



CONFERENCE  
**MIGRATION AND  
DISPLACEMENT IN  
CONTEMPORARY  
AFRICA**

30<sup>th</sup> May 2017 , Barcelona



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY

**UNU-GCM**

Institute on Globalization,  
Culture and Mobility

While public debate and policy attention on migration has focussed in recent years on so-called migration crises in the Mediterranean region and in Europe, much less sustained attention has been given to the processes of migration and displacement in contemporary Africa. This conference aims to shed light on these diverse dimensions and experiences of migration and forced displacement within contemporary Africa, and from Africa to other regions. It brings together scholars who examine this from different disciplinary and methodological perspectives, in order to foster a wide-ranging dialogue on the local, regional and global implications of these movements. Speakers will address a range of themes within an African context, including: the geopolitical impacts of US foreign policy on forced migration and displacement; the multifaceted decision-making processes of migrants; the ways in which EU policy discourses about migrant smuggling overlook complex historical, social and political dynamics; experiences of xenophobia among migrant women; and the agency of migrants in situations of immobility as they seek to build new lives in their localities, regions and further afield.

## VENUE

Pau Gil Room  
Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site  
Sant Antoni Maria Claret 167  
08025 Barcelona

## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

UNU-GCM is pleased to welcome you to this conference on "Migration and Displacement in Contemporary Africa". All participants should be aware that:

- » Filming and photography could be taking place during the event. The photographs and videos produced may be used in the public dissemination of the work of UNU-GCM.
- » This is an academic conference. As such, the opinions expressed and discussions arising represent personal opinions and not those of UNU-GCM. UNU-GCM asks that all contributions be responsible and substantiated by research.

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**9.00-9.30****REGISTRATION****9.30-10.15****FORMAL OPENING****10.15 -11.15****SESSION 1:  
POLICY IMPACTS AND  
THE MULTI-LEVEL  
GOVERNANCE OF  
MIGRATION**

*"First, Do No Harm! The United States and Africa's Refugee Crisis"* **Gregory Hall** Associate Professor at the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce, University of Kentucky.

*"From Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean: Understanding Migrants' Decisions for an Improved Global Governance of Migration"* **Belachew Gebrewold** Professor of International Relations and Head of Department of Social Work and Social Policy at Management Center Innsbruck.

**Discussant: Valeria Bello** Research Fellow, UNU-GCM.

**11.15-11.45****COFFEE BREAK****11.45-13.15****SESSION 2:  
CHALLENGING  
DOMINANT  
NARRATIVES FROM  
BELOW**

*"Un/Masking Narratives: An Alternative Account of Horn of Africa Migration"* **Samson Bezabeh** Research Fellow at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), Permanent Fellow of the African Studies Centre Leiden, and former Research Consultant at UNU-GCM.

*"Women's Voices in South-South Migration: Exposing Salient Forms of Xenophobia and Negotiated Ways of Belonging in South Africa"* **Gavaza Maluleke** Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Amsterdam and former Research Consultant at UNU-GCM.

*"You Have to Know How to Speak Nicely": Female Migrants' Use of the Internet during Situations of Prolonged Immobility"* **Dorte Thorsen** Gender Theme Leader (Geography, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, Anthropology), University of Sussex.

**Discussant: Megha Amrith**, Research Fellow, UNU-GCM.

**13.15****PHOTO****13.30-15.30****LUNCH****15.30-16.30****SESSION 3:  
DADAAB STORIES:  
DAILY LIFE IN A  
REFUGEE CAMP**

A screening of film excerpts from *Dadaab Stories*.

**Discussants: Janina Pescinski** Junior Research Fellow, UNU-GCM, and **Bavo Stevens** Junior Research Fellow, UNU-GCM.

**16.30-17.30****KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

*"Imagining Refugia: Addressing the Challenge of Global Mobility Outside the Current International Migration Regime"* **Nicholas Van Hear** Deputy Director at Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), University of Oxford

**Moderator: Francisco Cos-Montiel**, Senior Research Officer, UNU-GCM.

**17.30-18.00****CONCLUDING  
SUMMARY AND  
DISCUSSION**

Parvati Nair, Director, UNU-GCM.

# ABSTRACTS AND SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

In order of presentation

## Gregory Hall

### First, Do No Harm! The United States and Africa's Refugee Crisis

The world is approaching the third decade since the end of the Cold War, but this is hardly a cause for celebration. Humanity faces challenges on multiple fronts – cyber security, climate change, pandemic diseases, terrorism, economic insecurity, and food insecurity. Further, institutions and states and organizations are under great strain, and, in some cases, are even breaking down (the recent Brexit drama, and cases like Somalia and Syria are illustrative of these trends). Of all world regions, the challenges facing parts of Africa are especially acute, most notably, the crisis of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Since the 1990s, across western, central, and eastern parts of the continent, millions of people have been uprooted, fleeing wars, persecution, and poverty in places like the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan. These large-scale, forced migrations have implications not just for the countries of origin and surrounding regions, but also for destinations in Europe and elsewhere, especially in the Western world. This paper examines the refugee crisis in sub-Saharan Africa in the context of post-cold war US foreign and security policies. I am interested in exploring in what ways US policies impact the refugee situation. Generally speaking, have US policies contributed to this worsening crisis? This research focuses on three cases – Libya, Somalia, and Sudan/South Sudan. After surveying each country's domestic

and regional situation, I will examine the record of American involvement and its impacts. Finally, I will explore prospects for US engagement in Africa in the post–Obama era, with special attention devoted to emerging policies under the new presidency of Donald J. Trump.

*In August 2016, Gregory Hall joined the Patterson School of Diplomacy and International Commerce at the University of Kentucky as an associate professor. He previously served as Head of the Department of Political Science and Director of the International Studies Program at Morehouse College. He has held appointments at institutions both in the United States and abroad, to include Hong Kong and Turkey. Dr. Hall's primary areas of teaching and research include international relations and security, foreign policy, international political economy, Eurasian affairs, and, research methodology. He completed his Ph.D. in Political Science, with a concentration in International Relations from Howard University. Professor Hall is author of several articles, and is co-editor of (and contributor to) the book, *Eternal Colonialism* (University Press of America, Inc., 2010). His most recent book is titled *Authority, Ascendancy, and Supremacy: China, Russia, and the United States' Pursuit of Relevancy and Power* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis, 2013). Professor Hall is currently working on a book project on the broad subject of the BRICS countries in global affairs.*

## Belachew Gebrewold

### From Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean: Understanding Migrants' Decisions for an Improved Global Governance of Migration

Understanding the decision-making processes is decisive for the global governance of international migration. However, most of the times migration research and policies focus only on push and pull factors, causes and consequences of migration and do not pay due attention to decision-making processes. Therefore, the core question of this paper is: what are the main characteristics and determining factors of migrants' decision-making processes and why has the implementation of the European-African migration policy agreements and initiatives been so difficult? Firstly, this paper shows that the characteristics and the determining factors of migrants' decision-making process are multi-faceted. The decision-makers do not make once-for-all decisions; instead they make ad-hoc decisions at different stages. Migrants make decisions depending on their family circumstances, financial situations, border controls, threats and opportunities on their ways, amount of information available about the routes, and expectations from destination. Secondly, this paper argues that the implementation of the intercontinental migration policy agreements and initiatives has been very

difficult because the policy priorities of the African and European partners are asymmetric. For the African side, migration has not been a policy priority because migration is not seen as a problem, whereas the European response has been shambling for decades to address the global economic, environmental and political causes of migration. Both sides depend on each other but they view their interdependencies as asymmetric.

*Belachew Gebrewold is a Professor of International Relations and Head of Department and Studies of Social Work, Social Policy and Management at Management Center Innsbruck, Austria. His main research areas are international security, conflicts, migration, and global social policy. He has been teaching on those topics at different universities such as University of Innsbruck, Austria; Helmut Schmidt University of Hamburg, Germany; and at the MCI, among others. His publications include monographs and edited volumes (besides various scientific articles in peer reviewed journals) such as Africa and Fortress Europe (Ashgate 2007); Anatomy of Violence: understanding the systems of conflicts and violence in Africa (Ashgate 2009); Global Security Triangle: African, Asian and European Interaction (Routledge 2010, co-edited); Understanding Migrant Decisions: from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Mediterranean Region (Routledge, 2016, co-edited); Human Trafficking and Exploitation: Lessons from Europe, Routledge, ca. June 2017 (forthcoming).*

## Samson Bezabeh

### Un/Masking Narratives: An Alternative Account of Horn of Africa Migration

Migration has become a defining feature of our era. In this wave of migration, people from the Horn of Africa have been one of the major groups attempting to reach Europe via the Mediterranean, or oil-rich Gulf countries by crossing the Red Sea. The European Union and its African partners' narrative that was developed as a result of the migration of Africans focuses on the figure of the people smugglers. This narrative portrays the smugglers as criminals who are responsible for the increased flow of migration while the migrants are portrayed as vulnerable human beings who are tricked into leaving their homeland. This narrative, while being instrumental in the project of reinforcing borders, masks complex historical and contemporary social and political dynamics. In doing so, it contributes to the reinforcement of social boundaries and the emergence of racial and religious boundaries. To achieve long-term peaceful interaction, Europe and its African partners should engage in the development of an alternative narrative that unmask the different complexities that the current narrative conceals. This paper outlines some of the ways of developing an alternative account of migration and what should be

included and considered for developing a narrative that better reflects migrants' realities.

*Samson A. Bezabeh, is a Research Fellow at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) and a permanent fellow of the African Studies Center- Leiden, the Netherlands. He was previously a Post-doctoral researcher at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris, and has been affiliated with the University of Bergen, the University of Exeter, and Addis Ababa University. His research interests include diaspora studies, state- society interaction, colonialism, religion (Islam and Orthodox Christianity) as well as issues of citizenship, ethnicity, and class in Africa. His article, 'Citizenship and the Logic of Sovereignty in Djibouti', published in African Affairs, won the journal's African Author Prize. He has finalized a monograph Subjects of Empires, Citizens of States, that describes the interaction between Yemeni diaspora, states and empires in the Horn of Africa, published by the American University in Cairo Press in 2016. Currently, he is working on a new book length monograph that focuses on the political history of Djibouti as well as on a new project that focus on religion, sovereignty and human mobility in the Horn of Africa.*

## Gavaza Maluleke

### Women's Voices in South-South Migration: Exposing Salient Forms of Xenophobia and Negotiated Ways of Belonging in South Africa

This paper contains findings from a research project that explored the South African context as perceived by African women with migration experience. It focuses on African women with migration experience so as to include both African foreign women and South African women married to foreign nationals, as both groups are affected by similar issues in the South African context. This paper will highlight the complexities that exist in the South African context as underscored by African women with migration experience and explore the ways in which they negotiate and carve out their own forms of belonging in response to some of the issues they face. Even though xenophobia will be discussed in this presentation, the focus is on the salient forms of xenophobia and less on the highly publicized violent outbursts that occurred in May 2008 and April 2015. It aims to highlight to policymakers some of the issues that have been overlooked as a result of the heavy focus on the violent aspect of xenophobia by drawing upon the issues articulated by African women with migration experience.

*Gavaza Maluleke is a Postdoctoral Researcher at University of Amsterdam in the 'Becoming Men: Masculinities in Urban Africa' project. She recently finished a research project with the United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility (UNU-GCM) where she was a consultant working on the topic of South-south migration/mobility with a specific focus on African women's migration to South Africa. She has a PhD specialising in transnational feminism and African studies from the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz and a fellow in the Research Training Group, Transnational Social support. Her research interests are in African studies, Feminism, Migration studies, Masculinities, Postcolonial studies and Rural development.*

## Dorte Thorsen

### "You Have to Know How to Speak Nicely": Female Migrants' Use of the Internet during Situations of Prolonged Immobility

This paper focuses on female migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who reluctantly live in Morocco for prolonged periods of time. It explores how they use the internet to navigate multiple constraints imposed by the externalisation of European migration management. The analysis shows that although female migrants seek legal entry into Europe through internet romances with European men, as has been shown in a number of studies, female migrants in Rabat also use the internet to initiate flirtatious relationships with men in the Diaspora. These relationships, I argue, help female migrants circumvent constraints faced in the Moroccan context, ranging from structural marginalisation by the Moroccan state to marginalisation within migrant communities. Knowing how to speak nicely and thus prompt a trickle of gifts transferred through Western Union pays the bills and gives female migrants more control over whether or not to engage in physical/romantic relationships in Morocco.

*Dorte Thorsen is Theme Leader on gender dynamics in the Migrating Out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium in the School of Global Studies, University of Sussex. She is also Associate Tutor in Anthropology. She held an international postdoctoral fellowship from 2012-2014 (funded by Danish Council for Independent Research - Humanities). After completing her DPhil in African Studies at the University of Sussex in 2005, she carried out research at the DfID-funded 'Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty' (2004-05, 2008-09) and at the Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden (2005-08). She has worked as an associate tutor at the University of Sussex, Brunel University and Brighton University and as a teaching fellow at the University of Reading (2010-12). Dorte has done consultancies on children's work and migration (Save the Children, UNICEF, CODESRIA and the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty), on the assessment of gender equality in Burkina Faso (SIDA), and she has been an expert witness for the Special Court on Sierra Leone.*

## Nicholas Van Hear

### Imagining Refugia: Addressing the Challenge of Global Mobility Outside the Current International Migration Regime

The refugee summits in the US in September 2016 rounded off no less than seven major international meetings in 2016 that set out to address the 'refugee and migrant crisis' of recent years, resulting in the prospect of 'Global Compacts' to promote 'safe, orderly and regular **migration**' for refugees and migrants by 2018. While the aims and sentiments articulated are worthy and worthwhile, there is a general lack of confidence that such summitry holds promise of real progress, or that the three traditional 'durable solutions' (local integration, resettlement and return) can address the challenge on the scale needed.

This contribution takes as a starting point various recent proposals that depart from the usual three 'durable solutions' and international migration architecture, and that think about alternatives. Strands to consider include charter cities, ideas for safe areas, and special zones for refugees and migrants. One attention-grabbing set of proposals explores the idea of new nations, cities or polities for refugees and migrants. These suggestions - particularly the idea of 'refugee islands' - have usually been dismissed as fantasies by the ref-

ugee commentariat. However, perhaps such seemingly outlandish proposals should not be dismissed out of hand. In this presentation, after reviewing these proposals, I explore the possibility not of a new 'refugee nation', but rather a new kind of transnational polity - Refugia - governed by refugees and migrants themselves, and which links refugee and migrant communities globally.

In an exercise that I characterise as 'pragmatic utopianism', I argue that such a transnational polity is imperfectly prefigured in many of the transnational practices that refugees and migrants deploy and the environments in which they (sometimes in alliance with sympathetic citizens) find themselves today. Camps and communities in countries neighbouring conflicts, neighbourhoods in global cities, transnational political practices and money transfers, emergent communities and activities in disparate locations en route: all are fragments that taken separately do not seem to promise much. But in the aggregate they could add up to Refugia, imperfectly prefigured. Consolidating them somehow into a common polity might prove to be a way out of the current impasse.

### Screening and Discussion of Dadaab Stories: Daily Life in a Refugee Camp

Africa today hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world, many of whom reside in refugee camps. A considerable amount of research has focused on the causes of displacement, often highlighting the hardships that people face to reach relative safety. What needs more attention, however, is an understanding of life in a refugee camp. *Dadaab Stories* seeks to create a space in which refugees can exercise the agency to express their experiences of different dimensions of camp life. As a collaborative community media project, it is constantly evolving as refugees tell their stories through video, photography, poetry, music and journalism. The project is an initiative of FilmAid, a humanitarian media organization that has been making, teaching and screening films in Dadaab since 2006. This presentation and screening will place refugee voices at the center of our discussions. In particular, we will highlight how the residents in Dadaab are empowered by this project to shape their own narratives around the challenges they face, their creative livelihood strategies, their social relationships and more.

*Nicholas Van Hear is Deputy Director at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) and a Fellow of St Cross College, University of Oxford. With a background in Anthropology, West African Studies and Development Studies, he works on forced migration, conflict, development, diaspora, transnationalism and related issues, and has field experience in Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, North America and Europe. His books include New diasporas: the mass exodus, dispersal and regrouping of migrant communities (1998), The migration-development nexus (2003), and Catching fire: containing forced migration in a volatile world (2006). His main theoretical and conceptual contributions have been on force and choice in migration; migration, refugees and development; diaspora formation and engagement in conflict settings, including post war recovery; and migration and class. He is currently developing research on the interplay between geopolitical shifts, mobility, immobility and political mobilisation.*

# **PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS**

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**United Nations University - GCM**

**Makerere Institute of Social Research**

**Management Center Innsbruck**

**University of Amsterdam**

**University of Kentucky**

**University of Oxford**

**University of Sussex**





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