migrant women build belonging in this gap, in the Kemi–Tornio region on the Finland–Sweden border. It develops the concept of conditional belonging: belonging is not granted by arrival, a residence permit or a job, but has to be earned again and again through work, language, recognition of skills and, crucially, trust.

Trust is central to this process. For women navigating a new labour market and unfamiliar institutions, trust shapes whether they can find work, reach the right services, and feel accepted locally. It is not fixed but continuously built, tested and sometimes broken through everyday experiences of recognition and exclusion. The paper argues that belonging is often decided earlier than migration research assumes — in the first weeks after arrival, in whether a woman can learn how systems work, understand what she is entitled to, and find someone willing to help.

The study is qualitative and ethnographic, drawing on life-history interviews and fieldwork with Asian migrant women, conducted where possible in participants' own languages. The northern, cross-border setting is analytically revealing: services are thin, cultural expectations of who "fits" are strong, and for some women daily life stretches across the border into Sweden, so trust and belonging are negotiated across two states at once.

By centring immigrant women in a peripheral border region, the paper places trust at the heart of Nordic debates on migration, retention and regional sustainability. It shows that being needed is not the same as being trusted — and that belonging is earned through trust, built and tested condition by condition. Understanding how migrant women build this trust, and how institutions extend or withhold it, is essential to keeping the people these regions depend on.

3. Migrant experiences of labour, care and belonging in Finnish rural municipalities: Paula Merikoski (University of Helsinki & Åbo Akademi University)

This paper discusses how belonging and sense of home is developed when migrants settle in rural and peripheral regions where population and the public service network is declining. Moreover, it examines how mobilities are entangled with the futures of labour and care in rural regions. Finnish rural regions have since 1990s been destinations of seasonal workers and later year-around workers in green industries. More recently, asylum seekers have been temporarily hosted in reception centres within rural communities. Since 2022, Ukrainian refugees have settled down around Finland, often in regions where they used to take on seasonal agricultural work. In addition, students and workers are increasingly recruited from abroad to the care sector. Migration is sometimes viewed as a solution to the depopulation and need for labour in rural regions, especially in agricultural, service, and care sectors. In the context of care, migrants may be encouraged to fill the gap in health and care workforce, and on the other, migrants themselves are humans with aging and ailing bodies who need health care services as well as support in their over-generational, reproductive duties. Drawing on interviews with earlier and more recently migrated residents in Savo and Ostrobothnia regions, this paper will examine these linkages in the context where the welfare service network is scarcer than in cities and reliance on personal networks may be more difficult to sustain yet all the more needed. Adopting an intersectional perspective the paper examines these themes through changing situations vis à vis health, financial situation, and reproductive duties. Through this lens, the paper seeks to address the question of how migrants navigate their sense of home and belonging within evolving rural landscapes.

Keywords: belonging, care, labour, sense of home, rural migration

2.11 Trust in Everyday Encounters

Session convener	Eveliina Lyytinen, Migration Institute of Finland, eveliina.lyytinen@migrationinstitute.fi
Time	13:00-14:30 and 15:00-16:30, Thursday, 5.11.2026, Parallel sessions 1 and 2
Place	Westermarck (C101), Arken

Accepted papers

Parallel session 1 | 13:00-14:30 | 5.11.26

1. Trust Does Not Begin at the Border: Migrant Life Histories and Integration in Finland: Prince Duah Agyei (Tampere Peace Research Institute)

Trust is widely recognised as important for migrants' experiences of integration, shaping relationships with institutions, communities, and wider society. Yet research often examines trust primarily through migrants' post-arrival encounters in receiving countries. Trust however, does not begin at the border. Migrants arrive with prior experiences of institutions and authority, recognition and exclusion, solidarity and dependence, security and uncertainty. How these accumulated experiences matter for subsequent social and institutional relationships remains insufficiently understood.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with first-generation West African migrants in Finland conducted as part of the Forms of Resistance and Practices of Hope project, the paper explores how trust is narrated across migration trajectories. Rather than treating trust as a stable individual disposition or solely as a product of experiences in the receiving society, the analysis approaches trust as relational, biographical, and continually negotiated. It examines how participants connect past and present encounters with people and institutions, and how earlier experiences inform, complicate, or reshape experiences of belonging and integration in Finland.

The paper does not assume that trust or distrust is simply carried from one context to another. Migration may reinforce existing orientations, disrupt them, or create conditions in which trust is reconsidered and reconstructed through new relationships and institutional encounters. By tracing these processes across participants' narratives, the paper examines how trust is negotiated across places, relationships, and different stages of migration.

Conceptually, the paper develops a biographical approach to trust in migration. It argues that understanding trust and integration requires moving beyond arrival-centred perspectives to examine the longer trajectories through which expectations of people, institutions, and social relations are formed, challenged, and transformed.

2. From Margins to Belonging: Negotiating Trust and Gendered Pathways of Migrant Inclusion in the Nordics: Dr. Surabhi Singh (Bennett University)

Migration has increasingly challenged societies to rethink the relationship between mobility, inclusion, and social cohesion. While trust is recognised as essential for building sustainable relationships between migrants, communities, and institutions, how trust is experienced and negotiated through gendered migration pathways remains comparatively underexplored. This paper examines how gender shapes migrants' encounters with institutions, civil society actors, and local communities, influencing their opportunities for inclusion and processes of belonging in Nordic societies. Drawing on the conceptual frameworks of trust, belonging, and intersectionality, the paper argues that migrant inclusion is not a linear process of adaptation but a dynamic and relational process shaped by social positions, institutional interactions, and everyday encounters. It explores how gendered experiences influence migrants' access to resources, recognition, participation, and feelings of safety and belonging. By connecting trust and gender perspectives within migration research, the study highlights how structural inequalities and social hierarchies shape migrants' ability to develop meaningful relationships with their surrounding societies. Methodologically, the paper adopts a qualitative comparative approach based on existing scholarly literature, policy frameworks, and empirical studies on migration and inclusion in the Nordic context. It examines the role of civil society organisations and social networks as spaces where trust can be cultivated, solidarity can emerge, and migrant participation can be strengthened. The paper contributes to contemporary debates on migration and belonging by demonstrating that trust is not merely an outcome of integration policies but a relational process continuously negotiated between migrants, communities, and institutions. It highlights how trust, gender, and inclusion intersect in shaping sustainable forms of belonging in diverse Nordic societies.

Keywords: Trust; Gender and Migration; Migrant Belonging; Nordic Societies

3. Recognition in Finnish wartime evacuees' and contemporary refugees' experiences of dis/emplacement: Saara Intonen (University of Oulu)

This paper draws on my ongoing research on experiences of forced displacement and emplacement of the Lapland War (1944-1945) evacuees and contemporary refugees in Finland. It contributes to bridging the gap between history and refugee studies that have traditionally been separate fields, affording only scant attention to forced migrants' mnemonic agency. The source material consists of Lapland War evacuees' written narratives, together with thematic interviews and writing competition texts by people who have come to Finland as forced migrants between the 1990s and the 2020s.

Methodologically, I draw from oral history research and qualitative content analysis, applying social philosopher Axel Honneth's (1995) recognition theory. According to Honneth, mutual recognition – as love in primary relations, rights in legal relations and solidarity in community of value – is an essential precondition for personal integrity and social justice, but vulnerable to three corresponding forms of disrespect: abuse, exclusion and denigration.

Similarly to trust, recognition is relational, dynamic and context-dependent, as well as closely linked to senses of safety, equity and belonging. Forced displacement disrupts established relations of recognition, necessitating their renegotiation in new contexts. Distinguishing between vertical (institutional) and horizontal (interpersonal) recognition, this paper focuses on the latter by exploring forced migrants' meaningful relationships. How do these relations affect experiences and processes of forced displacement and emplacement, and vice versa? How do experiences of Finnish wartime evacuees and contemporary refugees compare with each other? Based on my analysis, significant others with whom experiences, memories and narratives are shared, span a wide range of social associations from families and friendships to immediate and imagined communities. These relations and their transformation are central to dis-/emplacement, albeit in complex ways. Furthermore, vertical recognition is inseparable from the horizontal sphere, playing a crucial role in shaping forced migrants' everyday lives, other relations of recognition and sense of belonging.

4. Materializing Trust: Assemblages of Belonging and Uncertainty in a Finnish Reception Center: Riikka Era (Tampere University)

Trust is often analyzed as a purely human, psychological, or institutional phenomenon. Drawing on a chapter from my monograph *"Koti keskuksella"* (Home at the Center), I offer a methodological and theoretical intervention rooted in feminist new materialisms and assemblage thinking. I argue that trust, mistrust, and the sense of belonging are fundamentally socio-material practices, continuously co-constituted by human bodies, institutional spaces, and everyday objects within asylum reception centers.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork with refugee families living in cramped institutional quarters in Finland, I try to think how the material environment facilitates the negotiations of trust. I demonstrate how children and families actively use space and furniture, such as sofas, large armchairs, and low coffee tables, to regulate bodily distance, seek protection, and autonomously initiate contact with peers and, for example, researchers. Here, trust is not merely spoken; it is embodied and mediated through material configurations that allow for the shifting dynamics of proximity and withdrawal.

In this presentation I aim to formulate a conceptualization of trust as an elusive, relational, and dynamic assemblage. I argue that this would help to recognize how non-human entities and spatial-temporal structures actively shape marginalized groups' capacities for agency, safety, and a fractured sense of belonging.

Parallel session 2 | 15:00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Trust through Care: Arab Migrant Mothers' Encounters with the Finnish Welfare State: Sandra Nasser El-Dine (FIME)

Drawing on ethnographic research, I examine how Arab migrant mothers develop relationships with the Finnish welfare state through everyday experiences of care. I approach trust as a relational process that emerges through encounters with schools, healthcare and other services. I show how experiences of safety, fair treatment and institutional care contribute to feelings of belonging and reciprocal commitment towards Finnish society.

Especially participants with a refugee background expressed gratitude towards Finland for providing safety after experiences of war and displacement. They described Finland as a society where the state protects rather than threatens those living within it. Experiences such as giving birth in Finnish hospitals, raising children in safe neighbourhoods, and seeing schools provide both safety and meaningful learning fostered not only trust in public institutions but also a sense of belonging.

Many mothers viewed participation in paid work as a reciprocal moral commitment – a way of giving back to a society that had cared for them. Participants valued Finland's commitment to gender equality, children's rights and religious freedom, describing it as a society where they could practise their faith and values openly. Several associated the Finnish ideal of suvaitsevaisuus with the Islamic concept of tasāmuḥ (respectful coexistence), emphasising shared ethical commitments rather than cultural difference. Likewise, many identified honesty, modesty and trustworthiness as moral virtues they associated both with Finnish people and with Islam.

Trust, however, remained contingent rather than unconditional. Experiences of inadequate healthcare sometimes led women to disengage from public health services. Experiences of discrimination and suspicion – such as assumptions

that migrants are unwilling to learn Finnish or contribute to society – generated pressure to succeed simultaneously as workers, mothers and "good migrants." The presentation argues that trust is not simply confidence in institutions but a reciprocal moral relationship produced – and sometimes undermined – through everyday experiences of care.

2. Seeing Trust Ethnographically: Everyday Social Relations among African Families in Rabat: Ossama Mouncif (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco)

Migration research has generated rich accounts of trust in relation to borders, institutions, humanitarian governance, and processes of belonging. Less attention has been paid to how trust becomes socially visible through the ordinary relationships that organise everyday urban life among migrant families. This paper argues that ethnography offers a distinctive lens through which trust can be understood not as an individual disposition or a condition for integration, but as a relational accomplishment emerging through everyday social practices.

Focusing on African families living in Rabat, Morocco, the paper examines how trust is continuously made, tested, and renegotiated through routine interactions with neighbours, schools, public administrations, civil society organisations, and other actors shaping everyday life. Rather than asking whether migrants trust institutions or communities, the analysis follows the everyday work through which families establish, maintain, suspend, and repair social relationships while navigating life in a context of South–South migration.

Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork based on participant observation, informal conversations, and sustained engagement with everyday practices, the paper argues that trust is better understood as an achievement of everyday social relations than as an individual disposition or an institutional resource. By treating trust as an ethnographic object rather than an explanatory variable, the paper shows how ethnography makes visible the gradual accomplishment of trust and belonging through the everyday work of sustaining social relations, thereby highlighting the analytical value of South–South migration for contemporary anthropological debates on trust, migration, and belonging.

3. Trust, Mistrust, and Well-being: Lived Experiences of Forced Migrant Women Navigating Child and Family Services in Finland: Laleh Golamrej Eliasi (Department of Social Research, University of Turku)

Trust lies at the heart of forced migrant women's ability to access support and build belonging in Finland. Social workers occupy a paradoxical position in this dynamic: if they pay attention to a client's cultural background, they risk "othering" the family; yet if they adopt a colour-blind approach in the name of equal treatment, they fail to see the individual and her specific circumstances. This double bind shapes the conditions under which trust can or cannot form between forced migrant families and the welfare system.

This paper draws on a qualitative studies examining how Afghan women in Finland discuss their ideal child-family services. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with forced migrant Afghan women (n=13) in Finland.

Thematic analysis revealed that institutional mistrust, rooted in fear of child custody loss, cultural misunderstandings, and inadequate information, functions as a significant barrier to help-seeking. A recurring theme was the profound power imbalance participants experienced with social workers: professionals who hold authority over both their home and their children, leaving families feeling exposed and without recourse. This power imbalance led participants to hide struggles, avoid authorities, and self-censor parenting choices. Mistrust was further compounded by interpreter-related privacy concerns and the absence of culturally responsive professionals.

At the same time, trust, when it emerged, became a powerful protective factor. Supportive social worker relationships, community networks, and religious practices provided emotional anchoring. Language learning and employment functioned not only as coping strategies but as pathways to agency and institutional trust.

The paper argues that institutional mistrust is structurally produced, by legal precarity and low-quality communication with social workers, and that rebuilding it requires trauma-informed, gender-sensitive approaches that navigate the tension between cultural awareness and individual recognition.

Parallel Session 3

3.1 Ethics of trust in research settings; perspectives on trust trajectories and trusting relations when doing research

Session conveners	Liselott Sundbäck, Åbo Akademi (chair) liselott.sundback@abo.fi Areen Nassar, University of Jyväskylä Kati Turtiainen, University of Jyväskylä Eveliina Heino, University of Helsinki
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday, 6.11.2026, Parallel session 3
Place	Simone Weil (M134), Arken

Session Description

This session offers a forum for sharing and exploring the concept of trust in relation to research settings and as a methodological foundation.

Trust is often mentioned as a key for "accessing" people involved in empirical research as interlocutors or co-researchers and for collecting information or co-creating knowledge. Especially when it comes to research on structurally "vulnerable" groups, trust is foregrounded. Ethical guidelines, such as the ethical principles for research with human participants by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity foreground trust as a central feature, and as researchers we need not to do harm to those we involve in research processes. However, what does trust in relation to research processes actually entail? Can we grasp trust as an ethical principle in research? What are the possible negative sides of trust? And is trust even necessary? How can we, when centering trust, strive to create ethically sane research?

The main aim of this session is to explore trust shaping in relation to empirical research settings from a methodological perspective. We invite papers including, but not limited to, the following themes: trust breakages, trusting relations, absence of trust, necessities of trust, critique against trust as a means of instrumentalization and benefits of trust in research settings. Considering and embracing the temporality of trust, we look forward to papers exploring trust in relation to time in research settings, as well as presentations problematizing trust dynamics. We welcome presentations scrutinizing trust through the lens of innovative methodological approaches centering positionalities and power dynamics in research settings.

In this session, we accept a limited number of presenters and start with a presentation of the papers submitted, while continuing with a panel discussion involving the audience. The language of the session is English.

Accepted papers

1. Negotiating Multi-layered Trust Across the Research Trajectory with Cross-Cultural Children and youth: Eurídice Hernández Gomes (Department of Cultures University of Helsinki)

Research with children and adolescents involves multiple layers of ethical negotiation, including institutional permissions, parental consent, and the mediation of teachers and school principals. While these procedures are essential for safeguarding children's rights and securing formal consent, they pay limited attention to how children themselves come to engage in research and how trusting relationships are established and sustain participants' engagement throughout the research process. Building on scholarship that conceptualises ethics as relational and consent as an ongoing process, this paper argues that trust constitutes a guiding methodological principle that is continuously negotiated throughout the research trajectory.

The paper draws on an arts-based ethnographic study with 21 cross-cultural children and adolescents aged 7–17 from Latin American backgrounds in the Helsinki Metropolitan Region. Combining drawing elicitation interviews and participant observation, I develop the concept of multi-layered trust to conceptualise how trust is negotiated across different relationships and stages of research.

Multi-layered trust refers to interconnected negotiations involving institutions, adult gatekeepers, children, and the researcher. First, trust enables access to the field through negotiations with municipal authorities, parents, teachers, other gatekeepers, and, crucially, children's own willingness to participate. Second, trust is sustained throughout the interviews by recognizing children as experts on their own lives, adapting methods to different forms of expression, creating opportunities for them to shape the research process, and treating consent as an ongoing relational practice. Finally, trust shapes the ethical representation of children's experiences through negotiations over how their contributions are stored, analysed, credited, and represented.

The paper contributes to methodological debates by arguing that trust evolves throughout the research trajectory, enabling access, sustaining meaningful participation, and shaping how children's contributions are interpreted and represented. Rather than a prerequisite for research, trust is conceptualised as an ongoing methodological relation negotiated through practices of care, flexibility, reciprocity, and shared agency.

2. Co-Creative Knowledge Making and the Politics of Trust in Reading Groups on Polycrisis: Kaiju Harinen (Migration Institute of Finland)

Reading contemporary literature and engaging in creative writing exercises in participatory research settings can challenge conventional academic and hierarchical boundaries and foster trust between researchers and participants. Such creative methods can become collaborative tools that enable participants to discuss polycrisis-related issues, such as the genocide in Gaza and experiences of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, if trust is understood as a central feature of the research setting, the politics of trust remain ambivalent, as these methods are shaped by intersectional, hierarchical, and contextual inequities and power imbalances between researchers and participants.

This presentation is based on material collected during a fieldwork trip to Morocco in 2025, including young Moroccan reading-group participants' reflections on reading literature about crisis-related experiences. I also examine participants' experiences of reading groups as a research method, selected literature-based creative writing exercises, and my field notes. The latter serve as a reflexive research tool for documenting observations, methodological decisions, and reflections on positionality, while contextualizing participants' accounts and the dynamics of trust that emerged during the fieldwork.

Based on these materials, I present a preliminary thematic analysis of the data. The empirical material was gathered as part of the project Youth in polycrisis. Intersecting crises and young people's lived experience, which combines empirical literary studies and sociology. The project examines how young people (aged 16-19) experience overlapping crises in Morocco and Finland, and how wars, climate change, and other global challenges shape their everyday lives, sense of belonging and safety, and future aspirations. First, I analyze the challenges of co-creating knowledge and the dynamics of trust during fieldwork. I ask whether it is possible to avoid reproducing extractive colonial practices while acknowledging my positionality as a white literary scholar from Finland conducting research in Morocco. Second, I reflect on what may remain unrevealed or silenced by both participants and the researcher, and on how such absences might be identified and interpreted in the data, although almost all participants reported enjoying the reading-group discussions.

3. "Dignity is all we need": Collective reflections on trust-building with academic and migrant co-researchers: Minna Sorri (University of Jyväskylä)

European countries are tightening language proficiency requirements for migrants, yet in policy making and research migrants' perspectives remain largely absent (Honko & Halonen, 2023). Situated within a larger research project, this study examines the effects of language requirements in Finland in a multilingual collaboration with migrants from diverse backgrounds as co-researchers. This collaboratively created presentation examines trust building in a participatory research partnership in which migrants actively shape all stages of the research process, from setting the agenda to impact and action.

Participatory research has emphasized trust and ethics as situated and fragile, emerging through interactions between people and requiring ongoing negotiation and responsiveness to the context and needs of co researchers (Armstrong et al., 2023; Tarsoly & Ćalić, 2025; Heltai et al., 2025). In the early stages of our ongoing participatory research project, migrant co researchers identified dignity as a key concern, leading our group to examine how dignity is understood, how it can be practiced within our research, and what role it plays in development of trust.

Drawing on the research diaries and collaborative discussions, we reflect on the early stages of our partnership, exploring how trust is built, how dignity is understood, and how our collaboration is shaped by multilingual practices and positionalities. Preliminary reflections suggest that dignity depends on being seen and recognized as a legitimate knowledge producer whose skills, experiences, and capabilities are valued. Trust-building may also involve skepticism and critical questioning of personal and institutional relationships, which can constitute an important dimension of collaborations grounded in honesty and dignity. Dignity has received limited explicit attention in participatory research within applied linguistics, and this presentation explores the possibility that dignity and epistemic agency are not outcomes of trust-building but conditions through which trust becomes possible.

4. Methodological considerations and unexpected frames of trust – reflections of researchers' uncertainty while studying ethical issues in a 'closed' work organisation: Sari Vanhanen and Katja Köykkä (University of Eastern Finland)

This paper examines methodological considerations regarding frames of trust in the research of ethical dilemmas within a 'closed' work organisation. Here, we understand the term 'closed' referring to a hierarchically organised institutional structure and a set of organisational procedures that regulate the accessibility of exclusive information. By reflecting our own role as researcher, the aim is to critically analyse the uncertainties of trust that have emerged (already) while preparing to conduct the research. In this presentation, we are discussing both expected and

unexpected dimensions of trust in research: how trust-related frames or boundaries may emerge, sometimes unexpectedly, and how we respond to them. With whom are these boundaries negotiated? Who serves as the gatekeeper of trust throughout the research process? What kinds of contextual frames of trust may arise? We also reflect on our own professionalism and positionality as researchers. How can we prepare ourselves for situations in which trust may shift into distrust, while avoiding excessive scepticism or an overly cautious and negatively predisposed stance? Our considerations are based on the recently started narrative-ethnographic research where we scrutinise ethical principles, conflicts, and expertise in preventive police work in Finland. In this research we ask e.g. how ethics are understood in daily work and how ethical competence is learnt and reflected during the police education. One aim is to examine dilemmas in ethical decision making in diverse contexts and interactions, including collaboration with local stakeholders and other relevant actors. Along with the individual interviews, the methods include observation and method of empathy-based stories. However, we assume that, during the process, we will encounter several instances in which the frames of trust will need to be negotiated. This may be particularly evident during observations conducted in workplace, educational, and collaborative settings within diverse societies.

3.2 Lettering Trust: Theorising Women of Colour (WOC) as Knowledge Producers in Finnish Academia and the Nordics

Please note that this is a closed session

Session conveners	Aleida Luján Pinelo aleida.lujanpinelo@tuni.fi, Dionysia Kang dionysia.kang@abo.fi, Kolar Aparna kolar.aparna@helsinki.fi, Yulia Dergacheva yulia.y.dergacheva@utu.fi
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel session 3
Place	Voltaire (M127), Arken

Session Description

This is a call for letters from and to WOCs in Nordic academia to dialogue about our roles as writers and knowledge producers. We draw inspiration from Gloria Anzaldúa's letter *"Speaking In Tongues: A Letter To 3rd World Women Writers",* viewing letter writing as an intimate and relational act to address the struggles of WOC, re-member and build on the works of predecessors. Lettering trust is a way of communicating with each other, re-membering, and acknowledging our genealogies in ethical ways that resist epistemic injustices.

In this call, we define 'WOC' as a political concept and praxis emerging from lived experiences as intersectional, diverse and fluid – linked to phenotypical racism but not exclusively. We situate such praxis in the diversity of gender experiences, considering heterocentric gender binary as colonial violence. WOCs experiences are unique in the intersection of racism, patriarchy, misogyny, colonialism, and class oppression, amongst other axes.

Using letters, we explore how epistemic injustices structurally betray, neglect, tokenise and compromise WOC's trust and solidarity. In this call, we explore what memory/knowledge is held by our letters and why letter-ing matter to our

many tongues, especially from the peculiar location of Finland and/or the Nordics against the triple, quadruple oppressions our bodies write against.

Eurocentric and patriarchal traditions of knowledge production tend to stonewall, conditionally listen to and tokenise WOCs as knowledge producers. Trinh Minh-ha (1989; p. 104) describes WOCs are 'immediately seen as betraying either man, her community or women herself' when taking up a feminist fight as Euro-American systems of dualistic reasoning pit anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles against one another. The non-recognition of WOC as knowledge producers and their dynamic and heterogenous knowledge fosters precarity and abandonment when WOC deviate from imposed categorical boxes. Hence, we use Letters and Lettering as a way to detach from the colonial-patriarchal conventions of knowledge production imposed upon us. We reject being essentialised as homogeneous, powerless 'Third World Women' victimhood or culturalist generalisation that deny our epistemic plurality and relationalities (Mohanty, 1984; p.338). As Barbara Christian (1987, p. 52) writes, "People of color have always theorized — but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic (…) our theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking".

We are particularly interested in discussing about:

- How do WOC sense, live, and experience processes of knowledge production in the neoliberal Nordic context?
- How are WOC knowledges situated, dismissed or co-opted in the sphere of neoliberal knowledge production?
- How can WOC legacies of knowledge production in the Nordics guide the immediate struggles WOC face today?
- How can we ethically navigate our complicated, imperfect, or difficult relationships while acknowledging that not all of us bear the same responsibilities, burdens, or capabilities within those relationships?
- How can letter(ing) serve as a record of, and memory, of WOC producing knowledge who came before, along and after us?

Format of letter submission and roundtable participation

We invite WOC researchers, writers, and activists in the Nordics to submit a letter addressed from and/or to WOC (max. 500 words, in pdf/word docx. format). This includes cisgender women, trans women, non-binary people, and Global South and Indigenous gender identities. People within and beyond academia, without disciplinary restrictions, are welcome to participate; including those who left Nordic academia.

We welcome all forms (e.g. signs, prose/poetry, audio-visual), especially knowledges considered outside the "normal" of academia.

After submitting one's letter, the organisers will contact writers with more information about the roundtable. The roundtable format is an on-site closed, communal participatory roundtable; presenting space for dialogue, convergence and care, to theorise/re-member otherwise neglected knowledge. **The session is designed as a closed session as we prioritise the facilitation of a safer and restful space for WOCs to feel secure in sharing insights that may be personal, at the same time reducing burden of WOC having to educate about underrepresented experiences and preventing WOCs being subjects of trauma porn consumption.** Participants will engage in discussion and activities surrounding 1) the dynamics of being a WOC in knowledge production spaces, and 2) systems and technologies of othering WOC in knowledge production. If you are unable to attend in person, you are also welcome to send a letter, someone can read your letter aloud during the session so that your voice is still part of the gathering. The session will close with discussing future aspirations emerging from the session.

3.3 Migration and Trust in Professional Settings

Session convener	Saara Pellander, Migration Institute of Finland, saara.pellander@migrationinstitute.fi
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel session 3
Place	Saussure (M128), Arken

Accepted Papers

1. Foreign-born university of applied sciences teachers – the importance of social networks for professional development (Anne Tornberg, PhD researcher, Tampere University, Faculty of Education and Culture)

The aim of my research article was to examine the nature of professional networks of foreign-born teachers at the Finnish universities of applied sciences. The focus in on the factors, which influence the formation of networks, and the importance of networks for their professional development. Answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. What kind of professional networks do foreign-born university of applied sciences teachers form? 2. What factors influence the formation of professional networks of foreign-born university of applied sciences teachers? and 3. What significance do networks have for the professional development of foreign-born university of applied sciences teachers?

This is a qualitative research article and the data consists of semi-structured interviews of foreignborn teachers. Qualitative interviewing is used to record people's voices (Rabionet, 2011) and to uncover participants' individual experiences related to their professional networking experiences (Grbich, 2013). All interviews were conducted in English. The data was analyzed using a data-driven thematic content analysis.

The key findings in foreign-born university of applied sciences teachers, when creating networks were the following: personality traits, English, management role and international networks were emphasized above all in project work. According to the research results, social interaction and trust formed social capital for foreign-born university of applied sciences teachers, which supported their professional development.

Keywords: foreign-born teacher, higher education, networking, professional development

2. Migrants in Finland's vocational education training: (in) voluntary career choice?: Jawaria Khan (University of Jyväskylä)

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is designed to help young people without tertiary education to gain job specific skills. However, in Finland, highly skilled adult immigrants who struggle to seek opportunities in their relevant fields are forced by the immigration system into VET. From the theoretical lens of bounded agency, the choice to study in VET by these immigrants reflects how their agency is hindered by financial obligations and legal matters along with institutional barriers concerning previous qualification, labour market segmentation and language constraints. Thus,

VET serve as a pathway to improve their chances of employability.

This paper empirically analyzes the agency of immigrants in VET (students) and the professionals (staff) working with them about integration and transitions. Through biographical narratives of ten students and five teachers in an Assistant Teacher Training VET in Helsinki, this study explores how the system 'enables' or 'disables' capabilities of students and teachers to ensure a smooth transition from unemployment to education and from education to workforce.

This paper is a part of project Transforming Immigration Systems for Future Skills (TRIM) (372292), funded by the Academy of Finland. The findings are targeted for global audience keen towards labour market integration of highly skilled immigrants.

3. Navigating the liberal paradox in Finland: the impact of political-economic changes to talent imaginaries within public institutions: Johanna Metsänheimo (Doctoral researcher, University of Helsinki)

The clash between talent competition and anti-immigration legislation creates challenges for public institutions to advance international talent mobility. While talent competition is a widely accepted policy principle, the shift toward more anti-immigration policies in the Finnish political environment and low economic growth creates barriers to the enactment of talent competition. This leads to a liberal paradox (Hollifield 2004), where a nation's economic interests call for increased skilled migration, and security actors and public anti-immigration sentiments call for migration restrictions. This article analyses: how do political-economic changes impact the talent competition imaginaries in public institutions and how do practitioners renegotiate them?

By interviewing public talent attraction specialists in state institutions and in municipalities in the Helsinki capital region, this presentation discusses the variation of responses into overcoming the liberal paradox. I examine how the liberal paradox has created variation in how talent competition specialists define the goals of public talent attraction and its target groups. The presentation will also discuss how political, economic, and social changes impact the environment in which public talent attraction is enacted, but also how these changes impact migrants' trust with institutions (institutional trust), and trust between institutions (inter-institutional trust).

4. Research on global mobility highlights how language shapes migrants' everyday professional lives and career trajectories: Maria Hokkinen (postdoctoral researcher, Åbo Akademi University, School of Business and Economics) and Wilhelm Barner-Rasmussen (Professor, Åbo Akademi University, School of Business and Economics)

Research on global mobility highlights how language shapes migrants' everyday professional lives and career trajectories. Within language-sensitive International Business, scholars increasingly examine how linguistic practices influence organizational processes, interpersonal relationships and power dynamics. Yet compared to multilingualism, the role of accent – a typical way of speaking particular for a group of people – remains underexplored. Accented speech often triggers ideological judgments and indexes underlying language ideologies and social hierarchies. Accent hierarchies are found to reflect stereotypes about countries and cultures rather than actual linguistic competence, shaping speakers' opportunities and experiences in working life.

This study investigates how Finnish migrants in Sweden experience and strategically use their non-standard accents in professional settings. The Swedish–Finnish context offers a distinctive lens: Swedish is a pluricentric language spoken in both countries, with recognizable Finland-Swedish and Finnish L2 varieties that carry historical and social meanings.

Finland and Sweden share a long migration history. Post-war labor migration in the 1960s–1970s brought large numbers of Finns to Swedish industries, where many faced discrimination, negative stereotyping and limited upward mobility. As Finland's economy strengthened from the 1980s onward, migration increasingly shifted toward education, family and professional mobility.

The analysis draws on 14 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2025 with Finnish professionals in Sweden, including both Finland-Swedish speakers and Finnish L2 speakers. Interviews explored career trajectories, language practices, identity negotiations and reactions to accented speech. Thematic coding identified patterns in how accents are interpreted and mobilized at work.

Preliminary findings show that Finnish-accented Swedish often generates positive social meanings, particularly linked to trustworthiness, authenticity, and cultural familiarity. Participants rarely attempt to conceal their accent; instead, many strategically use it to build rapport or reduce social distance. Several interviewees recognized the evolution of the country brand of Finland over time, and contrasted their experiences with earlier migrant generations, which they associated with the historical labor-migration wave rather than today's mobile professionals.

3.4 Migrant kinship networks – Legal and policy frameworks in shaping family life and belonging in a host country

Session Conveners	Mirkka Danielsbacka mirkka.danielsbacka@utu.fi & Johanna Lahtela johanna.lahtela@vaestoliitto.fi (MigScene consortium)
Time	15:00-16:30, Thursday 5.11.2026, Parallel session 2 and 9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel Session 3
Place	Smedjan (M227), Arken

Session description

One of the most e=ective ways of integration and belonging is to strengthen immigrant ties to the host country through family connections. Family is the most important social institution and a key provider of (emotional) support. Immigrants often lack the support of extended family members in the host country as they typically immigrate either alone or with only their core family. What are the the likely trajectories of employment, productivity and family formation accross di=erent immigrant groups and generations and how these are shaped by family relations, are questions that have not been answered yet.

What is the role of legal and policy frameworks in shaping family life, including family reunification policies, residence status, and access to social services? These structures can both enable and constrain the possibilities for maintaining family unity and fostering a sense of belonging. We welcome submissions on topics such as migrant family relations, quantitative migration studies, transnational families, and family reunification policies.

The Population projections for migration scenarios, human capital development, and sustainable integration (MigScene) consortium explores how human capital, and productivity may evolve in Finland under various educational, migration, and integration scenarios. MigScene is funded by the Strategic Research Council (STN), established within

the Research Council of Finland. MigScene is part of the Skills, Labour Supply and Migration in Future Finland (SKILLS) program.

Language of the session: English

Accepted Papers

Parallel Session 2 | 15 :00-16:30 | 5.11.26

1. Population projections for migration scenarios, human capital development, and sustainable integration (MigScene): Johanna Lahtela, Väestöliitto & Mirkka Danielsbacka (University of Turku)

The most important economic asset of a population is its human capital: the skills, educational level, and wellbeing of residents. Educational expansion and international immigration can increase human capital and mitigate the negative consequences of population ageing. Attracting skilled migrants is key for increasing productivity, while integration in a way that promotes social cohesion also involves new demands to the educational system, social services, and society at large. This challenge is shared by all high-income countries but is especially astute in Finland, with its stalling productivity and educational levels, ultra-low fertility, a modest recent history of immigration, and stark concentration of immigrants to the capital region.

MigScene answers to these challenges and opportunities by exploring how human capital and productivity may evolve in Finland under various educational, migration, and integration scenarios. We present a set of multidimensional population projections up to the year 2070, study integration processes, employ methodological innovations, and enhance capacity to use projection tools. Specifically, we address the following questions: What are the likely future scenarios of human capital development in Finland, given different types of migration and educational policies, and how do they compare to other high-income countries? How do different scenarios affect labour force productivity, public expenditure, and the Finnish pension system? How can Finland compete internationally and successfully integrate skilled immigrants and their descendants in different regions? How can services and education ensure all children and youth enter adulthood with optimal capabilities?

In this presentation, we introduce the MigScene consortium which brings together expertise in data science, economics, and the social sciences. MigScene uses international microsimulation tools, register data, and advanced statistical methods. MigScene will create scenarios and policy recommendations for immigration policies, and for immigrants' skill development and sustainable integration.

2. Narrowing the gap? The role of integration policies in reducing immigrant-native disparities across integration domains: Minna Tuominen (MigScene/INVEST Research Center and Flagship, University of Turku)

Ageing population and declining fertility rates have increased the importance of immigration for sustaining Europe's labour force, tax base, and welfare systems. At the same time, political pressures to restrict immigration and limit integration measures have intensified across many European countries. While a substantial body of research has examined the relationship between integration policies and immigrant integration outcomes, existing studies have tended to focus primarily on economic and labour market indicators, providing a relatively narrow understanding of integration.

This study adopts Ager and Strang's framework of integration and examines the extent to which national integration policies are associated with differences between immigrants and natives across selected core domains of integration. Particular attention is given to the framework's "soft" dimensions, namely social connections, including family and friendship ties, and facilitating factors such as language use, safety, and stability. By focusing on these domains, the study seeks to capture aspects that are more closely related to the sense of belonging and social inclusion.

The study's main contribution is to shift the focus from immigrants alone to immigrant-native disparities. Thus, it investigates whether more inclusive policy framework can narrow the gap between immigrants and natives across key integration domains. Where data permit, distinctions will be made between migrants with EU and non-EU citizenship to assess whether policy effects vary across migrant groups.

The analysis combines individual-level data from the European Social Survey with country-level indicators from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) and other contextual sources. Multilevel regression models will be used to examine variation across country contexts. Based on previous research, the relationship between integration policies and integration outcomes is not expected to be linear. Nevertheless, the study hypothesises that more inclusive integration policies are associated with smaller immigrant-native disparities across the selected integration domains, particularly among non-EU migrants.

3. The significance of family life and belonging in the transfer of prisoners – A Nordic perspective: Saila Heinikoski (Finnish Institute of International Affairs), Kirsikka Ruonala (University of Turku) and Tatu Hyttinen (University of Turku)

This paper examines the role of family life and belonging in decisions concerning the transfer of prisoners in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. Drawing on legislation and court decisions, it analyses the extent to which family ties, social integration, and attachment to the sentencing state influence decisions to transfer foreign prisoners to another country. Interestingly, while the EU Framework Decision on the transfer of prisoners provides that family reasons need to be considered when making transfer decisions, the Nordic agreement on the transfer of prisoners makes no mention to family life.

The study considers both the legal frameworks governing prisoner transfers and their interpretation in practice. Most of the cases examined concern transfers within the European Union, where legal and administrative procedures are generally more straightforward. Particular attention is paid to how courts assess family relationships, reintegration prospects, and connections to the sentencing state and the prisoner's country of nationality.

The analysis shows that, although family life and attachment are formally taken into account, courts rarely find that a prisoner is more closely connected to the sentencing state than to their country of citizenship, and prisoners are generally presumed to have stronger social and familial ties to their state of nationality. As a result, transfer decisions are only exceptionally overturned.

The paper also demonstrates that courts frequently assume that employment and reintegration prospects are better in the prisoner's country of nationality. It argues that nationality remains the primary indicator of belonging in transfer decisions, whereas family life and social integration have a more limited influence in practice. Consequently, courts tend to favour transfer if the person has in any case a deportation order and an entry ban to the sentencing state. The paper provides new knowledge on the significance of family ties and belonging concerning the transfer of prisoners.

Parallel Session 3 | 9:15-10:45 | 6.11.26

1. Do they catch up? African immigrants' earnings and employment trajectories in Finland: Chisom Okoli (University of Turku (Doctoral program in Inequalities, Intervention and New Welfare State – INVEST, Sociology))

This research focuses on African immigrants in Finland, comparing their economic integration outcomes and using administrative register data to track these outcomes over time. The study seeks to address an existing gap in immigrant welfare research in Finland by analyzing, longitudinally, the labour market outcomes of African immigrants in comparison to other major immigrant groups in Finland. The study will address this gap by asking: *How do African immigrants differ in their economic integration trajectories (earnings and months employed)* compared with *other immigrant groups?* This research uses the segmented labour market theory to aid its empirical analysis of the research problem. The segmented labor market theory posits that Western economies are bifurcated into a well-paying primary sector and a low-paying secondary sector; it provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing whether African and non-Western immigrants, who are often pushed into the secondary sector, have the same earnings and employment growth trajectories as other immigrant groups in Finland.

The study will use data from Finnish administrative registers to identify people born in Africa who are aged 18-64 and legally reside in Finland. For comparison, the study will also include six other immigrant groups with the same baseline characteristics. This study will use curvilinear growth curve models as part of its analytical strategy. Growth curve models estimate trajectories of earnings and employment over time since arrival in Finland from 2000 to 2023.

This research hypothesizes that African immigrants and those from non-European and non-Western countries will have slower earnings and employment growth trajectories than Western and European immigrants, with the former's labour outcomes failing to converge with the latter. Preliminary results show that immigrants from Africa and the Middle East have lower earnings and employment growth over time than other groups in Finland.

2. The prevalence, characteristics, and geographic distribution of core-kinless older adults in Finland: Mirkka Danielsbacka (University of Turku) & Alyona Artamonova (Population Research Institute)

Core-kinless older adults, i.e., those lacking a partner and children, represent a potentially vulnerable group. However, the whole population-level research devoted to this group remains scarce. This study estimates the prevalence, sociodemographic characteristics, and geographic distribution of core-kinless adults in Finland, with attention to variation across ethnolinguistic groups of Finnish, Swedish, and other language speakers (often immigrants). We used register data covering the entire population aged 65 and over in 2024 (N = 1,328,732) and descriptive analyses. Core-kinlessness was defined as the absence of both a registered co-residing partner and any living children registered in Finland. In total, 11.6% of older adults in Finland were core-kinless. Prevalence was 11.3% among Finnish-speaking, 10.3% among Swedish-speaking, and 30.5% among other language-speaking individuals. Migration background in general, being male among Finnish-speaking as well as being female, being older and having lower education among other language-speaking individuals are the characteristics of this group. The positive associations between municipal core-kinlessness and i) demographic dependency ratio, ii) the mortality rate among older adults and iii) the rate of home care clients confirm that municipalities where these older adults are concentrated also face greater demographic and service pressures. This study provides the first register based national estimates of core-kinlessness in Finland, demonstrating that survey data underestimate this group. The findings o er evidence for targeted care planning at the individual and municipality levels.

3. Kinship networks of immigrants in Finland: Samuli Helle (INVEST Research Flagship Centre, University of Turku, Turku, Finland) & Mirkka Danielsbacka (Population Research Institute, Väestöliitto, Helsinki, Finland)

Family is the most important social institution, and kin members are key providers of all kinds of support. Immigrants often lack the everyday support of kin in the host country, as they typically immigrate either alone or with only their immediate family. In addition to the crucial importance of family and kin for individual well-being, family connections may also facilitate integration. By supporting family connections, immigrants' ties to and sense of belonging in the host country may be strengthened. The extent and composition of kinship networks of immigrants residing in Finland are not known. In this study, we describe the kin networks of first-generation immigrants using Finnish full-population register data. We aim to describe, as accurately as possible, the kin networks of immigrants in Finland across time (e.g., 2000, 2010, 2020, 2024), stratified by ego's age groups (e.g., 5, 15, 35, 65, 85), country of birth, and region within Finland. One known limitation of the register data is that we cannot identify siblings or other horizontal kin if they do not share an older generation (e.g., a mother or father) that is observed in the data. Consequently, kinship networks of immigrants constructed using register data will inevitably remain incomplete. This limitation needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results.

3.5 Politics of Onward Migration

Session convener:	Zeinab Karimi zeinab.karimi@helsinki.fi & Linda Bäckman linda.backman@migrationinstitute.fi
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel session 3
Place	Nikander (D110), Arken

Session Description

Migration has long been understood as a once-and-done process — a move that ends on arrival. However, research scholarship pays increasing attention to migration as an open-ended and dynamic process, in which people may re migrate, either returning or moving on to a third and consequent destination. This phenomenon, known as onward migration, has attracted growing scholarly attention as researchers seek to understand the complex, multi-directional nature of human mobility (see Ahrens & King, 2023; Long, 2021).

Onward migration is shaped by a wide range of intersecting factors. For many, it becomes a necessity driven by labour market conditions, legal and residency constraints, and structural factors, such as racism. These forces do not act uniformly; they fall disproportionately on racialised minorities, low-income groups, and those with precarious legal status, compounding their vulnerability and narrowing their choices both for staying and leaving. Conversely, access to economic, social, and cultural capital — including more privileged passport hierarchies — affords certain populations significantly greater agency in determining when, where they move next. Onward migration is therefore not simply a matter of individual choice, but a profoundly unequal process stratified by class, race, gender, and legal status. Therefore, onward migration is also connected to how people (dis)trust the structure of the societies that they navigate along the way.

At the same time, studies have shown that onward migration is a deeply relational process, shaped by family obligations, gender roles, caring responsibilities, and the negotiation of mobility with significant others. Far from being a linear journey, onward migration may unfold in multiple ways: directly and without obstruction, delayed by periods of immobility, achieved step-by-step through intermediary moves, or following other types of international mobility that did not produce the desired outcomes.

A life-course perspective adds further depth to this picture, situating onward migration within the unfolding biographical trajectories of individuals and families. Aspirations shift over time — shaped by ageing, partnership, parenthood, and changing labour market positions — meaning that the decision to move on is rarely fixed, but continuously renegotiated in response to evolving personal circumstances and structural conditions. Crucially, not all members of a household or family unit experience these trajectories equally, and the capacity to move — or to stay — is itself unevenly distributed along lines of age, gender, and legal status.
This panel brings together scholars working at these frontiers, with the aim of advancing a more nuanced, intersectional, and empirically grounded understanding of onward migration. We invite contributions that engage with onward migration from a range of disciplinary and methodological perspectives, including sociology, anthropology, human geography, sociolinguistics, political science, and legal studies.

We particularly welcome papers that address, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- Structural drivers of onward migration, including institutional (dis)trust, labour markets, legal constraints, and racism

- The role of family, gender, and caring responsibilities in shaping onward mobility
- Life-course approaches to migration trajectories and shifting aspirations
- Methodological innovations for researching onward migration and hard-to-reach populations
- Policy responses to onward migration and their differential impacts

The language of the session is English.

Accepted Papers

1. Onward Migration and Labour Market Experiences: Academic and Tech Professionals from Finland: Zeinab Karimi (PhD, University Researcher at the Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations and Nationalism, University of Helsinki)

This presentation explores the labour market encounters and migration journeys of academic and technology professionals who initially relocated to Finland before undertaking onward migration to other destinations. Drawing on qualitative accounts, the research highlights the motivations, challenges, and opportunities faced by these individuals as they navigated both the Finnish labour market and subsequent transitions abroad. The findings offer new insights into transnational mobility, the dynamics of skilled migration, and the evolving landscape of international talent circulation. In engaging with the onward migration literature—which draws attention to the interplay of individual aspirations, institutional barriers, and career opportunities —this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of onward migration as a dynamic process shaped by both agency and structure within the global labour market.

2. Onward migration within a language community: from Sweden to Swedish-speaking Finland: Linda Bäckman (Migration Institute of Finland & Åbo Akademi University)

Despite the transnational turn in migration studies in the 1990s, migration is often perceived as encompassing movement from a place of origin to a particular destination. Studies on onward migration, defined as "a spatial trajectory that involves extended stays in two or more destination countries" (Ahrens & King, 2023: 5), however, allow for an "open-ended and processual understanding of migration" (ibid), in which places can "change from being destinations to becoming points of departure" (ibid)

This paper takes as starting point particular patterns of onward migration, from Sweden to Swedish-speaking Finland. Drawing on early data collection with ethnographic methods such as life story interviews and language portraits, the paper explores migration trajectories across national borders, yet in the same language community. It examines reasons for moving as well as processes of settling in a context in which the dominant, majority language of the point of departure is a minority language in the new country and city of residence.

The paper additionally takes as its starting point Ehrenfeld's (2025) exploration of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) distinction of 'smooth' and 'striated' space, asking if and to what extent a language community that spans across borders may act as a smooth space, i.e. a place associated with nomadism. This, in turn, means that the space is "created and carried" by nomads, forming a "plain, open, and boundaryless" space (Ehrenfeld, 2025: 423).

3. Staying, Leaving, or Moving On: Skilled Migrants' Future Trajectories in Post-Brexit Britain: Ilona Bontenbal (LUT University)

This article critically examines how employed skilled migrants in the UK perceive their future trajectories—whether staying, moving onwards, or returning. Based on 53 interviews with migrants working in white-collar occupations, the study explores how employment, often treated as a key source of legitimacy in the host society, shapes but does not determine migrants' sense of inclusion. While being unable to access work is frequently cited as a central reason for onward or return migration, employment alone does not guarantee staying. In line with debates on the integration paradox, being highly skilled and structurally integrated does not automatically translate into social embeddedness or emotional security.

Against this backdrop, the article analyses how white-collar migrant workers interpret their migration journeys and evaluate the possibility of future mobility. We examine how decisions about staying or leaving are shaped by migrants' perceptions of belonging, everyday inclusion, and their trust in the future that life in the UK can offer them. These perceptions are relational and dynamic: they reflect experiences in workplaces, neighbourhoods and institutions, as well as broader concerns about stability, recognition and long-term prospects.

By foregrounding migrants' own temporal and affective orientations toward the future, the article shows how onward and return migration are not solely economic or career-driven decisions but are deeply connected to feelings of security, social acceptance and anticipated life chances. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analysing skilled migrants' mobility patterns in contemporary post-Brexit Britain and for assessing the conditions under which staying becomes desirable—or onward migration becomes a meaningful alternative.

3.6 Religion and migration

Session convener	Tuomas Martikainen (University of Turku) tuomas.martikainen@utu.fi
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel session 3
Place	Fiesta (B205), Arken

Session Description

Religious communities are among the most common associations that migrants join or establish in their countries of settlement. Besides religious activities, these associations also serve as spaces for the education of children, the reproduction of ethnicity and culture, as well as venues for general socialising and mutual support. Even in multilingual communities, they can be important sites for the use of heritage languages. Communities can also act as hubs of transnational relations, with visiting religious specialists and as sites for sharing experiences from across the diaspora.

Religious communities face challenges as new generations grow up, as the social needs of the children of immigrants are often different from those of their parents. Young people are often more proficient in the majority language than in that of their parents, and their expectations and understanding of the role of religion and community may differ significantly.

Religions also adapt and change. Some communities are built from scratch without the support of religious experts. The local community supports them financially, paying rent and, where possible, for a religious specialist. Theological innovations may be needed to address questions that were not previously considered. National legislation may require practices that are unfamiliar or even alien to the tradition. Some values may need to be rethought and reformulated. How should communities deal with multifaith partnerships or the social problems faced by their members?

A common observation is that in Western countries, migrant religious associations often begin to resemble Christian churches in the types of activities they offer and in their understanding of the roles and tasks of religious specialists. Even migrants who belong to already established religious organisations often note differences in practice and traditions, if not in creed.

This session welcomes papers discussing the interconnections between religion, migration, and migrant settlement in a new society. We especially welcome papers that examine how religious associations can provide spaces of trust and belonging, while also recognising that they may serve as sites of social control and potentially harmful practices for some of their members.

Accepted Papers

1. Religiosity of six language groups in Finland: Tuomas Martikainen (University of Turku)

The presentation examines the religious wishes and expectations of immigrants living in urban environments regarding various religious communities. The analysis is based on a survey commissioned in the spring of 2026 by the parish unions of the Helsinki metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa) and Tampere. The survey (N=3227) targeted residents of these areas who speak Arabic, English, Farsi, Chinese, Ukrainian, or Russian. Among other things, respondents were asked what they would like from religious communities, how well they knew the Evangelical Lutheran parishes in their area, and what they thought about interfaith dialogue. The presentation presents the basic results of the survey.

2. Social Work and Religious Communities: Understanding Complexity Through Discourse Analysis: Marja Katisko (University of Eastern Finland)

The presentation is based on an article that examines how social workers construct and justify their professional role and expertise in encounters with religious and cultural diversity, particularly in relation to religious communities. While religiously sensitive practice and religious literacy have received growing international and Finnish attention, less is known about how social workers themselves linguistically negotiate their professional positioning when religious community life becomes salient in client work. The study asks: how is social work's role and expertise justified, and how does it appear in the context of religious and cultural diversity and community?

The article combines complexity thinking with Faircloughian discourse analysis. Complexity thinking—drawing on concepts such as interconnectedness, non-linearity, and emergence—provides a framework for treating the tensions and contradictions in the data as genuine features of the phenomenon rather than analytical shortcomings, while discourse analysis makes visible how this complexity is linguistically constructed and negotiated. The data consist of written reflective assignments (147 transcribed pages) produced by 18 social workers during a 2023–2025 specialization course on multicultural and transnational social work, in which practitioners reflected on culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse client situations.

The analysis identifies nine interconnected discourses through which social workers frame their relationship to religion and religious community, including discourses of privacy, religious neutrality, religious literacy as expertise, community as resource versus community as risk and control, reflexivity regarding professional positioning, and universal human rights. These discourses do not resolve into a single coherent account; rather, tensions—especially between privacy and communality, and between community as resource and as risk—coexist and are activated differently depending on situation. The article argues that professional expertise in this domain is inherently situational and negotiated rather than something that can be exhaustively defined through training alone, and outlines implications for developing community-oriented social work practice.

3.7 Stories, Discourses, Archetypes

Session Convener	Seija Jalagin, University of Oulu, seija.jalagin@oulu.fi
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel Session 3
Place	Kramer (M220), Arken

Accepted Papers

1. Beasts, Predators, Swarms and the Undoing of Archetypal Enmity: Armando Garcia (Independent Researcher, University of Iceland / Immigrant Politics in Iceland (founder) / Overseas Research Assistant, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Winnipeg)

How do Western liberal democracies produce trust, mistrust, and belonging by fabricating archetypal enemies — zombies, beasts, predators — and binding charged affective registers to them through repeated cycles of crisis? This paper argues that sovereignty relies increasingly on the aesthetic governance of social anxieties. Reading Neocleous' Universal Adversary alongside two critiques of modernity, Veblen on emulation and predatory habit, Mathiesen on the synopticon that primes surveillance where the many watch the few, I demonstrate how institutional trust is secured by turning racialised, migrant, and precarious populations into recurring figures of dread, while mistrust is redirected away from state power. Institutional trust here is not earned but exploited, fabricated through fear, while the mistrust such governance provokes proves protective, fostering the solidarity and grassroots activism that this paper's final section documents. Iceland offers a small scale setting for these processes, yet the innocence paradigm dominating its scholarship on racism, is uneqipped to register them appropriately, since it treats racism as a matter of national self-image rather than of rule. I instead read archetypes as working parts of an aesthetic and affective apparatus of governance. The method combines policy documents, police body-camera transcripts, media coverage, and public debate across three episodes: the policing of pro-Palestine protest, where participants were figured as beasts and handled as illegitimate citizens; public discourse casting immigrants as predators and agents of debauchery; and migration reporting that visualises arrival as an invading swarm. In each case symbolic enemies are entrenched through emergency rituals that turn diffuse anxieties into governable threats and justify expanded policing and surveillance. I situate these figures within a longue durée genealogy of bestiality and monstrosity as a recursive apparatus that trains publics to mark certain bodies as perpetually suspect and sacrificial. The conclusion returns to modernity's discontents in Veblen and Mathiesen to ask what antiracist and anticolonial solidarities might make of trust once it is detached from these archetypes, grounding belonging instead in practices of co-existence and co-suffering that disavow

predation, conquest, and domination. I close with concrete instances in which these antagonisms are already being rearticulated in Icelandic grassroots organising, particularly around Palestine.

Keywords: aesthetic governance; affective governmentality; monsterisation; racialisation; trust and mistrust; policing and surveillance; Nordic exceptionalism; Iceland

2. Self, the Other and their contested (mis)trust in Abdulrazak Gurnah's Gravel Heart: Touhid Ahmed Chowdhury (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg/ TU Chemnitz, Germany)

Salim, the young protagonist of Abdulrazak Gurnah's Gravel Heart, arrives in England with great aspiration and trust that he can find the best education and make a life for himself. But the reality of arriving and coping within a new society and environment is far from what he imagined. Gurnah's writing is a prime example of how postcolonial subjects negotiate new spaces within an "alien" culture where they play out the complexities of occupying the metaphorical border space of identity. Arrival in an alien culture is the first and sometimes most traumatic stage in the life of an immigrant. Racial tension is another aspect that often comes with the arrival in a foreign culture, which is usually fraught with fear, anxiety, and host societies' (mis)trust of newly arrived migrants. Paul Gilroy's observation from the 1980s about British nationalism with racial connotations still holds true; society has had to entertain the notion that the categories of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic are not sine qua non to being British, and it is within this rewriting of national belonging that the immigrant writers leave their mark. The feelings of nervousness, difference, and estrangement that the migrants felt when confronted with English society are directly addressed in many of Abdulrazak Gurnah's writings. This paper will look into Abdulrazak Gurnah's oeuvre in general and Gravel Heart (2017) specifically from a postcolonial perspective that explores the self and others. In Gravel Heart, the young protagonist grapples with immigrant identity, racial tension, and a sense of non-belonging, feeling somewhat disconnected from English society as he tries to forge a new identity for himself. Therefore, this paper will argue that Salim, the young protagonist, represents immigrants' search for a home, identity, and a place in the host society.

3. Spatializing Climate Breakdown: Ordinary Language on and around 'Climate Refugees': Tuomo Alhojärvi (University of Eastern Finland)

As the global ecological condition deteriorates rapidly, ecologically induced migration is increasingly becoming both an empirical fact and an object of intense public debate. As critical research has demonstrated, in the Global North, apocalyptic portrayals of 'human floods' have often been used to incite racialized fear, to justify securitization, and to legitimize the structural violences of borders and nation-states. The ways that *prospective* climate migrants are portrayed and discussed has close links to existing practices of racism, othering, and exclusion directed against racialized groups *in the present*. In this way, the politicality of anticipation intertwines future possibilities with contemporary experiences. It also connects the global scale of ecological expectations with localized everyday situations. Also in Finland, climate migration remains most often a matter of anticipation, expectation, and speculation – not a clear-cut empirical fact. In this paper, I explore how anticipatory politics concerning climate migration works at the level of ordinary language use. More specifically, I examine discourse on and around 'climate refugees' for how it works to create, sustain, and challenge spatial imaginaries that define intimacies and solidarities, as well as borderings and exclusions. The paper draws together lessons from a close reading of Finnish media representations concerning 'climate refugees' as well as from my ongoing exploration of corpus-based methods to study the topic on a wider scale. All in all, the paper discusses i) the theoretical grasp of ordinary language as an anticipatory medium that spatializes global, prospective, and abstract ecological conditions into recognizable and relatable imaginaries; ii) empirical findings on Finnish discourses on 'climate refugees' as they take shape in different media formats; and iii) methodological challenges arising from shifting the research focus from close reading to large datasets.

3.8 Trust in Policy and Multilevel Governance

Session Convener	Mehrnoosh Farzamfar (University of Turku) mehrnoosh.farzamfar@utu.fi
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel Session 3
Place	Westermarck (C101), Arken

Accepted Papers

1. Building Trust and Belonging through Good Population Relations: Lessons from a Multilevel Governance Approach in Finland: Nexhat Beqiri (Senior Specialist, Economic Development Centre of Uusimaa, Finland)

Trust, mistrust and belonging are not abstract concepts in migration-related work; they are shaped in everyday encounters between residents, communities, public authorities and decision-makers. In increasingly diverse societies, trust is closely connected to recognition, safety, participation, equity and the ability of institutions to respond to people's lived experiences. In Finland, the framework of Good Population Relations (Hyvät väestösuhteet) offers a practical approach to strengthening these connections across local, regional and national levels.

Long-term practice-based development of Good Population Relations work in Finland has produced tools such as multilingual population relations assessments, dialogue-based decision-maker events and regional action planning processes. These tools create structured spaces where residents' experiences of interaction, discrimination, belonging and trust can be made visible and connected to governance. They also support municipalities, regional authorities, civil society organisations and communities in identifying shared responsibilities for strengthening social cohesion and anti-racism.

A central argument is that trust is not produced only through individual integration measures. It is built relationally and institutionally through opportunities for participation, recognition and shared decision-making. Mistrust may also signal experiences of exclusion, racism or unresponsiveness, and should therefore be understood as important knowledge for developing more trustworthy institutions.

The Finnish experience shows how multilevel governance can function as trust-building infrastructure when it links local knowledge, democratic participation, regional coordination and national policy development. Impact assessments connected to decision-maker events indicate that participatory and dialogue-based methods can increase awareness, strengthen a sense of community and encourage concrete actions to improve relations between population groups.

The main challenge is how to move from project-based innovation to stable institutional practice. Sustaining trust and belonging in mobile futures requires long-term coordination, resources and public institutions capable of listening, responding and sharing responsibility with residents and communities.
Keywords: trust, mistrust, belonging, migration, good relations, Good Population Relations, anti racism, participation, recognition, multilevel governance, Finland

2. PRESUMING FORCE; DENYING AUTONOMY: (Dis)trusting Choice of surrogates in International Commercial Surrogacy: Meiraf Tesfaye (Åbo Akademi University)

Whereas many European States are moving towards legalizing altruistic surrogacy all EU States currently ban domestic commercial surrogacy and are increasingly extending national rules to international commercial surrogacies and their legal consequences. For many, the rationale lies in the lack of opportunities for women in non-western ('third world') and unequal power relations with European intending calling into question the voluntary nature of this labor.

Although there is undeniable that human trafficking rings are increasingly using international surrogacy as a cover to exploit vulnerable women, national legislations to close borders and ban the practice do little more than punishing the victims. In such paternalistic frameworks, there is an institutionalized distrust of free choice, irrespective of circumstances surrounding the arrangement. This lack of distinction ignores the autonomy and agency of economically vulnerable surrogates and implicitly bans the 'poor' from participating in commercial surrogacy It also implicitly increases risk of abuse for women in vulnerable situations more generally as the demand for international surrogacy remains on the rise with less women in host States willing to participate in altruistic surrogacies.

Using Pande's proposal in '*Wombs in Labor'* to move beyond the defensive project of protecting women's reproductive labor *from* the market to how we can protect them *in* the market, I propose a refarming of such unilateral victim narratives of 'third world' bodies to robust, binding safeguards to screen European prospective users and other entities involved rather than objectively denying international prospective surrogates the right to choose.

3.9 Trust in Researcher-Activist-Artist Collaboration

Session conveners	Research fellow Camilla Marucco Al-Mimar, Migration Institute of Finland, camilla.marucco@migrationinstitute.fi, Associate Professor Leonardo Custódio, Malmö University, leonardo.custodio@mau.se
Time	9:15-10:45, Friday 6.11.2026, Parallel session 3
Place	Jöns Budde (M218), Arken

Session description

In this workshop, we want to explore non-traditional forms of knowledge-sharing interactions.
Trust is a fundamental component for sustainable relationships between academic and non-academic partners in activist research. That is, scientifically rigorous research committed to human rights and social justice (Hale, 2018). With that in mind, this workshop contributes to debates about trust and the quality of collaborative practices among multisector partners in and out of academia (Bradford and Dutta, 2018; Jeppesen and Sartoretto, 2020; Macduff and Netting, 2000; McGiffin, 2021; Spišák, 2024). In practice, this workshop by the Activist Research Network (ARN) welcomes politically engaged scholars to share their methodological and practical experiences in building trust and sustainable relationships in and through collaboration with activists, civil society practitioners and artists in research and teaching.

We treat this workshop as a respectful and empowering space for sharing experiences, insights and methodological strategies across disciplines and career stages. Some of the guiding questions that we expect presenters to address in this workshop are:

- What does an activist research design that prioritizes the building of trust between scholars, activists, practitioners and/or artists look like?
- How has trust in collaborative processes between researchers, practitioners and/or artists been theorized in academic literature?
- What does "sustainable" in sustainable relationships between researchers, activists, practitioners and/or artists mean in practice?
- What are effective methods for researchers, activists, practitioners and/or artists to build sustainable relationships in and through collaboration?
- What are the challenges to build sustainable collaborative relationships? How to overcome these challenges?
- What are (emotionally, ethically, materially) sustainable ways of doing activism or activist research?
- What can go wrong (or has gone wrong) in efforts to build sustainable collaboration in activist research? How to prevent or fix problems in this kind of research?

In this workshop, we want to explore non-traditional forms of knowledge-sharing interactions. In addition to traditional conference presentations, we invite creative explorations in storytelling (e.g. poetry, literary prose, TED-talk-like narratives, recitations, performances, musical and audiovisual resources, etc.) and group activities.

The primary language for this workshop is English. We acknowledge that there is a problem concerning the hegemonic character of the English language in international academic work (Suzina, 2021). However, in the Finnish (and broadly Nordic) context, English still serves as a language that facilitates the interaction of international scholars with local academic communities. Possible contributions in other languages can be considered, if the proponent can provide some form of translation into English, too.

Camilla Marucco Al-Mimar and Leonardo Custódio are coordinators of the Activist Research Network in Finland. For further information, visit https://mailman.abo.fi/mailman/listinfo/activist-research-network

Accepted Papers

1. From Being Studied to Studying Together: Integrating Participatory Research, Interdisciplinary Expertise, and Artistic Practice: Adel Nikjoo (Teacher education, school and society Unit, University of Oulu), Shima Salehi (Shima Art Studio)

How can a study benefit from participants who are researchers and members of the institution being examined? This presentation discusses the context-responsive methodology of an ongoing project on two-way integration among migrant academics at the University of Oulu. Instead of selecting a single methodological tradition, the project combines participatory, interdisciplinary, semi-ethnographic, and arts-based approaches pragmatically in response to the characteristics of its participants and research setting.

Approximately 12–16 migrant academics across disciplines, national backgrounds, career stages, and institutional positions take part in brainstorming sessions, small focus groups, walking interviews, and reflexive diaries. These activities create a collective semi-ethnographic process for examining everyday encounters, belonging, participation, and institutional practices from multiple perspectives. As researchers, participants contribute experiences alongside

concepts, disciplinary insights, methodological reflections, and interpretations. The researcher undertakes initial open coding, after which emerging themes are discussed and refined collaboratively. Depending on their contributions, participants may become co-authors of resulting publications.

Some participants hold responsibilities within the university. Their involvement does not replace dissemination or guarantee institutional change, but it may create direct routes through which emerging knowledge can enter discussions relevant to university practices and decision-making.

A further layer is collaboration between research and visual art. The artist of the project participates in selected stages and develops artistic responses informed by the research and interaction with participants. A science-based art exhibition is intended to bring findings beyond academic audiences. In this reciprocal relationship, artistic practice gains access to research, while research gains different sensory, affective, and publicly accessible forms of communication. The presentation at ETMU will include participatory art involving the audience.

Keywords: Two-way integration; migrant academics; participatory research; interdisciplinary research; researcher–artist collaboration

2. Collaboration as Insider-Outsiders: Supporting Family Reunification Counseling of Free Movement Network:
Riikka Era, Mira Kainulainen, Anne Ketola, Eveliina Singh (Tampere University)

In Finland, refugees have a strict three-month window after receiving asylum to apply for family reunification without facing prohibitive income requirements. While intended to ease the process, this tight deadline forces highly vulnerable individuals to immediately navigate complex bureaucracy. The process requires a demanding set of skills: interpreting heavy official communication, filling out intricate multi-part forms, managing multiple digital systems, and handling legal translations. Because state-sponsored support is virtually non-existent, grassroots NGOs and activist groups have stepped in to fill the gap.

Our upcoming research project aims to promote equality by investigating these structural challenges, specifically how linguistic accessibility, digital exclusion, and varying counseling practices burden both applicants and their supporters. To do this, we are collaborating with the Free Movement Network, a grassroots activist group that has provided counseling and defended migrant rights for twenty years.

However, this collaboration introduces a profound methodological and ethical puzzle: three out of our four research team members are already active within the Network. While this “insider-outsider” positionality grants us immediate access and deep communal trust, it also raises critical questions that we wish to explore in this workshop:

- How do our dual identities as both activists and researchers reshape or challenge trust within the network?
- How does doing research actively transform our own roles as counselors on the ground?
- What are the ethical risks of blurring the lines between academic critique and grassroots solidarity?

As our project is in its inception phase, we do not bring final answers. Instead, we offer a reflexive look at our research design. We look forward to engaging in an open dialogue about the practical dilemmas, emotional sustainability, and potential pitfalls of doing activist research.