

PORTRAITS OF POWER

“Portraits of Power” project is imagined as a decolonial feminist approach to knowledge-sharing practice that (is epistemically non-violent and) leads to collective liberation. The focus of the project is young migrant and refugee women, particularly those from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds, struggling to overcome taboos in society, and integrate to live a life of full potential in the Netherlands.

Through our project, we offered a platform to these women so they can tell the stories, in their own words, of their lived and shared experiences and to offer them the tools to raise their voice against their sense of social injustices and exclusion. We aim to shift the gaze of migration discourses towards women’s shifting subjectivities in the process of migration, settling, and integration, while also serving as a bridge with policy-makers by translating their shared stories for effective policy action and responses.

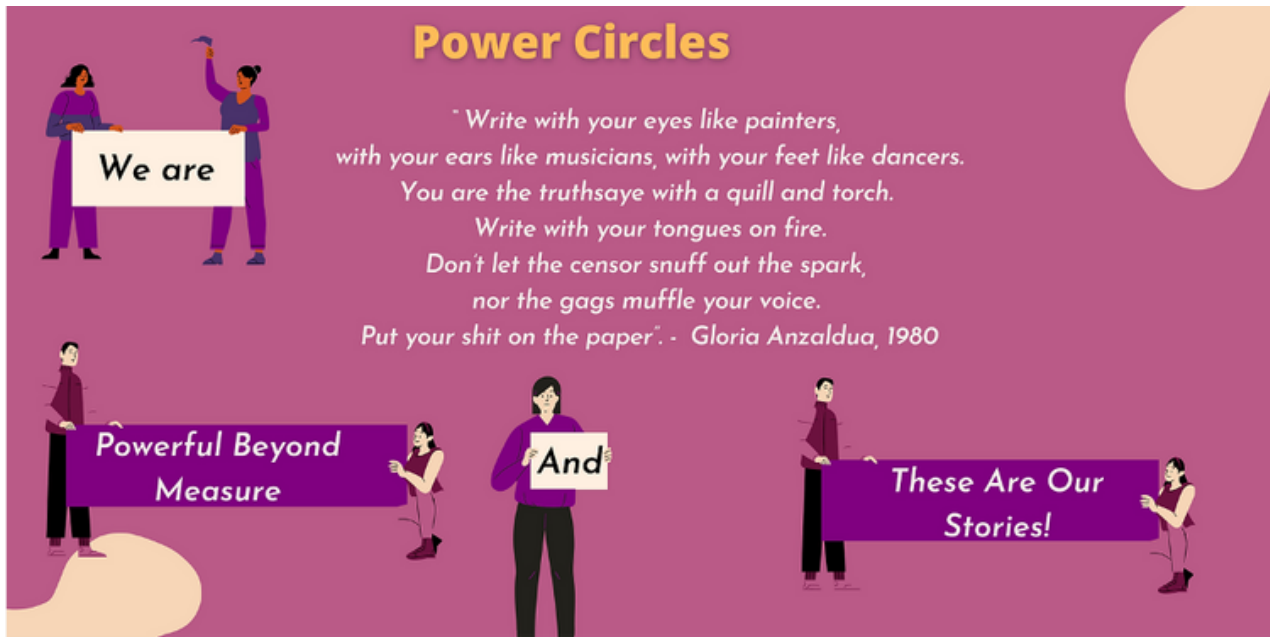


2022 POWER CIRCLES

As a part of the project, SEEK organized “Power Circles”, an online creative space for (collective) learning and knowledge sharing. The Power Circles offered interactive creative experience with exercises for encouraging self-reflection and for sharing knowledges, ideas, and perspectives.

SEEK worked with a group of migrant/refugee/newcomer girls/women under the theme of “Navigating Taboos” to provide a safe space for them to share their journey through a variety of activities that encourage empowerment and support their stories. The project offered a platform to young girls and women so we can tell the stories, in our own words, of our lived and shared experiences.

Participants had an opportunity to share their original creative works (including and not limited to: short stories, short articles, poems, journal entries, art, photography, etc) in the online spaces of “Portraits of Power”, which are promoted across SEEK’s social media channels, and disseminated across SEEK’s network members and partners.



CO-CREATING KNOWLEDGES: COLLABORATION WITH CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY OSUN SCIENCE SHOP

Under the partnership with CEU OSUN Science Shop, SEEK collaborated with the Masters-level coursework on "(Mis)Performing World Politics", led by Dr. Erzsebet Strausz. The course looks at contemporary issues of world politics, exploring how common concepts such as statehood, sovereignty, identity, gender, citizenship and labor under global capitalism are performed and acted out in everyday practices and situations.

SEEK brought its project "Portraits of Power" to the course, a participatory approach for a creative retreat for young migrant/refugee women through workshops and mentorship with the aim of providing a safe space for reflection on cultural taboos in their communities. SEEK sought support in designing the retreat for effective participant engagement, in the selection of topics for discussion and the collection of ideas on how to organize the writing circles

Within the project of "Portraits of Power", SEEK has published a number of video talks on its YouTube channel with the interviews of women who faced challenges and taboos during migration. The interviewed women shared their personal stories about their journey, the challenges that they faced when they arrived in the Netherlands, their ways of dealing with the taboos and their personal stories of integrating into the local community in the country.

RESEARCH PAPERS ON COLLABORATIVE LEARNINGS

Three groups of students, supervised by Dr. Strausz who had experience with writing retreats, came up with ideas on creating a safe and inclusive environment for participants.

As an outcome of this collaboration, three research papers written by the students of the “(Mis)Performing World Politics” course are published:

- Journal Entries of (Mis)Performing in World Politics by Mateja Zherajikj
- Co-Creating safe spaces for migrant women – decolonizing knowledge production and knowledge sharing practices by Marita Lagidze
- A retreat design that maps the journey of designing a creative retreat with migrant and refugee women by Dilara Bergler

The collaboration also resulted in students finding the skills of session planning a great experience, and “that it is acceptable to present an open-ended session plan that has as much room for modification as events and feedback require”. The anonymous reflection at course-end noted “the feeling that we are doing something that is actually worthwhile.”

Research Papers on collaborative learnings



ABOUT SEEK

SEEK is a research and response initiative positioned in principles of solidarity, listening, collaborating, nurturing, learning and growing together, striving to collaborate with and to augment the perspective of refugees and migrants into public policies and programs that directly affect them in the host countries across the globe. We believe there are diversity of knowledges and ways of knowing. We endeavor reimagining the current migration research, narrative and scholarship by bringing migrant “knowledges” and “perspectives” into the nexus of the current migration policy discourses to provide evidence-based public policy. Our research is based on principles of co-creation of knowledge with the people and communities.

We work as a network of experienced researchers, advocates, activists and scholars based in different countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

MEET THE TEAM

Umbreen Salim
Founder and Managing Director

Umbreen Salim is a researcher, a feminist, an activist and gender-advocate striving to contribute to efforts promoting epistemic, political and social justice. Her doctoral research, focused on challenges of integration, is with migrant women in The Netherlands. She has over 10 years of research and advocacy experience working with women and girls, particularly migrants and refugees, advocating for human-rights and social inclusion. She is a social sector development practitioner, with over 15 years of project management experience with various INGOs and Governments, across Asia, Pakistan and The Netherlands.



Sumbal Bashir
Co-founder, Director Projects

Sumbal Bashir is a feminist researcher and a development practitioner, interested in gender equality, Digital4Development, and social inclusion. She has been awarded the Fulbright scholarship (Temple University USA, 2015-16) and Policy Leader Fellowship (School of Transnational Governance at the European University Institute, 2020-21), and was selected as Internet Governance Forum Youth Ambassador (Internet Society) for her work on gender equality and digital inclusion



Collaborative meeting between SEEK members and CEU students within the course on "(Mis)performing World Politics" taught by Dr. Erzsébet Strausz, Assistant Professor at the department of International Relations at Central European University



Portraits of Power is being realized with the support of Mama Cash, and volunteer team members are engaged through OSUN, and Central European University.

This report was created by SEEK's team member Olga Ogula.