

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

*Migration and Mobility in a Digital Age
Paradoxes of Connectivity and Belonging*

Organizer Sandra Ponzanesi

Columbia University, [Heyman Center for the Humanities](#)

April 10-11, 2018

In collaboration with Utrecht University, ERC Project,

[CONNECTINGEUROPE](#)

Organizer:

Prof. Sandra Ponzanesi

Visiting Professor, Columbia University, Dept. of English and Comparative Literature/
Professor Gender and Postcolonial Studies, Dept. of Media and Culture Studies, UU

Keynotes:

Prof. Arjun Appadurai

(Visiting Professor Institute of European Ethnology, Berlin/ Goddard Professor in Media,
Culture and Communication at New York University)

Narrative Panic and the Edges of Europe

Prof. Mirca Madianou

(Reader in Media and Communications, Department of Media and Communications,
Goldsmiths, University of London, UK)

Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data in Humanitarian Practice

See below for full list of speakers including Bruce Robbins (Columbia U), Inderpal Grewal (Yale U), Myria Georgiou (LSE), Radhika Gajjala (Bowling Green), Ato Quayson, (NYU), Radha Hegde (NYU), Sandro Mezzadra (Unibo), Jonathan Ong (Amherst U), Miriam Ticktin (The New School) and several speakers from Utrecht University among others.



Conference description

The image of Syrian refugees with a smartphone shooting ‘selfies’ upon reaching dry land has captured the international imagination (Chouliaraki, 2017; Kunstman, 2017; Risam, forthcoming 2018). It suggests an image of the ‘connected migrant’ (Diminescu, 2008), which is shaped by a profound ambivalence: migrants are expected to be people fleeing from war, violence, and poverty; they are not expected to be ‘digital natives’, equipped with technologies to navigate their difficult journeys. While smartphones are accessible, affordable, and easy to use, in the realm of the public imaginary the image of the disenfranchised and disconnected migrant remains that of the ‘have nots’, and therefore subject to ‘high tech orientalism’ (Chun, 2006, p. 73). This posits the figuration of the migrant as outside the realm of development and modern forms of communication, disenfranchised and vulnerable in order to be worthy of international aid and pity (Boltanski, 2000; Ticktin, 2008). And yet smartphones are ubiquitous, and migrants have been early adopters and heavy users of technologies for the simple reason that these technologies are ingrained in their daily practices and everyday lives, which often involve perilous crossings but also the need to keep in touch with the home front and their diasporic communities. The promise of connectivity that is guaranteed even under duress becomes fraught with the profound disconnection brought about by the disciplining gaze of Western media and publics (Risam, 2017).

It is, therefore, crucial to focus on the specific way in which digital technologies bridge or magnify the gap in migration between geographical distance and digital proximity. How are affect, intimacy, and belonging negotiated online in the face of forced migration and expulsions (Sassen, 2012) but also of circular migration, expatriation, and transnational movements? Due to the increased feminization of migration the gendered analysis is particularly urgent. How do these new technologies help overcome isolation and segregation fostering networks of support and integration for migrant women? How do these networks stretch across different diasporas and how are new forms of transnational citizenship articulated?

This conference aims to cover a broad range of conflict-related issues on migration in a digital age. Using the latest insights from a range of interdisciplinary fields, it will explore theories of displacement such as diaspora, cosmopolitanism, and nomadism, and the transformations brought about by the digital revolution, through the analysis of virtual communities, social media platforms, and digital activism. It will also focus on media production and the regulation of information on forced migrants in a 'post-truth' era: fake news; the humanitarianism-securitization nexus, migration management, social and political conflicts related to migrant and diaspora communities, radicalization and online counter-terrorism, hate speech and racism, but also solidarities, activism, and protest.

Programme

DAY1

Tuesday, April 10

Heyman Center, Common Room

9.00-9.30 Coffee

9.30-10.00 Opening

- Sarah Cole (Dean of Arts and Sciences, Division of Humanities)

Introduction

- Sandra Ponzanesi (Utrecht University/Columbia University)

10.00-11.30

Panel I

Digital Cartographies 'in' Time

Moderator: Radhika Gajjala (Bowling Green State University)

- Alex Gil (Columbia University)
"In The Same Boats": Moving Maps and Cartographies of Intersections
- Roopika Risam (Salem State University)
Cartographies of the Living and the Dead: Mapping Global Migration
- Anne McNevin (The New School)
Time, Digital Media, and the Figure of the Migrant

11.30-13.00

Panel II

Networks, Affects and Activism

Moderator: Jonathan Corpus Ong (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

- Claudia Minchilli (Utrecht University)

Somali Women in Postcolonial Italy: Identity Construction Through Digital Connectedness

- Donya Alinejad (Utrecht University)
Social Media and Feelings of Presence: Mobile Apps and Emotions in a Context of Transnational and Urban Mobility.
- Radhika Gajjala (Bowling Green State University)
Migration and Mobility in Gendered Indian Digital Social Media Spaces: Revisiting “Ghar and Bahir

Break 13.00-14.00

14.00-15.30

Panel III

Digital Migration in Europe

Moderator: Radha Hegde (New York University)

- Melis Mevsimler (Utrecht University)
Divided Nation, Divided Diaspora: Crossroads of Gender and Homeland Politics in Everyday Lives of Migrant Women from Turkey in London
- Myria Georgiou (London School of Economics/Annenberg School of Communication, USC)
The Communication Architecture of Humanitarian Securitization: Communicative Politics of Reception at Europe’s Borderland.
- Koen Leurs (Utrecht University)
Connected Migrants and Digital Migration Studies in Europe

15.30-15.45

Coffee break

15.45-17.15

Panel IV

Cosmopolitan Interruptions

Moderator: Sandra Ponzanesi (Utrecht University/Columbia University)

- Bruce Robbins (Columbia University)
The Refugee and the Beneficiary
- Frances Negrón-Muntaner (Columbia University)
The Emptying Island: Puerto Rican Expulsion in Post-Maria Time
- Wouter Omen (Utrecht University)
Humanitarian Communication, Common Humanities Playground

Jerome Green Annex

17.30 -18.45

Keynote

Chair: Sandra Ponzanesi

- Mirca Madianou (Goldsmith, University of London)

Technocolonialism: Digital Innovation and Data in Humanitarian Practice

Day 2

Heyman Center Common Room

10.30-12.00

Panel V

Technologies for Change: Gaming, Piracy & Conviviality

Moderator: Koen Leurs (Utrecht University)

- Dennis Tenen (Columbia University)
Global Book Piracy as Peer Preservation
- Jonathan Corpus Ong/Maria Rovisco (University of Massachusetts, Amherst/University of Leicester)
Curating Conviviality
- Joost Raessens (Utrecht University/NYU)
Life as a Refugee: Games for Change

Break 12.00-13.00

13.00-14.30

Panel VI

Mediating Migration

Moderator: Marianne Hirsch (Columbia University)

- Laura Candidatu (Utrecht University)
Digital Media and Diasporic Mothering: Romanian Diaspora in Amsterdam
- Radha Hegde (New York University)
Diasporic Itinerancy and Remediated Authenticities
- Ato Quayson (New York University)
Modes of the Selfie from Orality to Social Media

14.30-15.00

Coffee break

15.00-16.30

Panel VII

Beyond Connectivity and Surveillance

Moderator: Myria Georgiou (London School of Economics/Annenberg School of Communication, USC)

- Sandro Mezzadra (University of Bologna/The New School)
The Border Regime as a Black Box? Migration, Logistics, and Digitalization in Europe and Beyond
- Inderpal Grewal (Yale University)
Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants: Racial logics of digital production.
- Miriam Ticktin (The New School)
Re-imagining Border Technologies, Designing New Political Forms

Jerome Green Annex

17.00-18.30

Closing Keynote

Chair: Sandra Ponzanesi

- Arjun Appadurai (New York University)
Narrative Panic and the Edges of Europe

Further info:

<http://heymancenter.org/events/migration-in-a-digital-age-paradoxes-of-connectivity-and-belonging/>



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

The conference is organized in collaboration with Columbia University, Heyman Center for the Humanities and Utrecht University, ERC project [CONNECTINGEUROPE](#), led by Sandra Ponzanesi, during her visiting professorship at Columbia University. Other co-sponsors are Columbia University, Divisions of Humanities, New York University (Department of Media and Culture Studies), The New School (Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility), Columbia University (Department of English & Comparative Literature), IRWGS (The Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality), CES, Council for European Studies, Columbia Center for the Studies of Social Difference, ICLS (Institute for Comparative Literature and Society) and Butler Library.