The Getaway Conference:

Mobilities, Societies, the State, and Detoxing

10 – 11 October 2024
Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia

Programme

10 October 2024 **15:00 – 18:00**	
Venue: Dzirciema iela 16, Senate hall, K-212	
15:00 – 16:00	Registration
16:00 – 16:15	Opening remarks **Ieva Puzo**, Head of the Social Sciences Research Center, RSU **Agnese Lāce**, Minister for Culture of the Republic of Latvia **Dins Šmits**, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, RSU
Keynote **16:15 – 18:00**	
Louise Ryan, Senior Professor of Sociology and Director of the Global Diversities and Inequalities Research Centre, London Metropolitan University **'You need a network': how highly qualified refugees rebuild social networks to convert cultural capital and reclaim professional identities**	
19:00	Conference dinner (venue TBA)

11 October 2024 **9:00 – 11:00**	
Venue: Dzirciema iela 16, Senate hall, K-212	
9:00 – 9:30	Coffee

Session I **Getting away from work & the work of getting away** 9:30 – 11:00	
Chair: Ieva Puzo *Rīga Stradiņš University, Latvia*	
Why does class resentment not transform into political action? A study of the food delivery workers' affective dispositions in the capital of Latvia. How do affective dispositions of the same occupational group members explain their political (in)actions towards their employers? To answer this question, we rely on 56 semi-structured interviews with the food delivery workers at two platforms in Rīga. Interviews were gathered from July 2022 to June 2023. The interview data is supplemented with publicly available courier chat analysis. Although most couriers express class resentment of the platforms they work for, we find they don't transform this resentment into political action against platforms. While couriers have transformed their class resentment of the platforms into political action in many European countries through strikes, protests, and boycotts, it has never occurred in Latvia. The class resentment has not been mobilized due to low trust, neoliberal feeling rules of individual responsibility, and the affective dispositions couriers hold about themselves, especially low self-confidence and related shame and fear of disconnection. These emotions silence leadership and any efforts to organize.	Iveta Ķešāne *Latvian Academy of Culture, Latvia*

The debt whirlpool. Dynamics of (de)indebtedness among the middle classes in Greater Buenos Aires (Argentina). In recent years, the inflationary experience in Argentina has been a constant in the daily lives of families who have had to readjust their consumption and spending patterns in order to cope with uncertain contexts. This is particularly evident among the middle sectors, which have been experiencing a regional reduction (in terms of their income levels) for decades, given the economic concentration at the upper social pyramid (Güemes and Paramio, 2020). This becomes a particular obstacle, considering that middle-classes historical narrative has been upheld by actions linked to work, effort and savings as premises directed towards the temporary predictability of their lives. In scenarios of uncertainty, various money management tactics emerge in order to carry out the complex enterprise of 'living well' in a context of 'fall', crisis or downward mobility in the middle classes (Salvia, 2021). Some of this I could notice among my interlocutors, with whom I conducted research in recent years, who constantly expressed themselves as 'they (do not) save, (do not) pay, (do not) owe', etc. Thus, a wide range of actions emerged, including, for example, 'cutting costs', 'selling goods' - such as family jewellery -, 'borrowing', accessing deferred payment modalities through interpersonal arrangements in order to cope with indebtedness and de-indebtedness. In this sense, from an ethnographic research approach and method, I ask myself, how do they get away from (de-)indebtedness in inflationary contexts? This article explores the dynamics of indebtedness and de-indebtedness among middle-class families in the urban peripheries of Buenos Aires (Argentina).	María Florencia Blanco Esmoris *Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas - Instituto de Desarrollo Económico y Social), Argentina*
Creating an illusion of control in gig-work: Analysis of Bolt Food communication to food delivery couriers in Riga An increasing number of people worldwide choose platform work as their primary or supplementary source of income. Platforms attract workers, promising unprecedented autonomy and flexibility, but the use of algorithmic management and asymmetric information distribution between a platform and its workers leave the latter with very little control and create rather precarious working conditions. In this paper, I shed light on the everyday realities of food delivery gig-workers by critically examining the communication of a food delivery platform, Bolt Food, to its courier partners in Riga. Through quantitative and qualitative cultural sociological analysis of 4135 Telegram messages Bolt Food has sent to its food delivery couriers in Riga from 2021 to 2023, I analyze the intensity and content of communication, use of persuasive means of expression, and asymmetrical provision of information, and thereby provide an insight into how platforms create an "illusion of control" (Woodcock 2020). The analysis is based on the data collected in a research project, "Meaning and Practice of Autonomy in Gig-Work: Sociocultural Inquiry in Experience of Wolt and Bolt Delivery Workers in Riga," conducted at the Latvian Academy of Culture and funded by the Latvian Council of Sciences (Nr. lzp-2021/1-0521).	Maija Spuriņa *Latvian Academy of Culture*

TikTok as a Catalyst: The Transformation of Digital Nomad Collective Identity This work continues our research on digital nomads (DN) by examining the narrative identities of professionals who blend work and leisure to pursue location independence through the lens of the science of communication and the theory of information. While the development of information and communication technologies is a foundational element of mobile lifestyle practices, we explore how such information shapes their collective identity. We do this by analyzing short video narratives on TikTok showcasing mobile lifestyles, examining characters, episodes, imagery, settings, plots, and themes, and mimicking the structure of original stories. Our study employs mixed methods: a qualitative thematic analysis studies how DNs communicate and assimilate their identity, leveraging TikTok's meme culture as a space for coping and adaptation. We also quantify the collective DN identity by analyzing popular hashtags used to label these narratives, such as #digitalnomadlifestyle, #digitalnomad, #digitalnomadlife, #remotework, #travellife, and #workfromanywhere. We found that TikTok vernaculars significantly influence the narrative identity of DN communities and how they present themselves, following familiar tropes and formats to achieve maximum resonance. This process dynamically facilitates moving away from communities' initial emancipatory ideals towards an extension of capitalist logic, transitioning from a fringe anti-establishment lifestyle to becoming professionalized, corporatized, and commercialized. Thus, our study highlights how TikTok facilitates changes in a niche community's collective identity. We contribute to the broader field of science communication and our understanding of how online narratives shape public discourse and perceptions.	Karine Ehn

Session II **Moving to, from and within relationships** 11:30-13:00	
Chair: Klāvs Sedlenieks *Rīga Stradiņš University*	
Parental control by proxy: Chinese children in elite British boarding schools In the last few decades, China has sent more students to overseas education than any other country. In the quest for global educational credentials, transnational lifestyle and social reproduction, the UK has become a top choice for wealthy parents who invest in prestigious boarding schools, where children typically arrive for Key Stage 3, at the age of 11. Children's internationalisation starts early in China and families work hard, in a concerted fashion, to gain admission for the child to one of these institutions. As parents take an active role in the regimentation of their children's timetable and pushing them to perform well, the families experience stress and anxieties in a hypercompetitive education system, compounded by the hardship posed by migration. How do children reflect on their "big move" to a foreign country? How does the separation affect the relationship between parents and children? How do parents, who are based in China, continue to exert their influence on children to achieve the aspired educational outcomes? The longitudinal, ethnographic study of well-off Chinese families from Shanghai focuses on the relationship between educational-migration strategies and changing parenting styles, simultaneously shaped by Confucian values and global discourses. The research also zooms in on the relationship between education-migration and the recent phenomenon of "runology" (润学) in order to observe young people's desire to run away from worsening conditions in China.	Andrea Kis *University of Sussex, England*
(Un)Moving Circles. A case study upon the social relationships as revealed by the Romanian diaspora from Madrid, Spain With a history depicted through scattering and displacement, the concept of diaspora enlarged its meaning, becoming an umbrella term for many communities whose reasons for undergoing the process of mobility would vary. This paper aims to look at how Romanian diasporic community from Madrid Spain (re)built their relational home (Taylor, 2013) while seeking for a better life. Having as a core 18 interviews with the community's generation of memory (Hirsch, 2012), I want to analyse the social environment they have created. When displaced, people tend to cope with homesickness through reimagining and recreating the routine they had to give up on. Even though suffering is an individual emotion (Ahmed, 2004), a common reason for suffering can add up to the process of bonding (Ponzanesi, 2020). How much can displacement influence one's lifestyle on an individual level? By looking at the life stories of the members, some patterns can be identified, these being the ones who seem to give the coordinates for the immigrants' life – a position of in-between, a rather uncertain position on Mobius' strip.	Bianca-Cătălina Munteanu *University of Bucharest, Romania*

Family, care, information and emotional coping strategies – how the vaccination attitude was formed among Latvian migrants in the Nordics during the COVID-19 pandemic While anti-COVID 19 vaccination rate was high in Nordic countries in general, migrant minorities were much less vaccinated. Although reasons for non-vaccination are compex, it is important to look at the contexts in which the attitude towards vaccination was developped and decision about it made. Our paper deals with strategies of emotional coping and attitudes towards vaccination among Latvian migrants in the Nordic countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. We examine the relationship between the informational environment, media consumption and vaccine acceptance, especially, among migrant women. The data for the analysis are collected in 36 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with Latvian origin respondents living in Latvia, Sweden and Iceland in the first part of 2023. They are interpreted through the lens of the (feminist) theory of the ethics of care, in order to provide an in-depth explanation of the motivations and attitude established towards vaccination. We find only minor gendered, country of residence based, generational, as well as education or occupation based patterns forming a particular attitude towards vaccination. However, both positive and negative attitudes are based on family and care related moral reasoning. The feeling of disillusion resulting in lack of trust in social institutions both media and government typical for Latvian society made Latvian migrants generally suspicious of the usefulness and safety of anti-COVID vaccines, whereas the feeling of care was a strong motivator for both kinds of vaccination behaviour.	Ilva Skulte Diana Kalniņa *Riga Stradins university, Latvia* Maarit Jaakkola *Gothenburg University, Sweden*
Fleeing from home: The racialized and gendered mobility trajectories of young white English teachers in China Based on fifty-two semi-structured interviews conducted between 2019 and 2024, this paper examines the diverse and overlapping motivations for the migration of white-looking youth to China's English Language Teaching sector. It identifies boredom, unemployment, broken relations, and repressive family regimes as the four major reasons for these youth to flee from home to search for new life and career opportunities in China. However, in China they become susceptible to racialized and gendered stereotypes such as Losers Back Home (LBH), the exotic white beauty, the cultural outsider, and performers of white face jobs. The findings show that international migration not only facilitates the youth's development of new knowledge of their racialized and gendered subjectivities, but contributes to the estrangement, suspension, and even severance of pre-existing kinship ties with families back home. Some youth feel empowered by the freedom and confidence they gained in terms of making decisions about job/business opportunities, romantic relationship, and sexual orientation. Others developed a critical perspective towards the racism, gender and religious bias perpetuated by family members back home. The paper argues that these white youth's mobile transitions to adulthood are mediated by the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, language, citizenship and nationality. Meanwhile, they are also conditioned by larger structural factors such as geopolitical tensions between China and the United States, the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Central Asia, and the Russia-Ukraine War.	Shanshan Lan *University of Amsterdam, Netherlands*

13:00 – 14:00	Lunch, Dzirciema iela 16, Daily

Session III **Emplacing the getting away** 14:00 – 15:30	
Chair: Christian Ritter, *Karlstad University*	
Romanian migrant artists – cultural identity and meeting the "other" The study tries to highlight how the cultural identity of some Romanian artists that migrated in USA, Canada, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and so on, got richer in connection with new cultures, with new people, with a whole new world with new spiritual elements. Regarding the methods I used triangulation: social biographies (life histories) – qualitative perspective, content analysis (of socio-cultural documents) and elements of documentary photography. Some of that understand art as a mean to detoxify from unpleasant aspects of everyday life – meetings, social relations etc., in order to create or to speak through colors and artistic expressions about a special way of life, about a personal view about life. As for exemple, the title of the exhibition of George Dragomir Turia at the Galateea Galery in Bucarest and The Artis Galery in Slatina, a city in Romania, is "Face to face" and it speaks about the artist's experience in Canada where he migrated almost 20 years ago. He used porcelain to create human expressions, moods, typologies, creative ideas about the artistic gaze, in his exhibition you can meet The Dreamer, The Healer, The Duplicitous and so on as they got discovered by the symbolic imagination of the artist. The Romanian artists that migrated abroad speak about migration as a way to reconnect with a profound self and also as a way to break with unpleasant images and socio-political and cultural aspects of life.	Gabriela Boangiu, *Institute for Socio-Human Researches "C.S. Nicolaescu-Plopsor", Craiova of The Romanian Academy, Romania*

Navigating Uncertainty: Migrants' Experiences of Public Health Communication During COVID-19 The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light disparities in healthcare systems and crisis management approaches among Nordic and Baltic countries. One consistent observation across these nations is the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on migrants, which have shown higher likelihoods of COVID-19 diagnosis and greater susceptibility to the disease. Lower vaccination intentions and uptake rates have also been recorded within these demographics. The aim of this presentation is to present an analysis of the effects of public health communication on migrant populations during the COVID-19 pandemic in three Nordic and Baltic countries. Through this analysis, we seek to understand the influences and perspectives that shape the views, information, and trust levels of migrant groups. Specifically, we aim to examine how public health communication strategies have affected the knowledge acquisition, trust in information, and compliance with COVID-19 preventive measures among migrant populations during this time. We pay particular attention to the role of emotions in influencing migrants' trust, information use, knowledge acquisition, and compliance to COVID-19 measures. Additionally, we explore how emotions are employed to shape and reinforce participants' perspectives on the pandemic.	Markus Meckl Stéphanie Barillé *University of Akureyri, Iceland*
Nomadic Urbanism: A multimodal ethnography of how digital nomadism shapes Latin American cities Digital nomadism is one of the newest forms of mobility in an urban world that seems to be on the move (Sheller & Urry, 2006) every time in a more accelerated way. According to a report by MBO partners, in 2023, 17.3 million people in the United States identified as digital nomads. It is worth noting that this number was only 7.3 million in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic. This represents a significant increase of 131% in just five years (MBO, 2023). The Economist predicted that by 2035, one billion of those "location independent workers" would be spread worldwide. However, despite its growing popularity, digital nomadism has received little attention from urban anthropology. While some efforts have been made to define and reflect on this phenomenon as a research object (Hensellek & Puchala, 2019), little consideration has been given to its urban and spatial dimensions. This panorama breaks new ground by studying an emergent sociotechnical phenomenon mainly overlooked by urban studies but highly popular in public discussions nowadays: how digital nomadism shapes our contemporary cities. This contribution will introduce an upcoming six-year research project that aims to ethnographically explore this phenomenon by focusing on the daily life of three Latin America: Mexico City, Medellín, and Buenos Aires. The most recent public controversies around this phenomenon, the local responses to digital nomadism, and the online infrastructures promoting and contesting digital nomadism in the region.	Santiago Orrego *Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany*

Narratives of Escape? Lifestyle Migration between Switzerland and Germany Although lifestyle migration as defined by Benson and O'Reilly refers specifically to the (economic) privilege of individuals in the developed world, it often involves a "narrative of escape" (Benson/O'Reilly, 2009, p. 609). This narrative typically portrays life in the home country in a negative light, contrasting it with an idealised fresh start and better quality of life in the destination country. My paper examines these narratives of escape among highly skilled Swiss migrants moving to Germany and German migrants moving to Switzerland. In both directions, the decision to migrate is driven by the hope of achieving a better quality of life. However, the concrete reasons behind their decisions are diverse, so it is worth considering whether all of them frame their move as an escape. My presentation will focus on whether post-migration life really becomes the "antithesis" (Benson/O'Reilly, 2009, p. 610) of pre-migration life, and how these experiences are negotiated by migrants. The empirical data for this study are drawn from interviews and participant observation conducted with Swiss and German migrants between 2019 and 2020. By providing a nuanced understanding of these escape narratives, the research highlights the complex interplay between aspirations and actual experiences in lifestyle migration. This study offers new insights into the lived realities of highly skilled migrants and enriches our understanding of contemporary migration dynamics.	Natascha Bregy *University of Hamburg, Germany*

Introduction to the project "(R)E-TIES: Managing mobility and human relations in digitally saturated social worlds" – towards a Horizon Europe project proposal **15:30 – 16:00**
Introduction to the SIEF working group on mobility and migration, a joint special issue proposal, and concluding remarks **16:00 – 17:00**
Exhibition "Latvians in Iceland" **18:00 – 20:00**
Venue: "Latvians abroad", Bergs Bazaar, Dzirnavu iela 84