

Université catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium),
September 17 - 19, 2025

From Experiences to Storytelling of Postmigration

Reinventing the Narratives of the Self and the World in Pluralistic European Societies

Developed and promoted by the German-speaking academic community, frequently mobilized by Anglophone and Scandinavian scholars, yet less used in Francophone and Italophone research, the concept of *postmigration* marks a significant shift in migration discourses. By dissolving the binary opposition between migrants and non-migrants, it allows immigration to be regarded as an intrinsic component of European societies. The conference “From Experiences to Storytelling of Postmigration” aligns with this ongoing epistemological and analytical transformation. It aims to explore how postmigration thinking is reshaping the narratives that can be written, spoken, or reconstructed from migration-related experiences. The conference will examine the stances, strategies, frameworks, and narrative content which emerge from the challenges, negotiations, conflicts, and alliances arising within European societies facing the diversity implied by migration.

Recognizing the diverse interpretations of *postmigration*, the conference deliberately embraces the term in its broadest sense. It invites exploration of the narratives of postmigrant individuals—descendants of immigrants who have not directly experienced migration. It also encourages the study of narratives about postmigrant societies, understood as societies transformed by immigration. Finally, the conference offers a space for considering a postmigrant perspective on storytelling as a practice reshaped by the dynamics of migration.

Resolutely pluralistic, the conference seeks to foster dialogues across the arts and disciplines which, in various ways, aim to express or give voice to the traces and stories left by migration within contemporary European societies. Designed with a comparative approach, it also promotes the exchange of studies on postmigration narratives across different European cultural and linguistic contexts (Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, and more).

Drawing on a range of disciplines, arts, and cultures, the papers will explore postmigrant narratives of the self and the world. These narratives will be examined through various dimensions of individual and collective experience likely to result in a form of storytelling. Key themes such as identity, hybridity, trauma, and struggle will guide the exploration of the narratives of the self. Concepts like connected history, memory, and postmemory could be employed to narrate the postmigrant relationship with time. The postmigrant connection to space will be approached through narratives of private and public spaces that bear the marks of migration. Special attention will also be given to the religious dimension, understood as a factor which shapes both the relationship to the self and to the world. Beyond these indicative themes, many other dimensions of postmigrant experience may also be considered.

While a broad spectrum of narratives can be covered from various perspectives, proposals should focus on one of the following themes.

1) *Literary Narratives of Postmigration*. This theme will examine the forms and content that characterize postmigration narratives, ranging from traditional genres (novel, autofiction, autobiography, etc.) to more recent forms (rap, slam, podcast, etc.). The objective is to explore the thematic, semiotic, pragmatic, linguistic, and narrative strategies employed by each genre to recount and interrogate the experiences of postmigrant individuals and societies. Literary narratives can also be addressed as laboratories for the imagination, offering spaces to experiment with new configurations of identity, memory, and space—elements still to be

actively (re)constructed in today's pluralistic societies. Finally, literary works can be studied as tools of recognition, giving a voice to those often marginalized, and contributing to the creation of a new imagined community.

2) *Visual Narratives of Postmigration*. This theme will focus on artistic, cultural, and media productions which place the image at the heart of postmigration narratives (such as cinema, documentary, photography, etc.). The aim is to explore how visual media provide unique resources for representing and conveying the individual and collective experiences reshaped by immigration. It will also be possible to analyze the techniques—such as composition and editing—applied to make the image tell the stories of postmigrant individuals and societies in Europe. Particular attention will be given to narratives that reveal the traces of migration within urban spaces, as public places often silently bear witness to the history of immigration to Europe.

3) *Postmigrant Narratives in Social Science Fieldwork*. This theme will focus on the methods of inquiry employed in anthropology and sociology to enable immigrant populations and their descendants to tell their own stories from a “demigrantized” perspective. It will explore the forms of narrative that allow for the experience of interviewees to be understood as an integral part of European societies. Special attention will be given to scholarly narratives that, grounded in real-life trajectories, redefine European histories and identities by incorporating cultural references, such as Islam, into a pluralistic framework where they are no longer considered foreign.

4) *Historical Narratives of Postmigration*. This theme aims to analyze and demonstrate how postmigration can generate a counter-discourse to dominant national histories. Drawing on Duncan S.A. Bell's concept of the “mythscape” (2003), it will examine the conditions under which transnational and connected historiographies are written and received so as to offer an account of the formation and evolution of postmigrant European societies, challenging conventional narratives and highlighting the diverse histories that shape contemporary Europe.

5) *Postmigrant Narratives and Education*. This theme will explore how narrative can address the pedagogical challenges of multiculturalism in classrooms within postmigrant European societies. It will also examine innovative educational practices and strategies that enable students to share personal stories deeply connected to immigration, and the diversity of cultural and religious heritages.

6) *Postmigrant Narratives and Commitment*. This theme will examine how storytelling functions as a form of engagement with the diversity of cultural and religious heritages. More specifically, it will explore whether individuals, in asserting their unique perspectives through narrative, draw upon specific aspects of personal or collective experience—such as personal development, issues related to the body, or political stances. Additionally, the theme will investigate how stories reflect the commitment of their authors, as well as the values underlying this commitment, which are often embedded in the narrative itself.

7) *Postmigrant Narratives and Reception*. This theme will explore how postmigration narratives actively shape their own reception. In particular, it will examine how these narratives engage with the audience's expectations, often playing with stereotypes and genre conventions. The focus will also extend to how the narrative, as a communicative act, is crafted to convey a message that takes into account the pluralistic context in which it is shared. Lastly, the theme will consider the image of the audience constructed by the narrative, and, in relation to the previous theme, explore the type of commitment the narrative seeks to inspire in its implicit audience.

The conference will be held at Université catholique de Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium), from September 17 to 19, 2025.

Papers may be presented in English, French, German or Italian. Proposals, including a title, an abstract (approximately 300 words) and a brief bio-bibliographical note, should be sent to Amaury Dehoux (amaury.dehoux@uclouvain.be), Hubert Roland (hubert.roland@uclouvain.be) and Letizia Sassi (letizia.sassi@uclouvain.be) before April 30, 2025.

We also welcome panel proposals. The organizer is asked to send the title and program of the panel, including an abstract for each paper (approximately 300 words), and a brief bio-bibliographical note for each speaker. Proposals should also be sent to Amaury Dehoux (amaury.dehoux@uclouvain.be), Hubert Roland (hubert.roland@uclouvain.be) and Letizia Sassi (letizia.sassi@uclouvain.be) before April 30, 2025.

All submitters will be notified of the outcome of their proposal by May 15, 2025 at the latest.