

Stories of Belonging:

The One-Drop Rule

In the early 20th century, the United States established 'the one-drop rule'; a social and legal principle of racial classification. The rule implied that each person with an ancestor of African descent – only one grand-grand-grandparent would suffice – would be considered 'black' by the US government.

“I was embraced by African-Americans as if I were their lost daughter.”

How this one-drop rule still shapes social dynamics in the streets of America, I experienced during my stay in the racially segregated city of St. Louis, Missouri. Being a woman of mixed race, I had never considered myself 'black', because of my white mother, my light complexion, my freckles and long curls. However, in St. Louis, I was embraced by African-Americans as if I were their lost daughter. Every day, black people would stop for me, give me hugs, touch my hair and make me compliments for being such a beautiful black sister. It made me feel proud and sad at the same time.

While, in the Netherlands, people would act surprised if I told them I am a descendant of African enslaved people, in St. Louis all my doubts about my racial identity vanished. I was no longer 'mixed'; I was black. But at the same time, I felt ashamed for being embraced by African-Americans as such. I very well realized I have the privilege to pass for white, while many of the black people who made me feel at home in St. Louis, did not.

Thanks to my one drop of African blood, I was able to enjoy the best of both worlds in the United States. For the 'real' black people in the streets of St. Louis, however, their drops of African blood continue to capture them in an ongoing disadvantaged position. Although most of them have more than one drop of European blood, apparently it does not count in changing their situation.



Fenneke Wekker
Head of Academic Affairs NIAS

Written@NIAS

Jan Willem Duyvendak (2015). The politics of home : belonging and nostalgia in Europe and the United States. Open access: [Politics of Home Duyvendak 2015 online.pdf \(jwduyvendak.nl\)](#)

Fenneke Wekker (2020). Building belonging : affecting feelings of home through community building interventions. Open access: [Building Belonging Wekker 2020 online.pdf \(fennekewekker.nl\)](#)

Need assistance?

Contact our helpdesk via Whatsapp +31 (0) 20 224 6704 or email us at events@nias.knaw.nl

Studies of Belonging Conference Newspaper

- Wednesday 9 June 2021 -



50 years of Academic Freedom

As NIAS celebrates its 50th anniversary, the founding principle of NIAS, and of Institutes of Advanced Study around the world – to provide space for free academic inquiry - feels just as urgent and important today as it did fifty years ago.

We deeply hold the belief that true innovation requires unshackled scholarship, but it is not a belief that is universally subscribed to. Academic freedom is under threat by governments, budget cuts, and weighty institutional administrative demands. The work of Institutes of Advanced Studies to create an intellectual haven has become a necessity, where scholars are [free to explore ideas beyond disciplinary boundaries](#).

We're proud that for the past fifty years we've been able to facilitate curiosity-driven research, and create communities and networks of scholars, and proud to continue this work in a world that needs it now more than ever.

“Free to explore ideas beyond disciplinary boundaries.”

Studies of Belonging

The notion of belonging has become increasingly important in politics and society. At the same time, for a feeling which is given so much importance in public debate, there is surprisingly little research on the topic.

“We hope to address some troubling social and political developments.”

The urgency for a discussion on this topic lies in the marginalization

of “emotions” at large. It is often disregarded as irrational, particularly in economics and political science, despite its notable role in the disciplines. By investigating the theme of Belonging from multiple angles, we hope to address some troubling social and political developments. The discussion on belonging is much needed to seek for more suitable explanations and to also explore our limits in studying Belonging. With this working conference, we want to make a start in this field of research from a social science, humanities and arts perspective.



Jan Willem Duyvendak
Professor of Sociology and Director of NIAS



What would you consider to be the essence of this thread?

The essence would be examining the tension in seeking membership to a group to belong without losing one's identity. It's a dance or a negotiation which a lot of panels in this thread dive into. How to belong without sacrificing your own identity.

What struck you while reading the proposals?

The diversity of the topics and the thoughtfulness of the proposals. I remember thinking, I would really like to meet these scholars who

Interview with Dr. Susanne Klausen;

Coördinator of the thread 'Community and the Individual'

“I thought I can learn a lot from the way others were approaching this topic.”

are also examining social recognition as a necessary condition for the sense of Belonging. Specially how people seek that social recognition and the price people have to pay to socially belong. I thought I can learn a lot from the way others were approaching this topic. As I was reading the proposals I was highlighting names and people I'd like to stay in touch with; specially whose works directly intersects mine. That's what a conference does if you are lucky. It gives you access to shared thinking and new insights.

How did you create the panels? This was a lot more challenging than I thought. It seemed like a puzzle with endless configurations which had no end point, and grouping them in panels was brutal. Everything connected to everything, like the community map. I had some guidelines; to match established scholars with early career scholars, and there were themes emerging from the papers. But it was tricky, ensuring that each panel was diverse in terms of disciplines as well for the listener to have a truly interesting experience.

Highlights of Today

“Choosing highlights in this programme is as difficult as choosing your favourite child.”

- Susanne Klausen

- Three guests of the NIAS Director kick off their Theme Group 2021/22.
Refuge and Belonging
Wednesday 9 June, 13.00 - 14.25h CEST
With: [Naluwembe Binasa](#), [Paolo Boccagni](#), [Bernike Pasveer](#), and [Jan Willem Duyvendak](#) as discussant.
- Celebrating the work of anthropologist Peter Geschiere during a double panel session.
Belonging, Mobility and Exclusion: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Europe – Part I
Wednesday 9 June, 14.30 - 15.55h CEST
Belonging, Mobility and Exclusion: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Europe – Part II
Wednesday 9 June, 16.00 - 17.25h CEST
[Christiana Marchi, Arts, Culture and Belongingness](#)
Wednesday 9 June, 16.00 - 17.25h CEST
- In her keynote, [Gloria Wekker](#) draws upon real-life moments to illustrate and analyse moments when she felt like she belonged, and distinctly felt that she did not.



When a Country does not Love you Back
Wednesday 9 June, 19.30 - 21.00h CEST

Check the [full Programme](#) & [Community Map](#) here.

Re-watch today's Welcome- and Closing sessions