

*International workshop – Call for papers*

## **The social life of names and naming practices in migration contexts**

*Paris, 20-21 November 2025*

Names, whether they refer to people, places, businesses, languages etc., are not mere labels disconnected from a social fabric, they are “a repository of accumulated meanings, practices, and beliefs, a powerful linguistic means of asserting identity (or defining someone else) and inhabiting a social world” (Rymes 1999: 165). Through their referential function and multiple connotations, they “identify, categorize, tell stories and provide social tools for interactions” (Bramwell 2016: 276). The agency of names may differ in significant ways and touch upon varied domains, yet the fact that names “do” things remains unquestioned. Embedded in social relations and histories, names and naming “shape, and are shaped by, worlds-in-the-making” (Rose-Redwood 2021: 196). Our workshop offers to reflect on names and naming practices in the more specific context of migration. While names have often been taken as an indication of the degree of integration into the host community as opposed to ethnic maintenance and discrimination (e.g. Khosravi 2012, Pennesi 2016, 2019), we posit that names and naming have the potential to reveal much beyond the integration/estrangement dichotomy.

Several scholars have pointed out that names appear as “an ideal object for cross-disciplinary research, because they are cultural artefacts and because their bestowal, change, and everyday usage are so manifestly related to the social organization of a community” (de Stefani 2016: 65; see also Rose-Redwood 2021). But names and naming “remain conspicuously absent as a dedicated area of interest in relevant sociolinguistic perspectives on language and migration”, and anthropological studies focusing on personal names and migration remain rare (Waldispühl 2024: 16). Migrations go together with the development of multilingual repertoires and the encounter of different social systems, and the study of names and naming provides an entry point for understanding the linguistic and social reconfigurations at work in the migratory experience. This is why our workshop hopes to enrich research on migration by looking into names and naming practices from a variety of disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, tackling present or historical situations, as long as these are based on empirical case studies.

Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- Naming and placing selves in migration: the use of names in an individual's or a community's construction;
- Naming and place-making in migration;
- Effects of encounters between different naming systems and their possible coexistence;
- Language contact in names and naming practices, including linguistic transfers and copies;
- Endonymy and exonymy in and by migrant communities;
- Actual use of names and alternative linguistic expressions in everyday interactions, in the cross-cultural context of migration;
- Names, naming and memory in migration contexts;
- Evolution of the connotations and associative meanings of names in the context of migration;
- Agency and contestation in naming practices in migration;
- Name giving and de-naming in migration.

### **Convenors & scientific committee**

This workshop is convened as part of DiasCo-Tib, ANR 23 CE41 0017 (<https://anr.fr/Projet-ANR-23-CE41-0017>), a multidisciplinary research project that examines various processes of linguistic and social convergence and divergence at play in the Tibetan diaspora, mainly in France but also in other geographical spaces.

- Anne-Sophie Bentz, contemporary history, CESSMA, Université Paris Cité
- Maria Coma-Santasusana, anthropology, CESSMA, Université Paris Cité
- Xénia de Heering, sociology, CESSMA, Université Paris Cité
- Françoise Robin, Tibetan studies, IFRAE, Inalco
- Nicola Schneider, anthropology, IFRAE, Inalco
- Camille Simon, linguistics, LACITO, Université de Picardie Jules Verne
- Wang Sanchuan, linguistics, IFRAE, Inalco

### **Location**

Inalco, Maison de la Recherche, 2 rue de Lille, 75007 Paris, France.

In-person participation is preferred (please contact us if impossible).

### **Abstract submission**

Send your 300- to 500-word abstract in English or French (for other languages, please approach the committee) to [maria.coma-santasusana@u-paris.fr](mailto:maria.coma-santasusana@u-paris.fr).

### **Important dates**

Deadline for submissions: **May 31, 2025**

Notification of acceptance: **June 30, 2025**

Workshop: **November 20-21, 2025**

### **References**

- Bramwell, Ellen S. 2016. 'Ch. 18 Personal names and anthropology.' In: Hough, Carole (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, 263-278. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199656431.001.0001>.
- De Stefani, Elwys. 2016. 'Ch. 4 Names and Discourse.' In: Hough, Carole (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, 52-66. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199656431.001.0001>.
- Khosravi, Shahram. 2012. 'White Masks/Muslim Names: Immigrants and Name-Changing in Sweden.' *Race & Class* 53, no. 3: 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396811425986>.
- Pennesi, Karen. 2019. 'Differential Responses to Constraints on Naming Agency among Indigenous Peoples and Immigrants in Canada.' *Language & Communication* 64: 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2018.11.002>.
- Pennesi, Karen. 2016. "'They Can Learn to Say My Name': Redistributing Responsibility for Integrating Immigrants to Canada.' *Anthropologica* 58, no. 1: 46–59. <https://doi.org/10.3138/anth.581.A03>.
- Rose-Redwood, Reuben. 2021. 'The Social and Political Life of Names and Naming: Concluding Commentary.' *Nordic Journal of Socio-Onomastics* 1: 187–198. <https://doi.org/10.59589/noso.12021.14734>.
- Rymes, Betsy. 1999. 'Names.' *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9, no. 1/2: 163–66. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43102455>.
- Waldispühl, Michelle. 2024. 'Personal Names and Migration: An Overview.' *Nordic Journal of Socio-Onomastics* 4, no. 3: 15–58. <https://doi.org/10.59589/noso.42024.17635>.