

December 16, 2-4 pm @ Auditorium 5, H. Dunantlaan 1, 9000 Gent

Meet the Phd Jury

'Social work, Homelessness, Migration, and the Borders of the Welfare State'



From home to homing, and back to house: revisiting a decade of research into home and migration - Paolo Boccagni

In this seminar, I revisit the interdisciplinary field of knowledge production about home and migration, with a view to foregrounding its prospects for conceptual innovation and societal/political relevance, starting from my own fieldwork stories. My core argument is that the transition from home to homing, analytical as much as experiential, is incomplete without finally returning to some form of house and housing.

This is meant to encourage resonances in the research (and perhaps the biographical) trajectories of the participants, and ultimately to elucidate the critical and political side of home studies. On the one hand, this perspective allows researchers, policy and practice to nourish reflexivity on what having one's place in the world means, and on what being denied this need and right entails, on the other hand.

Bio

Paolo Boccagni is Professor in Sociology at the University of Trento. As a former European Research Council grantee, he has done research on migration, home, diversity and social welfare. Starting from everyday life, his fieldwork tries to scale up local insights and findings by way of comparison, resonance, metaphor, and functional equivalence. His recent research engages with the lived experience of home, with a particular focus on temporalities and on the ways of negotiating "nothingness" and ambivalence in asylum reception facilities. Emerging research concerns involve the social study of shared housing and dwelling, as well as the practice of homing, the production and scaling of relevance, the social working of metaphor, the ways of coping with absence and distance, the encounter with death in migration and the significance of future-related imaginaries and practices.

Recent publications include Home in question (European Journal of Cultural Studies, 2022), Of home-comings and home-scales (Global networks, 2022), Migration and domestic space (Springer, 2023), the Handbook on home and migration (Elgar, 2023), La lotta per il tempo ("The struggle for time", Meltemi, 2023) and Vite ferme ("Still Lives", Il Mulino, 2024). His new book (forthcoming) is Undoing nothing: Waiting for asylum, struggling for relevance (University of California Press, 2025).

Social work with Irish Travellers: Findings from a national evaluation - Jim Campbell



Irish Travellers are a particular ethnic group that has existed in Ireland for at least a millennium. Traveller communities are often defined and characterised by historical, nomadic lifestyles and forms of social and economic exclusion. The presentation reports on the findings from a national evaluation of a specialist, Irish social work service for Traveller families and communities. It begins with an historical overview of the service which was established in the 1960s but which has evolved and developed over the past few decades at a time of changing patterns of Traveller lives and social and

December 16, 2-4 pm @ Auditorium 5, H. Dunantlaan 1, 9000 Gent

economic conditions. It was also a period when the role of social work was changing, most notably with the introduction of state regulation of the profession.

In the seminar, I will critically analyse national and international literature on the role of social workers with Travellers before describing the mixed research method used to evaluate the service. The findings highlight various, sometimes competing perspectives on the social work role, drawn from administrative data, a survey of social workers interviews with social workers and Traveller representatives. These include views about how the social work role was viewed by social workers and Traveller representatives, informed by theories on anti-oppressive practice, systems approaches and forms of advocacy. The presentation concludes with a discussion of ways in which the lessons learned from the evaluation can be used to further develop the social work service in ways that can enhance the lives of Travellers, through forms of continuous professional development and the created of a national policy and practice framework.

Bio

Jim Campbell is Emeritus Professor of Social Work in University College Dublin. Before then he taught and researched in Goldsmiths, University of London and Queens University Belfast. He was co-editor of the British Journal of Social Work (2010-15). He has two research interests: the relationships between social work and mental health law and policy; and analysing the experiences of social workers in the context of political conflict. With colleagues, he has just completed a European Association of Schools of Social Work funded project comparing social work policy and practice in Cyprus, Northern Ireland and Bosnia Herzegovina.

Recent publications include International perspectives on social work and political conflict (Routledge, 2019) and Models of mental health (Bloomsbury, 2025). The presentation is based on two selected publications: Social work with Irish Travellers: Findings from a national evaluation (Journal of Social Work, 2024) and Betwixt and between: Qualitative findings from a study on a specialist social work service for Travellers in Ireland (European Journal of Social Work, 2021).

The seminar is jointly organised with the following research consortia: [TRAHOME](#), [PANHOME](#), [IDC Stadsacademie](#) [IDC CESSMIR](#), [UNU-CRIS \(migration and social policy cluster\)](#); supported by the Doctoral Schools of Ghent University. The seminar will take place the day before the public PhD defense of Sophie Samyn, which is scheduled for Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at 4:00 PM (see: [Evenement Registratie](#)).

