Authoritarianism and Border Regimes: Struggles over Migration, Rights, and Democracy

Von-Melle-Park 9
Campus Universität Hamburg

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Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Conference of the Network for Critical Migration and Border Regime Research (kritnet), Hamburg, March 26–27, 2026

The authoritarian, right-wing populist shift continues to take shape. At EUropean and national levels, asylum and mobility rights are being eroded to the point of abolition. In the face of authoritarian upheavals and social brutalization, violations of fundamental rights and acts of openly racist violence are increasingly undertaken in the name of defending democracy by "combating" illegal migration. Yet such attacks also undermine and make apparent the fragile foundations of any such notions of democracy. At the same time, exhaustion is spreading within critical research, anti-racist movements, and civil society. But intimidation and repression by the state also lead to uncertainty and fragmentation within the political left. In light of all this, we believe that it is high time for a kritnet conference to continue the debates we had at the conference in Göttingen in 2024, to develop strategies of resistance, solidarity, and empowerment, and to discuss possibilities for political intervention.

Together, in good old kritnet practice, we want to understand present dynamics and bring together knowledge from critical researchers and activists on various burning issues of the rapidly radicalizing migration and border regime. These include, for example, the European policy of isolation against asylum seekers, which is materialized through the externalization of the EU's border areas but also through camp structures at the external borders; the linking of residence status and access to labor rights, as well as the authoritarian turn directed against migrants and other marginalized groups. And, of course, we want to focus on activist practices and the struggles of migration, whether current struggles against the payment card or against the deportation regime. But we also want to take a look back: we want to rummage through anti-racist knowledge archives and discuss together what we can learn from the struggles of previous generations for today's struggles in order to gain inspiration and strength for current debates.

The bottom line is that at the conference—as in Göttingen in October 2024—we want to discuss and understand together what "scholarly anti-fascism" and anti-racist research activism can mean in practice. The aim of the conference is to form broad alliances against the increasingly authoritarian and violent social power relations and positions. What does it mean to conduct critical migration and border regime research under these conditions? Which forms of criticism are (not) needed, and how can we translate these into political interventions together? But also: How do we build structures that are resilient and can arm themselves against further funding cuts and criminalization? And what role can and should kritnet play in all these endeavors? We want to discuss this and more with you and look forward to your contributions and knowledge.

Registration at: https://framaforms.org/registration-kritnet-conference-2026-1767712389
Contact: kritnet_2026@proton.me

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program overview Thursday

Thursday			
09:30 – 10:00: Kick-off event (Lecture Hall H) **DE** & EN			
Stream "Struggles and Contestation I"		**Stream "Anti-racist knowledge archives and migrant struggles"**	**Stream "Residence Status and Access to Labor Law"**
10:00 – 11:15 (Room S07) CEAS reform – Fortress Europe and ways to intervene *With Marie Hoffmann, Jakob Junghans, Stefan Salomon & Charlotte Föcking*		**10:00 – 11:15 a.m.** (Room S27) DE **& EN** Life paths – conflicts – solidarity within migrant-feminist struggles *With Annita Kalpaka & Efthimia Panagiotidis*	**10:00 a.m. – 11:15 p.m.** (Lecture Hall H) DE **& EN** Residence status and access to labor law (I) *With Nikolai Huke, Maren Kirchhoff, Ilker Ataç & Shabana Hewad*
11:45 (Room S07) Permanent border controls in the Schengen area? Ways of legal and political intervention *With Leon Züllig, Hannah Sommer, Stefan Salomon*		**11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** (Room S27) **DE** Book presentation: Becoming visible. On the trail of the struggles of leftist Africans in Hamburg *With Johannes Tesfai & Josephine Akinyosoye*	**11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** (Lecture Hall H) DE **& EN** Residence status and access to labor law (II) *With Christian Sperneac-Wolfer, Bernadett Petö, IQ Project Fair Integration*
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Lunch break (joint meal in the cafeteria)			
2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. (Room S07) **DE** & EN Citizenship in the age of monsters – theoretical-political appropriation and intervention or category of domination and exclusion? (Discussion) *With Stephan Scheel & Helge Schwiertz*	**2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.** (Room S08) **EN** & DE West Africa, the Sahel, and the Maghreb: Politics of border externalization and solidarity-based decolonial counterstrategies *With Azizou Chéhou, Sofian Naceur, Lam Magok & Conni Gunßer*	**2:15 p.m. – 5:15** (Room S27) **DE** Semra Ertan *With Kristina Theilig & Shahanshah Sayed*	**2:15 p.m. – 3:30** (Lecture Hall H) **DE** Labor mobilization in spite of residency law *With Sarah Tews, Christoph Wolter, Markus Köck & Mareike Biesel*
4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. (Room S07) Light into darkness: Multi-perspective exchange on the reality of detention pending deportation and support options for prisoners *With Bian Sukrow, Anna Gleiser, Jessica Allermann, Deportation Detention Counseling North & BUMAH*	**4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.** (Room S08) **DE** Materialized borders: The payment card in the German social and migration regime *With Initiative „Hamburg sagt NEIN zur Bezahlkarte“, Helena Bogner, Franka Fetzer, Alex Keiner, Helge Schwiertz & Lena Roser*		**4:00 p.m. – 5:15** (Lecture Hall H) **DE** Legal reforms and their implementation *With Peter Birke, Frederic Hüttenhoff & Claudius Voigt*

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program overview Thursday

5:15 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.: Dinner (Soup) Location: Café Knallhart
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.: Panel discussion (Lecture Hall H) **DE** & EN The everyday advance of authoritarianism. How migration control threatens the rule of law *With Claudius Voigt, Britta Jensen, Peter Fahlbusch, Hannah Franke & Pauline Fischer*
Followed by: Bar evening at Café Knallhart

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program overview Friday

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Friday</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">09:30 – 10:30: Breakfast together at Café Knallhart</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">10:30 – 11:30: Kritnet – Current status, what next? (Lecture Hall H)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stream "Struggles and Contestation II"</td><td>Stream "Deportations and residency law as means of repression"</td><td>Stream "Global distribution struggles. Migration defense as a source of authoritarian threats to democracy"</td></tr>
<tr><td>11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (Room S07) DE
"Migration is Beautiful"

With Stephan Scheel & Valeria Hänsel</td><td>11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m (Room S08) EN & DE
Residency law as a means of political repression

With Aino Korvensyrjä (University of Bristol, Chair), Sophia Hoffinger (ELSC), Tobias den Haan (3ezwa), Mohammad Wais Fedaie (Human rights activist) & Sunny Omwenyeke (Bremen Solidarity, formerly The VOICE and Caravan)</td><td>11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (Room S27) DE & EN
Anti-immigration sentiment and authoritarianism

With Sabine Hess & Niki Kubaczek</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.: Lunch break</td></tr>
<tr><td>2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Room S07)
Afghanistan and strategic litigation in humanitarian reception

With Pauline Fischer and Mareile Dedekind</td><td rowspan="2">2:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. (Room S08) EN & DE
Spatialities of Containment

With Selmar Krug, Svenja Schurade, Zana Aksu, Hrant Kasparyan, Leonie Jegen Valeria Hänsel, Kelly Bescherer, and Sifka Frederiksen</td><td>2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p..m. (Room S27) DE
Migration Defense and (the Ideology of) Performance-Based Justice

With Wolfgang Menz/Sarah Nies & Carina Altreiter</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. (Room S27) DE
Migration defense and global distribution struggles

With Fabian Georgi & Janina Puder</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.: Debate on critical knowledge production & launch of the new issue of movements (DE & EN)
Critical knowledge production in authoritarian times – challenges and responses

With Fabian Georgi, Karl Heyer, Antonia Jordan, Aino Korvensyrjä, Maximilian Pichl und Maria Ullrich

Location: Buttclub</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Followed by: Party at Buttclub

Line-up:
9:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. MC Timetunnel
10:00 p.m. -11:00 p.m. In cuter Gesellschaft ½
11:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. Le Fronque
1:00 a.m. – 3:00 a.m. HAAVA</td></tr>
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Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

Stream "Struggles and Contestation I"

10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (Room S07)
GEAS reform – Fortress Europe and ways to intervene
With Marie Hoffmann, Jakob Junghans, Stefan Salomon, Charlotte Föcking
In the summer of 2026, the two-year transition period for the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) will end. By then, all member states, including Germany, must have fully implemented the new legislation. Under the guise of reform, one of the most profound restrictions of European asylum law in decades is being carried out: The new CEAS architecture clearly focuses on controlling and managing migration, systematically restricts the rights of those seeking protection – for example, through the screening process and border procedures in detention camps – and further promotes the externalization of refugee protection. The workshop will first provide a concise overview of the CEAS reform and then highlight selected problem areas: Which challenges are particularly urgent, and which legal, political, and social risks require immediate attention? We will then reflect on the increasingly restrictive political framework and the possibilities for legal, political, and social intervention. The discussion will not be limited to legal strategies against the CEAS, but will also open up perspectives on political and activist engagement, critical scholarship, social movements, and collective action against exclusionary migration regimes.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Room S07)

Perpetual border controls in the Schengen area? Ways of legal and political intervention

With Leon Züllig, Hannah Sommer, Stefan Salomon

Since fall 2015, Germany has been conducting controls at its internal borders to prevent "irregular secondary migration" and to turn back refugees at the internal borders. This practice clearly violates European law. Despite court rulings that have determined the illegality of quasi-permanent internal border controls and rejections at the border, the German government continues to adhere to its practice. Against this backdrop, this workshop examines possibilities for legal and political intervention.

The workshop has three objectives: (1) to provide a concise overview of the legal frameworks governing internal border controls and the actors involved in Schengen governance; (2) to present the political and legal interventions to date, their effects, weaknesses, and potential; and (3) to discuss possibilities and creative practices for future interventions against internal border controls with all workshop participants in a participatory manner.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

2:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. (Room S07)

Citizenship in the Age of Monsters – Theoretical-Political Appropriation and Intervention or Category of Domination and Exclusion? (Discussion)

With Stephan Scheel & Helge Schwiertz

In this workshop, we want to discuss the potential of concepts of citizenship in the face of a shift to the right and authoritarianism to understand and advance emancipatory political projects. In doing so, we want to build on earlier debates: On the one hand, there is a fundamental critique of citizenship as an instrument of domination, whereby citizenship is primarily understood as a core element of sovereign power and nation-state exclusion. On the other hand, critical citizenship studies have developed an understanding of citizenship as a democratic, performative practice. Here, the focus is on performative acts through which subjects make themselves citizens or conceive new forms of urban community and solidarity that are less closed and more inclusive than national definitions of (state) citizenship. The session is designed as a round table with plenty of time for discussion among participants. After three short introductory statements (max. 5 min.) – for which a call for contributions will be sent out – we will enter into debate. We want to discuss the following questions, among others:

- To what extent does it make sense to understand emancipatory social movements and political struggles as "citizenship from below"?

- What theoretical and political interventions does the concept of citizenship enable, or is it almost entirely part of dominant discourses and power relations?

- How does the concept of citizenship relate to alternative concepts such as commoning or abolitionism, which more explicitly and unambiguously mark a distance from the prevailing social order but are less politically compatible?

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

2:15 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. (Room S08)

West Africa, the Sahel, and the Maghreb: Policies of border externalization and solidarity-based decolonial counterstrategies

With Azizou Chéhou, Sofian Naceur, Lam Magok & Conni Gunßer

The states of the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa are the focus of European border externalization policies that aim to contain and restrict the freedom of movement and mobility of citizens of African states.

The disproportionate focus of European border externalization policies on people of African origin, a comparatively small group within the migration and refugee movements towards EU states, serves the expectations of a European domestic policy characterized by racism. Externalization policies are negotiated against the backdrop of continuing colonial claims to dominance. They affect not only the movement of people towards Europe, but also intra-African freedom of movement, local economic cycles, and relations between African societies and states.

The consequences are violent and lead to the undermining of human rights standards, the disenfranchisement and criminalization of *people on the move*, the expansion of detention and internment, mass deportations and pushbacks in border and desert regions, and ultimately the deaths of tens of thousands of people.

At the same time, European border externalization policies are contested within African states. In the AES states, decolonial political dynamics are also leading to increased rejection of European migration policy directives. In Niger, a law on combating human trafficking, a cornerstone of the partnership with the EU border regime, was abolished by the military coup government in 2023. In Mali and Senegal, plans for readmission agreements have repeatedly been met with protests and have been partially prevented. In many places, civil society initiatives provide solidarity and support for *people on the move* and for those who have been deported.

The workshop format is designed to facilitate an exchange between researchers and activists on the effects and dynamics of border externalization policies and on the prospects for solidarity-based counter-initiatives.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

4:00 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. (Room S07)

Light into Darkness: Multi-perspective exchange on support options for prisoners

With Bian Sukrow, Anna Gleiser, Jessica Allermann, Deportation Detention Counseling North & BUMAH

We invite everyone who is involved or interested in deportation detention to join us for an exchange on the situation of prisoners and related current issues at the time of the conference. We assume that mandatory legal representation will be abolished and that there will be a further legal and factual tightening of the rules, which cannot yet be assessed at the end of the call for contributions.

Our goal is therefore not to provide frontal input, but to gather current experiences and explore which formal and informal support channels are still, again, or newly open. We would like to offer two different small groups within the workshop:

1. Participants who are unfamiliar with the topic of detention pending deportation can learn about the basic issues and opportunities for involvement.

2. People who have been detained themselves and/or have experience working with and for detainees awaiting deportation can discuss urgent needs for action and practical issues.

The aim of the workshop is to bring together solidarity-based legal, activist, informal, individual, and cross-group options for action and to strengthen networks against detention pending deportation.

The inviting organizations are Abschiebehaftberatung Nord and the Bundesfachverband zur Unterstützung von Menschen in Abschiebehaft, but we expect further participants from kritnet to join in.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. (Room S08)

Materialized borders: The payment card in the German social and migration regime

With Initiative „Hamburg sagt NEIN zur Bezahlkarte“, Helena Bogner, Franka Fetzer, Alex Keiner, Helge Schwiertz, Lena Roser

Since 2024, several federal states have introduced the so-called payment card for asylum seekers. Instead of cash or transfers to their own accounts, benefits are paid out via a prepaid card with limited use: cash withdrawals are restricted, transfers and online purchases are only possible to a limited extent, and use is sometimes restricted to certain regions. The payment card is therefore not a neutral administrative tool, but rather interferes with the lifestyle, mobility, and social participation of refugees, making it part of a migration and social regime in which state control, social control, and economic interests are intertwined.

We discuss the payment card from various theoretical and practical perspectives and classify it within an anti-migrant discourse that constructs migration as a threat or cost factor. In doing so, we place it within a genealogy of social disenfranchisement in which racialized groups are systematically excluded from social and political rights. At the same time, we analyze the payment card in the context of a historically specific border and welfare state regime in which migration is increasingly regulated by administrative, digital, and financial technologies.

Using ethnographic regime analysis and feminist and materialist state theory, we look at how social inequalities, legal status, and state control are condensed within the payment card. We also focus on the political economy of the payment card: companies in the payment and finance industry benefit from state contracts, while refugees find themselves in new relationships of dependency ("immigration-industrial complex").

Another focus is on the consequences for everyday life and care practices, i.e., how the restrictions imposed by the payment card affect care structures, mobility, social relationships, and self-determination, and how the conditions for social participation are shifting as a result. At the same time, we look at practices of resistance: solidarity-based exchange structures, informal networks, and political mobilization show that the introduction of the payment card is not without opposition.

The workshop is intended as a contribution to committed, collaborative research, providing space to develop perspectives of solidarity, share experiences, make strategies visible, and reflect on the role of civil society engagement.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Stream "Anti-racist knowledge archives and migrant struggles"

The stream comprises three events that deal with the history of anti-racist and migrant struggles. Among other things, it explores the question of what bridges can be built between the struggles of previous generations and current (post-)migrant struggles in our society. The events can also be attended individually.

10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. (Room S27)
Life paths – conflicts – solidarity within migrant-feminist struggles
With Annita Kalpaka, Efthimia Panagiotidis
Excerpts from video recordings will be shown in which protagonists from the 1980s and 1990s report on their diverse practices in migrant self-organizations and alliances. This insight into the living archive of feminist anti-racist life paths offers the opportunity to reflect on the importance of resistant knowledge archives and the ways in which knowledge can be passed on, with a view to intergenerational dialogue. What do the struggles of previous generations actually mean for today's struggles? What were the central areas of tension and demands from a migrant-feminist perspective in the migration society of the 1980s and 90s? Which of these are still or once again relevant today? And what challenges are we facing today? We want to discuss these questions with the audience.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Room S27)

Book presentation: Becoming visible. On the trail of the struggles of leftist Africans in Hamburg

With Johannes Tesfai, Josephine Akinyosoye

Whether it was the fight against apartheid in South Africa, the spread of pan-African ideas, solidarity work with liberation movements in the "Third World," or the struggle against structural and everyday racism in the Federal Republic of Germany: African leftists have long been socially, culturally, and politically active.

Since the 1970s, one of the largest Black communities in the Federal Republic has put key political and social issues on its agenda, attracting activists and intellectuals from various countries of origin. The book tells the story of the first decades of this self-organization, its key figures, groups, and initiatives, which fought vehemently for global justice. The activists also fought for space and resources and tried to create places where they could find protection from the racism of mainstream society. Africa was always present as a point of reference for their politics.

The book uncovers the traces, stages, and discourses of these struggles. It is the first time that the history of a pan-African, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist movement in a major city in the Federal Republic of Germany has been unearthed. The authors reveal a largely forgotten activism that generations of self-confident Black activists pursued long before the discussions around Black Lives Matter in Germany.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

2:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. (Room S27)

Semra Ertan

With Kristina Theilig & Shahanshah Sayed

In our creative seminar, we want to look at the life and poems of Semra Ertan. In over 350 poems, she recorded her experiences as a migrant, worker, and activist in Hamburg and Germany in the 1970s. Her texts tell of resistance, anger, love, and longing... Together, we will read some of her poems, discuss their significance in the context of the labor struggles of the 1970s, and build bridges to current (post-)migrant struggles in our society.

Please bring your own cell phones and headphones for the creative part of the seminar.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

Stream "Residence status and access to labor law"

This stream highlights the impact that residence status regulations (e.g., temporary suspension of deportation, settlement permit, naturalization, family reunification, Western Balkans regulation, freedom of movement for EU-citizens, or posting of workers) have on employees' ability to assert their labor rights. Based on empirical research projects and practical experience from counseling centers, it traces how the linking of work and residence, the exclusion from social benefits, or employer loyalty can prevent employees from taking action against labor law violations.

Using concrete examples such as a strike at a logistics warehouse in Leipzig or legal conflicts involving Georgian seasonal workers on German strawberry farms, the study then discusses the circumstances under which legal mobilization and union organizing can be successful despite restrictive residence law conditions. Finally, based on the ban on contract work in the meat industry, the reform of financial controls on informal employment, and Directive (EU) 2024/1233, the question of what contribution different legal changes can make to improving the enforcement of workers' rights will be explored.

It is also possible to attend only individual parts of this stream.

10:00 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. (Lecture Hall H)
Residence status and access to labor law (I)
Inputs: Nikolai Huke: Introduction. Residence law as a law that de facto overrides (labor) law? Ilker Ataç and Maren Kirchhoff (University of Kassel): Tolerated stay (Duldung) Shabana Hewad (IQ Project Fair Integration Mecklenburg-Vorpommern): Settlement permit, naturalization, and family reunification

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Lecture Hall H)

Residence status and access to labor law (II)

Inputs:

Christian Sperneac-Wolfer (PECO / IfS Frankfurt): Western Balkans Regulation

Bernadett Petö (Fair Mobility): Posting of workers and work through foreign agencies

N.N. (IQ Project Fair Integration - Work and Life Hamburg): Skilled labor immigration

2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Lecture Hall H)

Labor mobilization in spite of residence law

Inputs:

Sarah Tews (Universität Hamburg) & Christoph Wolter (Beratungsstelle Arbeit Duisburg): Conditions enabling the individual mobilization of employee rights

Markus Köck (Hochschule Fulda): Access to German labor law for precarious seasonal workers

Mareike Biesel (Universität Göttingen) Collective organization despite precarious residence status: Strike in a Leipzig logistics warehouse

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. (Lecture Hall H)
Legal reforms and their implementation
Peter Birke (SOFI Göttingen): Effects of the ban on contract work in the meat industry Frederic Hüttenhoff (IAQ Duisburg): Enforcement of workers' rights. On the reform of financial controls on undeclared work Claudius Voigt (GGUA): Directive (EU) 2024/1233 – An opportunity for better enforcement of employee rights?

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 26, 2026

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.: Panel discussion (Lecture Hall H)

The everyday advance of authoritarianism. How migration control threatens the rule of law

In recent years, migration policy in Germany has become a gateway to authoritarian state restructuring. The result is an erosion of the rule of law and the securitization and criminalization of refugees and migrants. Examples of this include the exclusion of Dublin refugees from social benefits introduced by the SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, and FDP, and the pushbacks of asylum seekers at borders ordered by Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt (CSU). Court rulings that (as expected) declared state practice unlawful in both cases were deliberately ignored by state authorities.

Against this backdrop, we want to discuss with guests from legal counseling, social work, and civil society support what consequences the visible everyday advance of authoritarianism has for those affected, but also for the rule of law in Germany in general.

Guests:

Claudius Voigt (GGUA), collects court rulings on the exclusion of Dublin refugees from social benefits, among other things, which show that this constitutes unlawful expulsion through social exclusion.

Britta Jensen (lawyer for migration law at the Public Legal Information and Comparison Office in Hamburg) experiences the practical consequences of authoritarian migration policy on a daily basis in her work.

Peter Fahlbusch (lawyer), has been accompanying prisoners in deportation detention throughout Germany for two and a half decades. He evaluates all his cases – and counts a huge number of illegal arrests and detentions.

Hannah Franke (Hessisches Promotionszentrum Soziale Arbeit is a social worker and volunteer board member of the Saxon Refugee Council

Pauline Fischer (Kabul Luftbrücke) supports people seeking protection from Afghanistan in the area of humanitarian reception, including access to justice.

Moderators: Leonie Jantzer and Nikolai Huke (Universität Hamburg)

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

Stream "Struggles and Contestation II"

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Room S07)

"Migration is Beautiful"

With Stephan Scheel & Valeria Hänsel

In this slot, designed as an open discussion space and ideas workshop, we want to discuss together how and by what means, concepts, and methods we can challenge AfD & Co. on their favorite campaign issue: How can the topic of migration be reclaimed in a positive way and from the left? Given the latest election polls and the adoption of right-wing extremist positions by supposedly moderate parties, it is clear that it is more urgent than ever to develop answers to this question. And it is also clear that we should address this question in a network called kritnet. To start with, we will present a few attempts from last year, from which we would like to critically discuss the lessons learned with you. So come along and bring your ideas, suggestions, and perhaps even just vaguely formulated thoughts. We hope that together we will develop them into slogans, interventions, and campaigns.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

2:15 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. (Room S07)

Strategic approaches to litigation in humanitarian reception from Afghanistan

With Pauline Fischer & Mareile Dedekind (lawyer and litigation coordinator at the Society for Civil Rights)

Since the Taliban took power, Germany has accepted over 36,000 vulnerable Afghans through humanitarian programs. The sometimes complex entry procedures for Afghan asylum seekers with an acceptance for humanitarian admission have been severely delayed over the past year and a half of the coalition government, against the backdrop of a shift to the right in society and the rise of anti-immigration rhetoric, which has had a particular impact on Afghan nationals. In its coalition agreement, the new federal government under Friedrich Merz decided not to initiate any further admission programs and to discontinue existing programs as far as possible. The federal government took this political decision as an opportunity to completely freeze the already stagnating and particularly grueling departure procedures for approximately 2,300 Afghans with admission commitments to Germany from May 2025 onwards. Meanwhile, the living conditions of those waiting in Pakistan have continued to deteriorate, mainly due to massive deportations of Afghans by the Pakistani government on a historic scale.

Since June 2025, the Kabul Luftbrücke Initiative, together with numerous lawyers, has been supporting affected individuals in legal proceedings against the federal government for the issuance of visas. Since the first wave of lawsuits began on June 20, 2025, numerous lawsuits have been won in summary proceedings. The federal government has been ordered by courts to issue visas and, in some cases, even to pay penalty payments. Since September, flights to Germany have resumed. However, the position of the courts depends heavily on the legal basis for the admission commitments: while an admission commitment under Section 23, sentence 2 is considered legally binding, according to current case law, the German government has considerable discretion in revoking admission declarations under Section 22, sentence 2. The current goal is to clarify the remaining legal issues from a constitutional perspective and thus bring as many people as possible to safety.

In the workshop, we would like to discuss the strategic approaches underlying the proceedings. We will examine the legal arguments of the proceedings and how they affect the plaintiffs' living conditions in practice, such as the determination of suspensive effect and legal claims to further accommodation in Pakistan. We would also like to discuss the distribution of roles among the actors in the lawsuits and consider whether the special constellation of this litigation can be transferred to other situations.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

Stream "Global distribution struggles. Migration control as a source of authoritarian threats to democracy"

The wish for migration control is an undisputed driver of the shift to the right in the political landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is also well known and has been discussed many times that this desire is linked to (supposed) distribution struggles, for example over jobs, housing, or state transfer payments. In the workshops of this stream, we would like to consider whether there is also a dimension of global distribution struggles that is negotiated when it comes to the relationship between people in Germany and the border regime. For example, is there an awareness of one's own imperial way of life, the repressed costs of which are brought to mind by refugees? Should borders also be closed because this awareness can be suppressed as a result?

We will explore this overarching question in the workshops. To this end, we will combine approximately 10-minute inputs from the speakers on the topics of "authoritarianism," "ideologies of deservingness," and "global distribution struggles" with a discussion of the material in small groups, followed by time for a 25-minute concluding discussion. The selected material comes from street interviews we conducted with passersby in the context of migration policy events in public spaces as part of the "Global Distribution Struggles" project.

11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (Room S27)
Migration control and authoritarianism
Speakers: Sabine Hess & Niki Kubaczek

2:15 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. (Room S27)
Migration control and (the ideology of) performance-based justice
Speakers: Wolfgang Menz/Sarah Nies & Carina Altreiter

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. (Room S27)
Migration control and global distribution struggles
Speakers: Fabian Georgi & Janina Puder

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

Stream "Deportations and residency law as means of repression"

Organizers: Kelly Bescherer, Sifka Frederiksen, Aino Korvensyrjä, Selmar Krug

11:45 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Room S08)

Residency Law as a means of political repression

With Aino Korvensyrjä (University of Bristol, Chair), Sophia Hoffinger (ELSC), Tobias den Haan (3ezwa), Mohammad Wais Fedaie (Human rights activist) & Sunny Omwenyeke (Bremen Solidarity, formerly The VOICE and Caravan)

Recent global examples of the targeted use of immigration law—such as the imprisonment and attempted deportation of Mahmoud Khalili, an Algerian-Palestinian student activist at Columbia University—underscore the connection between immigration law and political repression. In Germany, immigration law is increasingly used to target individuals expressing solidarity with Palestine. Focusing on Germany and knowledge from social movements, this panel situates the recent trend within a broader historical and political context. What are the historical trajectories of using immigration law to repress dissent and social movements, and what lessons can be drawn from past struggles? How does criminalisation operate to fragment antiracist and anti-deportation movements today? Can immigration law be understood as inherently repressive—particularly when migration itself is conceived as a transnational social movement?

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

2:15 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Room S08)

Spatialities of Containment

With Svenja Schurade, Zana Aksu, Hrant Kasparyan, Leonie Jegen, Valeria Hänsel, Selmar Krug (Moderation), Kelly Bescherer & Sifka Frederiksen (Discussants)

This panel approaches carceral geographies through a relational understanding of how spatialities of criminalization and containment connect and intensify one another within and beyond the German border regime. Following the insight that the "prison is not a building 'over there' but a set of relationships that undermine rather than stabilize everyday lives everywhere" (Gilmore 2007), we examine refugee camps, detention centers, and prisons as representations of carceral spatialities, as well as legal and administrative logics producing confinement through instruments such as residence requirements (Wohnsitzauflage) and designated "dangerous places" (gefährliche Orte), where policing and racialized controls are heightened.

While migrants in refugee accommodation centers are formally permitted to leave, these spaces function within the deportation regime by isolating people, subjecting them to intensified surveillance, and exposing them to increased risks of police violence.Policing practices reinforce spatial social control and may generate the very criminality that later shapes the outcome in deportation proceedings. This dynamic is emphasized by the fact that one-third of Germany's prison population lacks German citizenship, and many face deportation directly from prison or transfer to detention facilities, as criminal records often obstruct the obtaining of residency status.

We argue that these spaces, logics, and contexts form an interconnected carceral landscape in which criminalisation expands the reach and meaning of carceral spaces, revealing the entanglement of migration control with criminal law, captured in the concept of "crimmigration". In response, migrant justice movements draw on a broadened abolitionist framework to challenge punitive powers embedded in border regimes. This panel aims to amplify abolitionist analyses of these intertwined spatialities of containment extending within and beyond Europe.

Kapatmanın Mekânsallıkları

Bu panel, cezalandırıcı coğrafyaları, suçlaştırma ve kapatma mekânsallıklarının Almanya sınır rejimi içinde ve ötesinde birbiriyle nasıl ilişkilenip karşılıklı olarak yoğunlaştını iliskisel bir anlayışla ele almaktadır. Gilmore'un (2007) "Hapishane 'orada' duran bir bina degil, aksine her yerde gündelik yaşamları istikrara kavuşturmaktan ziyade onları aşındıran bir ilişkiler bütünüdür" saptamasından hareketle, mülteci kamplarını, geri gönderme merkezlerini ve hapishaneleri cezalandırıcı mekânsallıkların temsilleri olarak inceliyoruz; aynı zamanda ikamet yükümlülükleri (Wohnsitzauflage) ve polisliğin ile ırksallaştırılmış denetimlerin yoğunlaştığı "tehlikeli yerleri" (gefahrliche Orte) gibi araçlar aracılığıyla kapatmayı üreten hukuki ve idari mantıkları da ele alıyoruz.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

Mülteci barınma merkezlerinde yaşayan göçmenlerin mekânı terk etmelerine yasal olarak izin verilse de, bu alanlar sınır dışı etme rejimi içinde insanları yalıtarak, yoğunlaştırılmış gözetim altına sokarak ve artan polis şiddeti risklerine maruz bırakarak işlev görür. Polislik pratikleri mekânsal toplumsal denetimi pekiştirir ve daha sonra sınır dışı etme süreçlerinin sonucunu belirleyen suçluluğun bizzat üretilmesine yol açabilir. Almanya'daki hapishane nüfusunun üçte birinin Alman vatandaşlığına sahip olmaması ve birçoğunun doğrudan hapishaneden sınır dışı edilmesi ya da idari gözetim merkezlerine sevk edilmesi (zira sabıka kayıtları çoğu zaman oturum statüsü elde etmeyi engeller) bu dinamiği daha da görünür kılmaktadır.

Bu mekânların, mantıkların ve bağlamların, suçlaştırmanın cezalandırıcı mekânların kapsamını ve anlamını genişlettiği; göç kontrolü ile ceza hukukunun "crimmigration" kavramında ifadesini bulan iç içe geçmişliğini açığa çıkaran, birbirine bağlı bir cezalandırıcı manzara oluşturduğunu ileri sürüyoruz. Buna karşılık, göçmen adaleti hareketleri sınır rejimlerine içkin cezalandırıcı iktidarları sorgulamak için genişletilmiş bir abolisyonist çerçeveden yararlanmaktadır. Bu panel, kapatmanın Avrupa içinde ve ötesinde uzanan bu iç içe geçmiş mekansallıklarına yönelik abolisyonist analizleri güçlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Program details, March 27, 2026

7:30–9:00 p.m.: Debate on the launch of the new website of movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies (Buttclub)

Critical knowledge production in authoritarian times – challenges and responses

With Fabian Georgi, Karl Heyer, Antonia Jordan, Aino Korvensyrjä, Maximilian Pichl und Maria Ullrich

movements. *Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* was founded in 2015 by members of kritnet with the aim of taking an "interdisciplinary approach to the movements of migration and the attempts to control and regulate them" and "advancing research on migration and border regimes that intervenes in the field of migration in a self-reflective and power-critical manner". From the outset, movements has not only been published consistently as an open-access journal, often in multiple languages with German and English-language contributions. We have also experimented from the start with expanding the field of knowledge production to include narratives of movement and activist contexts. Consequently, some issues have been produced in collaboration with activists themselves. To date, 12 issues have been published, with three more in concrete preparation: on sea rescue in the Mediterranean, on migration regimes in West Africa, and on the nexus between authoritarianism and border policies.

Yet the conditions for such critical knowledge production are shifting. Migration research and open access have become mainstream – a double-edged sword. Greater recognition and funding go hand in hand with discursive, political and practical constraints on research and publication. At the same time, critical scholars, activists and their publication projects find themselves in the context of the rise of authoritarian-nationalist forces and increasing fascist tendencies and political attacks.

Against the backdrop of these developments, the movements editorial team is currently working on several projects: a new website, integration into Diamond Open Access infrastructures, and the establishment of our own support association. To mark the launch of the new movements website, we would like to present these plans to kritnet and provide an insight into our current work. Above all, however, we want to engage in dialogue and discuss together the challenges, tasks and next steps for independent and critical academic-activist knowledge production on migration, borders and racism.

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy

Important Addresses:

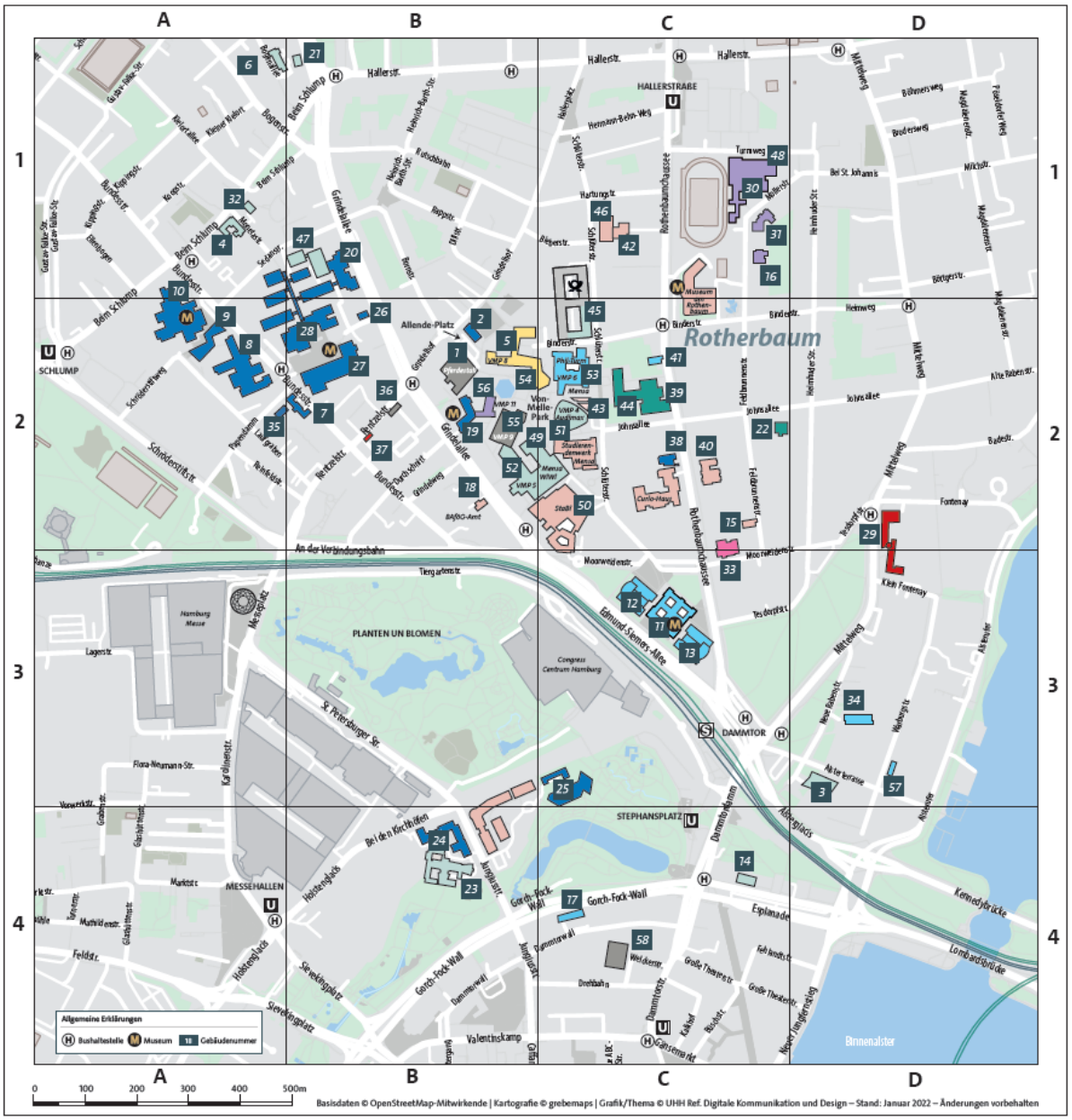
Cafe Knallhart - Von-Melle-Park 9 (on the campus of the University of Hamburg, on the ground floor of the (ex-)HWP)

HafenVokü – Hafenstraße 114 (Go down the ‘Balduintreppe’and then turn left or walk from U/S-Bahn Landungsbrücken towards Park Fiction)

Buttclub – Hafenstraße 126 (Go down the ‘Balduintreppe’ and then turn right, 50m from the Hafenvokü towards Park Fiction)

Dock europe e.V. (Guesthouse) – Bodenstedtstr. 16, backyard entrance a (in the Viktoriakaserne/ frapant)

Authoritarianism and border regimes: struggles over migration, rights, and democracy



CAMPUS-LAGEPLAN / GEBÄUDEVERZEICHNIS

Die Ziffern vor den genannten Einrichtungen und auf dem Plan sind die laufenden Gebäudenummern.
In dem folgenden Gebäudeverzeichnis finden Sie mit der laufenden Gebäudenummer die Anschrift und die Koordinaten des gesuchten Gebäudes.
Weitere Einrichtungen der Universität befinden sich außerhalb dieses Lageplans.
Informationen über die barrierefreie Zugänglichkeit und Nutzbarkeit von Gebäuden finden Sie unter:
www.uni-hamburg.de/campus-zugaenglichkeit

- Fakultät für Rechtswissenschaft
- Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften
- Medizinische Fakultät*
- Fakultät für Erziehungswissenschaft
- Fakultät für Geisteswissenschaften
- Fakultät für Mathematik, Informatik und Naturwissenschaften
- Fakultät für Psychologie und Bewegungswissenschaft
- Fakultät für Betriebswirtschaft
- Überwiegend von der Verwaltung genutzte Gebäude
- Von mehreren Fakultäten genutzte Gebäude
- Weitere Gebäude

1	Allendeplatz 1 (AP1)	B2
2	Allendeplatz 2 (AP2)	B2
3	Alsterterrasse 1	D3
4	Beim Schlump 83	A1
5	Binderstraße 40	B2
6	Bogenallee 11	A1
7	Bundesstraße 43	B2
8	Bundesstraße 45	A2
9	Bundesstraße 53	A2
10	Bundesstraße 55	A2
11	Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 (ESA1)	C3
12	ESA Flügel West (ESA West)	C3
13	ESA Flügel Ost (ESA Ost)	C3
14	Esplanade 36	C4
15	Feldbrunnenstraße 9	C2
16	Feldbrunnenstraße 70	C1
17	Gorch-Fock-Wall 5-7	C4
18	Grindelallee 9	B2
19	Grindelallee 46/48	B2
20	Grindelallee 117	B1
21	Grindelberg 5	B1
22	Johnsallee 35	C2
23	Jungiusstraße 9	B4
24	Jungiusstraße 11	B4
25	Marseiller Straße 5	C3
26	Martin-Luther-King-Platz 2	B2
27	Martin-Luther-King-Platz 3	B2
28	Martin-Luther-King-Platz 6	B2
29	Mittelweg 177	D2
30	Mollerstraße 2-4	C1
31	Mollerstraße 10	C1
32	Monetastraße 4	A1
33	Moorweidenstraße 18	C3
34	Neue Rabenstraße 13	D3
35	Papendamm 21	A2
36	Rentzelstraße 7	B2
37	Rentzelstraße 17	B2
38	Rothenbaumchaussee 19	C2
39	Rothenbaumchaussee 33	C2
40	Rothenbaumchaussee 34	C2
41	Rothenbaumchaussee 45	C2
42	Rothenbaumchaussee 81	C1
43	Schlüterstraße 11	C2
44	Schlüterstraße 28	C2
45	Schlüterstraße 51	C2
46	Schlüterstraße 70	C1
47	Sedanstraße 19	B1
48	Turmweg 2	C1
49	Von-Melle-Park 2 (VMP2)	B2
50	Von-Melle-Park 3 (VMP3)	C2
51	Von-Melle-Park 4 (VMP4)	C2
52	Von-Melle-Park 5 (VMP5)	B2
53	Von-Melle-Park 6 (VMP6)	C2
54	Von-Melle-Park 8 (VMP8)	B2
55	Von-Melle-Park 9 (VMP9)	B2
56	Von-Melle-Park 11 (VMP11)	B2
57	Warburgstraße 26	D3
58	Welckerstraße 8	C4

* Universitätsklinikum Eppendorf (UKE): außerhalb dieses Lageplans

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