

The United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility (UNU-GCM) in Barcelona: Mission and vision

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Summary. Based in Barcelona, in the Sant Manuel Pavilion of the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site, the United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility (UNU-GCM) is the newest institute to date of the United Nations University (UNU) and the only one in southern Europe. The UNU, which consists of a globally dispersed set of research and training institutes, is a global think tank and postgraduate teaching organisation headquartered in Japan. The mission of the UNU-GCM is to contribute to good governance, cultural diversity, democracy and human rights through a better understanding of cultural mobility and diversity in the context of globalisation. Its focus is thus on the major cultural and social phenomena of migration and media, as hallmarks of the era of globalisation. The institute aims to foster cutting-edge research in these areas at global and local levels through the lens of key cultural concepts, such as borders, gender and transnational connections. The UNU-GCM thereby also aims to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those of gender equality and the notion of development as a global partnership.

Keywords: culture · mobility · migration · diversity · globalisation

Resum. L'Institut de Globalització, Cultura i Mobilitat de la Universitat de les Nacions Unides (UNU-GCM), amb seu al pavelló de Sant Manuel del complex modernista de l'Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau de Barcelona, és l'institut més recent, fins ara, de la Universitat de les Nacions Unides (UNU) i l'únic al sud d'Europa. La UNU consisteix en un conjunt d'instituts de recerca i formació escampats per tot el món que actuen a la vegada com a laboratoris d'idees (*think tank*) i centres de formació de postgrau, amb la central al Japó. La missió de la UNU-GCM és contribuir a la bona governança, a la diversitat cultural, a la democràcia i als drets humans a través d'una millor comprensió de la mobilitat i la diversitat culturals en el context de la globalització. Així, se centra en els principals fenòmens culturals i socials de la migració i els mitjans de comunicació com a segells distintius de l'era de la globalització. L'Institut té com a objectiu fomentar la investigació d'avantguarda en aquestes àrees, tant a escala global com local, tenint en compte conceptes culturals com ara les fronteres, el gènere o les connexions transnacionals. La UNU-GCM pretén amb això donar suport a l'assoliment dels Objectius de Desenvolupament del Mil·lenni, en particular els d'igualtat de gènere i la noció d'una aliança global per al desenvolupament.

Paraules clau: cultura · mobilitat · migració · diversitat · globalització

IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED WORLD, mobility and cultural contacts are both commonplace and complicating factors with regard to national, regional and communal identities. At the same time, mobility is also the means through which globalisation propels itself. Within this context, two phenomena come to the fore as key social processes: migration, understood as the movement of peoples and cultures; and media, understood as increased and diverse modes of communication across space via technological and other means. The aim of the United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility (UNU-GCM) [gcm.unu.edu], as the academic arm of the United Nations, is to contribute towards an improved understanding of migration and the media, as key aspects of culture, in terms of globalisation, that are vital for the promotion of good governance, cultural diversity, democracy and human rights. It goes without saying that the media plays a crucial role in many aspects of the migration process. Whether by influencing popular perceptions of migrants, or by spurring migration by relaying images from destination countries, or by allowing diasporic communities to remain connected with homelands, understandings and perceptions of migration are always closely determined by its representation by the

media. This is as relevant to developing and transitional countries as to more developed countries.

The UNU-GCM concept

The United Nations University (UNU) bridges the academic world and the UN system. Its goal is to develop sustainable solutions for current and future problems of humankind in all aspects of life. Through a problem-oriented and interdisciplinary approach it seeks to carry out applied research and education on a global scale. The UNU was founded in 1973 and is an autonomous organ of the UN General Assembly. Headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, it encompasses 15 research and training institutes and programmes located in 13 countries around the world. The global UNU system is coordinated by the UNU Centre.

The UNU-GCM became operational in 2012 and was officially approved by the Council of the UNU in April 2013. In its adherence to the UNU's focus on pressing questions of development, human rights and the fostering of tolerance and diversity, the UNU-GCM considers issues of culture and mobility, with the rationale that globalisation is a key socio-cultural and economic facet of the mod-



Fig. 1. Sant Manuel Pavilion of the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site, designed by Lluís Domènech i Montaner and build under the direction of his son, Pere Domènech i Roure, in 1923. (Photo by Robert Ramos © Fundació Privada Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau).



Fig. 2. On Tuesday, 17 September 2013, the United Nations University Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility (UNU-GCM) in Barcelona hosted an inaugural lecture and reception to celebrate its official opening in the Administration Pavilion of the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site. The event was attended by a number of dignitaries, including UNU Rector David Malone; the President of the Generalitat of Catalunya, Artur Mas; the Mayor of Barcelona, Xavier Trias; and the Secretary General of Universities, Federico Morán-Abad. (© Photo by Pere Virgili).

ern world, one that functions principally through the expansion of markets, leading in turn to movements, flows and fluxes of capital, goods and peoples. Globalisation and its effects also rely on technology and complex, mediated modes of communication across space.

An initial line of research at the UNU-GCM will focus on the Mediterranean Basin, as the confluence of three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia. Research plans also include projects that offer comparative and global perspectives.

The UNU-GCM in Barcelona

The UNU-GCM is located in the Sant Manuel Pavilion of the Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site, in Barcelona (Fig. 1). The official opening of the institute was celebrated on September 17, 2013, and was attended by Artur Mas, President of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, and by other officials.

The Sant Manuel Pavilion was built in 1923 under the direction of the Catalan architect Pere Domènech i Roura, who took over the construction of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, following the death of his father, the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner. As one of the world's major modernist sites, the hospital was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997. Built between 1902 and 1930, the 12 pavilions housed the Santa Creu i Sant Pau Hospital, one of the most modern hospitals of its time, for nearly a century. In 2009, the working hospital was relocated in order to facilitate rehabilitation of the historic site, as part of Europe's major efforts at heritage restoration.

Table 1. United Nations University (UNU) Associated Institutions. In many of its activities, the UNU is assisted by a network of designated Associated Institutions. These typically are organisations that implement large, multi-year joint programmes with the UNU. Currently, 20 institutions have been designated as UNU Associated Institutions by the UNU Council.

UNU Associated Institutions

Asian Institute of Technology; Bangkok, Thailand

Centre for Development Research, University of Bonn; Bonn, Germany

Cornell University; Ithaca, NY, USA

Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Technology, University of Nairobi; Nairobi, Kenya

Department of Nutrition and Food Science, University of Ghana; Legon, Ghana

Gansu Natural Energy Research Institute; Gansu, China

Global Fire Monitoring Centre, Max Planck Institute for Chemistry; Freiburg, Germany

Griffith University; Queensland, Australia

Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology; Gwangju, Republic of Korea

Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology, University of Chile; Santiago, Chile

Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University; Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Institution for Nutritional Sciences, Shanghai Institute for Biological Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences; Shanghai, China

International Conflict Research Institute, University of Ulster; Northern Ireland, UK

International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation; Enschede, Netherlands

National Energy Authority of the Republic of Iceland; Reykjavík, Iceland

National Food Research Institute; Ibaraki, Japan

National Institute of Public Health, Nutrition and Health Research Centre; Cuernavaca, Mexico

National Nutrition Institute, Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population; Cairo, Egypt

Scottish Association for Marine Science; Oban, Scotland, UK

Tufts University; Boston, MA, USA

The Sant Manuel Pavilion, where general and gastric surgery were previously carried out, has been restored to enable new uses but also to recover its artistic and heritage value. Víctor Argentí, the architect in charge of the restoration, has emphasised the recovery of the original dimensions of this building, with its surface area of 2300 m². With financial support from the European Fund for Regional De-

velopment (FEDER), the Sant Manuel Pavilion is now a functional building, reflecting its heritage value while also equipped with the utmost consideration for energy efficiency and sustainability.

The UNU-GCM's mission and vision

The mission of the UNU is to contribute, through collaborative research and education, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare, which are the concern of the UN, its peoples and its member states. In carrying out this mission, the UNU works with leading universities and research institutes in UN member states (Table 1), functioning as a bridge between the international academic community and the UN system.

At the UNU-GCM, we believe that there is an urgent need for better understandings of culture and mobility in ways that view cultures as mobile and mobility as a feature of everyday life. As such, the prime concerns at the UNU-GCM revolve around questions of migration and media, as inroads to better understandings of culture, understood as lived realities. For reasons that are economic, political and environmental, among others, migration and media are important intertwined aspects of today's globalised world and they work together to mobilise cultures in diverse ways. The study of culture cannot be confined to the abstraction of theory: instead, it takes place on multiple levels, linked inevitably to questions of power and representation, not least as the politics of the margins, wrought from the rough grain of everyday life and from specific contexts. Cultural migrancy and cultural change arise from the struggle for self-definition and self-representation amongst those who are faced with discrimination and prejudice. These are also processes that emerge spontaneously from the many dislocations, migrations and relocations that accompany modernity and its attendant socio-economic processes. Indeed, migration looms large on any mapping of socio-economic development on global and most local scales. It is a vital part of contemporary social and cultural realities. To quote the Secretary General of the UN as he opened the latest High Level Dialogues on Migration and Development, which took place in New York in October 2013, "the face of migration is changing. Today, migrants are coming from, and going to, more places than ever before. Almost half of migrants are women. One of every 10 migrants is under the age of 15. And 4 of every 10 migrants are living in developing countries." [<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sgsm15367.doc.htm>]

Migration has become a key feature of the contemporary global scenario. It affects the ties of humankind to land, to place, to nation and to identity. It has led to major social changes, which, in turn, impact heavily on questions of culture and identity for nation states and communities, collectives and individuals alike. The rise of technology, an

essential aspect of globalisation, has led to the proliferation of the media, especially digital media, which allows for representation and communication whilst also offering outreach to specific ideological and other agendas. Migration and media are twin facets of globalisation that directly influence questions of culture, by imposing change, mobility and the crossing of traditional or established borders.

This is the nexus that forms the research focus of the UNU-GCM. In fact, the UNU-GCM was founded on the premise that a better understanding of these key phenomena of migration and media is imperative to resolving the cultural dilemmas that have proliferated in the contemporary world within the framework of globalisation. In particular, there is a need to overcome divisions between the south and north, and to understand the ways in which developed and developing nations and regions are fundamentally connected and mutually implicated. It is our hope that this awareness will pave the way for tolerance, understanding and good governance to overcome historical inequalities and injustices. Research efforts at the UNU-GCM are therefore devoted to the issues of global migration, gender, culture and migrancy, developments in media in the digital age and the proliferation of borders, routes and networks at local and global levels in a variety of contexts and geo-cultural spaces.

Since its inception, the UNU-GCM has adopted a staged plan to develop an analysis of the strategic research categories of migration and media within the overarching umbrella of globalisation, culture and mobility. It does so through a series of focused research projects with multiple outcomes aimed at disseminating knowledge, informing policy, enhancing the promotion of cultural dialogue and furthering the understanding of cultural mobility and cultural diversity. The UNU-GCM extends its work to collaborate with and meet the needs of a wide range of recipients, such as educational institutions, policy makers, cultural institutions and non-governmental organisations. Accordingly, the UNU-GCM functions primarily as a think tank, bridging the worlds of academic scholarship and policy formation. It is therefore strategically positioned to intervene positively in questions of governance, legislation and perceptions of diverse forms of mobility, such as migration, migrancy, statelessness and diasporas. Research activities and outputs reflect this aim to make scholarship relevant to diverse forums. In 2013, events under the UNU-GCM's aegis included workshops, a training seminar, a two-day international conference, film screenings and open forums for debate. UNU-GCM publications thus far range from the production of ten policy reports to scholarly articles in refereed journals and in the *UN Chronicle*. Many more are underway. UNU-GCM also contributed to the High Level Dialogues on Migration and Development at the United Nations, which can be read online on the UNU-GCM's website. [<http://gcm.unu.edu/index.php/publications/un-interventions>]

Within the UNU, the UNU-GCM also plays the very important role of serving as a focal point for the UNU Migration Network, which brings together six UNU institutes through a shared interest in migration that ranges across disciplinary areas. Thus, aspects of migration such as forced migration, climate refugees, the displacement of indigenous peoples, questions of economic remittances by migrants, migration and the use of social media, etc. come under research scrutiny. The first workshop of this network was held in Barcelona in June 2013.

The UNU-GCM's research programmes

Research programmes currently planned and underway at the UNU-GCM include: migration, media and intercultural dialogue; statelessness and transcontinental migration; female agency, mobility and socio-cultural change in developing countries; the impact of the global economic crisis on migration; diasporas and changes to cultures, peoples and places.

Migration, media and intercultural dialogue. This research programme focuses on a range of issues, both theoretical and practical, related to cultural diversity and difference. Migration and media are twin facets of globalisation, the one demographic, with crucial spatio-temporal consequences, and the other cultural and technological. While migration often poses the question of cultural difference, diverse forms of media play a key role in enabling its representation, thus forging modes of communication. Through a focus on the media, this research programme will explore the extent to which it is able to bridge cultural differences with respect to migration and to facilitate intercultural dialogue. Of interest too will be the ways in which the media can mobilise societies and cultures, and its role in triggering migration and in connecting migrants to their homelands.

Statelessness and transcontinental migration. This research programme examines a range of issues related to the well-being and recognition of people who traverse continents, devoid of citizenship. Issues related to refugees remain crucially unanswered in debates and policies surrounding migration. In the wake of the acknowledgement that it is not always possible to isolate refugees from migrants, this programme analyses a range of contexts in which dignity and human rights are compromised through the absence of legal and political recognition. By focusing on situations of extreme vulnerability and on lives lived on the borderline, this research programme seeks to articulate and address the urgent needs of the stateless migrants who have entered Europe.

Female agency, mobility and socio-cultural change. The feminisation of migration is one of the most significant so-

A forum for dialogue: the journal of the UNU-GCM

The *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture*, published by Intellect, reflects the research areas that are the focus of the UNU-GCM. Indeed, the foundation of the journal acted as a useful precursor to the UNU-GCM's conception and birth. By eschewing the more traditional sociological approaches to the study of migration, and focusing instead on theorising the paired notions of culture and migration in terms of a mobility that is mutually applicable, the journal provides a space for examining the inevitable and ever present overlap of migration and culture from myriad perspectives and through myriad contexts. Cultural texts and lived experiences form the core of its analyses; interdisciplinary theoretical approaches offer conceptual routes that lead beyond the issue at hand. As such, this journal seeks to establish a forum for a much needed dialogue between academia and the practitioners of culture, especially those working specifically within migrant contexts, to explore both the cultural aesthetics of migration and the ethical importance of interpreting culture in terms of migrancy.

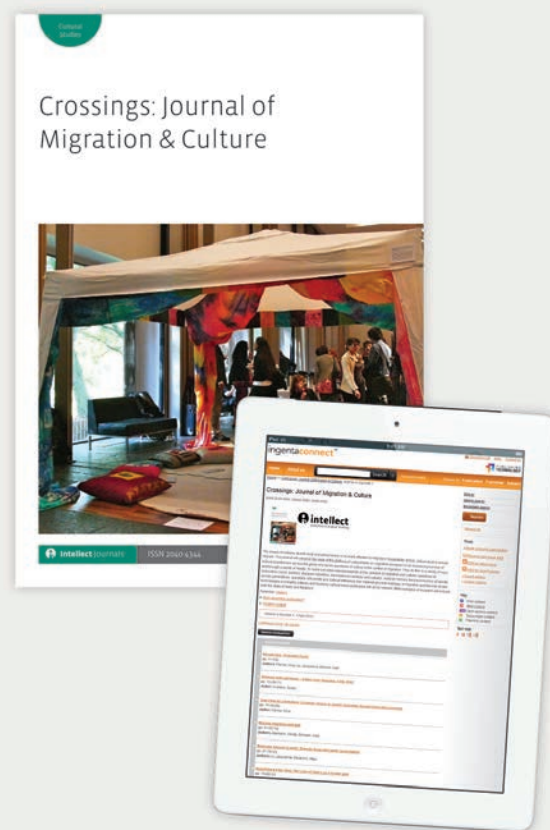


Fig. 2. Cover of the latest issue of *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* also available on-line [<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk>]

cial patterns to have emerged in the course of the last century. Too often, female migrants occupy vulnerable positions in their host societies, engaging in domestic work, sex work and other unregulated sectors. Despite their vulnerability and the established patterns of exploitation, the number of women who choose to migrate is rising. This research programme looks closely at this phenomenon in order to better understand why and how migration may offer routes to female empowerment. A specific focus will be the extent to which migration allows women from the global south to encounter new sociocultural horizons as they cross over and settle in the global north.

Sociocultural impacts of the global economic crisis on migration. The impact of the global economic crisis on migration has been the subject of numerous recent studies, most of which have focused specifically on economic and labor issues. This research programme analyses the sociocultural issues that arise in the wake of the ongoing crisis on migration. In particular, it examines the geo-cultural spaces of the northern shores of the Mediterranean, where the crisis is most acute, and the ramifications of this both in these areas and further south, in Africa. As countries of recent immigration, such as Spain, return to becoming countries of emigration and as migrants from the global south turn elsewhere to seek their fortunes or else find themselves trapped in the throes of the crisis, a shifting landscape of (dis)empowerment has emerged within and without Europe. Interestingly, as migrancy and displacement become commonplace, the long-standing demands of migrants for citizenship, recognition and belonging become mainstream concerns.

The UNU-GCM's staff

At the UNU-GCM, the very international character of the UN and the interdisciplinary nature of the research undertaken are reflected in the institute's staff. While the team is still small, dynamic work is already underway, as evidenced by

the publication of a series of ten Policy Reports on Migration, Media and Intercultural Dialogue, available via the website.

The Director of the UNU-GCM is also the founder and Principal Editor of *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* (Fig. 2).

UNU-GCM's future plans

The UNU-GCM actively seeks collaborations with research entities in Catalonia and elsewhere so as to explore synergies and share knowledge. These collaborations may range from joint activities, such as workshops or training seminars, to teaching contributions at the postgraduate level or shared supervision, to working on joint research projects. The UNU-GCM runs a Visiting Researcher programme in conjunction with each of its research lines. The programme is advertised periodically via its website and its goal is to facilitate the exchange of research interests, methodologies and expertise. In addition, the many research activities organised at the UNU-GCM are designed to open spaces for contact, collaboration and debate.

The UNU-GCM is as yet in a fledgling state but its emerging research profile ambitiously seeks to explore many dimensions related to questions of culture and mobility in the contemporary world. Its aim is to combine research excellence with an ethics of commitment in order to further the ways in which questions of culture and migration are perceived, experienced and imagined in our contemporary world. It invites collaboration from interested colleagues in Catalonia and elsewhere in carrying out its mission. ■

Useful links

- Website of UNU-GCM [gcm.unu.edu]
- Website of UNU [www.unu.edu]
- *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* [<http://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Journal,id=173/>]



Parvati Nair is the Founding Director of the United Nations University Institute (UNU-GCM) in Barcelona. She is Professor of Hispanic, Cultural and Migration Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. Her research focuses on migration, ethnicity and gender through the study of photography, music and film, as well as with ethnography. Her concern is primarily with the displacements and mobilities of globalization. She is the author of *Configuring Community: Theories, Narratives and Practices of Community Identities in Contemporary Spain* (2004), *Rumbo al norte: inmigración y movimientos culturales entre el Magreb y España* (2006) and *A Different Light: The Photography of Sebastião Salgado* (2012). She is the Principal Editor of *Crossings: Journal of Migration and Culture* and co-editor of *Gender and Spanish Cinema* (2004) and of *Hispanic and Lusophone Women Filmmakers: Critical Discourses and Cinematic Practices* (2013). Currently, she is writing a monograph entitled *Flamenco Rhythms: People, Place, Performance*, as well as working on several other migration-related projects. She also writes a blog on flamenco music [www.flamencorhythms.com].