

Call for Contributions: Visions and Narratives in Migration Studies

As migration scholars, we analyse, problematize and critique discourses, narratives and imaginaries about migration, as produced by states, civil society, migrants and other actors. But when it comes to our own imaginaries and visions as researchers, which implicitly shape our research decision-making, we seem to be far more cautious. We rarely reflect on and render explicit these implicit biases and normative assumptions, and even more rarely do we dare to come up with our own narratives and visions for the social realities we study. Some might argue that this is not our job. However, it is increasingly accepted in migration studies that it is impossible to do (migration) research from a non-normative standpoint, “a view from nowhere” – all knowledge production is situated and our own normative assumptions are part of this situatedness. Thus, our work is inevitably shaped by visions and ideas, rooted in belief systems, social norms, lived experience, and the places and structures we are born into, among other factors. For instance, as researchers we often have an idea of what “migration” and “society” are and *ought* to be, but do not make it explicit. Yet, these notions are constantly re/produced in and by migration studies, among other public fora. With this call, we invite you to reflect and make explicit the narratives and visions that are always there, in our research, but hardly ever spelled out.

In fact, migration studies do have a long history of reflecting on (alternative) narratives and visions: from research paradigms aiming to disrupt dominant research approaches, such as the transnational lens (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1993; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), the mobility turn (Urry 2007; Cresswell 2010) and de-migranticization (Dahinden 2016), to outright political projects such as post-national citizenship (Soysal 1994; Bauböck 2018), conviviality (Gilroy 2004; Valluvan 2016; Meissner and Heil 2021), no borders (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2011), open borders (Carens 2013; Sager 2020) and freedom to move (Somin 2020). It is precisely in a world of doomsday scenarios, populist rhetoric and dystopic politics that migration research and migration scholars need to reflect on and come up with (alternative) narratives and visions in and for migration (studies).

This blog series invites migration scholars to reflect upon, engage with and develop new or alternative visions and narratives. Ideally, blog posts begin with a reflection on how the author’s own implicit normative assumptions structure their research, and end with the author’s vision of what migration studies should do and, more broadly, how society (of/with migration) should look like. Contributions are invited to think along the following questions, and beyond:

- How/Is choosing migration-related research as your focus linked to your inner convictions and beliefs, and to your biographical trajectories and experiences (rather than being a matter of chance or circumstance)?
- What implicit assumptions affect what you research and how you design your research? What are your departure points when starting a new migration studies project?
- Are there ethical, moral, political, philosophical or other convictions that you identify as guiding your work, what are they and how do they do so?
- What should the role of migration studies be in the societal contestation over mobility and diversity? How do new visions of migrations studies need to examine assumptions of human stasis?

- How are neighbouring epistemic fields (e.g. research on racialisation, nationalism, populism, gender and queer studies etc.) influencing the shape of visions and narratives within migration studies?
- How should societies deal with human mobility and diversity? How do you envision a fair, just and egalitarian world (of migration)?
- Thinking beyond critiques of what is wrong in the field, how should migration studies develop ontologically, theoretically and methodologically?

We invite 200-word abstracts and a short author bio to be sent to reflexstudies@uni-osnabrueck.de (including “visions + last name” in the subject line) **by 31 October 2025**. We will inform selected authors by 30 November 2025. The contributions (1000-1500 words) are to be submitted **by 31 January 2026**. The blog posts will be published by the Standing Committee “Reflexivities in Migration Studies” on the IMISCOE website, and distributed also via social media and mailing lists. Ideally, depending on the response and the quality of submissions, authors will be invited to develop their contributions into a special issue or edited book proposal later on.