

**Call for abstracts
Perpetrator Studies Network
2024 Conference**

***Reflections on the boundaries of perpetrator studies: looking at violence,
politics, and harm***

Organizing Committee

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The field of perpetrator studies has traditionally focused on the criminal behavior, the historical context of this act, and the repression by criminal (inter)national law, or treatment of perpetrators by transitional justice institutions. Perpetrator studies address past and present issues related to perpetrators and perpetration. Moreover, it is more generally interested in fundamental questions including terminology, motivation, ideology, agency, processes, and dynamics, as well as issues related to prevention. At the same time, the field has always been interested in the status and significance of the perpetrator as a discursive formation in legal, political, historical, philosophical, and cultural settings. Hence, research in this field is navigating between both the study of “perpetration” of acts that bears inherent negative characters and entails a specific social reaction (such as punishment or prevention), and the criticism of the very label of “perpetrator” as a limited and ambiguous category, heavily influenced by legal positivism as well as political or economic strategies.

Caught between what might be considered as antagonistic expectations (i.e., the parallel exploitation and problematization of their object of study), researchers in the field of perpetrator studies face epistemological challenges that can be common or divergent across disciplines yet end up having consequences on the framing of the global social issues they tackle. In this context, we would like to explore theoretical and methodological questions, including the ethical and moral implications of the researcher’s position regarding the analysis of “perpetrators” as a distinct group of individuals, and “perpetration” as the realization of typical individual behaviors; how such position varies according to disciplinary backgrounds and the difficulties that it entails in terms of collaboration; the articulation and fluidity between global representations on harm and violence, legal categories of crimes, and political or economic strategies; and the development of methodological tools or conceptual lenses that can help understand or overcome these epistemological pitfalls and challenges.

With the focus on reflecting on the boundaries of perpetrator studies, we invite contributions that analyze specific topics that are not often thought of in the field of perpetrator studies, as well as theoretical problems present in the field, including suggestions of where the field should move towards. As such, we invite contributions that will explore how epistemological boundaries affect the content of the research, and how it can lead to expanding, limiting, or re-defining the field and the social issues it tackles. Meaning, how the influence of legal categories, general representation, historical writing, or other factors can make certain behaviors invisible, that although violent or harmful, are usually considered as not constitutive of mass

crimes or necessarily relevant to the field (e.g., abuses in church, political misconducts, financial crisis, etc.). This is also the case for large-scale or collective behaviors, structural organizations or socially encouraged practices that although not being considered as “pathological”, have a global negative effect similar or even bigger than “traditional” mass crimes (e.g., regarding work conditions, consumerism, prison-industrial complexes, etc.). Likewise, some behaviors are presumed harmful and entailing a certain type of negative social reaction even if they can potentially lead to a positive change (e.g., civil disobedience, political violence, etc.).

In this perspective, we invite contributions that include theoretical, conceptual, or empirical reflections, coming from a broad scope of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, on: (1) Epistemological challenges in the field of perpetrator studies, and/or (2) alternative examples or topics that are less focused on in the field of perpetrator studies.

The committee welcomes papers as well as other forms of knowledge sharing, including (but not limited to) podcasts, performances, and/or videos.

To submit your application, we invite researchers to send one email containing two different documents:

- (1) an anonymized abstract in English (max. 250 words), and
- (2) a short biography including name, title, university, and email address.

to **psnconf2024@ulb.be**, by **December 1st, 2023**.

The decision will be announced by mid-January 2024.

The colloquium will take place on 26-28th of June 2024 at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) in Brussels, Belgium. Accommodation and food will be covered by the organizing committee. Transportation costs to and from the conference are at the charge of the speakers.

Participants will have the opportunity to publish their paper (in English, French and Spanish) in a special issue, if selected and following the traditional peer review processes. Articles have been expected by March 1st, 2025.

The registration fee is 150€ - free for students, PhD candidates, and under special request.