



Annual Report 2020

CENTRE FOR GLOBAL MIGRATION STUDIES
University of Göttingen

Centre for Global Migration Studies, University of Göttingen

Migration is one of the most pressing and complex issues of the 21st century. The Centre for Global Migration Studies (CeMig) brings together scholars of the Göttingen Campus from six different colleges, known as 'faculties' in the German context, plus the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (MPI-MMG). CeMig examines the complex challenges of migration under very different thematic and regional foci, that by engaging in interdisciplinary collaboration and by pooling together diverse methodological approaches. The result is a deep, multilayered understanding of migration and the provision of innovative policy approaches to deal with this supremely important issue.

CeMig establishes innovative forms of knowledge transfer in addition to strengthening research and teaching in the area of Migration Studies. It contributes to public debates, and facilitates the inclusion in the discussion of stakeholders from civil society, politics, industry and business.

CeMig offers:

- International Conferences
- Interdisciplinary Working Groups
- Joint Research in the Field of Migration Studies
- Teaching Activities related to Migration Studies
- Support to Early-Career Academics
- Support for Research Projects Externally Funded
- Collaboration with Stakeholders from Civil Society, Politics, Industry and Business

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Introduction

In 2020 the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic significantly influenced world events and also had a major impact on the research focus at CeMig itself.

A virus which has easily spread around the world through our mobilities and interconnectivities brought questions to the fore on the complex challenges of global migration in a new and more remarkable way. While the virus was initially called a 'leveller', several surveys have since indicated that the risk of infection and the death rate significantly vary along lines of class and race. On a global scale, especially migrant populations and postcolonial minorities seem to be disproportionately affected by the virus and the specific crisis-management measures. The closure of borders to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus has not only thrown into disarray fundamental frameworks of movement of persons in, for example, the European Union but made it impossible from one day to the next to pursue transnational lives – having fundamental effects for labour migrants worldwide. The imperative to maintain social distancing and stay at home if possible reinforces the social structuring of public health, establishing the link between one's social situation, working and living conditions, and migration-related positioning in societies as a central risk factor.

These new perspectives have been successfully taken up in both individual and collective activities at CeMig. This annual report provides an overview of CeMig's most central projects in 2020 in all of its four task fields: (1) research; 2) education; 3) outreach; and, 4) cooperation and network. The achievements in detail (events, research grants, publications, teaching and supervision, knowledge transfer activities, cooperative relations) as well as the list of CeMig members and the budget justification are listed in the Annex.

Research

5 submissions or initiatives for joint research projects

13 ongoing research projects by individual CeMig members

1 newly funded project by a CeMig member (starting in 2021)

45 publications by CeMig members

→ see Annex A3. & A4.

CeMig organizes its research along the following **thematic areas**:

1) Legal and Policy Regimes as well as Migration Governance are systematically explored and explained on the state, regional and international level. How different governments deal with migration and refugee flows is herewith examined.

2) The Political Economy of Migration deals with economic contexts. Researchers are interested in the determinants and effects of migration and refuge on the one hand, and study the relationship between labour and migration more generally on the other.

3) Environmental Issues and Migration addresses the question of how environmental contexts and factors interrelate with migration decisions and patterns, and how communities deal with these circumstances.

4) Economic, Political and Social Integration targets the necessary conditions for successful integration. Here, not only legal statuses but also rather classical sociological categories of ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, cultural background and level of education explain the integration pathways and trajectories of migrants and refugees.

5) Migrants' Perspectives and Voices brings migrants' and refugees' practices, as well as their own subjective understandings and conceptualizations, to the fore. This research focus is interested in practices of mobility and translocal life

projects, alongside migrants' and refugees' experiences with belonging, home-making and participation in nationally organized societies.

6) Socio-Legal Perspectives on Borders was identified as an additional shared interest by researchers especially at the Faculties of Law and Humanities. A joint Migration Research Lab, '[Socio-Legal Perspectives on Borders](#)' (22.01.2021), initiated interdisciplinary exchange about legal, socio-legal and ethnographic perspectives on migration and refugee regimes, their humanitarization and securitization, as well as border control and bordering practices.

In addition to individual research activities in the numerous projects of CeMig members, several new projects were initiated to further interdisciplinary exchange:

In view of the Covid-19 crisis and its global management, researchers from the fields of Political Science, Cultural Anthropology, Development Economics, Medical Ethics, Social Psychology and Philosophy founded a new **research group on global health and migration**. Starting from the observation that in political practice health coverage and entitlements remain highly unevenly distributed across countries globally, the research group aims to address the problem of how the 'protection of life' and the 'right to health' are defined, encoded and implemented in relation to migrant populations and postcolonial minorities – as well as which ethical, social and political questions arise from this practice. The application was submitted to the Lichtenberg-Kolleg; after its closure the application was reviewed externally and granted by the university's presidential board.

The question of how **global mobility rights** are shaped, claimed and contested by the conjunctures of different 'crises' (financial and economic crises, refugee crises, health crises such as the current Covid-19 pandemic or the climate crises) has brought together scholars from the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Law. A proposal for a joint Research Training Group (German Research Foundation, DFG) is being planned.

CeMig members are also involved in the application process for a '**Collaborative Research Centre**' (DFG) on sustainable development. Regardless of migration being centrally referenced only under Goal 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (which lists the facilitation of orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people as a prerequisite to 'reduce inequality within and among countries'), interdisciplinary collaboration makes it clear that migration is a cross-cutting question of achieving sustainable development. Migration management, for example, extends to security and peace policies (SDG 16 'peace, justice and strong institutions'). On a global scale, migration also intersects with and includes fair labour (SDG 8), gender equality (SDG 5) and education (SDG 4) too.

The joint application for a research alliance '**Forced Migration and Policies: Mapping and Explaining State Responses across World Regions**' (submitted 09/2019) is under review with the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony. The collaborative project of researchers from the fields of Anthropology, Development Economics, Cultural Anthropology and Political Science aims to systematically examine and explain **state responses to forced migration** in a comparative study of a number of countries across six world regions: Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa and the South Pacific.

In a continuation of the collaborative research within the '**Urban Lab: Migration Moves Göttingen**' (2019-2020), Sabine Hess in cooperation with colleagues from the Faculty of Social Sciences applied for funding for a **citizen-science project 'Shaping Integration in the City – Recognising and Promoting Migrant Civic Knowledge'** (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, BMBF). The aim is to use the wealth of experience of migrant self-organizations as a starting point for the further design of municipal integration and participation processes: on the one hand, with regard to an empirical assessment of how integrative municipal welfare, education and work structures are from the perspective of those 'affected'; on the other, with regard to the further development of

existing integration approaches and structures within the framework of urban integration policy. In this way, migrants are strengthened as citizen scientists to conceive more precise and sustainable integration concepts, with integration research becoming more reflexive. Unfortunately, the application did not prevail in the final round of decision-making when up against a joint project on East German migration history by the TU Dresden and several history workshops.

Education

8 presentations at the CeMig Research Colloquium

2 international Migration Research Labs

19 seminars and lectures on the subject of migration given by CeMig members at their institutes

41 doctoral candidates supervised by CeMig members

5 supported international applications for fellowships at CeMig

→ see Annex A2. & A5.

Besides the diverse teaching and supervision activities, CeMig also offered additional support to (post)doctoral candidates by offering multiple forums for interdisciplinary exchange and networking activities:

In Winter Term 2020/2021, 8 researchers in the early stages of their careers presented their current research projects to peers and senior CeMig members from different disciplines in the [CeMig Research Colloquium](#). The sessions were held online, which made it possible for interested colleagues from other universities working on similar topics to be able to join in.

CeMig also hosted two **Migration Research Labs**. Migration Research Labs offer the opportunity to discuss research questions with leading experts

and among peers. For the workshop '[A Postcolonial Critique of Migration and Border Studies](#)' (17.12.2020), Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen (Council for African Studies at Yale University) was invited to discuss Euro-centric concepts in Migration and Border Studies, colonial presences in the context of migration policies and the importance of race as a central logic of border enforcement and migration management. The workshop '[Socio-Legal Perspectives on Borders](#)' (22.01.2021) mentioned above was held in cooperation with the Department of Ethics, Law and Politics of the MPI-MMG.

Increasingly, CeMig is receiving requests for support and supervision from international both doctoral and postdoctoral candidates. In 2020 CeMig supported **four applicants for various fellowship programmes** (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation; Fulbright Foreign Student Program; Marie Skłodowska-Curie). Ece Çim, PhD student at the Institute of Social Sciences, Istanbul University, was accepted as a visiting researcher. After some postponement due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic she arrived in Göttingen in October 2020. She has since taken up her fieldwork on return migration, collective memory and transnational spaces using the case of Turkey–Germany.

Outreach, Third Mission and Societal Impact

5 public CeMig events

32 contributions to academic conferences and public events by individual CeMig members

→ see Annex A6.

In addition to the numerous contributions by individual members to academic conferences or public symposiums, CeMig also organized and hosted various events itself:

In February 2020 the collaborative research project '[Urban Lab: Migration Moves Göttingen](#)'

(2019-2020) was concluded with a two-day public event. Over 200 listeners followed the panel discussion on the role of cities and municipalities in view of the ongoing crisis of European refugee and asylum policy. Scholars, local politicians and activists debated the scope for action of cities like Göttingen which declared themselves 'safe harbours' as a way to express their willingness to directly receive refugees rescued from the Mediterranean Sea.

On the second day, the initiators of the Urban Lab, cultural and social scientists from CeMig as well as Museum Friedland, boat people project and Literarisches Zentrum Göttingen, together with the 20 participating groups (migrant self-organizations, civil society initiatives and professional support organizations) drew a preliminary conclusion from the collaborative reflection on how to make manifest the fact that all people regardless of their origin, nationality or residence status have the right to live, reside and work in Göttingen. The final brochure '[What makes a city for everyone? Impulses and recommendations for a solidarity-based Göttingen](#)' is available for download (in German).

In Summer Term, the **three-part online seminar series** '[Global Migration in the Shadow of Corona: Current Implications and Developments](#)' (held in English and German) addressed immediate effects of the new pandemic on global migration, as well as indirect implications of the related containment measures on migrants around the globe.

The first session, which was organized in collaboration with the Centre for Modern Indian Studies at the University of Göttingen (CeMIS), looked at the situation of migrant labourers in India after the sudden announcement by that country's government of a complete lockdown. On the basis of the edited volume *Borders of an Epidemic: COVID-19 and Migrant Workers* (edited by Ranabir Samaddar, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group), it was explored how caste, race, gender and other fault lines operate in the governmental strategies enacted to cope with the pandemic.

Turning to Europe and Germany, the second session focused on long-standing forms of exploitation and exclusion of migrants and refugees in companies and on the labour market – having become all the more visible during the pandemic. It was discussed how border closures, a lack of social rights and the compulsion to work thwart transnational life plans; which conflicts are triggered by the impossibility of social distancing in sectors like logistics or the meat industry was also subject of debate.

On the occasion of local outbreaks of the coronavirus in two high-rise buildings in Göttingen, being followed by stigmatizing reports in the news and political measures which further fuelled existing prejudices, the third session initiated a conversation on the effects of racism in times of a pandemic. It brought to the fore the structural factors that increase the risk of infection and make access to health care more difficult.

On 3–4 December 2020, the **online conference** '[Migration and Work: Transdisciplinary Perspectives and Current Research Findings](#)' (held in German: „Migration und Arbeit: Transdisziplinäre Perspektiven und aktuelle Forschungsergebnisse]) was jointly hosted with the Sociological Research Institute at the University of Göttingen (SOFI). Due to the free movement of workers within the framework of the EU, the selective opening of labour markets for immigrants from third countries as well as increased refugee migration in recent years, the topic of 'work' has taken on central importance in debates on migration. In this context, 'integration' is repeatedly measured by the question of one's employment. The interdisciplinary online conference presented current research results on the question of labour-market access, types of employment and the situation of migrants in companies. In addition, the discussion shed light on how the labour market and professional qualifications are analysed in transnational migration relationships.

The first part of the conference looked at the current situation in Germany, in individual European

states and in immigrants' countries of origin from different sociological and economic perspectives. A second historical part embedded the current situation in the broader context of labour migration and integration. Here, non-European insights were also presented, looking beyond German horizons alone. The third part returned to the present local context, covering the everyday practice of workplace integration from the perspectives of different regional, social and political actors in Göttingen. The programme and conference report can be downloaded here (in German): <http://www.sofi-goettingen.de/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungsdetails/news/tagungsbericht-migration-und-arbeit-transdisziplinaere-perspektiven-und-aktuelle-forschungsergebnis/>.

Cooperation and Network

For the collaborative activities of individual CeMig members

➔ *see Annex A7.*

In order to further establish migration as a cross-cutting topic, CeMig has continued conversations to strengthen collaboration across campus and with other transregional and Social Science-oriented research groups. In particular with regard to the subject of sustainable development, one of the global challenges of our time, migration has been identified to play a key role.

Impressum

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The board of directors of the Centre for Global Migration Studies (CeMig)

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