

La soutenance de mémoire de Master en sciences sociales
- *pilier migration et citoyenneté* -
de

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Migration Students at the Frontlines of the Asylum System
experiences, perceptions, and affects

aura lieu le

Mardi 3 février 2026 à 14h, Salle 2.310 (Breguet 2, 2^e étage)

Directrice de mémoire : Mme. Alessandra Polidori

Expert : Prof. Tania Zittoun

Résumé :

This thesis explores how students of the Master's program in Migration and Citizenship at the University of Neuchâtel (UNINE) experience and perceive their engagement with migrants in practice. Through semi-open interviews with five participants currently or formerly enrolled in the program, the study examines what constitutes these experiences, what social factors or actors influence these engagements, and to what extent academic training contributes to their practical work. The analysis shows that students frequently encounter experiences such as witnessing human suffering, negotiating interpersonal boundaries, institutional isolation, confronting humanitarian paradoxes, and engaging in practices aligned with the ethics of care. A dominant perception concerns the asylum system, understood as a rigid structure largely resistant to change. Yet, despite this perceived immobility, students also described their own actions as effective to some degree, and interactions with migrants as both enriching and emotionally demanding. The most significant shaping factors were pre-existing political activism, ethics of care, and the constraints of asylum policies, whereas the influence of the academic program on practical engagement appeared limited.

