



# DISENTANGLING THE MULTIPLICITY OF CRISES: IM/MOBILITIES AND UNCERTAINTIES BEYOND PERCEPTIONS OF EMERGENCY

DFG-funded network: Migration and im/mobilities in the Global South in Pandemic Times  
3rd network meeting (MPI-MMG Göttingen)

9-11 November 2023

Organizer: HEIKE DROTBOHM, Mainz University

Venue: Library Hall, MPI-MMG, Hermann-Föge-Weg 11, 37073 Göttingen, Germany

## Thursday, 9 November

Til 17:30      arrival and welcome

### DISENTANGLING THE MULTIPLICITY OF CRISES (PART I)

18:00      *Keynote: "Migration world-making practices engaging with mutually independency through abolitionist horizons", MARTINA TAZZIOLI (University of Bologna)*

19:30      *dinner*

## Friday, 10 November

09:00      *coffee and conversation*

09:30      Round of introduction, where we're currently at? – news from our network's members

### DISENTANGLING THE MULTIPLICITY OF CRISES (PART II)

10:00–10:30      *Invited guest talk: "Crisis as Exception or Context? Covid-19 in the Somali regions and in the diaspora", NAUJA KLEIST (DIIS Copenhagen), with colleagues*

10:30–11:00      *"The desire to control 'crisis anxiety'- Migrants social positioning strategies in transnational spaces", INKA STOCK (University of Bielefeld)*

11:00–11:30      *"Crisis that spans a life-time (and beyond): Parenting practices in displacement", MAGDALENA SUERBAUM (University of Bielefeld)*

11:30–12:00 *Discussant note* by **MEGHA AMRITH** (MPI-MMG Göttingen)

12:00–12:30 plenary round of reflection

12:30 *lunch*

## DISENTANGLING THE MULTIPLICITY OF CRISES (PART III)

14:00–14:30 “Trapped! Immobility and second flight in war-torn Ethiopia”, **MAGNUS TREIBER & MULU GETACHEW ABEBE** (LMU München & Addis Ababa University)

14:30–15:00 “The ‘crisis’ of migration: mobility norms in Africa”, **FRANZISCA ZANKER** (ABI Freiburg)

15:00–15:30 “Crisis as usual. Producing migration control policies in the long run in Niger”, **LAURA LAMBERT** (ABI Freiburg)

15:30–16:00 *discussant note* by **ANTJE MISSBACH** (University of Bielefeld)

16:30–17:00 plenary round of reflection

19:00 *dinner*

## Saturday, 11 November

10:00 Round of discussion: where will we go next? Conferences, publication plans, joint applications?

12:00 departure

## ABSTRACTS

### KEYNOTE

#### Migration world-making practices engaging with mutually independency through abolitionist horizons

Martina Tazzioli (University of Bologna)

Migrants’ struggles for movement and stay constitute an analytical lens for shedding light on socio-economic independencies and the proliferation of mutually entangled “crises”. In fact, building on the assumption that “there could be no capitalism without migration” (Mezzadra, 2011), it can be advanced that there cannot be anti-capitalist project without a challenge of modes of governing by not making people live that are at the core of migration containment - but that also exceeds it. In this talk I suggest to come to grips with the questions raised by debates on mutually interdependent crises (polycrisis) by taking migration as a vantage point for exploring abolitionist horizons forged through world-making practices. This does

not mean romanticising migrants’ struggles for moving and staying; rather, it is a matter of registering how migration lays bare interlocking modes of subjugation and exploitation and, at once, shed light on incipient world-making practices that cut across different sites of “crisis”. Abolitionism as an analytical perspective does much more than undoing and dismantling: it is driven by a political imagination apt at sustaining collective political subjectivities that struggle against state’s organised displacement and principles of possessiveness. That is, it requires forging political analytics oriented towards world-making practices grounded on processes of commoning.

## INVITED GUEST TALK

### Crisis as Exception or Context? Covid-19 in the Somali regions and in the diaspora

Nauja Kleist, DIIS Copenhagen

(in collaboration with:) Mohamed Aden Hassan, Peter Albrecht, Mark Bradbury, Fatima Dahir Mohamed, Abdirahman Edle Ali, Karuti Kanyinga, Ahmed M. Musa and Jethro Norman

During times of crisis, Somali diaspora groups have become a crucial lifeline for their kin in the Horn of Africa, as they respond more quickly and access places considered too dangerous or remote by the formal humanitarian system. In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, such emergency relief was challenged as diaspora groups living in Europe and North America recorded high rates of fatalities and experienced significant loss of employment and income, while Covid-19's impact within the Somali territories was less disastrous than initially feared. In this paper, we explore what happens when a particular crisis becomes a shared – if uneven – context, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Does this disrupt pre-existing caregiving relations between diaspora and homeland? And what are the implications for conceptualizations

of global crises and the future of diaspora humanitarianism? Based on collective multi-sited fieldwork across multiple localities in the Horn of Africa, Europe and elsewhere in the world, we show that within the global Somali community, the nature, scale and impact of Covid-19 has been contested in a manner that calls into question the concept of the pandemic as singular, shared crisis. We show that responses display both elements of continuity and change with previous crises, but in general have been less organized and more individualized. We argue that these responses are explained by the contested conceptualization of Covid-19 as a crisis, and the ways in which Covid-19 is at times both compounded and relativized by previous historical crises faced by Somali communities.

### The desire to control “crisis anxiety” - Migrants social positioning strategies in transnational spaces

Inka Stock (University of Bielefeld)

This article interrogates the meaning of crisis for debates on understandings of social class and social hierarchies in the context of rising neoliberal authoritarianism on a global scale. I argue that contemporary political and economic contexts around the globe are currently producing situations in which peoples' daily lives are marked by constant fear of eminent crisis situations that may result in a loss of social status. Focusing on research with middle class migrants in Germany, I show how perceived threats of precarity impact on migrants' subjective strategies of social positioning in transnational spaces. I venture that many migrants perceive continuous threats of crisis as strongly connected to fears of becoming subjected to precarious living conditions in which they have an inability to take autonomous decisions and lose control over the way they wish to lead their lives. I also show how this can impact on the value they accord to the pro-

mise of status mobility in the context of transnational livelihoods. The article also shows that despite migrants' often quite contradictory experiences with contemporary neoliberal promises concerning individual progress, security and prosperity through capitalism, they are nevertheless likely to reproduce ideas that connect values like individual effort, determination, adaptation and competitiveness with heightened resilience to crisis and social success. In this context, it is interesting that it may be precisely the fear of crisis and precarity which appears to prompt migrants with middle class lifestyles to adhere and believe in neoliberal ideas of progress. Taking this thought seriously would also have consequences for the way in which migration researchers may theorise about the apparent (and actual) links between migration and social status mobility.



## Crisis that spans a life-time (and beyond): Parenting practices in displacement

Magdalena Suerbaum (Bielefeld University)

For Syrians of Kurdish and Palestinian descents, who settled in Istanbul after the outbreak of the uprising and ensuing civil war in their home county, being in crisis mode is nothing new. Experiences of precarity, exclusion, racialisation and discrimination span their lives in Syria and their displacement in Turkey. Crisis is not normality, because it does not conform to how people think of a 'good' life, nevertheless, Kurds and Palestinians who grew up in Syria have been attuned to different forms of crisis often since their childhood. Data that is presented in this paper was collected during six months of ethnographic fieldwork in Istanbul in 2022 and a follow-up visit in 2023. This paper questions how crisis mode is negotiated in parenting practices and intergenerational relationships. By applying a gendered lens, it seeks to analyse how related-

ness in the everyday is affected by various forms of crisis, such as continuous legal precarity, insecure employment, high inflation, the earthquake, and rejection of the Syrian presence in Turkey on societal and political level. These challenges are often entangled with experiences of gendered forms of violence that similarly span people's lives in Syria and Turkey. On a theoretical level, this paper interrogates whether concepts of crisis are able to grasp how parenting practices and intergenerational relationships in displacement are adapted and transformed over time and space. It suggests prioritizing dimensions of relationality and interdependency in omnipresent and challenging circumstances, for instance with the help of Hayder Al-Mohammad's (2010) concepts of 'being-with' and 'labour of being'.

## Trapped! Immobility and second flight in war-torn Ethiopia

Magnus Treiber & Mulu Getachew Abebe (LMU München & Addis Ababa University)

In the last 20 years Ethiopia has become a major destination for refugees from neighboring Eritrea. Life has never been easy for these refugees, neither inside nor outside the Ethiopian camps, mostly situated in Northern Tigray province. Following the 2018 peace process between both countries, Eritrean refugees experienced increasing uncertainty and threats to personal safety and status. The most recent war (2020-2022), however, has changed everything. Refugee camps in the North became inaccessible and totally cut off from international help. Local militias attacked refugees, blaming them for the invasion of the Eritrean army, which in turn forced many refugees, who had deserted national service and dictatorship, back to Eritrea. Once more Eritreans must seek refuge elsewhere. Moreover, Eritrean refugees in urban centers such

as Addis Ababa likewise face new insecurity and most recently, deportation to Eritrea. During the last phase of the war a new camp in the Amhara region, AlemWach, has been established, which soon became known for its very basic conditions and its inability to protect refugees from rain and flood. Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia today once again face an existential dilemma: stay and hope for formal resettlement, which may never come, while lacking other resources - or try their way towards the Mediterranean through Libya. War and turmoil in Libya have provoked new routes, while prices further increased. We want to show how this regional crisis and the restrictions of the international migration regime entrap refugees in a spiral of human insecurity and continuous existential threats.

## The 'crisis' of migration: mobility norms in Africa

Franziska Zanker (ABI Freiburg)

Policy makers and politicians often frame migration as a 'crisis' – not just the crisis from which people are fleeing (wars, violence, climate catastrophes) but the 'crisis' of hosting refugees and other migrants – in terms of alleged implications for the economy, security and society/culture. The political rhetoric serves to justify harsh responses, strict border policies and ultimately underscores the current European race to the bottom when it comes to asylum and migration (Bello 2022; Sahin-Mencutek et al. 2022). Whilst African policy documents also mirror securitised discourse (Zanker 2019), research to date has not yet considered the relevance of 'crisis' narratives of migration in Africa. Migration is understood differently on the African continent: migration is a right, is a normality of life, and is essential for development (e.g. Okyerefo and Setrana 2018). It is the antithesis of 'crisis'. Yet, impressive policy frame-

works on free movement continue to suffer from a lack of implementation, including in the ECOWAS region (e.g. Arhin-Sam et al. 2022) or the AU Protocol on Free Movement (Hirsch 2022). Development actors, policy makers and external pressure have produced a "sedentary bias" and increased securitization also on the continent (Bakewell 2008; Landau 2019; Nijenhuis and Leung 2017). Acknowledging the complexity of migration in Africa, this paper considers the (normative) framing of migration by governments, regional bodies and civil society; in particular, to what degree they reiterate or distance themselves from "migration as crisis" narrative. The paper will draw on expert interviews with policy makers on Addis Ababa and Nairobi, planned for September / October 2023, for a report on African migration norms to be co-authored with Laura Lambert.

## Crisis as usual. Producing migration control policies in the long run in Niger

Laura Lambert (ABI Freiburg)

The talk of a 'migration crisis' post-2015 has been a major driver for migration control measures both on European soil and in third states. While crisis calls for immediate interventions, the continuity of anti-migration interventions depends on a perpetuation of the crisis framing and thus its creeping and contradictory normalization as a 'crisis as usual' with the attendant difficulties of justifying the state of exception infringing on migrant rights and further funding (diminishing over time in what development actors often describe as the 'tennis ball effect').

Departing from Niger as a major partner country for EU migration control measures, this presentation

examines such negotiations of crisis and normalcy over time in Niger and their effects on migrants' mobility, protection and assistance. Since 2012, IOM established a migration crisis framing to challenge the normality of trans-Saharan migration as a major historical mobility pattern and income source. The resulting measures since 2015 have reportedly reduced transit migration importantly. To justify further interventions and funding, IOM has several times adapted the way it counts migration flows and – together with state actors – claimed new threats (e.g. the nexus between migration, arms and drug trafficking).