REMAP

Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

Reception Coloniality and Urban Space

Integration as a Continuation of Colonial Governance

Conference proceedings

Conference of 1 October 2026

Contributions by Marie Moïse, Roberto Bertolino and Camillo Boano

Opening remarks by Maddalena Alberti

Moderation and closing remarks by Raisa Labaran; afternoon workshop facilitated by Marie Moïse

Editorial synthesis prepared from the conference transcript and afternoon workshop materials. The interventions are reported in indirect form and condensed without reducing their principal arguments, examples or exchanges.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Contents

1. Opening remarks and the problem of integration

2. Deactivating coloniality: power, relations and everyday practices — Marie Moïse

3. Undoing reception: asylum, psychological suffering and institutional violence — Roberto Bertolino

4. Living without integrating: space, refuge and the coloniality of urban governance — Camillo Boano

5. Closing remarks on bodies, relationships and urban participation

6. Afternoon workshop: looking at coloniality from within — Marie Moïse

7. Workshop outcomes

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

1. Opening remarks and the problem of integration

Conference context

Maddalena Alberti

Maddalena Alberti introduced the conference as part of the European REMAP project, funded by the European Commission. She explained that the project examines how the colonial histories of European countries continue to shape contemporary systems of reception, inclusion and asylum. The meeting was presented as one step in a wider programme of exchanges involving international partners, local institutions and civil-society organisations, with further national and online events planned.

Alberti emphasised that the project is not limited to historical reconstruction. Its purpose is to examine whether present-day administrative routines, professional categories and institutional arrangements continue to reproduce relations formed within colonial histories. The international partnership was therefore described as a space in which practitioners and institutions could question their own procedures rather than treating decoloniality as an external theme. The morning session was intended to connect the language of reception and integration with the concrete organisation of bodies, rights, care and urban space.

Integration and the barriers to recognition

Raisa Labaran

Raisa Labaran opened the substantive discussion with the recent experience of Gladys (a fictitious name used to ensure anonymity), a thirty-eight-year-old woman who had arrived in Italy fifteen years earlier after trafficking. In Nigeria, Gladys had trained as a doctor specialising in geriatrics, but her qualification was not recognised in Italy. After unsuccessful attempts to obtain recognition, she enrolled in an adult training programme for healthcare support workers. Labaran underlined the scale of this downward professional movement: a trained doctor was required to begin again in a much less qualified role simply to find a recognised place in the Italian labour market.

Gladys, who has three daughters, invested the remainder of her savings in the course and achieved excellent results. Before enrolling she had been told that she would have one year to obtain recognition of her school diploma, a requirement separates from the recognition of her medical degree. She paid the course fee and later relied on an intermediary in Nigeria to obtain the missing documentation, only to discover that she had been defrauded. Because a required certification was still absent, she was then prevented from taking the final qualifying assessment and lost a year of study.

Labaran used this case to expose a contradiction within the language of integration. Gladys had done what institutions conventionally ask of migrants: she had learned Italian, returned to education, paid for training and tried to translate previous qualifications into the receiving system. Yet the same system repeatedly created barriers that made recognition unattainable. When Labaran

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

sought explanations from the school and other bodies, she was told that similar cases occurred every year and that the problem lies elsewhere, including in the way documents were produced in countries of origin. For Labaran, such responses displaced institutional responsibility instead of asking whether procedures could be changed.

The example framed the title of the conference, Integration as a Continuation of Colonial Governance. Labaran argued that colonialism could not be confined to a completed historical period. Its traces had to be examined in the contemporary allocation of credibility, qualification, responsibility and mobility. She invited the conference to move from questioning familiar categories to considering how everyday practices might be altered. The subsequent interventions were introduced as three connected perspectives: Marie Moïse would examine coloniality through bodies, histories and relations; Roberto Bertolino would address psychological suffering, care and institutional violence; and Camillo Boano would consider how bodies are placed, governed and excluded through urban space.



Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

2. Deactivating coloniality: power, relations and everyday practices

Marie Moïse

Editorial abstract

Marie Moïse connected contemporary migration governance to longer histories of colonial domination through a situated account of diaspora, whiteness and family history. She distinguished migration policies from above from forms of politics from below, described coloniality through terra nullius, hierarchies of living beings and their transformation into a world system, and argued that decolonial relationships require an explicit recognition of unequal positions within solidarity. The discussion extended these arguments to anger, education, institutional racism and Italy's place within colonial history.

A situated point of departure

Moïse began from the circumstances in which the conference had been prepared. During the summer, Abderrahim Fakir, a forty-two-year-old man of Moroccan origin who had experienced severe psychological distress, was killed by police in Bologna. She presented the event not as background information but as a reminder that theoretical work on coloniality should remain anchored in everyday territories and in lives exposed to institutional power. The case also resonated personally with her as a daughter of diaspora, making it impossible, in her account, to separate conceptual analysis from the histories through which people recognise themselves in others.

This situated starting point led Moïse to distinguish two broad forms of migration politics. Policies from above included laws, residence permits, reception systems, citizenship regimes and the institutional categories through which mobility is governed. Politics from below referred instead to relationships, speech, collective action and resistance capable of interrupting or reworking those arrangements. The distinction was not offered as a simple opposition between bad institutions and good communities. Rather, it provided a way to ask where colonial relations are reproduced and where they can be deactivated.

Moïse then made her own position part of the argument. On her father's side she located herself within the Haitian postcolonial diaspora; on her mother's side she is Italian and was born and raised in Italy. She is generally perceived and treated as white. This position, she explained, places her within a history of whiteness that is simultaneously a source of privilege and an effect of family histories of assimilation. Her father and other Haitian relatives had encountered pressures to leave behind Creole, distance themselves from Haitian history and even modify the pronunciation of the family surname so that it could be more easily accommodated in Italy.

She described this process as **whitening** and linked it to the contemporary language of integration. Historically, colonised and enslaved populations were asked to approximate a model of humanity

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

defined as universal but materially organised around **whiteness**. In her family history, the demand did not disappear with the end of formal colonialism. It continued through language, recognition and social normality. Moïse used the distinction between History with a capital H and personal history with a lower-case h to show how large political processes enter intimate family trajectories. Her own capacity to be recognised as white therefore appeared to her as both an advantage and a painful inheritance.

From this perspective, colonial trauma was not presented only as an individual psychological wound. It named a rupture through which whiteness could become an aspiration, a horizon of safety and survival, and therefore a horizon of integration. Moïse's critique of migration policies from above was grounded in this ambivalent location: she spoke from within structures that grant her relative normality while also connecting her to histories in which that normality was produced through coercive assimilation.

Three principles of coloniality

To clarify what she meant by coloniality, Moïse proposed three connected principles. The first was **terra nullius**, understood as the production of land as belonging to nobody. The second was a **hierarchy of living beings**, through which some lives are recognised as fully human while others are placed below that threshold. The third was the transformation of these principles into a **world system**: relations tested and consolidated in colonial settings became components of modern political, economic and epistemic order more generally.

In her account, terra nullius was not simply a legal doctrine about unoccupied territories. European colonisation declared lands in the Americas, Africa and Asia available for appropriation by treating their inhabitants as if their presence did not establish legitimate claims. Property relations could then be imposed by first rendering existing forms of occupation socially and legally invisible. The production of nobody's land depended on the production of people as nobody.

The hierarchy of living beings extended this operation. Colonial systems established scales of value in which some people counted as fully human and others as non-human or subhuman. Animals, plants and the earth were likewise classified within knowledge systems that facilitated exploitation. Moïse stressed that these hierarchies did not remain confined to former colonies. Colonies functioned as laboratories in which forms of governance, classification and extraction were developed before circulating more widely.

Coloniality in the present therefore required attention to the survival of these relationships rather than only to the survival of colonial administrations. Moïse asked how contemporary institutions continue to produce nobody's land, how they determine which lives are recognised as fully human, and how relationships to what is defined as other-than-human remain organised through ownership and extraction. In this framework, the Bologna killing became an example of the practical consequences of hierarchy: Fakir's position as Moroccan, foreign and psychologically distressed could allow his presence in public space to be read first as disturbance rather than as the presence of a person embedded in relationships, affection and history.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Natal alienation, social death and dehistoricisation

Moïse drew on Orlando Patterson's concepts of **natal alienation** and **social death** to describe the removal of people not only from territory but also from genealogy and historical time. Enslavement and colonisation could sever recognised relations with communities of origin, language, names and family lines. The denial or alteration of a surname was important in this respect because it could interrupt the public legibility of descent, making a person appear detached from a recognised past.

She argued that analogous forms of dehistoricisation can persist even when people formally retain names and citizenship documents. A person can still be treated as though their community of origin, relationships and capacity to possess a past and future are irrelevant. Migrants arriving across the Mediterranean are often approached through their immediate administrative condition rather than through the histories of love, kinship, labour, violence and responsibility that precede their arrival. Their presence can thereby be reduced to an isolated present.

This analysis shifted the conference's attention from inclusion alone to the question of historical agency. For Moïse, a decolonial practice would have to recognise people not as empty subjects to be integrated into a pre-existing order but as historical actors whose relationships already exceed the categories through which institutions receive them.

Migration politics from below and communities of resistance

Against this process, Moïse described migration politics from below as practices that can reorganise speech, visibility and space. In Bologna, she referred to the role of Fakir's family and the Pilastro neighbourhood committee. Their mobilisation transformed the neighbourhood from a territory merely administered by institutions into a space actively constituted by inhabitants. Political speech, commemoration and collective action created relationships that had not been anticipated by policy.

Drawing on Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Moïse called these formations **communities of resistance**. Such communities do not exist in advance as homogeneous groups. They are produced through the relationships and struggles that bring people together against coloniality. Moïse paid particular attention to children of migration in Italy. Unlike many of their parents, they may have been born and educated in the country and speak the national language from childhood. The language that earlier generations were compelled to acquire as part of integration can therefore become a resource through which the next generation contests the demand to integrate into a place that is already theirs.

She noted that public calls for justice in Bologna were articulated in Italian by Fakir's niece, who was born in the country. For Moïse, this illustrated how the descendants of migration can shift the terms of political speech. Their position does not erase the violence experienced by earlier generations, but it may provide material and linguistic resources that allow conflict with coloniality to be articulated differently.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Unequal positions within solidarity

Moïse cautioned against treating a community of resistance as a space in which all participants occupy equivalent positions. Solidarity does not dissolve differences of privilege. A white participant who is not subjected to racism cannot automatically occupy the centre of a collective struggle against racism or present a privileged perspective as representative of the whole group. Decolonial solidarity therefore requires ongoing attention to the position from which one speaks and acts.

She used the term **white anxiety** for the discomfort, guilt, shame, defensiveness or fear that can emerge when white subjects encounter criticism of racial power. Rather than treating such emotions as signs that discussion should stop, Moïse suggested that they can function as information about unequal relationships. The task is not to make discomfort disappear immediately but to remain with it long enough to understand what it reveals about habitual zones of comfort and authority.

In this sense, deactivating coloniality is relational and continuous. It requires people to notice how inherited structures operate inside ordinary interactions and to change the organisation of those relationships. Moïse's position rejected both the fantasy of individual innocence and the idea that acknowledging privilege is sufficient. The political work lies in how relationships are subsequently transformed.

Discussion: anger, education and colonial history

In the discussion, Raisa Labaran raised the problem of anger, especially the way Black people can be described as aggressive when they insist on being heard. Moïse treated anger as a legitimate response to injury and as an emotion that can expose white anxiety. She also stressed that colonial representation has historically associated **Blackness** with supposedly natural violence and uncontrollable emotion. Such stereotypes can delegitimise anger by interpreting it as a defect of character rather than as a response to prolonged humiliation, exploitation and exclusion. For her, solidarity required learning how to remain in relation to anger without recentring the discomfort of white participants.

A participant then questioned the slogan that no one is a foreigner at school. Moïse expressed reservations about universalist slogans that attempt to overcome difference too quickly through declarations of sameness. She argued that schools can actively produce the category of the foreigner through curricula, administrative practices and everyday classifications. Research on racism in education, in her account, makes it impossible to assume that schools stand outside institutional racism. A decolonial educational practice would therefore need to study the problem before rushing toward reassuring solutions.

The discussion also addressed the relative absence of Italian and German colonial histories from public debate compared with British and French cases. Moïse agreed that Italy's specific history requires greater attention. She connected formal colonial rule in Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia with longer processes through which the Italian state and peninsula imagined themselves

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

in relation to Africa and the Mediterranean. The construction of national identity after unification, she argued, involved forms of ideological whitening and distancing from Africa. She also situated Italian histories within older Mediterranean circuits of enslavement and commerce, arguing that colonial responsibility cannot be reduced to the fascist period alone.

Across these exchanges, Moïse resisted rapid closure. Anger, racism in schools and historical responsibility were not treated as problems that could be solved by a slogan, a training session or a single act of recognition. They were presented as fields of relationship in which coloniality is reproduced and where decolonial work must therefore remain sustained, uncomfortable and collective.



Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Undoing reception: asylum, psychological suffering and institutional violence

Roberto Bertolino

Editorial abstract

Roberto Bertolino approached reception and care as political relationships rather than neutral services. He examined how asylum systems can detach people from historical agency, translate resistance into vulnerability or pathology, and make the suffering body a resource for recognition. His intervention connected diagnostic knowledge, reception facilities and administrative detention in CPR centres, while the discussion focused on curricula, responsibility and the difficulty of responding to colonial trauma without reproducing authority.

The contradiction within reception and care

Bertolino began from the contradiction identified by the moderator: reception systems are formally organised around protection, autonomy and integration, yet they can simultaneously produce waiting, dependency, classification and surveillance. Psychological care operates inside this contradiction. The question is therefore not only whether professionals intend to help, but how the institutional form of helping shapes the people who receive it.

To illustrate the problem, Bertolino recalled a question raised by a psychologist at the end of a training course. The question attempted to connect violence in Libya with psychopathology related to the origins of the viand trauma. Although the participant appeared motivated by a desire to improve care, Bertolino saw the formulation as evidence of a deeper problem: professional training can reproduce assumptions about populations even when it aims to challenge prejudice. A conventional format in which experts speak and practitioners listen does not necessarily unsettle the categories through which practitioners interpret those they are asked to treat.

For this reason, he valued forms of learning based on shared reflection on experience. Such work can move professionals away from the position of operators who manage, treat or correct others and return attention to the relationship in which care takes place. Bertolino's central proposition was that care is itself a terrain of political conflict. It does not stand outside the colonial relations discussed by Moïse; diagnosis, therapeutic expertise and welfare practice can become mechanisms through which those relations are reproduced.

Diagnosis and the colonial history of pathology

Bertolino used the nineteenth-century diagnosis of **drapetomania**, associated with Samuel Cartwright, as a historical example. Drapetomania pathologised the desire of enslaved people to escape. Dissatisfaction with enslavement could be interpreted as a symptom, while punishment could be prescribed as treatment. The example showed how a diagnostic vocabulary can translate an intelligible political refusal into individual disorder.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

He cautioned against assuming that contemporary diagnosis is automatically free of comparable political effects. The categories are different and the institutions have changed, but the underlying question remains: what happens when a form of resistance is interpreted primarily through a clinical deficit? Professional care can then participate in producing the vulnerable, dependent subject it claims merely to describe.

Frantz Fanon served as an important reference for this problem. Bertolino also discussed contemporary attacks on postcolonial thought in Italian public debate, including statements associated with Education Minister Giuseppe Valditara. He interpreted representations of migrants as ungrateful, dissatisfied recipients of hospitality as part of a longer political imagination in which complaint is treated as evidence of moral failure. In his reading, such rhetoric matters because it helps normalise punitive responses to people who do not perform gratitude after being received or even after obtaining citizenship.

Bertolino also distinguished coloniality from the continued existence of colonial occupation. While the concept of coloniality addresses the persistence of colonial relations beyond formal empire, he cautioned that current occupations should not disappear into abstraction. Gaza and the West Bank entered the discussion in this context as examples through which the conference considered the relation between historical structures and present territorial domination.

Reception and the institutions of exclusion

Bertolino proposed that the reception system should be analysed alongside CPR centres, Italy's administrative detention centres for people awaiting removal. The two may appear to be opposites: one receives and assists, while the other confines and excludes. Yet he argued that they belong to a broader apparatus that sorts mobility, legal status and belonging. His criticism was directed primarily at the organisation of the system rather than at the intentions of individual workers; he explicitly included himself among those who work inside these institutions.

Asylum legislation was central to this apparatus. In the situation Bertolino described, legal migration possibilities had been narrowed to such an extent that an asylum application often becomes the main route through which a person can negotiate permission to remain. The law, recognition commissions and operational reception practices therefore have to be read together. They do not simply assess pre-existing subjects; they help produce the kinds of subjectivity that become administratively recognisable.

Bertolino described the European migration regime as racialised at a transnational level. In his account, the issue cannot be attributed only to individual states because European regulation itself organises differentiated access to movement and protection. He also stressed that this organisation enters intimate relationships. Family reunification rules, for example, determine which bonds count as legitimate for administrative purposes and under what conditions partners or children can join a person. Border governance therefore reaches into affective life rather than operating only at the territorial edge.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The earlier discussion of anger returned here. Drawing on François Sironi, Bertolino treated anger as a political emotion that can be converted into action rather than merely contained. Yet the institutional apparatus tends to interpret dissatisfaction, conflict and refusal as management problems. This makes it difficult for workers inside the system to recognise political meaning in behaviours that disrupt the expected script of vulnerability and gratitude.

Producing people without History

One of Bertolino's strongest claims concerned the production of people without History. Building on Moïse's distinction between collective History and individual history, he argued that asylum procedures may accept a personal narrative while stripping it of the larger historical relations that make it meaningful. The individual account is also shaped by the fact that it functions as evidence in a negotiation with the State. People learn which parts of their biography are legible to the procedure and which parts do not contribute to a claim for protection.

He offered the example of violence experienced in Libya during a journey. Depending on the legal grounds of a protection claim, suffering in a transit country may have limited relevance to the determination process when compared with persecution in a country of origin. Bertolino read this as a one-way institutional procedure removing parts of History from a person's account. The result is a subject who has a biography but whose historical location in wars, borders, labour systems and geopolitical relations is not fully recognised.

For Bertolino, the alternative would be to approach migrants and refugees as witnesses to the places where histories of encounter are being enacted: in Libya, along the Balkan route, at borders and in European cities. This would restore political agency to people who are too often recognised primarily as victims. He associated the dominant humanitarian model with what Didier Fassin has described as an **empire of trauma**, in which professional certification of suffering can become the authorised language through which another person's experience reaches institutions.

Bertolino included his own practice in this criticism. When a clinician writes a certificate on behalf of someone else, professional authority can replace that person's speech even when the intention is to support a legal or welfare claim. It is possible to recall here the refugee's ***speechlessness*** that is produced and re-produced every day. The problem is therefore not solved by placing the caring professional outside power. Clinical work is implicated in the same field of recognition and translation it seeks to navigate.

When vulnerability replaces resistance

A related mechanism, Bertolino argued, is the substitution of vulnerability for resistance. Psychological, medical and psychiatric expertise can individualise practices that might otherwise be interpreted politically. A person becomes intelligible to institutions because of trauma, fragility or incapacity rather than because of a claim, conflict or refusal. Vulnerability can then function as a threshold of humanity: the more visibly wounded the person appears, the easier it may be for institutions to recognise a need for protection.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Bertolino suggested that this humanitarian logic can be particularly consequential for women, whose claims may be more readily recognised through narratives of victimisation than through political agency. Protection is then offered paternalistically: the person is allowed to remain because an institution judges them vulnerable, rather than because their political or social claim is accepted on equal terms.

He illustrated the problem with rules in reception facilities that forbid residents from hosting people who are not formally accommodated there. A resident who lets an undocumented friend sleep indoors may technically violate house regulations and put their own reception place at risk. Yet the act can also be understood as a political refusal of a system that decides who is entitled to a bed and who must sleep outside. If institutional expertise sees only rule-breaking, it misses the political meaning of the gesture.

The same mechanism can affect anger. What may be an expression of injustice can be classified as aggression and sanctioned. Bertolino's pessimism therefore concerned the capacity of the existing reception apparatus to decolonise itself without creating other political spaces in which resistance can be recognised as more than pathology or non-compliance.

The suffering body and administrative detention

Bertolino then turned to the suffering body as a resource for recognition. In asylum and humanitarian procedures, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, physical scars or evidence consistent with torture can increase institutional credibility. This creates a paradox: the more the political subject is translated into a wounded body, the more legible that person may become to the system. The body thus becomes central to both the production and dismantling of subjectivity.

This problem became especially stark in his discussion of CPR centres. These institutions detain people administratively before removal. Bertolino described them as spaces of exception, while warning against treating exception as an accidental departure from normal legality. Following a familiar line of political theory, he argued that the suspension or special application of law can be one of the ways the legal order confirms itself.

Vulnerability appears again inside detention because a person judged sufficiently vulnerable can be declared unsuitable for confinement, whereas suitability is otherwise presumed. For Bertolino, this demonstrates that care and coercion are not separate domains. Assessment by health professionals can determine whether a person remains inside an institution of confinement. Caring, like educating, is therefore a political act.

He also described CPR centres as sites where the territorial border is reproduced inside the State. A journalist known to him had drawn attention to military vehicles positioned outside such centres. Bertolino considered their presence symbolically important: the detained person is physically within the national territory but institutionally represented as already outside it, as a body awaiting removal. The border becomes material inside the city or province rather than remaining at the national edge.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Struggle through the body

Inside administrative detention, Bertolino argued, the body can become one of the few remaining means through which a person attempts to change their condition. Self-injury may result in transfer to an emergency department or hospital, potentially creating an opportunity to leave confinement. He described increasingly serious forms of self-harm in CPR centres, including acts with fatal consequences, as evidence of a system in which freedom is pursued through damage to the very body being detained.

Bertolino connected this, cautiously and disturbingly, with historical reflections on suicide among enslaved people as an ultimate exercise of control over one's own body. His purpose was not to equate the situations but to expose a recurring political problem: when other forms of agency are blocked, the body itself becomes the terrain of struggle.

This returned the intervention to diagnosis. Bertolino asked whether medical, psychological and educational knowledge can produce concepts adequate to these institutional realities or whether diagnosis continues to translate conflicts into individual disorder. The historical absurdity of drapetomania makes its political function easy to recognise in retrospect. The challenge, he suggested, is to identify the contemporary categories that may perform analogous work by rendering dissatisfaction or non-adaptation pathological.

The broader question for care is therefore how to respond to suffering that cannot be understood as exclusively individual. Such suffering also implicates the institutions, professionals and political orders that encounter it. Treating the person without interrogating those relations risks reproducing the conditions from which the distress emerges.

Discussion: detention, education and responsibility

In the discussion, Labaran returned to the CPR centres and asked whether administrative detention of this kind should be considered compatible with a state governed by the rule of law. Another participant introduced a project on decolonising curricula and asked how schools and educators could work with colonial and intergenerational trauma among young people with very different historical experiences.

Bertolino replied that educational practice requires changes not only in classroom methods but also in curricula. He described Italian history and literature curricula as strongly ethnocentric and suggested that teachers need support in revising the frameworks through which historical experience is taught. While waiting for institutional reform from above, professional work with teaching staff can begin to open space for histories that have been marginalised.

He referred to Ukrainian children in Italian classrooms as an example of the difficulty of making room for painful testimony. Teachers who allowed children to discuss war experiences sometimes faced complaints from other parents whose children returned home frightened. For Bertolino, this did not justify suppressing the experience. Children already inhabit a divided and violent world;

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

education cannot protect them by pretending that those divisions do not exist. The task is to develop forms of speech and care that acknowledge distress without converting silence into safety.

The participant's second question concerned the risk that European professionals reproduce colonial authority when trying to heal colonial trauma. Bertolino responded with deliberate uncertainty. He suggested that white European practitioners may need to relinquish the assumption that they know how other populations should recover, and he referred to examples in which care for former child soldiers had been developed through local figures and customary structures. At the same time, he recognised the danger of turning humility into withdrawal: those implicated in histories that produced harm cannot simply declare that healing belongs to others.

The resulting position remained unresolved by design. Bertolino argued for a practice attentive both to the danger of speaking for others and to the danger of evading responsibility. Decolonising care cannot mean replacing one authoritative formula with another; it requires sustained reflection on who is authorised to interpret, who bears responsibility, and how spaces of resistance and care can be supported without being appropriated.



Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Living without integrating: space, refuge and the coloniality of urban governance

Camillo Boano

Editorial abstract

Camillo Boano examined urban space as a material and conceptual product of colonial modernity. He linked reception facilities, prisons, camps and detention centres to the same urban processes that distribute bodies and regulate visibility. Moving through Patrick Chamoiseau, Carl Schmitt, María Lugones, Eyal Weizman, Filip De Boeck, Lauren Berlant and the film Melancholia, Boano described modern planning as an ordering project and proposed fugitive spaces, marronage and refuge as alternative figures for thinking about dwelling. The discussion concluded by questioning symbolic decolonisation when deeper spatial relations remain unchanged.

Where are the bodies of reception?

Boano took up the moderator's spatial question: where are the bodies discussed in the preceding contributions actually placed? Bodies move, but institutions also assign them to particular locations. Detention centres can be distant, difficult to access and poorly visible, while refugees and people with migration histories are distributed through neighbourhoods, reception facilities and administrative territories. Discussions of participation and inclusion often remain abstract unless they examine these concrete geographies.

He situated his intervention in relation to the previous speakers and described contemporaneity, drawing on Giorgio Agamben, as a willingness to face the darkness and pressure of the present rather than avoid it. From this perspective, the city does not simply contain spaces of order and separate spaces of disorder. It actively produces both. Prisons, camps and detention centres are not external anomalies but part of the mechanisms through which urban freedom, privilege and normality are maintained for some subjects.

Boano argued that the city continually contains, manages and administers bodies. Inclusion and exclusion are spatial operations: they determine where a person may stay, which places remain accessible, how visible a body can become and when presence is treated as a problem. Otherness may be framed through fear, rights, undesirability or abnormality, but in each case, it is measured and named. Urbanism therefore includes practices of domestication, distancing and selective inclusion.

For Boano, these practices are colonial not only because similar techniques were historically deployed in colonies. More fundamentally, colonial modernity helped constitute the disciplines of architecture and planning themselves through processes of capture, extraction, capitalist construction and emptying. Contemporary geography carries the effects of these processes even when professional practice presents itself as neutral or progressive.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The city as an ordering project

Boano used the term **project** in a broad sense. It referred not only to a plan, drawing or building proposal but to the underlying idea of the city through which planners and architects act. Contemporary forms of inclusion and exclusion are intensified, in his argument, by processes of destruction and annihilation that continually withdraw space from certain forms of presence.

Making the city is therefore inseparable from colonial modernity. It produces accepted forms of dwelling while also producing sacrifice zones: spaces that can be near or distant, visible or hidden, but that absorb the costs of maintaining other spaces as protected and orderly. Urban design continually rearranges distances between protection and exposure.

Patrick Chamoiseau's writing provided Boano with a literary image of this problem. He referred to a passage in which early geometric cities are contrasted with the tent. The tent is mobile, circular and responsive to wind, while the city appears square, rooted and oriented toward grasping and ordering the ground. Boano used this contrast not as a literal history of settlement but as a conceptual opposition between an architecture open to movement and an urban order that seeks stability, legibility and control.

Chamoiseau's account of imperial cities, as summarised by Boano, associates urban form with the capacity to count, subordinate and organise territories. The figure of the soldier-architect condenses this connection between spatial knowledge and political force. Streets, squares, temples and centralised monumental space can become techniques through which power is made visible and populations are arranged.

Boano read this image as a challenge to the disciplinary self-understanding of architecture and planning. The city as project is a machine of classification: it tolerates and excludes, selects, measures, values and names. Yet the city also contains what exceeds this machine—spaces of encounter, movement, disorder and collective invention. He associated these excessive or resistant formations with the teeming city, a city animated by openings, winds and people rather than exhausted by its official plan.

Modern planning and the production of space

Boano described contemporary urbanism as a composite of design practices shaped, in their postmodern and neoliberal variants, by a productivist logic. Places, cultures, economies and forms of nature become objects to be enhanced, valorised and made productive. Even projects presented as socially inclusive can remain organised by a logic in which space must generate measurable value.

He identified several recurring distinctions within this framework: the separation between public and private spheres of dwelling; the treatment of nature as an external object to protect, restore or exploit; the use of culture as infrastructure for identity; and the imagination of public space as a pacified field of social mixité in which only approved behaviours are allowed. These principles do not define every Western planning practice, but for Boano they reveal a durable dualistic structure.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The space imagined by modern Western urban thought is finite, knowable and controllable. A city that remains illegible, unpredictable or resistant to knowledge is treated as a problem to be corrected. Boano linked this aspiration to coloniality because it privileges a specific mode of knowing and ordering space while marginalising other ways of inhabiting, moving and producing relations.

The modern urban project, in his account, continually reconstructs a founding imaginary. It is shaped by two related paradigms: emptiness, or more precisely **emptying**, and **ordering**, or the production of order. Emptying makes land available by removing, disqualifying or rendering invisible existing uses and claims; ordering reorganises what remains into a legible system. Boano described the struggle around these operations as global, violent and unfinished.

He therefore interpreted the contemporary city as the product of a historically specific tension between emptying and order. The objective of this project is not simply physical demolition. It can also neutralise other forms of spatialisation, dwelling, movement and social life by making them administratively impossible or culturally illegible. Urbanism becomes a process that attempts to establish a singular regime for producing space and life.

Carl Schmitt's The Nomos of the Earth entered the argument at this point. Boano referred to the sequence of appropriation, division or distribution, and production as a concise way of describing how an order establishes itself materially. He used the triad to emphasise that spatial organisation begins with claims over land and proceeds through allocation and productive use. The reference served Boano's broader argument about the inseparability of urban form from political acts of taking, distributing and organising space.

Mapping lives through power

Drawing on María Lugones, Boano described power as spatially mapping life. A person's position is shaped by the intersections of places in which they are allowed, required or prevented from living and moving. This formulation shifted the emphasis from architecture as a collection of objects to spatial permission as a central political mechanism.

From this perspective, design fixes, defines, regulates and explains lives. Movement, presence and visibility become dimensions of dwelling that are unevenly distributed. Boano therefore described the urban project as a battlefield in which space is not only the setting of conflict but also one of its principal objects. Dominant understandings of what it means to dwell and exist are articulated from a particular geopolitical position, which he characterised as white and European.

Coloniality, in this argument, makes Indigenous land disappear not only through direct dispossession but also through transformations that reduce porosity, erase forms of use and open new corridors of circulation and extraction. Yet this process never fully succeeds. In the folds, ruins and recesses of the ordered project, spaces can appear that resist their own erasure. Boano located the bodies of reception and resistance in these unstable spaces, each possessing different degrees of freedom rather than a single universal condition.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

The limits of architectural shelter

Boano's second major image came from Lars von Trier's 2011 film Melancholia. Near the end of the film, three characters sit holding hands beneath a fragile structure made from bare branches while the approaching planet fills the sky. Boano treated the structure as a kind of tent and as an image of the extreme limit of architecture: it provides a symbolic form of shelter but cannot prevent catastrophe.

The scene allowed him to distinguish the power of the city as a spatial order from the limited power of architects and planners. Architecture can organise symbols, affects and relations, but it cannot guarantee safety or hold catastrophe at a distance. The branch shelter in Melancholia therefore became an image of refuge without protection, a temporary spatial relation established in the face of an event it cannot control.

Boano then turned to Eyal Weizman's work on the vulnerability of the ground. He recalled Weizman's analysis of the earth's thin inhabited surface and connected it to contemporary bombardment and destruction in Gaza and southern Lebanon. Digging, bombing, flattening and uprooting were described as operations that destabilise the material surface on which human life depends. Boano's point was not only that buildings are destroyed, but that the very possibility of inhabitation is attacked through transformations of ground, infrastructure and access.

In discussing Palestine, Boano used the language of genocidal destruction as his own political characterisation of the scale and effects of devastation. He argued that physical and conceptual foundations are shaken together when craters, fissures and ruins reorganise the terrain. Life nevertheless continues in, around and beneath these damaged spaces under precarious conditions.

The hole as an urban figure

This led Boano to replace the abstract idea of the void with the more material figure of the **hole**. A void can suggest absence in general, whereas a hole has edges, depth, material consequences and a history of how it was produced. The hole is therefore both physical and conceptual. Satellite imagery can make such perforations visible, but for Boano the hole is also a site from which to think about contemporary urban life.

He connected this figure to Filip De Boeck's work on Kinshasa, where the hole recurs as a feature of postcolonial urban life and as a form around which practices of dwelling are organised. The idea of suturing holes offered a way to describe how inhabitants continually repair, bridge and negotiate gaps produced by infrastructure, extraction, abandonment and political neglect.

Boano proposed that the crucial urban question may therefore be less about identifying the ideal form of the future city than about understanding what happens inside the hole while holes continue to be produced. This displaces the habitual planning sequence in which a problem is identified and then repaired or integrated. Instead, the analysis begins from prolonged incompletion, damage and the forms of life that persist within it.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Günther Anders and the aftermath of Hiroshima provided another reference point. Boano used Anders to suggest that apparently separate crises—war, displacement, asylum, destroyed cities—should not be treated only as specialised themes. They can be read as expressions of a broader condition of the world. War appears in this framework as someone else's project of spatial transformation, while techniques of annihilation and exclusion migrate into cities in different forms.

Lauren Berlant's concept of crisis ordinariness helped Boano name the exhausting labour of remaining attached to life when crisis is no longer exceptional. The catastrophic is woven into ordinary routines. For him, the teeming city can be understood through this tension: life persists not because the urban order secures it completely but because people continue to make relations in conditions where security is partial and uneven.

The impossibility of refuge

Boano argued that the contemporary project of the city increasingly presupposes the impossibility of refuge. Safe places are repeatedly withdrawn: ruins, designated safe zones, tunnels, hospitals and other spaces that might offer protection can themselves become exposed to violence or control. The issue is therefore not simply the absence of enough shelters but the systematic weakening of the possibility of staying, remaining and being protected in place.

This diagnosis redirected the role of design. If architecture cannot guarantee shelter, design should not compensate by exaggerating its power. Boano suggested instead that design knowledge must reconsider what refuge means under conditions in which security cannot be assumed. The discipline organises affects, passions and desires as well as material form; its responsibility lies in how it supports or closes possibilities for inhabitation.

The problem of refuge also connected the spatial argument back to reception. An asylum system may promise protection while locating people in spaces that are temporary, isolated, surveilled or administratively fragile. To think the city through refuge is therefore to ask what conditions allow a person to remain without being constantly required to justify presence through integration, vulnerability or compliance.

Texaco, marronage and fugitive spaces

Boano's final image returned to Patrick Chamoiseau's Texaco. He presented the novel as a history of a city told from the informal and fugitive side of colonial urbanisation. Texaco, in his account, is repeatedly built, threatened and rebuilt. Its history emerges from flight, liberation and the persistence of Black, poor and free inhabitants in Fort-de-France, Martinique.

The novel's central narrative relationship is between Marie-Sophie and an urban planner who arrives with a modernising project. Marie-Sophie narrates her own history and the histories of previous generations in order to make the settlement legible on its own terms. Boano interpreted this act of storytelling as part of the struggle for Texaco's survival. The community cannot rely

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

only on formal planning categories; it has to produce another account of the space, one capable of challenging the assumptions through which the planner sees it.

From this literary example, Boano developed the concept of **fugitive spaces**. He linked them to the history of marronage and to critiques of plantation capitalism. Maroons were enslaved people who escaped plantations and made forms of collective life in swamps, forests, mountains and other terrains that were difficult for plantation power to control. Boano was interested not in romanticising these sites but in understanding the spatial intelligence produced through mobility, concealment, ecological knowledge and collective survival.

Fugitive spaces, as he described them, are mobile, changing and frequently dirty rather than cleanly bounded alternatives to the official city. Their mobility is not explained only by the need to evade slave catchers. It also develops in relation to ecological transformations caused by drainage, reclamation and other interventions that continuously reshape the terrain. A refuge that works under one set of environmental conditions may disappear under another.

This made land reclamation an important political metaphor. Boano characterised the contemporary urban project itself as a project of reclamation: it drains, clears, cleans, fixes and makes land available to a preferred order. Decolonising urban thought would therefore require recovering a vocabulary born within slave society while expanding its relevance to all those practices and forms of life excluded from the dominant project.

If modern design is permeated by an affirmative rationality that produces its own reality and space, Boano argued, architecture and urbanism need to open themselves to different paradigms. Flight, forest, refuge and other figures can help practitioners imagine how to support spaces that remain resistant to complete capture. No single final form of resistance exists; fugitive space is defined precisely by its capacity to change in relation to the forces attempting to stabilise it.

Violence, scars and the urban planner as reader

Boano closed his main intervention by returning to Chamoiseau's description of urban violence in Texaco. Rather than reproducing the passage as a quotation, he used it to underline that the Creole city bears the material and historical scars of slavery, colonisation and racism. Urban order is not produced outside violence, and settlements such as Texaco should not be judged as defective merely because that history remains visible in their form.

The figure of the urban planner was consequently redefined. Boano suggested that the planner must become capable of seeing what official categories normally miss: histories, relations and spatial practices that are not immediately legible to modern planning. The task is not to impose a more complete vision from above but to learn how to read fugitive spaces through different imaginaries.

Discussion: colonial monuments and urban change

A participant from Catalonia described municipal work on colonial and slave-trading histories in public space, including the removal or reinterpretation of monuments in Barcelona and coastal

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

municipalities. The participant asked whether comparable processes of historical research and revision were taking place in Italy.

Boano did not offer a direct survey of Italian initiatives. Instead, he used the question to distinguish symbolic interventions from deeper transformations of colonial relations. He considered the revision of monuments valuable but warned that decolonisation could be reduced to a process of cleaning the visible surface of the city. The removal of a monument does not in itself alter camps, detention regimes, housing inequalities or the spatial distribution of vulnerability.

He connected this caution with Moïse's discussion of white anxiety. Symbolic acts can sometimes provide rapid reassurance that a difficult history has been addressed, even when the material structures that reproduce inequality remain in place. For Boano, decolonising architecture therefore cannot be assessed through isolated objects. Following a Foucauldian line, he argued that architecture is not simply good or bad in itself; its effects depend on the political relations through which it operates.

The same caution applied to architecture's attachment to symbolism. Because design works powerfully through images and representative gestures, it can favour solutions that appear clear and decisive while leaving more difficult structures untouched. Boano described decolonising urban thought as a long, demanding and painful process requiring changes in how curricula are built and how future professionals learn to think and make the city.

He concluded that architects and planners work inside powerful imaginaries that often remain implicit. Their responsibility is not merely to invent new forms but to expose these imaginaries, examine the exclusions they produce and cultivate the capacity to imagine the city otherwise. The persistence of an easy imaginary—one that assumes problems can be resolved through visible, controlled interventions—was presented as one of the principal obstacles to this work.



Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Closing remarks on bodies, relationships and urban participation

Raisa Labaran

In closing, Labaran returned to the central proposition of the conference: integration can continue colonial governance when institutions require people to enter pre-existing categories without questioning how those categories were historically produced. The morning had moved across bodies, care, administrative systems and urban space, showing how coloniality operates through apparently different domains.

She emphasised that the discussion had also been about relationships and affections. Policies do not stop at legal status or the physical border; they shape family bonds, recognition, trust, anger and the ability to appear in public space. The question of where bodies are placed therefore cannot be separated from the question of which relationships institutions recognise and which forms of presence they make possible.

Labaran acknowledged the pessimism that could follow from the speakers' diagnoses but insisted on the importance of alliances and collective action from below. She used municipal planning as an example. Social movements regularly mobilise around speed limits, green space and other territorial questions; similar pressure can be directed toward asking where people with migration histories are housed, how reception facilities are located and whether those locations enable participation in urban life.

For Labaran, these questions require an intersectional perspective. Participation is not adequately measured by formal inclusion in a programme or consultation process. It concerns the concrete spaces in which people live, the infrastructures that connect or isolate them, and the institutional arrangements that make presence secure or precarious. The conference therefore ended not with a single model of decolonial practice but with a shared demand to examine how bodies, relationships and territories are organised in everyday governance.

She closed by thanking the speakers, interpreter and participants, framing the morning as a basis for further collective work rather than a completed answer.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Afternoon workshop: looking at coloniality from within

Marie Moïse

Editorial abstract

The afternoon workshop translated the morning's discussion of coloniality into a collective exercise centred on participants' own practices. Facilitated by Marie Moïse, the activity asked participants to identify relations of power in situations commonly framed as helping, caring, protecting, empowering, educating or representing. Short historical and theoretical prompts introduced a vocabulary for recognising colonial dynamics in the present. Participants then connected these keywords to personal experiences, worked in small groups to identify recurring patterns and contradictions, and returned to plenary discussion with unresolved questions rather than ready-made solutions. The workshop's main outcome was a shared recognition that paternalism, racial hierarchy and the reduction of agency can be reproduced through well-intentioned practices, including within reception and social-support systems.

Workshop approach: from moral judgement to relations of power

Moïse framed the exercise as an attempt to look at coloniality from within rather than to identify who was morally right or wrong. Participants were asked to suspend immediate judgement, observe their own reactions and contradictions, and examine how power might operate through ordinary professional and interpersonal practices. The working sequence proposed by the workshop was to see, recognise, interrupt and unlearn colonial patterns, while remaining with discomfort long enough to understand what it revealed.

The practical method began with a series of short stories from colonial and postcolonial history. Each story introduced one or more keywords. Participants kept post-it notes and recorded concrete experiences in which they had been involved, especially moments when they believed they were helping, caring, protecting, empowering, educating or representing someone. The emphasis was placed on one's own involvement rather than on identifying the mistakes of others. The stories functioned as prompts rather than as objects of extended historical discussion.

Story prompts and keywords

1. Paternalistic care and infantilization. A statue of Victor Schœlcher in Fort-de-France, in which the abolitionist appears to guide a formerly enslaved Black man, was used to examine how care can distribute agency unequally: one subject knows and leads, while the other is positioned as dependent and in need of direction.

2. Primitivization and inferiorization. Fanon's discussion of the Banania advertisement provided a compact example of how colonial representation simplifies the colonised subject, presenting him as childlike, cheerful and incapable of articulating the complexity of his own condition.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

3. Emancipationism, civilization and the victim to be saved. French colonial policies directed at Algerian women were used to show how domination can speak the language of liberation. The example raised the problem of defining another person's freedom from a position of power and approaching that person primarily through victimhood.

4. White narcissism and white innocence. Two abolitionist narratives were condensed into a question about who occupies the centre of liberation. In one, Black resistance is ultimately overshadowed by the white figure who grants freedom; in another, benevolent intervention returns an enslaved woman to the structure from which she fled. The keywords highlighted the gap between good intentions and the effects of action.

5. Empowerment. The development discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, particularly microcredit for women in the Global South, was used to question forms of empowerment that individualise responsibility while leaving the structures that produce poverty and dependency insufficiently examined.

6. Agency and speaking for. Spivak's account of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri introduced the distinction between having a voice and having the conditions in which that voice can be recognised. The discussion focused on the risk that professional or political interpretations may become so powerful that they obscure another person's own strategies and agency.

7. Analogy. The involvement of white women in nineteenth-century abolitionism was used to consider both the transformative potential and the limits of solidarity. The key problem was the point at which another group's oppression becomes a metaphor for one's own, causing the historical specificity of slavery and the people subjected to it to recede from view.

From individual experience to collective reflection

After the stories, participants placed their post-it notes beside the keyword that helped them read each experience most productively. They then chose one keyword to explore in greater depth and formed small groups around the corresponding boards. The groups were asked not to discuss every note individually, but to identify recurrences, differences, contradictions and relations of power: who defines, decides, knows, speaks, helps or represents, and what thread connects the different experiences.

Each group prepared a short plenary return consisting of two elements: a synthesis of the "red thread" identified across the experiences and one open question that remained unresolved. The exercise deliberately avoided producing a recommendation or final solution. Its purpose was to move from individual experience to collective analysis while keeping the discussion open.

Workshop outcomes

Several recurring conclusions have been presented. First, participants identified racial hierarchy and paternalism not only as individual attitudes but as dynamics embedded in social structures and intervention projects. This shifted the discussion away from personal blame and towards the systemic conditions through which unequal positions are reproduced. Dignity and equality

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

emerged as reference points for rethinking these relationships within a broader European reflection on colonial legacies.

Second, the groups questioned narratives of help and salvation. Starting from examples concerning Amazigh/Berber populations and from participants' own professional experience, they examined the tendency to assume that some people need to be saved or guided. The unresolved issue was how to offer support without crossing the threshold at which accompaniment overrides autonomy.

Third, participants working in reception and support services described a recurring dilemma of representation. Speaking on behalf of someone can protect that person from stereotypes, institutional misunderstanding or exclusion, but it can also make the person disappear from the conversation. Remaining silent, however, can reduce the likelihood that the person will be heard at all. The group therefore treated "speaking for" not as a problem with a simple rule, but as a situated relation of power requiring continuous attention to who is able to speak, who is heard and who controls the interaction.

Finally, the discussion connected professional discomfort to the racialised and colonial structures of reception systems. Categorisation and infantilisation were seen as practices that can restrict desires, choices and autonomy even when they are carried out in the name of protection. A related exchange considered guilt and responsibility: Moïse distinguished politically recognising one's implication in a system from remaining trapped in self-directed guilt, while reaffirming the importance of not immediately escaping the discomfort produced by that recognition.

Taken together, the workshop did not produce a single model of decolonial practice. Its outcome was methodological: participants were invited to make power visible inside apparently benevolent actions, to recognise the agency of the people with whom they work, and to keep unresolved contradictions available for collective reflection. In this sense, the workshop extended the morning's argument that decolonial work requires changes not only in institutional rules but also in the everyday relations through which care, reception, education and representation are enacted.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.





Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.





Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.





Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

REMAP
Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

POLICY BRIEF

From Integration to Equal Participation

Decolonising[1] reception, care and urban inclusion in Europe

REMAP — Reception, Coloniality and Urban Space
Policy recommendations emerging from the conference and afternoon workshop of 1 October 2026.

Purpose

This brief translates the conference proceedings into actionable policy options for EU institutions, Member States, regional and local authorities, reception-system managers, and professional bodies. It focuses on how administrative recognition, care, spatial planning and participation can reproduce unequal relations even when programmes are formally designed around inclusion.

[1] In this brief, "decolonising" does not refer to a single event or symbolic gesture. It denotes the ongoing work of identifying, challenging and dismantling colonial legacies embedded in contemporary institutions, including hierarchies of knowledge, authority, territory and legitimacy. It is a practical governance task, not only a cultural or discursive one. It should be distinguished from historical decolonisation, the formal ending of colonial rule through independence and transfer of sovereignty, which is generally treated as an event with a beginning and an end.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

REMAP

Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

Executive summary

The conference identified a recurrent contradiction in European reception and integration systems: institutions may formally promote inclusion while simultaneously producing dependency, dehistoricisation [2], administrative invisibility, spatial marginalization and unequal recognition. The problem is not reducible to individual prejudice. It concerns how rules, professional categories, care practices, qualification systems and urban arrangements distribute credibility, mobility, protection and the right to remain.

Three cross-cutting messages emerged. First, people seeking asylum or living with migration histories should be recognized as historical and political actors, not primarily as vulnerable recipients of protection. Second, care, education and reception are not neutral technical fields: professional authority can support people, but can also displace their voice or translate resistance into pathology or non-compliance. Third, inclusion is spatial. The location of reception facilities, access to transport and services, the possibility of remaining in a neighbourhood, and the availability of safe and non-segregated spaces materially shape participation.

The afternoon workshop converted these arguments into a practical method: examine power relations inside actions usually described as helping, protecting, educating, empowering or representing; identify paternalism[3] infantilization, speaking-for and other dynamics; and keep unresolved contradictions open long enough to redesign practice.

Policy message

EU reception and inclusion policy should move from a model centered on adaptation to pre-existing systems towards one centered on dignity, equal agency, institutional accountability and the right to inhabit.

[2] The process by which a person's political, social and historical background, including colonial histories, conflicts and reasons for migration, is set aside, so that they appear only as an individual case or recipient of aid.

[3] Acting on behalf of others "for their own good" in ways that override or bypass their own judgement and choices.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

REMAP

Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

Ten priority recommendations

- Redistribute decision-making power in reception and inclusion systems.
- Stop making vulnerability and visible suffering conditions for recognition.
- Build systems in which people do not have to use their bodies as instruments of freedom.
- Replace integration as adaptation with inclusion as institutional transformation[4].
- Guarantee recognition of qualifications and prevent institutionalized[5] deskilling.
- Make the right to inhabit the city[6] a core principle of reception policy.
- Make speaking for others[7] an accountable exercise of power.
- Shift accountability from service delivery to the redistribution of power and autonomy.
- Treat coloniality[8] and institutional racism[9] as structural governance issues.
- Move from protection without power to protection with autonomy[10].

---

[4] "Integration as adaptation" describes a model in which the main responsibility for change lies with newcomers, who are expected to conform to existing institutions, while those institutions remain unchanged. "Inclusion as institutional transformation" shifts the burden of change to institutions, which must remove barriers and justify rules that produce unequal outcomes.

[5] The systematic devaluation of qualified people's existing skills and credentials through administrative barriers, forcing them to restart at lower professional levels than their training warrants.

[6] The principle that people should have the material possibility to live in, move through, use and take part in urban life, including housing, transport, services, public space and social networks, rather than being confined to isolated or segregated locations. The concept derives from the work of Henri Lefebvre.

[7] The practice by which professionals, advocates or institutions represent a person's experience or interests in their place. The brief treats this as an exercise of power that can open institutional doors but can also displace the person's own voice. In advocacy contexts, it is often described as speaking for communities rather than with them.

[8] The ongoing, structural afterlife of colonialism: the persistence of colonial power relations, hierarchies and ways of knowing after formal colonial rule has ended. It operates through institutions, norms and everyday practices, in what is treated as normal, neutral, professional or credible, rather than through direct rule. It does not refer to individual attitudes.

[9] Patterns of unequal treatment and outcomes produced by an institution's rules, procedures, categories and resource allocation, regardless of the intentions of individual staff. The focus is on effects embedded in systems, not on individual prejudice.

[10] "Protection without power" describes safeguarding measures that remove a person's ability to choose, move, speak, refuse or remain. "Protection with autonomy" describes measures that expand, rather than substitute for, a person's control over their own life.

alda European Association for Local Democracy · ADL zavidovici · FONS CATALÀ DE COOPERACIÓ AL DESENVOLUPAMENT · kitev · município de lousada · PLACE · VOICIFY

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

REMAP
Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

1. Why current approaches need adjustment

Administrative inclusion can still produce exclusion

The International Conference promoted by the Project REMAP on "Integration as a continuation of colonial governance" show how recognition systems may require migrants to repeatedly prove their legitimacy while treating institutional procedures as neutral. The case of a foreign-trained doctor unable to convert prior qualifications into recognized professional status illustrates how inclusion can become a sequence of costly administrative hurdles rather than a pathway to equal participation. The policy implication is that Inclusion should be grounded in systems that support and facilitate the recognition of formal qualifications acquired in other Countries, rather than in procedures that effectively prevent people from exercising the competences they have already gained.

Care can individualize structural problems

Psychological and social-care systems can unintentionally reinterpret political conflict, anger, refusal or solidarity as individual vulnerability, aggression or dysfunction. The International Conference therefore call for safeguards that preserve the value of clinical assessment while ensuring that professional expertise does not erase historical context or political agency.

Space is a policy instrument

Reception[11] is organized through location as much as through law. Peripheral or poorly connected facilities can isolate people from services, education, employment, social networks and public life. Conversely, access to ordinary urban infrastructures can strengthen autonomy. Spatial decisions should therefore be assessed as part of reception quality, not treated as logistical details.

Participation must include power analysis

The workshop highlighted a persistent dilemma: speaking on behalf of someone can help them navigate institutions, but it can also make them disappear from the conversation. Meaningful participation therefore requires more than consultation. It requires rules about representation, decision-making power, feedback

[11] The system of accommodation, material support and services provided to people seeking international protection while their claims are examined.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

and the ability of affected people to influence programmed design. This risks tokenistic / extractive inclusion[12].

2. Policy recommendations

1	Redistribute power in reception and inclusion systems

Why it matters. Participation is not meaningful when institutions retain all decisive authority. Reception and inclusion should not merely consult person with migration backgrounds and refugees; they should redistribute decision-making power to the people directly affected by policy.

Priority actions

- Give people with lived experience[13] formal decision-making roles in the design, implementation and evaluation of reception policies.
- Create paid migrant-led advisory bodies whose recommendations require a formal institutional response.
- Fund migrant-led and diaspora organizations as autonomous policy actors, not only as service providers or outreach intermediaries.
- Require institutions to demonstrate which rules, budgets or practices changed as a result of participation.

2	Stop making vulnerability a condition for recognition

[12] Forms of participation in which people are present or consulted but hold no decision-making power, or in which their stories, data or trauma are used to support a case without consent, benefit or return to them. This is distinguished from genuine participation, which involves shared decision-making.

[13] First-hand knowledge gained by people who have themselves experienced the issue in question, here migration, asylum procedures or reception. It is recognised as a legitimate form of expertise, and lived-experience leadership means that those most affected lead the response rather than being merely consulted on a response designed by others.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Why it matters. Protection systems can reward the visible performance of suffering while treating anger, resistance or refusal as non-compliance. Rights should not depend on how convincingly a person can present themselves as wounded, passive or deserving.

Priority actions

- Reduce the use of vulnerability as a gateway to basic rights and essential services.
- Separate access to rights from repeated obligations to narrate, prove or medically certify traumatic experiences.
- Ensure that anger, refusal and political disagreement are not automatically translated into pathology or behavioral risk.
- Audit procedures that privilege narratives of victimhood while marginalizing autonomy and political agency.

3 Build systems in which people do not have to use their bodies as instruments of freedom

Why it matters. No asylum, reception or detention system should create conditions in which self-harm becomes one of the few effective ways to obtain mobility, healthcare, visibility or release. Recurrent self-injury in confinement is an institutional warning signal, not only an individual clinical event.

Priority actions

- Establish independent monitoring of self-harm, suicide attempts and deaths in administrative detention[14] and reception facilities.
- Trigger an automatic institutional review whenever self-harm is linked to attempts to leave detention, obtain healthcare or change legal or accommodation status.
- Develop and expand community-based alternatives to administrative detention.
- Prohibit practices that make access to basic protection or freedom dependent on demonstrating extreme physical or psychological deterioration.

[14] Detention imposed by administrative rather than criminal authorities, typically in the context of immigration control, without a criminal conviction.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

REMAP
Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

4 Replace integration as adaptation with inclusion as institutional transformation

Why it matters. Integration policy too often measures how successfully individuals adapt to existing institutions while leaving those institutions unchanged. Equal participation requires public systems themselves to remove structural barriers and justify rules that produce unequal outcomes. Institutional transformation also requires policies to avoid reproducing a hierarchy of living beings through which some lives are recognised as fully human, entitled to dignity, rights and protection, while others are placed below that threshold and treated as less worthy of recognition, care or political consideration.

Priority actions

- Evaluate inclusion policies by the barriers institutions remove, not by behavioral indicators of individual adaptation.
- Require every inclusion policy to assess whether its categories, eligibility criteria, implementation practices or resource allocations reproduce hierarchies that assign unequal human value to different lives, and revise them accordingly.
- Require public administrations to identify rules that generate unequal outcomes and publish a justification or reform plan.
- Replace expectations of gratitude, compliance or cultural conformity with enforceable duties of equal access and non-discrimination.
- Link programme evaluation to institutional change, not only participant completion rates.

5 Guarantee recognition of qualifications and prevent institutionalized deskilling

Why it matters. Inclusion should be grounded in systems that support and facilitate the recognition of formal qualifications and competences acquired in other Countries, rather than procedures that effectively prevent people from exercising what they already know. Requiring qualified professionals to restart from the bottom institutionalizes deskilling.

Priority actions

alda European Association for Local Democracy · ADL zavidovici · FONS CATALÀ DE COOPERACIÓ AL DESENVOLUPAMENT · kitev · município de lousada · PLACE · VOICIFY

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Create a right to competence-based assessment when original documentation cannot reasonably be obtained.
- Set maximum processing times, transparent fees and accessible appeal routes for recognition procedures.
- Require bridging pathways, supervised practice or targeted modules before outright rejection of qualifications.
- Monitor downward professional mobility and publish data on recognition outcomes.

6 Make the right to inhabit the city a core principle of reception policy

Why it matters. Reception is not fulfilled by providing a bed. People need the material possibility to remain, move, build relationships, use services and participate in public life. Location and housing policy therefore distribute rights in practice.

Priority actions

- Prohibit systematic placement of reception facilities in isolated or poorly connected locations.
- Introduce a right-to-the-city and spatial-inclusion assessment for publicly funded reception facilities.
- Prioritize ordinary, dispersed housing over large segregated facilities wherever feasible.
- Protect continuity of neighborhood ties and reduce repeated forced relocations.
- Measure access to transport, education, healthcare, employment, legal assistance and public space.

7 Make speaking for others an accountable exercise of power

Why it matters. Professional representation is never neutral. Speaking on behalf of someone may open institutional doors, but it can also replace their voice with the language of experts. This power should be visible, reviewable and contestable.

Priority actions

- Require professionals to record when they speak on behalf of another person and why this is necessary.
- Clearly distinguish first-person accounts from professional interpretation in institutional records.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Give people the right to correct, challenge or withdraw representations made on their behalf.
- Strengthen interpretation and direct-access mechanisms so that professional mediation is not the default route to being heard.

8 Shift accountability from service delivery to redistribution of power and autonomy

Why it matters. Counting beds, appointments, courses or referrals does not show whether people gain control over their lives. Publicly funded services should be accountable for whether they reduce dependency and expand agency, mobility, recognition and the capacity to refuse.

Priority actions

- Adopt outcome indicators on decision-making power, autonomy, mobility, continuity of relationships and institutional fairness.
- Measure whether service use reduces or reproduces long-term dependency on providers.
- Include user-defined indicators of dignity, safety, freedom and the ability to refuse without retaliation.
- Require corrective action where programmes reproduce segregation, dependency or unequal access.

9 Treat coloniality and institutional racism as structural governance issues

Why it matters. Coloniality cannot be addressed through occasional diversity training or symbolic gestures alone. It concerns how institutions organize knowledge, territory, authority and legitimacy. Structural problems require structural accountability.

Priority actions

- Introduce mandatory racial-equity, coloniality and power-impact assessments for migration, asylum and reception measures.

alda European Association for Local Democracy · ADL zavidovici · FONS CATALÀ DE COOPERACIÓ AL DESENVOLUPAMENT · kitev · município de lousada · PLACE · VOICIFY

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

- Review professional classifications, behavioral expectations and administrative categories for racialized[15] or paternalistic assumptions.
- Make institutional racism a measurable dimension of public-sector evaluation and inspection.
- Connect EU funding and procurement to demonstrable progress in reducing structural inequalities.

10	Move from protection without power to protection with autonomy

Why it matters. Protection can reproduce domination when it removes the possibility to choose, move, speak, refuse or remain. The governing principle should be simple: protection must expand a person's power over their own life rather than substitute institutional authority for it.

Priority actions

- Adopt "no protection without agency" as a cross-cutting principle in reception standards and programme evaluation.
- Review house rules, sanctions, relocation practices and conditional benefits for unnecessary restrictions on autonomy.
- Guarantee accessible complaint and redress mechanisms with protection against retaliation.
- Assess every protective measure against a proportionality test: what power does it remove, from whom, for how long, and with what possibility of challenge?

3. Principles for implementation

Do not equate vulnerability with lack of agency. People can need protection and still be political actors capable of interpreting their own situation and making decisions.

Treat discomfort as information, not programme failure. The workshop emphasized that power analysis may produce tension; rapid reassurance can close reflection before institutional learning occurs.

[15] Describes people or groups assigned a racial identity by others, regardless of how they identify themselves. The term highlights that "race" is a social process of categorization, not a natural fact.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

REMAP
Remembrance and Mapping of Colonial Legacies in Migration and Integration Policies

Avoid symbolic substitution. Changes in language, monuments or representation matter, but they should not replace reform of housing, detention, recognition, care and participation systems.

Apply subsidiarity[16] with accountability. Many relevant competences sit with Member States and municipalities. EU funding, guidance, monitoring and peer learning can nevertheless establish shared quality expectations.

Protect data and avoid re-racialization[17]. Monitoring inequality should be designed with fundamental-rights safeguards and should not create new systems of profiling or suspicion.

[16] The EU principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest effective level of governance, with the EU acting only where objectives cannot be sufficiently achieved by Member States or local authorities

[17] The risk that monitoring or data collection intended to measure inequality could itself reinforce racial categories or become a tool of profiling and suspicion.

Funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.