International Symposium
Recognition, Dialogue and Redress after Intercountry Adoption

19–20 November 2026
University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht
Kromme Nieuwegracht 29, 3512 HD Utrecht, the Netherlands

For decades, intercountry adoption was widely celebrated as a humanitarian practice, promising children a better future with families overseas. In recent years, however, this image has come under increasing scrutiny. In 2021, the Dutch Joustra Commission uncovered systemic abuses in past intercountry adoptions and concluded that the Dutch government had knowledge thereof but failed to intervene. Inquiries in other European receiving countries and some countries of origin have reached similar conclusions, prompting a growing number of countries to phase out intercountry adoption or to consider a ban. These developments have been driven in important part by adoptees advocacy. For many years, adoptees have been demanding justice for the harm inflicted upon them and their families in the countries of origin. However, their efforts to secure recognition and redress from those involved in the adoption system often stall, and many feel that their experiences are not properly heard or taken seriously.

What does meaningful recognition and redress after intercountry adoption require? How can we foster a dialogue about the lasting consequences of past intercountry adoption and what should follow from them for the present and the future? Organised on the occasion of the inaugural lecture of Elvira Loibl, Professor of Recognition, Dialogue and Redress after Intercountry Adoption at the University of Humanistic Studies, this symposium brings together scholars, practitioners, and people with lived experience to explore these questions. Across two days, we will discuss inquiries and recent developments in receiving countries and countries of origin, the long-term impact of intercountry adoption, and different approaches to recognition and redress. We will also explore how a debate about recognition and redress can create room for the diverse lived experiences and perspectives of adoptees, including views that may differ or even conflict, without diminishing or invalidating any of them.

PROGRAMME

DAY 1 (Thursday, 19 November 2026)

09:45 – 10:00 | Welcome and Introduction, *Prof. dr. Elvira Loibl* (UvH, Chair Recognition, Dialogue and Redress after Intercountry Adoption)

10.00 – 12:00 | Panel 1: Inquiries and developments in the Receiving Countries

In recent years, several European receiving countries have initiated inquiries into past intercountry adoption practices, uncovering systemic abuses as well as state knowledge thereof. This panel brings together perspectives from Belgium, Sweden, and Switzerland to discuss the findings of these inquiries and their impact on public and policy debates about intercountry adoption and its aftermath. In particular, we will explore the forms of recognition and redress that have been offered, and the limitations and challenges associated with them. The panel will conclude with a broader discussion around the question: Is intercountry adoption as we know it coming to an end?

Dr. Sophie Withaeckx (Maastricht University)
Prof. dr. Anna Singer (Uppsala University, Sweden)
Sabine Bitter (Independent historian, Switzerland)
Prof. dr. Kristen Cheney (Child Frontiers)

12:00 – 13:00 | Lunch

13:00 – 14:30 | Panel 2: Reckoning with Past Intercountry Adoptions in the Countries of Origin

Countries of origin are also beginning to confront the history and consequences of intercountry adoption. In Greece, adoptee advocacy and historical research have brought past adoption practices into public debate. In South Korea, one of the most significant sending countries, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up to investigate decades of intercountry adoption practices. In Chile, a parliamentary inquiry and ongoing criminal investigations have gradually moved the issue out of public silence and prompted growing public recognition and call for accountability. In this panel, we will explore these developments and the forms of repair that have emerged from them.

Prof. dr. Gonda Van Steen (King's College London, UK)
Dr. Tobias Hübinette (University College Stockholm, Sweden)
Dr. Irene Salvo Agoglia (University of Barcelona, Spain)

14:30 – 15:30 | Break

15:30 – 16:30 | INAUGRUAL LECTURE: *Prof. dr. Elvira Loibl* (Pieterskerk, Utrecht)

16:30 | Reception

DAY 2 (Friday, 20 November 2026)

10:00 – 12:00 | Panel 3: Identity, Belonging and the Lived Impact of Intercountry Adoption

An increasing body of research examines the long-term consequences of intercountry adoption for adoptees, their families, and subsequent generations. In this panel, we will discuss research on identity formation, searches for origins, adoptees' justice needs, and the transgenerational consequences of intercountry adoption. We will conclude by exploring ways to create space for the diverse lived experiences and perspectives of adoptees. This matters especially in a debate that has become increasingly polarised.

Prof. dr. Amanda Baden (Montclair State University, USA)
Dr. Atamhi Cawayu (Cathlolic University of Bolivia)
Sarita Santoshini (Erasmus University Rotterdam)
Bastiaan Flikweert (Netherlands Korean Rights Group)

12:00 – 13:30 | Lunch

13:30 – 14:15 | Keynote: *Prof. dr. Nicole Immler* (UvH, Chair Historical Memory and Transformative Justice)

14:15 – 14:30 | Break

14:30 – 16:00 | Panel 4: Redress, Recognition and Repair

How should institutions and society respond to past and ongoing injustices related to intercountry adoption? This concluding panel explores different pathways towards recognition and redress, including civil litigation, archives, and other forms of repair. Drawing on insights from the Dialogics of Justice project carried out at the UvH, we will ask not only what remedies are available, but also whether they provide the recognition and sense of justice that those affected are seeking. We will further reflect on the institutional structures and assumptions that may stand in the way of meaningful dialogue and repair, and on what is needed for justice to become more transformative.

***Dr. Lisa-Marie Komp* (TBC)** (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Prakken d'Oliveira Human Rights Lawyers)
Dilani Butink (Pink Cloud Project)
***Prof. dr. David M. Smolin* (Online)** (Cumberland School of Law, Samford University, USA)
Durga Saraya (Researcher on Archives & Adoption, the Netherlands) & ***Dr. Annet Dekker*** (University of Amsterdam)
***Dr. Siri Driessen* (Moderator)** (UvH, Dialogics of Justice)

16:00 | Closing Remarks

George Jean Joseph Schuddebeurs, LL.M. (Plan Kiskeya)
Bina de Boer (Adoption coach)

16:30 | Reception

SPEAKERS

Prof. dr. Amanda Baden (Montclair State University, USA)
Amanda L. Baden, Ph.D. is a transracial adoptee, adopted internationally from Hong Kong. She believes in examining issues of race, privilege, oppression, and power in adoption to promote ethical and sensitive practice with transracial adoptees and their families. Amanda is a professor and the former Doctoral Program Director and former Graduate Program Coordinator in the graduate Counseling Program at Montclair State University (NJ). She is a licensed psychologist with a practice in New York City. She focuses her research and clinical practice on the adoption kinship network, transracial/international adoption issues, racial and cultural identity, adoption microaggressions, estrangement within adoptive families, and multicultural counseling competence. Amanda was an editor of The Handbook of Adoption: Implications for Researchers, Practitioners, and Families. Amanda serves as a member the New York State Board of Psychology, Extended State Board, the Advisory Board for the Rudd Adoption Research Program (UMass-Amherst), as Senior Fellow for the National Center on Adoption and Permanency, as chair of the Adoption Initiative Biennial Conferences held in NYC.

Bina de Boer (Adoption coach)
Bina de Boer is an adoption coach, transcultural systemic facilitator and body-oriented trauma therapist from the Netherlands. She combines transcultural systemic work with body-oriented approaches to trauma, including Somatic Experiencing® and SOMA-Embodiment®. Her work focuses on the impact of adoption and early separation, with attention to loss, relational safety, identity, a sense of belonging, culture and assimilation. A central part of her approach is creating space to acknowledge the experiences and perspectives of all sides of the adoption story. She is particularly interested in how recognition can support healing through the body, especially when experiences are difficult to put into words or may not be consciously remembered. Bina has been involved in the Dutch adoption field for many years, working as a coach, trainer and advocate for adoptee perspectives and rights. Through initiatives including DNA India Adoptees, she has contributed to bringing adoptee experiences and concerns into public and professional discussions, and to strengthening recognition of the long-term impact of intercountry adoption. As an Indian adoptee, Bina knows the adoption experience not only through her professional work, but also through her own life story. The connection between professional knowledge, systemic understanding and lived experience forms an important foundation of her approach.

Sabine Bitter (Independent historian, Switzerland)
Sabine Bitter is working as a freelance historian in Switzerland, specialising in intercountry adoptions. In 2018, together with the journalist Nathalie Nad-Abonji, she realised a report on Tibetan children adopted in Switzerland in the 1960s. This report was the first published study on international adoptions ins Switzerland and prompted further studies at universities in Switzerland, commissioned by Swiss authorities. As part of this, Sabine Bitter collaborated on research projects focusing on adoptions from Sri Lanka and India.

Dilani Butink (Pink Cloud Project)
Dilani Butink, a photographer, was born in Sri Lanka in 1992 and adopted shortly thereafter by a Dutch couple. In 2019, Dilani became the first adoptee to sue the Dutch government and the adoption agency for their role in her fraudulent adoption. In 2022, the court ruled that the Dutch government and the adoption agency should have exercised greater oversight to prevent abuses in Dilani's adoption, especially since there were already many signs of adoption abuses in Sri Lanka at the time. Unfortunately, the government and the agency appealed this ruling to the Supreme Court, and Dilani remains embroiled in this grueling legal battle. In response to the lawsuit, she founded the Pink Cloud Project, a platform where Dilani uses podcasts to give a voice to adoptees and experts and to raise awareness about the dark side of intercountry adoption.

Dr. Atamhi Cawayu (Catholic University of Bolivia)
Atamhi Cawayu is a sociologist and social anthropologist based in Bolivia, currently working as a postdoctoral researcher at the Universidad Católica Boliviana "San Pablo" in La Paz. He earned his PhD in Gender and Diversity Studies from Ghent University in 2023. His dissertation critically examines the adoption and child protection system in Bolivia, with particular attention to families of origin. Cawayu's expertise centers on childhood and child protection, with specific interests in transnational adoption, family policing and lived experiences of institutionalisation.

Prof. dr. Kristen Cheney (Child Frontiers)
Dr. Kristen Cheney is an anthropologist and childhood studies scholar with over 25 years of research and policy expertise, particularly in the fields of orphanhood and international adoption. She is the author of Crying for Our Elders: African Orphanhood in the Age of HIV and AIDS and lead co-editor of the forthcoming edited volume, A New Era of Intercountry Adoption, as well as author of many other articles on childhood vulnerability, the consequences of charitable actions for children, and the politics of humanitarian interventions for orphans. She is most well-known for her explication of the global Orphan Industrial Complex, a political-economic concept that connects and unpacks these issues for a lay audience.

Dr. Annet Dekker (University of Amsterdam)
Annet Dekker is an associate professor at the University of Amsterdam. Her work addresses both the theory and practice of archiving, documentation, curation and conservation, with particular attention to context, networks, changeability, and sustainability of digital cultures as well as to the ways in which meaning is shaped and transmitted through processes of preservation. In relation to archives and adoption, Annet Dekker is the contact person for the response submitted by the University of Amsterdam's Archival and Information Studies Chair Group to the public consultation on the proposed Act on the Phasing Out of Intercountry Adoption and Simplification of Identity Restoration. From an archival studies perspective, the response addresses, among other issues, the definition of the adoption file, the management and accessibility of adoption archives, and the position and agency of adoptees.

Dr. Siri Driessen (UvH, Chair Historical Memory and Transformative Justice)
Siri Driessen is an assistant professor in Historical Memory and Moral Imagination at the University of Humanistic Studies. Working at the intersection of Social Sciences and Humanities, she studies how individuals and societies engage with memories of war and violence. In the Dialogics of Justice project, her work focuses on encounters between groups affected by conflict, examining how these interactions can foster mutual recognition of wartime experience. She has contributed to projects on women genocide survivors in Bosnia, Dutchbat veterans, multivoicedness, and the legacy of archives.

Bastiaan Flikweert (Netherlands Korean Rights Group)
Bastiaan Flikweert (aka Shin Seo Vin) has been an active adoption researcher and adoptee rights advocate since 2020. Grounded in restorative justice, he is researching the institutional history of transnational adoption by focusing on the symbiotic relationship between the state and the adoption agencies in both the sending and receiving countries. He is also looking at the intergenerational impact of adoption based on his perspective as the son of two Dutch Korean adoptees.

Dr. Tobias Hübinette (University College Stockholm, Sweden)
Tobias Hübinette has a PhD in Korean studies and is an associate professor in intercultural education and a senior lecturer and researcher at the University College Stockholm Sweden. He has been engaged with Korean adoption studies and critical adoption studies for many years as well as with Swedish critical race and whiteness studies focusing on, among others, Asians in Sweden and Swedish anti-Asian racism. He is also following the development of the current truth and reconciliation process when it comes to the adoption issue in Sweden and in Korea and at the moment he is working on a research project on the problem with suicidality among adoptees in Sweden.

Prof. dr. Nicole Immler (UvH, Chair Historical Memory and Transformative Justice)
Nicole L. Immler is Professor of Historical Memory and Transformative Justice at the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Studying the afterlife of historical injustice (Holocaust, colonialism, slavery), her work on recognition, repair and justice intersects (Oral) History, Memory Studies and Transitional Justice. She is currently finalising the interdisciplinary team research Dialogics of Justice (NWO Vici, 2020-2025), a comparative study of dissimilar cases, scrutinising the role of dialogue in recognition and repair procedures.

Dr. Elvira Loibl (Maastricht University, UvH, Chair Recognition, Dialogue and Redress after Intercountry Adoption)
Elvira Loibl is an assistant professor at Maastricht University and endowed professor of Recogntion, Dialogue and Redress after Intercountry Adoption at the UvH. Her research focuses on illegal intercountry adoptions, transnational organised crime, illegal markets, and crimes against children. In 2024, she co-edited the book Facing the Past: Policies and Practices for Responses to Illegal Intercountry Adoptions together with David Smolin, which addresses how the practice of intercountry adoption is shrouded by a metaphorical ‘fog’ of humanitarian and white saviour narratives which conceal the practice’s neocolonial nature and obscure paths to meaningful repair and reform.

Dr. Irene Salvo Agoglia (University of Barcelona, Spain)
Irene Salvo Agoglia is a psychologist (University of Chile), holds a Master's in Family Counselling (University of Santiago de Compostela) and a PhD in Psychology (University of Buenos Aires). Since 2003 she has specialised in intervention, research, and international consultancy on human rights, adoption, forced adoptions, and origin searches. She has contributed to advocacy around Chile's new Adoption Law - particularly the strengthening of the right to identity and the introduction of open adoption - and has worked alongside survivors' associations, serving as an expert witness in proceedings on forced adoptions before the Chilean judiciary. Currently, she is a Senior Researcher at the GRISIJ group (Socio-educational Interventions in Childhood and Youth) and lecturer in the Department of Research Methods and Diagnosis in Education (MIDE) at the University of Barcelona, Spain.

Sarita Santoshini (Erasmus University Rotterdam)
Sarita Santoshini is a graduate in Development Studies from the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, where her research examined experiences of belonging and justice among Sri Lankan adoptees in the Netherlands. Her academic and professional work is informed by an interest in decoloniality and the ways in which laws, policies, and institutions shape the lives of communities marginalized by systemic inequalities. She has nearly a decade of experience as an independent journalist reporting in South Asia and East Africa for publications such as Al Jazeera English and The New Humanitarian, with a particular focus on gender equality and conflict-affected regions, and currently works in the international development sector.

Durga Saraya (Researcher on Archives & Adoption, the Netherlands)
Durga Saraya is independently engaged in research on questions concerning archives and adoption. She explores, among other things, how knowledge and perspectives from international archival studies can contribute to thinking about adoption archives. A fundamental question guides her work: what are we actually trying to preserve? Her particular interest lies in the safeguarding, coherence, discoverability, and accessibility of adoption archives. What knowledge is needed to make careful decisions about preservation and access? For whom are we preserving this information, for what purpose, and what should this information enable? Of particular importance is the ability of adoptees to access information when seeking to reconstruct their paper trail, for example to learn more about their origins or to search for their parents. Her point of departure is that safeguarding records is important, but safeguarding alone does not repair.

George Jean Joseph Schuddebeurs, LL.M. (Plan Kiskeya)
George Jean Joseph Schuddebeurs BBA was adopted from Haiti to the Netherlands and has been actively involved with Plan Kiskeya since 2018. Plan Kiskeya is an advocacy organisation that supports Haitian adoptees in their searches for family, identity and cultural heritage, while representing their interests within the broader adoption landscape. Through Plan Kiskeya, George Jean Joseph has helped bring irregularities and systemic issues surrounding adoptions from Haiti to public and political attention. Together with his organisation, he provided background information to the Joustra Committee, the Dutch independent committee investigating intercountry adoption, which contributed to the inclusion of a dedicated section on Haiti in the Committee’s final report. George also played an active role in the

establishment and development of INEA, the Dutch Expertise Centre on Intercountry Adoption. A central focus of George's advocacy is ensuring that adoptees are not merely consulted, but have a formal and meaningful voice in the institutions and policies that affect their lives. Drawing on his own experience as a Haitian adoptee, he works to promote recognition, transparency, access to information, and the right to identity, family and cultural heritage. George has an academic background in financial and tax law. He works as a tax lawyer and, alongside his primary profession, is active in dispute resolution.

Prof. dr. Anna Singer (Uppsala University, Sweden)
Dr Anna Singer is professor in private law, in particular family law, at the faculty of law at Uppsala University, Sweden where she served as the Dean of the Faculty of Law 2020-2026. Her research interests focus on children's rights in different fields of law, such as the right to parentage, parental responsibility, maintenance, social security, and torts. She is the author of numerous articles and books on these topics. She is also teaching marital law and law of succession. She was the deputy vice rector for the Scientific Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences at Uppsala University 2014-2020. She was, among other expert assignments, government appointed investigator of Swedish International Adoption Practices in 2021-2025, a report 'Sweden's intercountry adoption activities – lessons learned and the way forward' (SOU 2025:61) was published in June 2025.

Prof. dr. David M. Smolin (Cumberland School of Law, Samford University, USA)
David M. Smolin is the Harwell G. Davis Professor of Constitutional Law, and Director, Center for Children, Law, and Ethics, at Cumberland Law School, Samford University. He served as an independent expert for the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) on intercountry adoption issues and served as an external expert for the International Social Service (ISS), on issues related to children's rights, adoption, and surrogacy. He is a member of the core expert group that developed the Verona Principles on international standards for surrogacy. He serves as a special advisor for the Swiss NGO Child Identity Protection (CHIP). He received the Outstanding Scholar in Adoption Award from the St. John's University Adoption Initiative in 2014. He presented at the 2010 and 2015 Hague Special Commissions on the Practical Operation of the Hague Adoption Convention; the Second International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies in Seoul, South Korea; the State Supreme Court of Sao Paulo, Brazil; and the NALSAR University of Law, in Telangana, India.

Prof. dr. Gonda Van Steen (King's College London, UK)
Gonda Van Steen is Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College London and Director of its Centre for Hellenic Studies. Her research spans Modern Greek studies, classical reception, theatre and performance, cultural memory, and the politics of heritage. She is recognised for groundbreaking research on the international adoption of Greek children during the Cold War. Combining archival scholarship with public engagement and policy impact, her work examines how culture, memory, and identity shape both collective histories and individual lives.

Dr. Sophie Withaeckx (Maastricht University)
Sophie Withaeckx is an assistant professor of philosophy at Maastricht University. She previously worked as a coordinator and postdoctoral researcher at RHEA, the Centre of Expertise on Gender, Diversity and

Intersectionality at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and as a lecturer and researcher at Odisee University College. She holds master's degrees in African Languages & Cultures (Ghent University) and International Politics (University of Antwerp), as well as a PhD in Philosophy and Ethics (2014) from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. She has done research on gender-based violence, migration and social work, and decolonisation in higher education. Her current research explores the ethics of adoption, investigating how underlying assumptions about humanness, family, and kinship inform both the ethical discourse and practical realities of both domestic and transnational adoption. She was a member of the expert panel on intercountry adoption in Flanders (2020-2021) where she examined ethical aspects in transnational adoption. Together with Atamhi Cawayu & Chiara Candaele, she co-edited the book 'Voorbij transnationale adoptie/Beyond transnational adoption' (2023).